

THE Nº1 CAR SPOTTER

Fights the Factory

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The No. 1 Car Spotter

The No. 1 Car Spotter and the Firebird

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Anna Hibiscus

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Have Fun, Anna Hibiscus!

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Go Well, Anna Hibiscus!

Love From Anna Hibiscus

You're Amazing, Anna Hibiscus!

For younger readers

Anna Hibiscus' Song

Splash! Anna Hibiscus

Double Trouble for Anna Hibiscus

THE Nº1 CAR SPOTTER

Fights the Factory



by Atinuke

illustrated by Warwick Johnson Cadwell



WALKER
BOOKS

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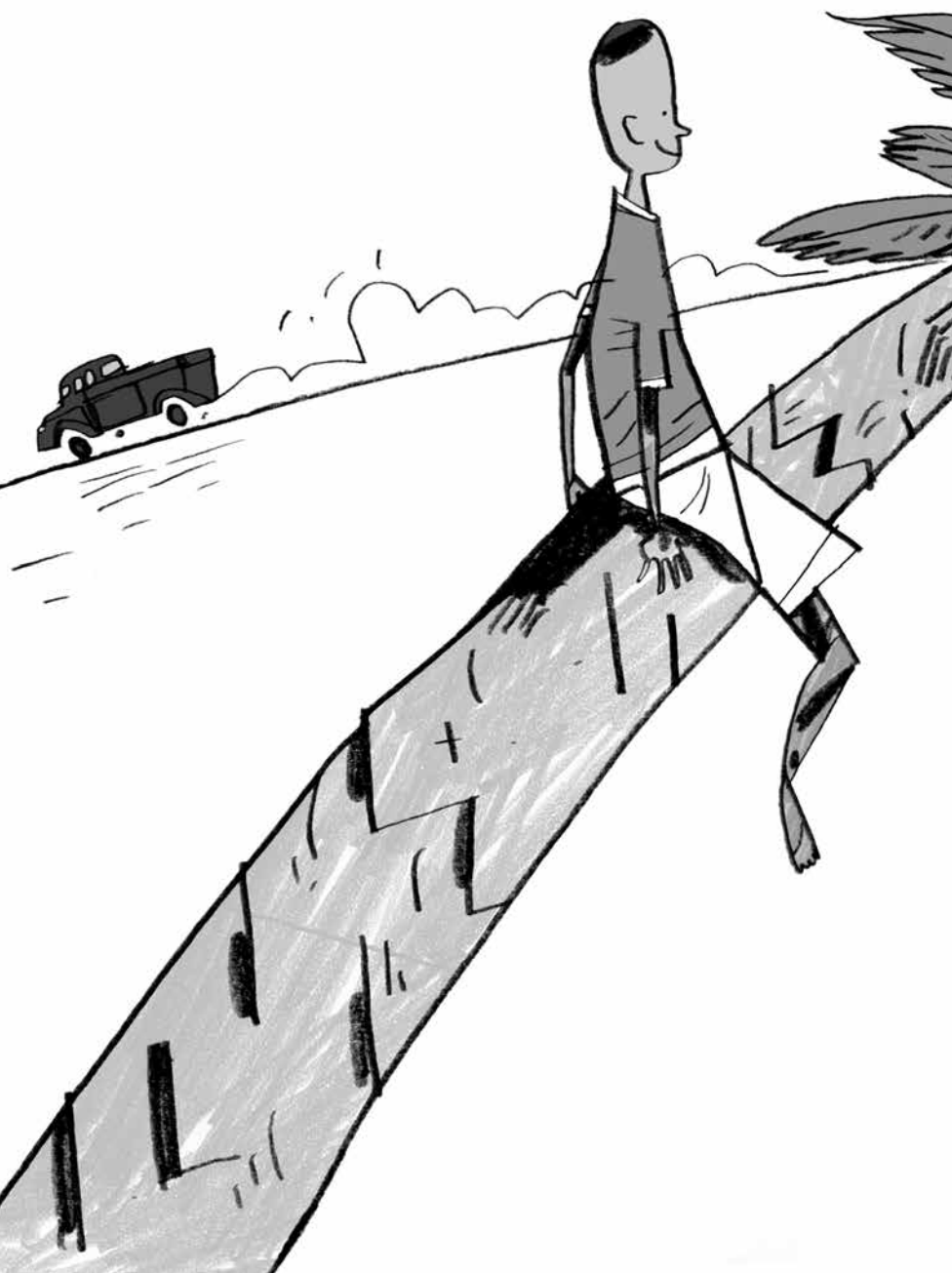
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For Daisy. For Soo. For Erica.
For Justin. For everything. xx
A.

For my gang as ever,
D, S, H and W
I would also like to thank Atinuke and Jacky Paynter
for letting me join No. 1 and his family.
W. JC.





No. 1 Spots a Bugatti

I might look like only a village boy.
A village boy from a no-count village with
no electricity, no school and no shop.

To millions of people, this village might
look like nothing. But here we have the
houses where we sleep, the fields and river
where we grow and catch our food. And we
also have the road.

This village is our home.

And yes, I am a village boy. But not only a village boy. I am the No. 1 car spotter. The No. 1 car spotter in this village.

And the road that passes our village is a No. 1 road! It speeds past on its way from one metropolis to another. It carries many lorries and buses and taxis. And it carries many fine-fine cars too.

WAIT! What can I hear?

An engine! A car! A car is coming! And by the sound of this engine, it is not just a battered up Peugeot taxi that is approaching. No! I can hear...

Not a Mercedes Benz. Not a BMW. What is it? An engine I have never heard before!

I lean out from the palm tree – then I see it. A car I have never seen before on this road. A car I saw only once in a picture torn from a city magazine. I shout its name for the entire village to hear.

“BUGATTI!
BUGATTI!
BUGATTI!”

My best friend,
Coca-Cola, comes
running out of his
mother’s chop-house.

My cousins Emergency and
Tuesday come running up from the river.
Even my sister, Sissy, puts her head over our
compound wall to look.

I climb down from the tree and run to the
road. We are all running alongside the car,
screaming and shouting and waving.

“BUGATTI! BUGATTI! BUGATTI!”

Never has such a fine-fine car rolled past
our village!

And I should know! I have seen uncountable
Peugeots, I have seen many Mercedes Benz,
I have even seen some Lamborghinis. But I have
never before in my life seen a Bugatti Veron!



NA-WA-OH! WOW!

Coca-Cola and Emergency and Tuesday and I are jumping up and down, up and down.

“Super fine! Super fine!” Coca-Cola punches the air.

“So shiny! So sleeeeeeeek!” Emergency is almost singing.

“Dust did not dare even to touch that car!” Tuesday marvels.

“**LAZY BOY!**” Coca-Cola’s mother shouts from the chop-house for him to come and carry drinks for her customers.

“**WHERE ARE YOU?**” Uncle

Go-Easy shouts for my cousins to come and drag the nets from the river.



“OYA, COME NOW!”

Grandfather shouts for me from under the iroko tree.

We scatter! But we are still shouting about that car!

“It must have been a chief’s car!” Coca-Cola shouts as he runs.

“A chief?” Emergency is shouting over his shoulder. “That car could only have belonged to a singer...”

“And his girlfriend!” Tuesday gives his brother a high-five.

I roll my eyes. Who cares what person is inside a car? It is the car that matters!

“Bugatti! Bugatti!” I pant when I arrive at Grandfather’s tree.

“Did you see it, Grandfather?”

“I saw it! I saw it!”



Grandfather's grin is so wide it splits his face in two. "I never knew I would be so lucky as to see one of those!"

It was Grandfather who taught me everything I know about car spotting. When he was a boy, there was no road here. And when he was a young man, the only car on the road was the Peugeot 404. Now Grandfather has been lucky enough to see a Bugatti Veron.

And, unbelievably, in less than two hours' time we are all lucky again – the Bugatti Veron returns! Where was it going so close to here that it returned so quick?

This time as I run alongside the car I look inside. There is a man shouting into a mobile phone. An open briefcase is next to him on the seat.

"That is not a chief!" I tell the others.
"That is not a music star! That is a businessman!"

“Grandmother! Grandfather!” It is
Mama shouting now.

She is turning away from
a taxi. The taxi that brings
us news of my father in
the city. Then she is
running up to the village,
still shouting! I run
after her. Grandmother
comes hurrying from the
compound. Grandfather
stands up under the tree.

“News from Femi!”
Mama is laughing and
crying all at once. “He has
sold his business in the
city. He is coming home!”

Grandmother’s and
Grandfather’s eyes
light up. Grandmother and
Grandfather grasp each other’s hands.



Femi is their son, and he is my father.
He lives in the city, earning money by
wheelbarrowing peoples' possessions from
the bus stations to their homes. He sends
the money home to us.
But now he is coming
back himself!

“Coming home!”
Grandmother
exclaims.

Then she
frowns and throws her
arms open wide. “For what?”

We look around at our dry and dusty
village. At the crooked houses, bleating
goats and raggedy children. What job is
there here for a man with a wife, two
children and two parents to support?

Uncle Go-Easy sells fish from the river
by the side of the road – and he only just
makes enough money to survive.

