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# Half of a Yellow Sun

By Biyi Bandele

'Lagos, capital of Nigeria,  
'prepares to give the welcome of its life  
to Queen Elizabeth II.  
'Or, in its own language,  
to Oba Oberin, the King-Lady.  
'A million Nigerians  
are here to greet her.  
'Just seventeen hours  
from the mists of London airport,  
'the Queen's Argonaut comes to rest  
in the sunshine of Ikeja,  
'the airport of Lagos.  
'The Guard of Honour is mounted  
by the Nigeria Regiment,  
'many of whom, like the Queen's  
husband, wear the Burma Star. '  
'Governor General Sir James Robertson  
and Lady Robertson  
'welcome the royal couple  
as they leave the Argonaut.  
'In a temperature around the 100 mark,  
the queen still looks cool  
'as the royal car makes  
its 13-mile journey to the capital  
'at a steady eight miles an hour.  
'Every foot of the way  
the road is packed with Nigerians.  
'The welcome is as tremendous as  
any Her Majesty has ever been given,  
'and it's a proud welcome.  
'For this is no longer a people  
in colonial subjection,  
'but a free nation with its feet already  
firmly on the road to self-government. '

**(MIRIAM MAKEBA:**

"The Naughty Little Flea")  
Where did the naughty little flea go?  
Won't somebody tell me?  
Where did the naughty little flea go?  
Won't somebody tell me?  
Tell me now,  
where did the naughty little flea go?  
Nobody know, nobody know

Tell me now,  
where did the naughty little flea go?  
Nobody know, nobody know  
There was a naughty little flea  
He climbed up  
on the doggie's knee  
He climbed some here,  
he climbed some there  
He was climbing everywhere  
Tell me,  
where did the naughty little flea go...  
Happy Independence Day!  
Are you going  
to help dad get his contracts?  
What do you mean?  
Will you be spreading your legs  
for the Right Honourable Minister  
in exchange for daddy's contract?  
What do you think?  
Hurry up, you two.  
His Excellency's here.  
- We'll be right down, Mum.  
- Help me with this, will you?  
I hope you've thought about coming  
to join us at the Ministry, Olanna.  
We need first-class brains like yours.  
How many people get offered jobs  
personally from the Finance Minister?  
I've decided to go to Nsukka.  
I'll be leaving next week.  
Is that right?  
You have decided to move to Nsukka?  
I applied for a job as a lecturer in  
the Department of Sociology and I got it.  
Oh?  
So you'll be leaving Lagos?  
Er... why don't you all come  
to my house this weekend, eh?  
If only to sample  
my cook's fish pepper soup.  
The chap is from Nembe,  
he knows what to do with fresh fish.  
Sounds wonderful, Honourable Minister.  
I won't be here this weekend.

You won't be here?

I made plans to go to Kano  
to see Uncle Mbaezi and the family.

I SEE.

And what about you, Kainene?

What about me, indeed?

I, too, will be putting my newly acquired  
degree to good use.

I'm moving to Port Harcourt  
to manage daddy's businesses there.

So Kainene will manage  
the cement factory?

The cement factory,  
the bottling company,  
the sawmills and the freight carriers,  
everything.

She'll oversee everything in the east.

Whoever said you lost out  
by having twin daughters is a liar.

Thank you, Minister.

Happy Independence Day!

Happy Independence Day!

Happy Independence Day.

- Are you all set?

- All set for what, Kainene?

It's Independence Day, Mummy.

There are 1001 soires  
in Lagos tonight.

Good evening, Chief.

You realise, don't you, that you've  
just cost daddy the contract?

It's not as if he'll get nothing.

Daddy will still give him  
ten per cent after all.

Well, the ten per cent is standard,  
so extras always help.

The other bidders probably  
don't have a beautiful daughter.

That horrid little woman, Richard,  
and right in my face too.

- Susan, I wasn't.

- I know you didn't mean to flirt.

- But you must understand...

- Susan, I wasn't flirting.

- Champagne, Madam?  
- The gossip here is just vicious.  
How are you, Olanna?  
Happy Independence Day.  
The Hausa in the north  
are a dignified lot,  
the Yoruba are rather jolly,  
as well as being first-rate lickspittles.  
- And the Igbo are...  
- Surly and money-loving.  
Hello, Graham.  
Meet Kainene Ozobia,  
Chief Ozobia's daughter.  
Kainene is *asumma cum laude*  
graduate of Yale  
and an Oxford graduate to boot.  
Kainene, this is Susan Grenville-Pitts,  
from the British Council.  
- How do you do?  
- And this is...  
- I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch...  
- Richard. Richard Churchill.  
Now, I want to speak to you.  
Hello.  
I'm no relation of Sir Winston's,  
I'm afraid,  
or I might've turned out  
a little cleverer.  
How funny.  
Great music, don't you think?  
It turns out Kainene and I have  
a mutual friend in London.  
How lovely. I'll let you two  
catch up then. Back in a bit.  
You just lied to your wife.  
She's not my wife.  
- Move out of the way, please.  
- What?  
There is a photographer behind you  
who's keen to take a photo of me,  
and particularly my necklace.  
Thank you, Ma'am.  
The necklace will be featured  
in tomorrow's "Lagos Life".

That will be my way of contributing  
to our newly independent country.  
I'm giving fellow Nigerians  
something to aspire to,  
an incentive to work hard.  
- It's a lovely necklace.  
- Of course it's not lovely!  
My father has obscene taste  
in jewellery.  
But it's his money.  
I see my sister looking for me.  
I should go.  
Don't go... please.  
Shall I introduce you?  
Everybody wants to meet her.  
I'd rather talk to you.  
If you don't mind.  
- Here comes the wife you denied.  
- Darling?  
- How lovely to meet you.  
- How lovely to meet you.  
Don't tell me you're interested in him.  
- What if I was?  
- What about Okafor?  
You know that ended long ago.  
Now we're just good friends.  
- And lain with the dimples?  
- No, it's over with lain.  
- Robert?  
- Robert is history.  
No, he's here. Hello, Robert!  
Ha-bloody-ha! You're not funny.  
I just don't get what you see  
in these English boys.  
Watch out, though.  
This one is married.  
No. That's just a woman who doesn't  
know when to cut her losses.  
Did he say as much?  
Operator?  
For you, Ma'am.  
Mr Churchill on the line.  
Churchill?  
Hello? Who is this?

It's me, Richard.

- We met last night at...

- 'Yes... '

The man who denied his wife.

Hello, Richard.

Did you come to Nigeria

to run away from something?

No.

I've always wanted to see Africa,

so I took leave from "The Spectator"

and a generous loan from my aunt and...

- And here you are.

- Here I am.

A modern-day explorer

of the "Dark Continent".

I've accepted an offer to join

the Faculty of English at Nsukka.

Splendid. My sister's there.

She'll introduce you to her revolutionary

lover and his band of drinkers.

And you can come visit me

in Port Harcourt.

Ah, I can't believe it's you.

You've come to help.

All right. Let's go to Aunt Ifeka's.

You have been on my mind.

I knew you would come

and see us soon.

Uncle, good afternoon.

And how is Lagos treating my sister?

- Lagos is treating mother well.

- And your sister and your father?

- How is your father?

- Daddy is well.

Kainene is well.

See who is here!

- Ah! Olanna!

- My Auntie!

- How is your mother?

- She's good.

Oh!

May another person do for you.

May another person do for you.

Ahh...

Cousin!

You should've warned us  
that you were coming.

At least we would've swept  
the yard better.

- Cousin, you look well.

- Thank you.

There are stories to tell.

So you are going to Nsukka  
to marry Odenigbo, Sister?

I don't know about marriage yet,  
but I want to be closer to him.

And I want to teach.

The way you describe him,  
you had better not wait!

'A special woman  
is arriving this weekend. '

Very special.

Make sure the house is clean.

I'll order the food from the staff club.

But, sah, I can cook.

She likes her rice a certain way.

Fried rice, I think.

I'm not sure you can make  
something suitable.

I can make that, sah.

Let me make the rice.

And you get the chicken  
from the staff club.

Artful negotiation.

All right, you make the rice.

- Did you go to school?

- Standard two, sah.

- But I learn everything fast.

- Standard two? How long ago?

Many years now, sah.

But I learn everything very fast.

- Why did you stop school?

- My father's crops failed, sah.

Why didn't your father find someone  
to lend him your school fees?

Sah?

I will enrol you  
in the staff primary school.



Yes, sah. Thanks, sah.

I suppose you'll be the oldest,  
starting standard three at your age.  
But the only way to get their respect  
is to be the best. Understand me?

Yes, sah.

- What's your name again?

- Ugwu, sah.

Ugwu...

Yes. Call me Odenigbo.

Sah?

My name is not "Sah".

Call me Odenigbo.

It's quite tasteless.

Which is better than bad-tasting,  
of course.

I'll show you how  
to cook rice properly, Ugwu,  
without using so much oil.

- Ugwu told me he could cook rice.

- He can't.

My God.

Quick, drink coke.

You should eat first.

Ugwu is making a stew.

I know what I want to eat.

So, what happened here?

Your older books are  
in the second bedroom.

I needed the space for my books.

- Why can't they go to your flat?

- Because I want them here.

You've really moved in, haven't you?

We have visitors, sah.

- Can't they leave?

- Odenigbo!

- I can't wait for them to meet you.

- Is she here? Come out, now!

Stay just a little longer.

Ugwu, go and fetch your master.

Tell him to come out now.

My friends. This, finally, is Olanna.

How are you?

You must be Lara Adebayo.

Faculty of Medicine?

Yes. He did not tell us  
you were illogically beautiful.

- I will take that as a compliment.

- And what a proper English accent.

I'm Okeoma. I thought Odenigbo's  
girlfriend was a human being.

- He didn't tell us you a water mermaid.

- Thank you.

- Victor Patel. Nice to see you finally.

- Olanna.

- And what's your discipline?

- Sociology.

Voodoo science! You should've  
studied one of the proper sciences.

Didn't the great thinker Hegel  
call Africa a land of childhood?

Nobody can take Hegel seriously.

Have you read him closely?

He's funny, he's very funny.

You are the one that is Ugwu.

How are you?

I'm fine, Mama.

Did your journey go well?

Yes. God led us.

- How are you?

- I'm well, Mama.

My son has told me

how well you're doing.

- When will my son be back?

- They will return in the evening.

They said you should rest, Mama,  
when you come.

I'm cooking rice and chicken.

Rest?

I have brought ingredients  
to make proper soup for my son.

I know you try,

but you are only a boy.

What does a boy know

about real cooking?

Is that not so, Amala?

Does a boy belong in the kitchen?

Mama, no.

You see, Ugwu?

A boy does not belong in the kitchen.

Yes, Mama.

Eh? My son wastes money  
on these expensive things.

- Do you not see, Amala?

- Yes, Mama.

Those belong to my madam, Mama.

She brought many things from Lagos.

- Amala, come and make the cocoyams.

- Yes, Mama.

Mama, welcome!Nno!

I'm Olanna. Did you go well?

- Our journey went well.

- Good afternoon.

Is this Odenigbo's relative from home,  
Mama?

Amala helps me in the house.

Come, Mama, let's sit.

You shouldn't bother in the kitchen.

You should rest. Let Ugwu do it.

I want to cook a proper soup  
for my son.

Of course, Mama.

At least let me help you, Mama.

I'll go and change.

I hear you did not suck  
your mother's breasts.

What?

They say you did not suck  
your mother's breasts.

Please go and tell those  
who sent you

that you did not see my son.

Tell your fellow witches that

you did not see him! Do you hear me?

Tell them that nobody's medicine  
can work on my son.

He will not marry  
an abnormal woman,  
unless you kill me first.

Only over my dead body!

Mama...

Don't "mama" me.

I said, do not "mama" me.  
Leave my son alone.  
Go and tell your fellow witches  
that you did not see him!  
- Neighbours!  
- Mama, will you stay inside?  
Neighbours!  
There is a witch in my son's house!  
Neighbours!  
Tell your master I've gone to my flat.  
Neighbours!  
I'm so sorry she acted that way.  
- I just had to leave.  
- No, no. You didn't have to, Nkem.  
You should've ignored her, really.  
I've decided to talk to Okeoma  
about the Labour Strike.  
- We have to show support...  
- Your mother made a scene.  
You're angry, Nkem?  
I didn't think you'd take this  
so seriously.  
You can see my mother  
doesn't know what she's doing.  
She's just a village woman.  
You never talk about your mother.  
You've never asked me  
to come to Abba with you to visit her.  
Stop it, Nkem, it's not  
as if I go that often to see her,  
and I did ask you the last time  
you were going to Lagos. Huh?  
- What did you cook?  
- Rice.  
- Aren't you going to play tennis?  
- I thought you would come.  
I don't feel up to it.  
Why is your mother's behaviour  
acceptable  
because she's a village woman?  
I know village women  
who do not behave this way!  
My mother's entire life  
has been in Abba.

Do you know  
what a small bush village that is?  
Of course she'll feel threatened by  
an educated woman living with her son.  
Of course you'd have to be a witch!  
It's the only way she can understand it.

- Did you talk to her about this?  
- I didn't see the point.  
- You didn't see the point?  
- I want to catch Okeoma at the club.  
Let's discuss this when I get back.  
- I'll stay here tonight.  
- No.  
- What?  
- I said no.

What's wrong with you, Olanna?  
Go. Go and play your tennis  
and don't come back!  
Olanna?  
Did something happen?  
Nothing happened.  
'I just wanted to say hello,  
find out how you are. '

How's Nsukka?  
How's your revolutionary lover?  
'Odenigbo is fine. Nsukka is fine. '

Richard seems taken by it.  
He even seems taken  
by the revolutionary, but I forgive him.  
'You should come and visit. '

Soon.  
You sound rather subdued.  
Are you sure nothing's happened?  
Out with it, Olanna.  
'It's nothing much.  
Just a little misunderstanding with... '

- The revolutionary?  
- 'No. His mother.  
'But there's nothing to it. Really. '

You reek of brandy.  
Are you still angry?  
Get dressed, we'll go back together.  
I will talk to Mama.  
No, you don't have to do that.

Stay here.  
If you won't marry me...  
...let's have a child.  
Let's have a child,Nkem.  
A little girl... just like you.  
We'll call her Obianuju.  
Because she will come into a place  
where there is plenty.  
Or a little boy.  
Let's have breakfast in bed.  
Or is this one of your Sundays of faith?  
I won't go in today.  
Good.  
Because we have work to do.  
We will have a beautiful child,Nkem.  
We will have a brilliant child.  
'Our enemies are the political  
profiteers, the swindlers... '  
Nkem! It's happened.  
There's been a coup.  
Major Nzeogwu is speaking  
from Kaduna.  
What's happening in Lagos?  
Did they say what's happening  
in Lagos?  
Your parents are fine.  
Civilians are safe.  
Operator...  
- It's not going through.  
- They're fine. It's just for security.  
The lines will come back once they've  
fully taken control of the government.  
- Those soldiers are true heroes.  
- This is the end of corruption.  
That's the Finance Minister. He shit  
in his trousers before they shot him.  
I knew Okonji.  
He was a friend of my father's.  
The BBC is calling it an Igbo coup.  
And they have a point.  
It was mostly Northerners  
who were killed, after all.  
It was mostly Northerners  
in government.

The BBC should ask who put  
the Northerners in government  
to dominate everybody.  
If we had more men like Major Nzeogwu,  
we would not be where we are today.  
Isn't he a communist?  
You Americans are so predictable.  
Do we have time to worry about that?  
'The coup did not  
succeed in Lagos itself.  
'Those politicians that survived  
asked the army to take control.  
'And Major General Ironsi, an Igbo,  
took over.  
'He concentrated authority in Lagos  
'and cut down the power of the regions.  
'It looked as if the Igbos were  
beginning to run the whole country  
'and the north was suspicious. '  
My son told me you had gone  
to the village to see your mother?  
Yes, Mama. Welcome, Mama.  
Welcome, Auntie Amala.  
Go and rest, Ugwu.  
I am preparing my son's dinner.  
I will stay in case you need help, Mama.  
Do you cook Ofe Nsala well?  
- I have never cooked it.  
- Why? My son likes it.  
My madam has never  
asked me to cook it.  
"Madam. "  
She is not your madam, my child.  
She's only a woman  
who's living with a man  
who has not paid her bride price.  
Richard, did you say  
you were going to Lagos tomorrow?  
Yes. Yes, I am.  
To give Kainene moral support?  
Not quite, Lara.  
It's Chief Ozobia's 60th birthday,  
and they're having a party at...  
See? Richard is a gentleman.

He's going all the way to Lagos  
to give Kainene, who doesn't need it,  
moral support.

And you, what are you doing  
when Olanna has had to rush  
to Lagos all by herself?  
How's your book coming along?

- I'm ploughing on.

- It's a novel, isn't it?

- Yes.

- More wine?

Yes, please.

Odenigbo, you're not trying  
to get me drunk, are you?

What's it about?

As soon as it's finished,  
you'll be the first to read it.

Ugwu, more wine!

UgWu!

I brought fresh palm wine for my son.

Our best wine-tapper  
brought it to me this morning.

Ugwu!

My point is, the only authentic identity  
for an African is his tribe.

I am a Nigerian because  
the white man created Nigeria  
and gave me that identity,  
and I am black

because the white man  
constructed black  
to be as different from his white  
as humanly possible.

But I was Igbo  
before the white man came.

But you became aware that you were  
Igbo because of the white man.

- The Pan-Igbo idea itself...

- Go ask your elders in your village!

The problem is that Odenigbo  
is a hopeless tribalist,  
we need to keep him quiet.

I will go powder my nose.

Sorry, Richard.



She doesn't look as though  
she wants to go home today.  
Sure you're not planning  
to do something with her?  
- Don't talk rubbish.  
- Nobody in Lagos would know.  
Look, look, look.  
- I know you're not interested in her.  
- I'm not. And that's that.  
I can't wait for Tuesday.  
I can't wait either.  
Tell Ugwu to air the rug  
in the bedroom.  
- 'Why?'  
- Why what?  
'Why do you want the rug  
in the bedroom aired?'  
Because it hasn't been aired  
for some time.  
You sound so glum.  
Are you all right?  
'Oh, my mother is here.  
I had no idea she was coming. '  
- Will she be gone before Tuesday?  
- 'I don't know.  
- 'I wish you were here. '  
- Well, I'm glad I'm not.  
Did you have a conversation with her  
about breaking the spell  
of the educated witch?  
'I'll talk to her, Nkem...  
'I'm sorry.  
'I'm so sorry. '  
- Richard.  
- Yes, dear?  
You were in Nsukka two days ago.  
You saw the revolutionary.  
Did you notice  
anything unusual about him?  
Was he anything other  
than his smug, self-righteous self?  
I'm not waiting till Tuesday.  
I'm leaving for home today.  
Olanna, do you want me

to come with you?

Let me come with you.

No.

Nkem?

Nkem. What a pleasant surprise.

It's good to have you back.

So good.

- Good afternoon, Mama.

- Olanna, how are you?

Mama and Amala are just leaving.

I'm taking them to the motor park.

Amala, how are you?

I didn't know you came too.

Have you got your things?

Come on, let's go.

- Have you eaten, Mama?

- My morning meal is still in my stomach.

- I have a game scheduled for later.

- Amala?

- I hope you ate something.

- Yes, Auntie, thank you.

Let's go.

Give Amala the key

to put things in the car.

OK.

- Go well.

- Hm-mm.

Mah, will you eat?

Should I warm rice?

Not now.

Go and see if any avocados are ripe.

Yes, ma'am.

Did anything happen?

Yes. Yes, indeed.

One of my students missed the last test,

and this morning he tried

to offer me money to pass him,

the ignoramus.

I didn't know Amala came with Mama.

Yes.

You touched Amala?

You touched Amala?

Olanna...

Olanna.

Nkem?

Nkem?

Nkem, please open. Please!

Nkem!

Nkem, please open!

Please open, Nkem.

Nkem!

Nkem, please. Please open!

Nkem!

I was drunk, Nkem.

I was drunk,

and Amala forced herself on me!

It was brief... rash... lust.

It meant nothing, Nkem, nothing!

Get out.

I think I'm going to postpone

my programme at Nsukka

and stay here in Kano.

No. Mba.

You will go back to Nsukka.

I can't just go back to his house, Auntie.

I am not asking you

to go back to his house.

I said you will go back to Nsukka.

Do you not have your own flat

and your own job?

Odenigbo has done what all men do

and inserted his penis

in the first hole he could find

when you were away.

Does that mean somebody died?

When your uncle first married me,

I worried because I thought

all those women outside

were coming to displace me

from my home.

I now know that nothing he would

ever do would make my life change.

My life will change

only if I want it to change.

What are you saying, Auntie?

He is very careful now,

since he realised I'm no longer afraid.

I have told him that if he ever

brings disgrace to me in any way,  
I will cut off that snake  
between his legs.

You must never behave  
as if your life belongs to a man.

Do you hear me?

Your life belongs to you and you alone.

You will go back on Saturday.

Let me hurry up and make  
some abacha for you to take.

Would you like to read this?

Yes. Thank you.

They have finally removed  
that Igbo vice-chancellor  
from the University of Lagos,  
it's on the back cover.

Oh?

The problem with the Igbo people  
is that they want to control everything  
in this country, everything.

They own all the shops,  
they control the Civil Service,  
even the police.

If you are arrested for a crime,  
as long as you can say "keda",  
they will let you go.

And now, with this coup,  
they control the army.

We say "kedu", not "keda".

It means, "How are you?"

- Are you Igbo?

- Yes.

- But you have the face of a Fulani.

- Igbo.

Master looks like somebody  
that is crying every day...

- Put my blender in the carton.

- Yes, mah.

Mah, please forgive Master.

- Put the blender in the car.

- Yes, mah.

Do the guests still come  
in the evenings?

Not like before, mah,

when you were around.

- But they still come?

- Yes.

And your master still plays tennis  
and goes to the staff club?

Yes.

Good.

- What is it?

- Amala is pregnant.

What?

Mama just came to tell me that  
Amala is pregnant with my child.

Please, let me come in.

Please.

We will do whatever you want.

Whatever you want, let's do it together.

You said it happened just once.

Just once and she got pregnant.

- It was just once.

- Just once, I see.

I told Mama I'd send Amala  
to Dr Okonkwo in Enugu.

She said it would be  
over her dead body.

She said Amala will have the child  
and she will raise the child herself.

Mama planned this thing  
from the beginning.

I see now how she made sure

I was dead drunk

before sending Amala to me.

I feel as if I have been dropped  
into something that I...

...I don't entirely understand.

Nobody dropped you into anything!

- I thought it was you.

- Oh!

How are you? Are you all right?

I'm very well.

I can't decide whether to get  
the Bordeaux or the Burgundy.

Can I help?

Why don't I buy both

and if you'll share them with me,

we can decide which is better.  
Can you spare an hour? Or do you  
have to run back to your writing?  
I would hate to impose on you, really.  
Of course you wouldn't be imposing.  
Besides, you've never visited me...  
...in my flat.  
You really must write about the horrific  
things the British did in Kenya.  
Didn't they cut off testicles?  
- Didn't they?  
- Yes.  
You should write about it then.  
- Do you have a title for your book?  
- "The Basket of Hands. "  
"The Basket of Hands" ...  
Sounds macabre.  
It's about labour.  
The good things we achieved.  
The railways, for example, but...  
...also how labour was exploited  
and the lengths  
the colonial enterprise went to.  
- My glass isn't quite empty.  
- No, it's not.  
Come and sit on the floor with me.  
I should leave.

**(EARTHA KITT:**

...Santa Baby, and fill my stocking  
with a duplex and cheques  
Sign your "X" on the line,  
Santa Baby...  
Do you want anything, mah?  
These look very well.  
Did you use fertiliser?  
- Yes, mah.  
- And on the peppers?  
Yes, mah. Mah?  
Mama used bad medicine  
on my master, mah.  
Rubbish!  
Let's get married.  
Mama will leave us alone then.

I slept with Richard.

No.

Yes.

Do you have feelings for the man?

No.

You have no feelings for him, then why?

Olanna?

Is your master in?

- Is your master in?

- Thank you, Harrison.

I want you to stay away from my house!

Do you understand me?

Stay away!

Are we still trying to have a child?

Of course we are.

Or aren't we?

Get me some brandy,

my good man.

Give that to Odenigbo.

Tell him Amala has refused to touch her.

Mama doesn't want to keep the baby.

There's a young man

doing timber work in Ondo

that Amala is to marry.

Mama doesn't want to keep the baby?

She wanted a boy.

I've spoken to Amala's people.

We've agreed that

the baby will stay with them.

I'll go to Abba next week

to see them and discuss...

We'll keep her.

Our relationship is the most

important thing to me, Nkem.

We have to make

the right decision for us.

You weren't thinking

about our relationship

when you got her pregnant.

Let's think about this.

- How noble of you.

- I'm not being noble.

- Will you adopt her formally?

- Yes, I think so.

What will you tell her?

- What will I tell her?

- Yes, when she's older.

The truth...

that Amala is her mother.

And I'll have her call me

Mummy Olanna or something,

so that if Amala ever comes back,

she can be Mummy.

You're doing this

to please the revolutionary.

- I'm not.

- Why are you doing it then?

She was so helpless.

I felt as if I knew her.

I think this is a very brave decision.

Will you come back

for her christening?

Yes. Of course, I will.

- This is excellent, Harrison.

- Thank you, madam.

He doesn't deserve you, you know.

This tart tastes better than the one

I had the last time I was in London.

Thank you, madam.

My master is telling me that everybody

in Mr Odenigbo's house says the same.

You made it for them?

I used to make it for my master

to take there,

but I'm not making anything again

for Mr Odenigbo's house

since that time

he's shouting at my master.

Shouting like a madman

and the whole street is hearing.

The man's head is not correct.

I hope you won't say, "Forgive me. "

There is nothing more trite.

Please don't leave.

Leave? That would be too easy,

wouldn't it?

- I'm sorry, Kainene.

- It would be forgivable



if it were somebody else not my sister!

I am so sorry.

You should sleep in the guest room.

Yes. Yes, of course.

'In May, Major General Ironsi  
abolished the regions by decree.

'This was the last straw for the north.

'There were riots and Ironsi's regime  
fell after barely six months.

'At Ibadan, among northern troops,  
he was killed.

'Looting, rioting, ambushing  
left thousands of Igbos dead.

'Northerners took advantage  
of the confusion

'to work off their long pent up anger  
at the economic success of the Igbos

'who migrated into their own region. '

Anything to declare, sir?

- No. I'm going on to London.

- OK. Well done, sir.

Where are you from?

I'm from Obosi.

My fiance is from Umuunnachi,  
not far from you.

- Your fiance, sir?

- Yes. Her name is Kainene.

You speak Igbo, sir?

You speak...

My name is Nnaemeka.

- Nice talking to you...

- Thank you, sir.

We have here

a little technical difficulty!

A small problem that can be  
resolved very simply!

I want all our foreign visitors  
together over here.

This way, sir.

Passports!

Bring out your passports!

Where's your passport?

It's at home, sir.

I haven't got it on me here, sir.

- You are Igbo?

- Yes, sir.

- Come, my brother.

- Yes, sir.

Turn the page

Passports!

Show me your passport!

- Which church you go to?

- I'm Catholic.

You're Catholic? That's nice.

What is the name of the church?

- Saint Dominic's.

- Saint Dominic's, ah...

Listen, just wait for me  
a minute over here.

Passport!

Get up! Come on!

Move! Right now!

Please, please.

Please, don't.

OK, line them up!

Let me out of the car.

Stop the car!

What's happening here?

What's happening?

No, no!

- Madam!

- Auntie!

Auntie!

No! Auntie!

Please, Madam, please.

We have to go!

There's only troubles here.

We have to go.

Murderer!

Get in the car!

You have to get in the car.

Get in the car!

We have to go now, Ma'am.

I'm sorry. We have to go.

Please, please, leave us alone.

Leave us alone.

Sorry, Auntie.

'The Military Governor of

the Eastern Region, Colonel Ojukwu,  
'was questioned  
about the extent of the killing. '  
'I can't give you the total figures,  
but this I know,  
'that the May 29th rioting  
'did in fact take toll  
'of some 3,300 easterners  
in the north.  
'I know that on the first night  
of the September rioting...  
'... in Zaria alone there were 670.  
'In Kano,  
definitely over 1,000 to 1,500.'  
And what about our university  
colleagues in Ibadan and Zaria?  
They kept silent while white expatriate  
encouraged the killing!  
You would be one of them  
if you didn't happen to be in Igboland!  
- How much sympathy can you have?  
- Don't dare say I do not have sympathy!  
To say secession is not the only way  
to security  
doesn't mean I have no sympathy!  
Did your uncle die? You're going  
back to your people in Lagos,  
and nobody will harass you  
for being Yoruba.  
Is it not your own people  
who are killing the Igbos in Lagos?  
Didn't your chiefs go north  
to thank the emir  
for sparing the Yoruba people?  
So what are you saying?  
How is your opinion relevant?  
You insult me, Odenigbo.  
Then the truth has become  
an insult. Olanna.  
This is unacceptable, Odenigbo.  
You owe her an apology.  
It is not a question of whether or not  
I owe her an apology.  
It is a question of whether or not

I spoke the truth!  
You owe her an apology!  
All right, yeah, I will.  
When you are ready, mah,  
your food is here.  
What did you cook, Ugwu?  
I used fresh tomatoes from the garden.  
- Has baby eaten?  
- Yes, mah. She's playing outside.  
'Is love this misguided need  
to have you beside me most of the time?  
'Is love this safety I feel  
in our silences?  
'Is it this belonging,  
this completeness?'  
Operator, I'd like to make  
a trunk call, please. Nigeria.  
- 'Charged to yourself, sir?'  
- Yes.  
'One moment, please. '  
'Hello? Hello? Kainene?  
- 'Is that you Kainene?'  
- Hello, Richard.  
- How was your cousin's wedding?  
- It was fine. Are you all right?  
I miss you, Richard.  
I'm flying home tomorrow.  
- Are you all right?  
- Hurry home.  
This is our beginning  
This is our beginning  
Don't cry, baby,  
you're a Biafran now.  
'... Military Governor  
of Eastern Nigeria,  
'by virtue of the authority,  
'and pursuant to the principles  
recited above,  
'do hereby solemnly proclaim  
'that the territory and region  
known as and called Eastern Nigeria,  
'together with her continental shelf  
and territorial waters,  
'shall henceforth be

an independent sovereign state  
'of the name and title  
of The Republic of Biafra. '  
War is looming.  
Port Harcourt is going crazy.  
It's the oil.  
They can't let us go easily  
with all that oil.  
There won't be a war.  
'If civil war comes,  
and I do think it is imminent,  
'our people have for a long time  
been prepared for this eventuality.  
'And I am confident of their readiness.  
'I think...  
'... that when it does come...  
'... the people on the other side  
will be surprised...  
'... as to what they're going to get. '  
What is that?  
Did you hear it? Ugwu!  
- What is that? Odenigbo!  
- The Federals are advancing.  
I think we should plan on leaving today.  
Evacuate! Evacuate now!  
Let's go. Let's go now.  
Evacuate now.  
The Federals have entered Nsukka!  
We are evacuating now. Right now.  
I am going to all the other houses.  
Lock up quick.  
Don't forget the Boys' Quarters.  
Put a few things together, Nkem.  
I'll check the engine.  
What things? What will I take?  
It won't be for long, we'll be back soon.  
Just a few things, clothes.  
- I was still cooking.  
- Put it in the car.  
Ugwu!  
Ugwu!  
I'm fine.  
Are you a little early?  
Yeah, we finished early because

there's going to be a general meeting  
in the square tomorrow.

- Why?

- The elders decided it was time.

There's all kinds of silly rumours  
about Abba evacuating soon.

Some ignoramuses even say  
the federal troops have entered Awka.

Will you come?

To the meeting? I'm not from Abba.

But you could be, if you married me.

You should be.

- We're fine as we are.

- We're at war.

My mother will have to decide  
what will be done with my body  
if anything happened to me.

- You should decide that.

- Stop it! Nothing will happen to you.

I know nothing will happen to me.

I just really want you to marry me.

We should marry.

It no longer makes sense.

It never made sense.

You'll have to take wine  
to my father, then.

Is that a yes?

Yes. It is a yes.

Mum.

I wasn't sure you got my message  
about the wedding.

What wedding? Where is he?

Odenigbo? He's at work.

Mum, what is all that for?

I carry them everywhere I go now.

My diamonds are inside my bra.

Nobody knows what's going on.

We are hearing that Umannachi  
is about to fall

and that the Federals are very close by.

The vandals are not close by.

Our troops are driving them  
back around Nsukka.

But how long is it taking

to drive them back?  
Anyway, your father and I have  
finalised our plans.  
We have paid somebody  
who will take us to Cameroon  
and get us a flight  
from there to London.  
We paid for four places.  
Your father's gone  
to Port Harcourt to tell Kainene.  
You know I won't go.  
But you and daddy should go,  
if it'll make you feel safer.  
I'll stay with Odenigbo and Baby.  
We'll be fine.  
We are going to Umuahia soon  
for him to start work at the Directorate.  
What's that?  
The Directorate of Labour  
and Manpower.  
As soon as Nsukka is recovered,  
though, we're going back.  
But what if Nsukka is not recovered?  
What if this war drags on and on?  
It won't!  
How can I leave my children  
and run to safety?  
We'll be fine, Mum.  
You can still change your mind,  
the four places are paid for.  
Wedding? What wedding?  
Good evening, Mama.  
Odenigbo's not back yet.  
Smoking is bad for you, Mama.  
That may be so, my daughter,  
but I am too old  
to die young from smoking.  
Is my grand-daughter well?  
Baby is well.  
- She's inside, asleep.  
- That's good.  
I have not come to see Odenigbo.  
It is you, my daughter,  
that I have come to see.

Supposing Odenigbo's cousin,  
Aniekwena,  
were to take wine to your father,  
how would you feel?  
- I am asking...  
- I know what you're asking, Mama.  
If you would marry my son.  
But why, Mama?  
What has changed about me?  
Did Odenigbo put you up to this?  
Did he come to you  
on his way home last night?  
Did he tell you  
that he was going to ask me?  
I have not seen my son  
in three days, my daughter.  
Will you marry Odenigbo?  
Yes.  
Yes, I will marry Odenigbo.  
It's too good to be true, don't you think?  
Where's the catch?  
There's no catch, Nkem.  
It's Mama's way of saying sorry.  
We are ready to go, Odenigbo,  
and your mother has refused  
to pack her things and come.  
Mama? I thought we agreed  
you are going to Uke.  
Hm-mm. Don't say that!  
You told me that we have to run,  
that it is better that I go to Uke.  
But did you hear me agree?  
Did I say 'oh' to you?  
You want to come with us  
to Umuahia, then?  
But why are you running?  
Where are you running to?  
Can you hear any guns?  
Mama, people are fleeing  
Abagana and Ukpo,  
which means the Hausa soldiers  
are close and will soon enter Abba.  
Who am I running away  
from my own house for?



Do you know that your father  
will be cursing us now?  
We are going to Umuahia soon  
for him to start work at the Directorate.  
What's that?  
I am leaving for Uke.  
Send word when you get to Umuahia.  
As soon as Nsukka is recovered,  
though, we're going back.  
I will wait and watch the house.  
After you all have run, you will return.  
I will be here.  
How can I leave my children  
and run to safety?  
Give me the keys to your house.  
I might need things there.  
You can still change your mind,  
the four places are paid for.  
Wedding? What wedding?  
Mama...  
Come with us.  
Please come with us, Mama.  
'Seven weeks ago Colonel Ojukwu  
was on the receiving end  
'of a federal police action to prevent  
'his pulling the former eastern region  
'out of the federation.  
'Now, it's a full-scale civil war. '  
Where's Baby?  
She hasn't gone out to play, has she?  
I don't want her getting any dirt  
on that dress.  
She is in the living room.  
I sent a message  
to Port Harcourt for Kainene.  
She won't come.  
I just wanted her to know.  
It's still too big.  
(Knocking  
- Olanna, are you ready?  
- Yes, I'm ready. Please come in.  
Did you bring the flowers?  
What is this?  
I wanted fresh flowers, Okeoma.

Nobody grows flowers in Umuahia.  
People here grow what they can eat.  
I won't hold flowers then.  
I caught you dancing?  
Hail Biafra!  
Ah, the cake.  
Come with me now.  
Was it you?  
Come on, get some.  
Everybody, I want you together.  
OK, let's do one, two...  
Okeoma! Okeoma!  
No!  
No!  
Mummy!  
Enunciate. Ike, you say it.  
Setru.  
Ah, "set-tle".  
"Set-tle".  
The word has no R in it.  
OK, let's try...  
B for?  
Ball.  
- C for?  
- Cat.  
- D for?  
- Dog.  
- E for?  
- Egg.  
Mama...  
Come with us.  
- H for?  
- House.  
'Seven weeks ago Colonel Ojukwu  
was on the receiving end  
I have to bury  
what the vultures left behind.  
- Sah...  
- Yes, yes, yes.  
'Out of the federation.  
Where's Baby?  
She hasn't gone out to play, has she?  
I don't want her getting any dirt  
on that dress.

What am I going to do?  
Why are you using the kerosene stove?  
Are you stupid?  
Haven't I told you  
to save our kerosene?  
But, mah, you said  
I should cook Baby's food.  
I did not say that!  
Go outside and light a fire!  
Do you know how much  
kerosene costs?  
Just because you don't pay  
for the things you use  
does not mean  
you can use them as you like?  
Is firewood itself not a luxury  
where you come from?  
Sorry, mah.  
His mother is dead.  
They shot her in Abba.  
The Biafran soldiers at the roadblocks  
kept asking me to turn back.  
So I parked the car, hid it,  
and began to walk.  
Finally, one Biafran officer...  
...cocked his gun...  
...told me he would shoot me...  
...and save the vandals the trouble  
if I didn't turn around.  
I'm fine, Nkem.  
I'm fine.  
I hear there's a lot of free sex here,  
but the girls got some kind of disease.  
The Bonny disease?  
Guess you guys gotta be careful  
what you bring back home.  
This refugee camp is run by my wife.  
- Really? How long she been here?  
- She's Biafran.  
- Do you speak Igbo pretty well?  
- Yes. Kedu.  
There is food in Sao Tom  
crawling with cockroaches  
because there's no way to bring it in.

Would it be all right  
if I gave you some letters?  
To my wife's parents in London.  
We'll get something better soon.

- Welcome. Nno.

- Thank you.

I live down the corridor.

Your husband is not here?

He's still at work.

I wanted to see him  
before the others do.

It is about my children.

Three of them have asthma.

- Asthma?

- The landlord called him "Doctor".

Oh!

No, he has a doctorate.

He's a doctor of books,  
not a doctor for sick people.

Oh...

Erm... there is a woman  
in a car asking for you.

Kainene?

I went to your old house  
and somebody told me to come here.

Our landlord kicked us out.

Come in.

Sit down.

So, how have you been?

Things were normal  
until Port Harcourt fell.

I was an army contractor, and I had  
a license to import stock fish.

I'm in Orlu now. I'm in charge  
of a refugee camp there.

Oh...

Are you silently condemning me  
for profiteering from the war?

Somebody had to import the stockfish.

No, no, I wasn't thinking that.

You were.

I was so worried  
when Port Harcourt fell.

- I sent messages.

- Yes, you said you were teaching.  
Do you still?  
Your noble win-the-war effort?  
The school's a refugee centre now.  
Sometimes I teach children  
in the yard.  
And how's the revolutionary husband?  
He's still with the Manpower Directorate.  
You don't have a wedding photo.  
There was an air raid  
during our reception, and...  
I came to give you this.  
Mum sent it through a British journalist.  
I also brought two dresses for Baby.  
A woman who came  
back from Sao Tom  
had some good children's clothes  
for sale.

- You bought clothes for Baby?  
- How shocking, indeed.  
It's about time  
the girl began to be called Chiamaka.  
This Baby business is tiresome.  
Will you drink some water?  
It's all we have.  
No, no, I'm fine.  
Yes, please.  
I'd like that.  
I thought about  
changing your money for you.  
But you can do it at the bank  
and then deposit, can't you?  
Haven't you seen all the bomb craters  
around the bank?

- My money's staying under my bed.  
- Make sure the cockroaches don't get it.  
Life is harder for them these days.  
I'll come on Wednesday.  
- Will you drive?  
- No. Look, it's not that far.  
Greet the revolutionary for me.  
Madam.  
I am bringing drinks?  
The way he goes on,

you'd think we had a grand cellar  
in this half-built house  
in the middle of nowhere.

- Madam?

- No, Harrison, don't bring drinks.

We're leaving now.

Remember, lunch for three.

Yes, Madam.

Harrison is the most  
pretentious peasant I have ever seen.

- I know you don't like the word peasant.

- No.

- But he is, you know.

- We're all peasants!

Are we?

It's the sort of thing Richard would say.  
Odenigbo too.

Grandfather used to say about  
difficult things he had gone through,

"It didn't kill me,  
it made me knowledgeable. "

I remember.

There are some things  
that are so unforgivable...

...that they make other things  
easily forgivable.

'At precisely half past one every day,  
they come over the town

'as the market place is full,

'as patients are sitting out

'on the lawns at hospitals.

'Here comes the next one.

'He's flying the other side of the Mission  
Church. Sweeping to the right.

'Strafing the ground as they move.

'Dropping incendiary bombs  
and fragmentation bombs

'in the market places around here. '

We are sure to win the war

We are sure, we are sure...

'The war was going quite badly.

'In desperation, Ojukwu mobilised  
the country's Boys' Brigade

'to raise morale by showing

a new generation was training  
'to take its place at the front line. '  
'Fight on, brave boys, fight on!  
'Heroes of our fatherland  
'pursue the enemy,  
harass him, destroy the invader.  
'March on, brave boys,  
now that victory is in sight. '  
You! Stop there! Stop there!  
Stand up, stand up,  
you bloody civilian!  
Join them there. Join them there.  
Inside the van!  
My sister, hold your head,  
be strong.  
Ugwu has died.  
Ugwu was with the field engineers,  
and they suffered massive casualties.  
Only a few came back.  
Come with me. Bring Chiamaka.  
Come and stay in Orlu. Olanna!  
Have you drunk enough, eh?  
Ugwu has died.  
Do you hear me? Ugwu has died.  
Drink and don't stop! Drink!  
Ugwu has died!  
Get the boxes.  
Leave the clothes.  
Ba by.  
- Odenigbo.  
- We'll take this one. OK.  
Odenigbo!  
Start walking!  
I'll catch you up when the car starts.  
If we are walking, we'll walk together!  
Stop it! Stop it right now.  
Leave him alone.  
Leave him alone!  
- He's a thief!  
- He's not a thief. Do you hear me?  
He is not a thief! He is a hungry soldier.  
Have you come from the front?  
Are you running?  
Have you deserted?

Come. Come and have  
somegarri before you go.  
We're here  
until we find a place to rent.  
Harrison, bring some more  
palm oil for Chiamaka.  
What an interesting beard.  
Are you trying to copy His Excellency?  
I never try to copy anyone.  
Of course.  
I'd forgotten how original you are.  
Harrison roasted a fantastic  
bush rat for us last week.  
But you would've thought  
it was a rack of lamb  
the way he went on about it.  
'... border towns and  
zones they've captured by treachery.  
'Our people are determined  
to fight to the last man,  
'confident of eventual success.  
'May God bless you all,  
fellow Biafrans,  
'and keep and protect Biafra. '

A convertible  
would be lovely.  
What do you think accounts  
for the success  
of the white man's mission in Africa,  
Richard?  
The success?  
Yes, the success. I think in English.  
Perhaps you should first account  
for the failure of the black man  
to curb the white man's mission.  
Who brought racism into the world?  
I don't see your point.  
The white man brought racism  
into the world.  
He used it as the basis of conquest.  
It's always easier to conquer  
a more humane people.  
So, when we conquer the Nigerians,  
we will be less humane?



I've got some Nigerian coins.  
I want to go to Ninth Mile  
and see what I can buy.  
If that goes well, I will sell some  
of the things our people have made.  
That's trading with the enemy.  
It's trading with illiterate Nigerian  
women who have what we need.  
It's dangerous, Kainene.  
That sector is free.  
Our people are trading freely there.  
- You're going too?  
- No.  
At least not tomorrow.  
Maybe the next time Kainene goes.  
- Tomorrow?  
- Yes, Kainene is going tomorrow.  
Yes.  
But don't mind Olanna,  
she will never come with me.  
She's always been terribly frightened  
of honest free enterprise.  
Ninth Mile Road has been  
occupied on and off.  
- I don't think you should go.  
- It's all decided.  
I leave tomorrow morning,  
and I'll be back by evening.  
We need to eat.  
You'll leave early won't you, Richard?  
Those big men in Ahiara  
- may be in the office just 30 minutes.  
- I'll leave in an hour.  
Just tell them I'm dying  
and we desperately need  
milk and corned beef  
to keep me alive.  
I will.  
Go well.  
Uncle Richard!  
Uncle Richard, carry me!  
You're a big girl now, Baby.  
You're too heavy to be picked up.  
Baby has grown wiser but she hasn't

grown taller since the war started.

Better wisdom than height.

- No luck at Ahiara?

- No, I tried everywhere.

The relief centres are empty.

Is Kainene at the camp?

She's still not back  
from Ninth Mile.

- Is Kainene back?

- Not yet.

Excuse me?

- Have you seen this woman?

- No.

Hello.

Have you seen this woman?

Thank you.

Why are you crying?

Kainene is just stuck  
on the other side for a few days.

Stop! Stop!

'In accord

with my own frequent affirmations

'that I would personally go anywhere

'to secure peace and security

for my people... '

'... I am now travelling out of Biafra

to explore with our friends

'all these proposals further and fully. '

Yes?

Right. Thank you.

Is it Kainene?

Has something happened?

- Ugwu is alive.

- Oh, God.

Oh, God.

They said I was dead, mah?

Your battalion thought you had died  
during the operation.

Where's Auntie Kainene?

'General Ojukwu, who led

the Biafran cessation in Nigeria,

'is on his way to seek

political asylum in the Ivory Coast.

'He is said to have with him

3,000 pounds of luggage  
'and his Mercedes-Benz car. '  
'I, Major General Philip Effiong,  
'officer administering the government  
of The Republic of Biafra,  
'now wish to make  
the following declaration... '  
- Did you find her?  
- No.  
Where's the car?  
Did the soldiers take it?  
The fuel finished on the road.  
I will find fuel and go back and get it.  
Thank God! War is over!  
Peace is here!  
'... we are loyal Nigerian citizens  
'and accept that the Republic of Biafra  
hereby ceases to exist. '  
I'm going to find Kainene  
in the towns outside Ninth Mile.  
Wait until morning, Richard.  
You have fuel?  
Enough to get me to Ninth Mile  
if I roll down slopes.  
Kainene...  
Excuse me,  
have you seen this woman?  
- Her name's, Kainene.  
- No, I've not seen her.  
Will Auntie Kainene  
come to Nsukka?  
Yes. Yes, my Baby.