

Lagos has never been, will never be, and has never aspired to be like New York, or anywhere else for that matter. Lagos has always been indisputably itself, but you would not know this at the meeting of the Nigeropolitan Club, a group of young returnees who gather every week to moan about the many ways that Lagos is not like New York as though Lagos had ever been close to being like New York. Full disclosure: I am one of them. Most of us have come back to make money in Nigeria, to start business, to seek government contracts and contacts. Others have come with dreams in their pockets and a hunger to change the country, but we spend all our time complaining about Nigeria, and even though our complaints are legitimate. I imagine myself as an outsider saying: Go back where you came from! If your cook cannot make the perfect Panini, it is not because he is stupid. It is because Nigeria is not a nation of sandwich-eating people and his last oga did not eat bread in the afternoon. So he needs training and practice. And Nigeria is not a nation of people with food allergies, not a nation of picky eaters for whom food is about distinctions and separations. It is a nation of people who eat beef and chicken and cow skin and intestines and dried fish in a single of soup, and it is called assorted and so get over yourselves and realize that the way of here is just that assorted.

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There are many young women in Lagos with Unknown Sources of Wealth. They live lives they can't afford. They have only ever travelled business class to Europe but have jobs that can't even afford them a regular flight ticket. One of them is my friend, a beautiful brilliant woman who works in advertising. She lives on The Island and is dating a big man banker. I worry that she will end up like many women in Lagos who define their lives by men they can never truly have, crippled by their culture of dependence, with desperation in their eyes and designer handbags on their wrists.

... And who are you to pass judgement? How is it different from you and the rich white guy in America? Would you have U.S. citizenship today if not for him? How did you get you're your job in America? You need to stop this nonsense. Stop feeling so superior.
Page 421,422

...There was a moment, a caving of the blue sky, an inertia of stillness, when neither of them knew what to do, he, walking towards her, she standing there squinting, and then he was upon her and they hugged. She thumped him on the back, once, twice, to it a chummy – chummy hug, a platonic and safe chummy-chummy hug, but he pulled her ever so slightly close to him, and held her for moment too long, as though to say he was not being chummy-chummy. Page 427

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"Ifem, I do what rich people are supposed to do. I pay school fees for a hundred students in my village in my mum's village." He spoke with an awkward indifference, this was not a subject that he cared to talk about. He was standing by her bookshelf. "What a beautiful living room" Page 438

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They were standing by the bookshelf and laughing about how often his mother had tried to get him to read the book. And then they were standing by the bookshelf and kissing. A gentle kiss at first, lips pressed to lips, then their tongues were touching and she felt boneless against him. He pulled away first.

"I don't have condoms," she said, brazen, deliberately brazen.
"I didn't know we needed condoms to have lunch." Page 439