HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Anthills of the Savannah (1987)

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013)

OVERVIEW

Auteur Chinua Achebe is widely regarded as one of Africa's most important literary voices, known for his ability to portray the complexities of Nigerian life. Born in 1930 in Ogidi, he died in 2013, in Massachusetts. Achebe studied at University College Ibadan, where his interest in literature and storytelling took shape. Over the course of his career, he received major national and international accolades, including the Nigerian National Order of Merit and the Man Booker International Prize, which recognized the global impact of his work. His novels include *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). In universities around the world, Achebe's writing is treated as essential reading, valued for its insight into colonialism, cultural identity, and the challenges of modern African societies.

Book *Anthills of the Savannah* is a political novel about a fictional African country, Kangan, struggling under a military dictatorship. The story follows three friends, Chris, Ikem, and Beatrice, whose personal lives become entangled with the growing instability of the regime. Through their experiences, Achebe explores major issues such as abuse of power, censorship, corruption, gender roles, and the suffering of ordinary citizens during political crises. The novel also examines how communities rebuild themselves after violence, especially through the strength of women. *Anthills of the Savannah* was widely praised in Nigeria and abroad for its sharp insight into postcolonial politics and its rich human storytelling. The novel was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and celebrated as one of Achebe's finest later works. In Nigeria and across Africa, readers welcomed it as a bold, honest reflection on leadership, responsibility, and hope.

Background *Anthills of the Savannah* was written in the mid-1980s, a period marked by intense political turmoil across many African countries, including Nigeria, Achebe's home. After independence, hopes for stable democratic rule were repeatedly crushed by military coups, authoritarian regimes, censorship, and economic decline. Achebe had witnessed these upheavals firsthand: the Biafran War, the rise and fall of military rulers, and the growing disillusionment of citizens who saw their leaders drift further from the ideals of independence. Culturally, the novel reflects a society negotiating between traditional values, modern institutions, and the pressures of postcolonial identity. Achebe highlights the tension between intellectual elites, ordinary citizens, and military power, showing how each group struggles to define its role in a fragile nation. The book also emerges from a moment when African writers were pushing back against silence and repression, insisting on literature as a tool for truth-telling. Politically, Achebe uses Kangan as a mirror for real African states where fear, propaganda, and personal ambition often replaced public service. The novel's focus on women's resilience, community rituals, and the survival of ordinary people reflects Achebe's belief that renewal must come from the grassroots, not from the ruling class.

MAIN CHARACTERS

His Excellency (Sam): The military ruler of the fictional state of Kangan
Chris Oriko: The Commissioner for Information and longtime friend of His Excellency
Ikem Osodi: The outspoken editor of the *National Gazette* and longtime friend of Sam and Chris
Beatrice: A senior civil servant and girlfriend of Chris
Elewa: Girlfriend of Ikem

SYNOPSIS

Anthills of the Savannah tells the story of Kangan, a fictional West African nation ruled by a military government that is slowly collapsing under its own fear, corruption, and internal rivalries. At the center of the narrative are three longtime friends, Chris Oriko, the Commissioner for Information, Ikem Osodi, the outspoken editor of the national newspaper, and Beatrice, a senior civil servant whose emotional intelligence and discernment anchor the story. Their personal relationships and political responsibilities become dangerously entangled as the regime grows more unstable. The Head of State, known as His Excellency, begins as a familiar schoolmate but has transformed into a paranoid dictator. Cabinet meetings reveal a government ruled by mood swings, intimidation, and empty flattery. Chris tries to maintain professionalism, while Ikem uses his editorials to challenge injustice and speak for ordinary citizens. His Excellency interprets both men's honesty as disloyalty, and the tension between them deepens.

A drought in the region of Abazon becomes a turning point. The people send a peaceful delegation to request help, but the regime sees their petition as a threat. Ikem's criticism of the government leads to his dismissal, and soon after, his assassination. Chris flees the capital, trying to protect Elewa, Ikem's grieving girlfriend, but he is killed during a confrontation with soldiers. In the aftermath of these tragedies, Beatrice becomes the emotional center of the surviving community. She shelters Elewa, supports her through childbirth, and organizes a simple naming ceremony for her baby. The ritual becomes a symbol of renewal, unity, and hope in the face of political violence. The novel ends with the resilience of ordinary people, especially women, who rebuild community and meaning after the collapse of power.

PLOT NARRATIVE

CHAPTER 1**: First Witness-Christopher Oriko**

Cabınet Meetıng

A Tense Cabinet Meeting: His Excellency, Mr. Samsonite (Sam) U. Osita, the military head of the fictional state of Kangan, snaps at Chris Oriko, his Commissioner for Information, Mr. Chris Oriko, during a cabinet meeting: *"you're wasting everybody's time, Mr. Commissioner for Information. I will not go to Abazon. Finish! Kabisa! Any other business?"* As the Commissioner mumbles an excuse, *"As Your Excellency wishes. But ...,"* His Excellency snaps*, "Why do you find it so difficult to swallow my ruling. On anything?"* Chris offers another apology as he senses His Excellency's anger rise in the sudden silence of the meeting room, a second apology, which he remarks to himself that he would not have offered a year earlier without doing great violence to himself: *"I am sorry, Your Excellency. But I have no difficulty swallowing and digesting your rulings … I am very sorry, Your Excellency"* (1).

A Dangerous Game: Chris reflects on how the relationship between the Cabinet and His Excellency has changed. He once thought it was a harmless game, but now he believes the danger was present from the beginning. He wonders why he continues to stay: *"I don't know. Simple inertia, maybe"* (2). He admits that he remains partly out of curiosity and partly because he wants to observe the decline of leadership. Chris describes his colleagues as intelligent men who have surrendered their independence.

A Room Full of Fear: Chris notes that his colleagues sit stiffly around the mahogany table, their fear easy to see as they wait for His Excellency's mood to decide whether the day will turn out well or badly. Chris senses the thought passing among them, something like *"another of those days,"* because everything now depends on how the ruler woke up. If he is in a bad temper, everyone falls into silence. Chris cannot ignore the irony that he was the one who recommended many of these men for their positions.

The Commissioner Who Lives in Terror: Chris focuses on the Commissioner for Education, whom he describes *as "by far the most frightened of the lot."* The man reacts like a small creature sensing danger. He tries to hide his papers as if crawling backward into a hole. But he suddenly freezes, realizing that closing his file might look like slamming a door in His Excellency's face. In panic, he drops the cover and then scatters his papers again, as if undoing a crime. Chris watches this with a mix of pity and amusement, thinking that the man looks *"like a supplicant."* A man begging for merci, preparing to repeat his own apology word for word.

His Excellency Breaks the Silence: His Excellency's voice cuts through the tension, reminding everyone who holds power. The tense meeting shifts when His Excellency unexpectedly speaks, not to the minister who just made a mistake, but to Chris. His tone becomes almost friendly, which instantly transforms the atmosphere. Chris describes it as if *"the fiery sun retired behind a cloud."* The ministers feel relieved and begin celebrating inside themselves.

Chris's Silence and His Excellency's Misreading: His Excellency turns to Chris and asks, *"Do you realize what you are asking me to do, Chris?"* Chris stays completely still, his *head "assuming the gravity of granite."* He feels detached, as if observing the scene through a telescope. Chris notices that he is no longer being addressed as *"Mister Commissioner,"* a sign of temporary warmth. But Chris refuses to be drawn in: "*I note for what it's worth that he has dropped the icy distancing of Mister Commissioner and Mister Oriko. But I no longer allow such niceties to distract me."* His silence is not agreement or disagreement. It is *"pure, unadulterated disinterest."*

Accusations About Insulting the People: His Excellency insists that Chris is asking him to *"insult the intelligence of these people."* He claims Chris wants him to exploit the public's belief in rainmakers for *"cheap popularity."* He rejects this idea, saying, *"I am still a soldier, not a politician."* His Excellency's pride in being straightforward contrasts with the ministers, many of whom imitate military style even though they are academics. Professor Okong, for example, wears khaki safari suits with epaulettes, showing how *"the intellectual envies the man of action."*

Still a Soldier: Chris smiles when His Excellency reminds everyone that he is still a soldier. His Excellency notices the smile and hesitates, unsure whether to confront it. He then speaks in a way that excludes Chris without openly dismissing him. His words are meant for the room, but his tone signals that Chris is *"a professional dissident"* whose opinion is too troublesome to engage. He declares, *"Soldiers are plain and blunt,"* and tells the ministers to be patient, to wait until soldiers return to barracks before resuming *"civilian tricks."*

The Ministers Sense an Opening: His Excellency's last words act like a signal. Although his voice is firm, the content feels safe enough for the ministers to speak again. The Attorney-General boldly interrupts, saying, *"Your Excellency, let us not flaunt the wishes of the people."* Chris corrects him: *"Flout, you mean."* The ministers begin *to "crawl out into the open again,"* sensing that the danger has passed.

Flattery Returns and Panic, Too: The Attorney-General claims that *"the people have spoken"* and that His Excellency is *"condemned to serve them for life."* The room erupts in applause and shouts of *"Hear! Hear!"* His Excellency responds modestly, saying he is *"only a simple soldier"* who must keep his word. The ministers rush to reassure him that he is not bound by promises he never made. Professor Okong adds that there is *"no obligation … to keep faith with heretics"* (5). The Attorney-General adds that a newspaper editor who once wrote that His Excellency had claimed to stay in power only if he received 100% support is a self-seeking saboteur who deserves no attention. Chris speaks up to defend a public servant who is not present. He says he wants to *"dissociate"* himself from an insult made earlier. The word "dissociate" terrifies his colleagues, who fear he is about to criticize the regime. When they realize he is not, they relax. Even His Excellency is momentarily thrown off balance.

The Chief Secretary's Moment of Panic: His Excellency abruptly asks, *"Any other business?"* This time the question sounds like a rebuke. The Chief Secretary panics and stumbles over his words: *"Oh no sir. Nothing at all, sir."* When he looks at Chris, Chris gives him a derisive smile. The Chief Secretary realizes that if he continues acting like a frightened servant, he will be mocked later. Gathering courage, he tries again and asks to *"crave Your Excellency's indulgence"* to speak on behalf of a colleague. His Excellency asks, *"Which Honourable Commissioner? There are twelve of them, you know."* When the Chief Secretary clarifies that he means the Commissioner for Information, His Excellency responds with a joke*: "He doesn't need a word from you. Remember, he owns all the words in this country."* The room explodes into laughter, slapping Chris on the back and calling him *"the Honourable Commissioner for Words."*

His Excellency's Ritual of Leaving: The meeting is ending, and His Excellency performs his usual ritual of putting on his shoes he always kicks off at the start. The Chief Secretary carefully arranges the shoes under the table so His Excellency can find them easily. This small act of service is never acknowledged. His Excellency treats it like the invisible work of a hotel bell-boy who shines shoes overnight. He slips each foot into place then rises slowly. The ministers stand frozen, waiting respectfully for him to leave.

A Silent Exit and a Hint of Satisfaction: His Excellency leaves without saying his usual *"Good afternoon, gentlemen.,"* An aid gathers his papers and follows him, while another opens the carved doors and salutes. After he exits, the Chief Secretary breaks the silence*: "He is not in a good mood today."* He tries to reassure Chris that they will revisit the issue next Thursday. Chris notices a dim smile on His Excellency's face as he walks away, *"like the faint memory of light at the edges of an eclipse,"* suggesting that he overheard the comment and enjoyed it.

A Strange Sound Breaks the Silence: As His Excellency retreats, the silence in the room begins to change. At first, Chris thinks the air-conditioners have grown louder, which would be typical of the unreliable National Electric Power Authority. But the ministers' chatter about His Excellency's moods distracts them from noticing the sound. The Attorney-General approaches Chris and taps him on the shoulder: *"Relax, man … the world isn't coming to an end"* (8). Suddenly, everyone stops talking. They turn toward the east window. Someone asks, *"A storm?"* But the hibiscus hedge outside is still, the courtyard calm, and the palm trees swaying gently. Nothing in the landscape suggests a storm. The ministers realize the sound is not weather. It is something else.

His Excellency Turns on the Police Chief: The Chief Secretary, now free from His Excellency's intimidating presence, opens the window. The loud chanting of a crowd rushes into the room. His Excellency bursts back in. He demands, *"What is going on?"* His panic is visible. The Inspector-General of Police steps forward, salutes, and offers to investigate. His Excellency mocks him severely: *"Look at him! Just look at him … Gentlemen, this is my Chief of Police. He stands here gossiping while hoodlums storm the Presidential Palace. And he has no clue what is going on. Sit down! Inspector-General of Police!"* (9).

Nobody Knows Anything: His Excellency then turns to Chris: *"Do you know anything about this?"* Chris answers that he does not. His Excellency demands if anyone knows what the crowd outside is doing. No one speaks. He declares, *"That's what I mean when I say that I have no Executive Council"* (9). He orders everyone to sit and stay seated, then rushes out again. The aid salutes him once more as he exits. The Attorney-General is frightened. He groans, *"Oh my God!"* Chris sends him a broad, mocking smile, and the Attorney-General backs away as if Chris were dangerous.

Waiting in Fear: For half an hour, almost no one speaks. When the doors finally open, an orderly announces: *"Professor Okong wanted by His Excellency!"* Okong jokes as he leaves, *"I go to prepare a place for you, gentlemen… I will keep the most comfortable cell for myself."* Chris laughs loudly and praises him*: "A man who will not piss in his trousers at the first sound of danger."* He walks to the window and stands alone, looking out.

Professor Okong

Who Professor Okong Really Is: Chris reflects on Okong's past. Though often a buffoon, Okong is tough and self-made. He lacks political morality, which is tragic for someone who began as an American Baptist minister and later became a professor of political science. Chris believes Okong and himself share responsibility for *"the remarkable metamorphosis of His Excellency,"* though both meant well. Okong was a bright elementary school teacher who impressed American Baptist missionaries. They ordained him at twenty-six, calling him *"the youngest native American Baptist minister in the world,"* a mistake, since he was African. Ambitious and impatient, Okong secretly planned to leave the church and study in the United States. His patrons tried to have him deported, but he fought back and succeeded. He earned a Ph.D. and returned home to teach.

How Chris Helped Create Okong's Public Image: At the time, Chris was editor of the *National Gazette.* Okong proposed a weekend column. Despite doubts about his scholarship, Chris built him up as a leading political scientist. The column, "String Along with Reggie Okong," became popular. Okong's clichés delighted readers who had never heard them before. Okong never upset politicians. He kept readers entertained. But after the civilian government was overthrown, he immediately reinvented himself as a critic of the old regime. Chris thought he had gone too far, but readers loved his critical phrases against the civilian regime, one of which, *"a historic fall from grace to grass"* became a hit. When His Excellency asked Chris to suggest names for his new cabinet, Chris put Okong at the top of the list.

Why Chris Recommended Okong: Chris explains that His Excellency came to power with no preparation for political leadership. Sandhurst trained officers to avoid politics, not run governments. When the coup-makers invited him to become Head of State, he had no clue about what to do. He asked his friends, *"What shall I do?"* Chris, who had known him for twenty-five years, helped advise him. His Excellency was terrified at first, especially of demonstrations: *"In his first days of power his constant nightmare was of the people falling into disaffection and erupting into ugly demonstrations all over the place, and he drove himself crazy worrying how to prevent it"* (12). Chris believed Okong could help translate ideas into popular language, so he recommended Okong to His Excellency. Okong became Commissioner for Home Affairs.

CHAPTER 2**: His Excellency Inquires About Chris's Loyalty**

Petition

Professor Okong Faces a Cold Reception: Professor Okong is marched in by a stern orderly. His Excellency ignores his greeting and keeps writing. When he finally looks up, he speaks sharply, as if Okong is an intruder. He orders him to go to the reception square to meet the delegation. Okong sits down only after being told, *"Well, sit down."* His Excellency reminds Okong of their earlier discussion about the Entebbe Raid. He imitates the Cabinet's past disbelief that such an attack could happen in their country: "*If Entebbe happens here, it's me the world will laugh at … they will print my picture on the cover of Time magazine with a big mouth and a small head. You understand?"* (14). Okong apologizes repeatedly, unsure what point His Excellency is making.

The Delegation From Abazon: His Excellency asks Okong if he knows what the crowd outside wants. Okong says no. His Excellency tells him that it matters little because he has not really counted on his cabinet to give him reliable information: *"You know I've never really relied on you fellows for information on anything or anybody."* His Excellency explains that the crowd outside has come from Abazon. Okong reacts with irritation, saying, *"Those people again … The same people pestering you to visit them"* (15). His Excellency explains that they are peaceful and loyal, although they may also have a petition about drought. They want him to personally visit their region and see their problem for himself. His Excellency repeats his strong opposition to petitions, calling them *"signs of indiscipline."* He argues that if he meets the Abazon delegation, others will follow. He says that his standard answer to all such groups is *"No! Kabisa"* (absolutely not).

Managing the Petition Carefully: His Excellency says the Abazon visitors are sincere peasants who regret their past actions of not voting in favor of his referendum to be president-for-life. He wants Okong to speak kindly to them. He instructs him to say that the government is busy with important matters. He suggests adding that he is on the telephone with the President of the United States or the Queen of England, because *"peasants are impressed by that kind of thing … humour them, is what I'm saying. Gauge the temperature and pitch your message accordingly"* (16). His Excellency tells Okong to accept the petition but to call it *"problems"* instead of *"complaints,"* to shake hands with the leader of the delegation while looking him in the eyes instead of *"grinning into the camera."* He orders Okong to avoid any mention of petitions in the press: *"This is a goodwill visit pure and simple."* Okong agrees and calls it a *"reconciliation overture."* His Excellency rejects the characterization: *"No no no! I don't want to rub that in. Let's leave well alone"* (17).

No Television Coverage: Okong claims that trouble always begins in Abazon Province. He blames Ikem Osodi (the Chief Editor of the *Gazette*), calling him *"a typical Abazonian."* He suggests that the drought might be divine punishment. His Excellency forbids television coverage. He fears that publicity will encourage more goodwill rallies. Okong praises his foresight, saying, *"It is surprising how Your Excellency thinks about everything."* His Excellency replies: *"You know why, Professor. Because it is my funeral … When it is your funeral you jolly well must think of everything. Especially with the calibre of Cabinet I have."* Okong offers an apology on behalf of the Cabinet for their lack of vigilance. He then warns that the Commissioner for Information and the Editor of the *Gazette* might create disaffection: *"I believe that if care is not taken those two friends of yours can be capable of fomenting disaffection which will make the Rebellion look like child's play."* His Excellency dismisses this as gossip and sends him off to meet the delegation: *"That's fine, Mr. Okong. I deal with facts not gossip. Now run along and deal with the crowd and report to me as soon as it's over"* (18).

Make Them Feel Comfortable: His Excellency tells Okong that after the visitors have spoken and Okong has given his reply, he must stay with them as His Excellency's representative. His Excellency has arranged refreshments, drinks and small snacks, and wants Okong to mingle with the group, make them comfortable, and give them the impression that they are there at His Excellency's personal invitation. The State Research Council will handle the food and logistics, but Okong must be the public face of the event. Okong answers, *"Very well, Your Excellency."*

His Excellency Reflects on Loyalty: His Excellency's buzzer cuts off Okong's final words. Okong nearly crashes into the door as he leaves. He feels dizzy and says aloud, *"I am in disgrace. What did I do wrong?"* The orderly barks at him, *"You still here?"* Okong hurries away, thinking he might need a drink. His Excellency wonders what Okong meant by his warning. He criticizes Okong for *"no sense of loyalty, no esprit de corps, nothing! And he calls himself a university professor"* (19). His Excellency questions why he ever thought he needed professors in government. They are *"soft to the core … What do they know? Give me good military training and discipline any day!"*

Questions about Chrıs

A Secret Question for the Attorney General: His Excellency summons the Attorney General and asks whether the Commissioner for Information is loyal. He stresses confidentiality: *"I have received intelligence from various sources indicating that the Commissioner for Information is perhaps not as loyal to me as he might be … What would you make of such intelligence?"* The Attorney General listens, aware of the danger in the question. He hesitates to reply. His Excellency becomes impatient: *"Did you hear what I said or should I repeat?"* The Attorney General replies that he trusts evidence, not suspicion. His Excellency reminds him, *"You may be the Attorney but I am the General."*

A Theory About Chris Oriko: The Attorney General laughs loudly at His Excellency's joke. He then says he has no evidence of disloyalty but believes Chris Oriko is not fully supportive. He claims Chris cannot accept what his former schoolmate has become: *"He cannot understand how this same boy with whom he played all the boyish pranks … can today become this nation's Man of Destiny. You know, Your Excellency it was the same trouble Jesus had to face with his people."* His Excellency begins to respect the Attorney General's theory. The Attorney General continues praising His Excellency's background and contrasts it with his own *"bush grammar school"* man, who knows his place.

His Excellency's Warning: His Excellency is clearly amused now, smiling as the Attorney-General keeps talking. The Attorney-General feels proud of himself, amazed that His Excellency listens so patiently and even smiles at his jokes. He explains that, coming from a humble background, he has no difficulty admiring a leader like His Excellency. But, he adds, Chris struggles with this. Chris wonders why His Excellency, and not he, has become the nation's leader. He has never said it aloud, but the Attorney-General is sure the thought is in his mind. His Excellency thanks him for the theory and says he is relieved that there is no evidence of Chris's disloyalty. He orders the Attorney General to forget the conversation and says, *"If a word of this ever gets around, it's either from me or from you"* (23). The Attorney General promises "absolute silence.

CHAPTER 3**: Chris Quarrels With Ikem**

An Unwelcome Assignment: Chris calls Ikem and asks him to send a photographer to cover a goodwill delegation from Abazon. Chris insists on seeing the newspaper copy before publication. Ikem refuses, reminding him, *"It's my name and address printed at the bottom of page sixteen."* Chris is firm and cites the Newspaper Amendment Decree: *"Chapter Fourteen section six gives the Honourable Commissioner general and specific powers"* (25). He threatens to send written instructions. Ikem calls back in anger, but Chris has already told his secretary to say he is not available.

Ikem's Frustration: Ikem is driving toward the Presidential Palace in severe heat. The sun is described as an enemy. The heat and traffic slow him down, and he regrets being drawn into the Abazon matter. Ikem becomes trapped in a long traffic jam. Drivers behind him honk and shout. He refuses to move, protecting the small space ahead of him. A taxi driver tries to force his way past on the grass. Ikem blocks him. The taxi driver *"had met more than his match."* After many tense minutes, the taxi driver gives up with a curse. That night Ikem writes a long, poetic lament about the destructive heat. He calls the sun the *"Single Eye of God"* and asks why it punishes the world. The hymn is a cry of despair at the suffering caused by drought.

A Legend of Abazon's Origins*:* The narrative shifts to an old legend. Long ago, a terrible heat forced people to abandon their land. They traveled by night and left behind the dying. The legend says, *"A man who deserts his town must carry death in his eyes."* These desperate wanderers attacked a small village called Ose, killed its people, took the land, and renamed it Abazon. The drought has returned. The times have *"come round again out of storyland."* The people of Abazon cannot repeat the violent acts of their ancestors. Instead, they send a delegation of elders to the government, *"who hold the yam today, and hold the knife,"* to ask for help.

CHAPTER 4**: Second Witness: Ikem Osodi**

Ikem's Gırl frıend

A Quarrel Between Lovers: Ikem and Elewa argue late at night in his flat. She feels mistreated and complains that he is sending her home by taxi at midnight. She reflects that women suffer a lot in this world and admits that it's partly their own doing. If she hadn't foolishly gone to his bedroom, he would not now be treating her so carelessly, *"kicking me around like a football."*

Elewa's Fear and Ikem's Frustration: Elewa insists that armed robbers still roam the city. She reminds him of a recent massacre at the motor park*: "Imagine … To put a girl for taxi at midnight to go and jam with arm robbers in the road … The woman dem massacre for motor Park last week …"* (32). Ikem replies, *"Nobody will kill you, Elewa."* She challenges him to drive her home himself if he believes that. He explains again that his car battery is dead. She mocks him, saying the battery never dies in the afternoon when he comes to pick her up.

Sending Elewa Off in a Taxi: The taxi finally arrives. Ikem escorts Elewa down the dark stairs with a flashlight. He inspects the driver's face and registration number. The driver protests. Ikem insists*, "I want to be able to recognize you in the morning."* He warns the driver that operating without interior lights is an offense. He lies, *"Do you know it is an offence to operate a vehicle without interior lights according to the Criminal Code chapter forty-eight section sixteen subsection one hundred and six?"* The driver lies that his interior lights have just gone out today. Ikem seals the moment with a tip and reassures Elewa that she will be alright.

Ikem's Views: After Elewa leaves, Ikem reflects on his dislike of sleeping with someone in his bed. He believes people should wake up in their own homes. He says it is unfair to wake up beside *"somebody naked and unappetizing."* He insists that his preference proves he loves Elewa deeply, not the opposite. He admires her lovemaking, describes it as sensational, and calls her *"a fine, fine girl."* As Ikem prepares to work, he praises the invention of the hot shower and jokes about forgotten geniuses.

Ikem and Chris

Ikem Believes that Chris Has Changed: Ikem criticizes Chris for lecturing him about the futility of his crusading editorials. He says that Chris keeps warning him that his fiery editorials are useless and only

make enemies, but Ikem believes Chris has simply changed after a month in government. He may need to remind his friend more directly of the editorials' successes, though doing so could be risky. Ikem argues that those in power try to shut down criticism by claiming to possess special facts, so he relies on passion rather than evidence to confront them. After witnessing a public execution, he becomes a fierce opponent of capital punishment.

The Execution That Changed Him: Ikem recalls the public execution that transformed him into a crusader. He describes the huge crowd at the beach, the television cameras, and the unbearable heat. He remembers the four condemned men, each reacting differently. One shouted desperately. Another walked steadily. The last, a notorious criminal, wore a spotless white lace outfit and declared, *"I shall be born again"* (38). Ikem is horrified by the crowd's laughter and excitement. Ikem realizes the crowd would laugh even if their own mother were torn apart.

Rituals of Authority: Ikem describes how the government's display of power during the public execution shocks him with its tasteless theatrics. He watches in disbelief as officials turn the killing into a grotesque ritual, from pinning a bull's-eye on the condemned man's chest to a hypocritical priest whispering false comfort, and a doctor dramatically confirming death with exaggerated professionalism. The whole performance convinces Ikem that Authority and its servants are far more vulgar and self-important than he had ever imagined.

A Tense Meeting With Chris: Ikem visits Chris, who is irritated about the morning's editorial. Chris warns him that His Excellency may demand explanations. Ikem replies, that Chris hired him to be the editor of the *Gazette*, and *"as long as I remain editor of the Gazette I shall not seek anybody's permission for what I write."* Chris replies angrily: *"I am sick and tired of getting up every Thursday to defend you … I shan't do it anymore. From now on you can go right ahead and stew in your own water"* (40). Ikem thanks him sarcastically*: "Defend me? Good heavens! … Sounds to me like busy work, Chris … Thank you, sir. If there is nothing else, may I leave now?"* Ikem leaves.

Chris Worries Too Much: Ikem believes that Chris worries too much. A week passes with no punishment for the editorial: *"No green army jeep or blue police jeep has pulled up outside the Gazette or in front of the flats."* Ikem plans to visit Chris to comfort him. He reflects on the absurdity of worshipping a dictator: *"The real problem is having no way of knowing from one day to another, from one minute to the next, just what is up and what is down."* He thinks that life is simpler when you stop looking over your shoulder and *"march to the stake like a man."*

The Dictator's Changing Whims: Ikem describes how exhausting it is to serve a ruler whose decisions change from moment to moment, leaving everyone confused and scrambling. Chris dutifully announces that His Excellency will visit Abazon, only for the dictator to wake from a nap and suddenly declare, *"I must not go and visit my loyal subjects of Abazon."* No one bothers to update Chris, and Ikem notes that he never expects clarity from the palace anyway, choosing instead to act on his own instincts. Ikem explains that, ironically, he often predicts the dictator's moods better than the officials who surround him daily.

Understanding Sam's Nature: Ikem thinks of Sam (His Excellency) as a man who loves the *performance* of power more than its substance. When Ikem visits him after hearing of his promotion to captain, Sam is lounging in a morning coat, surrounded by scattered newspapers, a half-smoked pipe, and Mozart playing on his record player, a scene that shows both his vanity and his desire to imitate refined English habits. Ikem notes that Sam is *"not very bright but not wicked"* and even completely tone-deaf, but he enjoys acting out the role of a cultured gentleman. Ikem worries that this theatrical streak could become dangerous if Sam falls under the influence of manipulative advisers.

CHAPTER 5**: Mad Medico Recounts His Friendship With Sam**

An Afternoon at Mad Medico's Bar: Chris, Ikem, Beatrice, Elewa, and two visiting Englishmen gather for drinks inside Mad Medico's home-bar. Mad Medico, whose real name is John Kent, mixes drinks with disregard for hygiene, which both horrifies and fascinates Elewa. As the group settles in, Chris sketches Mad Medico's history: his friendship with His Excellency, his near-deportation, and his notorious habit of

posting outrageous graffiti in hospital wards. One of these jokes, *"Blessed are the poor in heart for they shall see God,"* had nearly cost him his job.

Power, Humor, and Irritation: The conversation shifts to politics when Mad Medico asks about His Excellency. Chris explains that the Head of State recently detained his entire cabinet for an hour because a delegation from drought-stricken Abazon arrived unexpectedly. Mad Medico uses the moment to mock the absurdity of power: *"the most awful thing about power … is that it makes people so utterly boring."* Dick, the English visitor, struggles to understand the logic of the situation, prompting Mad Medico to tease him: *"He is looking for connections. There aren't any, young man. This is negritude country, not Devonshire"* (52). Chris bristles at the condescension: *"We are no more illogical in these parts than any other people, yourselves included."*

Mad Medico's Condescension: Mad Medico nostalgically insists that Chris and Sam (His Excellency) were *"much nicer people"* five years earlier Chris notes that Mad Medico (MM) is the only person who stills call him "Sam". MM retorts: *"Yes and I'll be damned if I should ever join your ridiculous Excellency charade. I would sooner be deported!"* Beatrice challenges him: *"Tell me, would you walk up to your Queen and say, 'Hi, Elizabeth'?"* he admits he wouldn't and laments why people are so keen on transforming the sunny African paradise into bleak Little England.

A Story of Sam's Past: Mad Medico recounts how he once procured a girl for Sam when Sam was recovering from pneumonia in an English hospital. The story delights Elewa, who exclaims, *"Woman done suffer for dis world-o."* Beatrice presses for details, and Chris admits that he later told her the full story, including the girl's *"invigorating tongue."* The anecdote exposes Sam's youthful innocence and charm, qualities long eclipsed by power. It also shows how the three men, Chris, Ikem, and Sam, share a long, complicated past that continues to shape their present relationships.

Chris and Beatrice's Anniversary: Chris recalls an early moment in his relationship with Beatrice. After a long day, she asked simply, *"Can I come home with you?"* wanting only to sit quietly and listen to music. Chris reflects on her calmness and strength, her deliberate pace, and the contrast between her and the women he had known before. They spend the evening together with wine, fried shrimps, and gentle conversation. Beatrice reminds him that the night marks the anniversary of their first dinner together, a detail he had forgotten but that she carries with significance.

Old Friendships, New Resentments: The conversation turns to Ikem. Beatrice senses that Ikem now resents Chris: *"Do you notice how much he resents you now? … It bothers me because it wasn't there before. I can see plenty of trouble ahead for the two of you"* (59). Chris acknowledges the tension. He explains that their rivalry dates back to school: Ikem was always the intellectual star, Sam the charismatic leader, and Chris *"the child of luck,"* neither brilliant nor dazzling but always in the middle. Power has changed all three men, especially Sam, whose flawless record, school captain, Sandhurst officer, rising military star, has become a burden. Chris admits that Sam now resents both him and Ikem, and that their intertwined destinies may lead to trouble.

CHAPTER 6**: Beatrice**

The Unexpected Call: Beatrice receives a phone call from an unfamiliar voice asking for her. Her first instinct is panic. She imagines Chris has been in an accident. But the caller announces that *His Excellency* wants to speak to her. The President himself invites her to a private dinner on Saturday, saying he has something *"important and personal"* to discuss. The call is brief, almost dismissive, and leaves Beatrice worried. She hasn't seen him in over a year, not since relations between him, Chris, and Ikem began to sour. She immediately contacts Chris, who promises to stop by her apartment later to discuss it.

Preparing for the Journey: On Saturday evening, a soldier arrives at Beatrice's flat to escort her. She assumes they are going to the Palace, but the soldier casually reveals that the President is at the Abichi Lake Retreat, forty miles away, and that she is expected there instead. The lack of courtesy infuriates her. She remembers Chris's advice: stay calm, go, and keep all options open. Perhaps, he suggests, she might even help the President find lucidity in a moment when his leadership is faltering.

Arrival at the Presidential Retreat: The drive up the hill toward the Retreat is breathtaking, even to Beatrice's frayed mood. She recalls past arguments between Chris and Ikem about the extravagant refurbishment of the place, millions spent while ordinary citizens lacked clean water and basic shelter. At the entrance, she is searched and escorted into a lavish lounge where guests mingle. His Excellency rushes out to greet her warmly, kissing her forehead and presenting her proudly to the room. The gathering includes ministers, military officers, and an American journalist named Lou Cranford, whom the President introduces with enthusiasm.

The Dinner and Its Players: Beatrice observes the guests closely. The men are eager to please, laughing too loudly at the President's jokes. The women are overdressed and strangely quiet. The Director of SRC strikes her as particularly unpleasant, strong, awkward, and excessively servile. The Chief of Army Staff is more agreeable. The food is simple but good; the wine is excellent but wasted on most of the guests. His Excellency seats Beatrice on his right and Lou on his left, clearly wanting them to interact. But Beatrice cannot muster enthusiasm, and Lou, after an initial rebuff, keeps her distance. Still, Lou grows increasingly bold as she drinks, addressing top officials by their first names and lecturing the room on foreign debt policy, a behavior that shocks Beatrice.

Beatrice's Questions: Lou's lecture on debt repayment, echoing arguments from Ikem's editorials, astonishes Beatrice, especially the President's deferential reaction. He seems grateful for Lou's bluntness, as though she is voicing truths he cannot utter. After dinner, the group moves to the lounge for coffee and liqueurs. His Excellency calls Beatrice to sit beside him, joking about African polygamy. The room erupts in laughter. But Beatrice withdraws inward, questioning why she was summoned. She realizes she was brought not for diplomacy or mediation, but to entertain and perhaps impress the American journalist. The realization stings.

The Dance and the Confrontation: When dancing begins, Beatrice is suddenly thrust into a symbolic battle she recognizes from her youth, the "Desdemona complex," the way some men fetishize white women. Seeing Lou dominate the room, she feels compelled to intervene. She throws herself into the dance with His Excellency, drawing him away from Lou with boldness and intensity. He responds, clinging to her, aroused and captivated. On the balcony overlooking the dark lake, she tells him the Desdemona story, challenging the racial and political dynamics at play: *"If I went to America today, to Washington DC, would I, could I, walk into a White House private dinner and take the American President hostage. And his Defence Chief and his Director of CIA?"* (74). His Excellency recoils, accusing her of racism, and storms off: *"Oh don't be such a racist, Beatrice. I am surprised at you. A girl of your education!"* Beatrice breaks down in tears, aware of people watching from the doorway. Finally, Major Ossai approaches and tells her a car is waiting to take her home.

CHAPTER 7**: Beatrice Was an Unwanted Daughter**

A Sudden Beginning: For a long time, Beatrice could not find a way to begin the story she felt she had to write. Everything she tried sounded *"too abrupt"* or simply wrong, so she kept postponing the task. Then one hot Saturday, after returning exhausted from the market, something powerful stirred in her mind and pushed her straight to her desk. She wrote through the night, later throwing away the pages and even the nearly spoiled meat, as if these losses were part of the *"sacrifice"* demanded by the force that had finally opened the door to her story.

An Unusual Sabbath: Beatrice's house girl, Agatha, belonged to a strict Sabbath sect that forbade her from lighting a stove on Saturdays. Beatrice normally refused to entertain these rules, insisting she would not *"wash and wipe the feet"* of her own employee. But on that extraordinary day, Agatha broke her religious law and put away the groceries. Beatrice sensed that Agatha, with her own experience of spiritual possession, recognized that something unusual had taken hold of the house.

A Public Image She Rejects: Beatrice explains that friends call her B or BB, and that recent political turmoil has given even *"little people like me"* unexpected enemies. Journalists had painted her as ambitious and manipulative, comparing her to figures like Madame Pompadour. These accusations hurt her deeply

because she had never sought attention and had always lived within her own private world. From her childhood in the Anglican mission compound to her adult life, she had learned to protect her inner space.

Childhood in a World of Silence: Beatrice remembers the mission compound she grew up in as a place of layered worlds, where long prayers ended with the chant *uwa t'uwa*. Her father was stern, and his whip was *"famous throughout the diocese."* She suspected he sometimes beat her mother behind closed doors. Once, when she tried to comfort her mother, she was pushed away so hard she hit her head. That moment taught her that her parents had their world, her sisters had theirs, and she stood alone in her own. Later, Beatrice learned that her mother resented her birth because she was another girl. Even her baptismal name, Nwanyibuife, *meaning "a female is also something,"* felt like a reluctant consolation.

A Woman Who Refuses to Be Rushed: Beatrice explains that when she first met Chris, then only an editor at the *National Gazette*, he pursued her persistently, but she held back. Her caution wasn't coyness; it came from experience. As a young woman with beauty, education, and a good job, she had learned to be wary of smooth talkers and social pressure. She rejects the idea that a woman needs a man to complete her, calling it *"male chauvinist bullshit,"* and insists she learned resistance not abroad but from growing up in a deeply patriarchal home. This fierce independence shapes her early interactions with Chris.

Chris's Kindness: Despite her skepticism, Chris quickly distinguishes himself from the arrogant men of the oil-boom era. He is gentle, perceptive, and attentive in ways that surprise her. He often guesses her preferences in colors, foods, habits without asking, and when she wonders how he knows, he simply says, *"I am a journalist … it's my business to find out."* Emotionally, she feels no reservations about him, but intellectually she remains cautious, feeling *"like two people living inside one skin,"* one drawn to him, the other determined to stay alert. From their very first meeting, she even feels a flash of envy for *"his wife,"* imagining the woman lucky enough to be married to such a man.

Ikem's friendship

Ikem, The Trusted Confidant: Unable to ask Chris directly, Beatrice turns to Ikem, her closest friend since their London days. Their relationship once hovered near romance but settled into a deep, sibling-like bond built on years of talking, arguing, and supporting each other. Ikem knows her well enough to tease her mercilessly when she finally asks about Chris's wife. In a supermarket, he pretends outrage, jokes about her *"demure lips,"* and then reveals with theatrical pleasure that *"there is no wife, my dear."* Ikem even whispers a long account of all the subtle signs he has observed between her and Chris, signs that, in his view, prove Chris has *"done catch."* The news of Chris's single status gives her relief but also a strange disappointment, as though the thrill of competing with an imagined wife has been taken away.

A Growing Attraction and a Brother's Loyalty: As Beatrice's interest in Chris grows, she begins unconsciously adjusting her clothes and makeup when she thinks she might run into him, though she dismisses it as harmless excitement. Meanwhile, her bond with Ikem remains strong. She recalls how he once crossed snowy London after midnight to comfort her when she was humiliated by her boyfriend, arriving frozen and exhausted at her door. Moments like these cemented him as *"a brother,"* not a lover, despite gossip that later tries to portray him as one of her supposed *"trio of lovers."* In truth, Ikem is the one person she can trust with her fears, insights, and delicate questions, including the inquiry about Chris that marks the turning point from guarded curiosity to genuine emotional possibility.

Love, Insight, and a Sudden Awakening: Beatrice shifts to Ikem's unexpected visit. He arrives in a strangely intense mood, telling her he has come to thank her for *"the greatest present one human being can give another. The gift of insight."* Ikem explains that her earlier criticism of his views on women forced him to rethink his assumptions, especially during his suspension from the *Gazette*. He admits, *"I now realize you were right and I was wrong,"* and begins to articulate a new understanding of women's oppression, drawing from myths, religion, and cultural stories that have long justified keeping women powerless.

Ikem's New Philosophy of Oppression and Reform: Ikem reads aloud a long, reflective *"love-letter"* in which he traces how societies have repeatedly reinvented ways to keep women, and other oppressed groups, subordinate. He argues that oppression adapts and changes its face, whether through crude blame or through placing women on pedestals that remove them from real influence. He expands his analysis to peasants, the urban poor, black people, and minorities, insisting that *"the oppressed inhabit each their own peculiar hell."* Ikem rejects simplistic revolutionary fantasies, warning that *"man's progress in freedom will be piecemeal, slow and undramatic,"* and that reform, though unfashionable, may be the most realistic path forward.

A Goodbye Kiss: After finishing his letter, Ikem prepares to leave, but the emotional tension between Him and Beatrice suddenly breaks into physical closeness. Beatrice watches him fold the paper *"elegant but at the same time, immensely powerful,"* and when she approaches him, he impulsively embraces and kisses her. The moment overwhelms her: *"my knees were giving way under me; I was trembling violently"* (92). But she manages to tell him he should go. Ikem leaves. The passage ends with a metaphor: the storm of emotion has passed, leaving only *"tired twitches of intermittent lightning and the occasional, satiated hiccup of distant thunder."*

CHAPTER 8**: Daughters: Idemili**

The Birth of Idemili and the Meaning of Power: The narrative explains how the world first learned that authority must be guided by morality. In the beginning, Power roamed the earth violently and without restraint, until the Almighty sent his daughter Idemili to teach modesty and peace. She descended in a magnificent pillar of water, a divine sign remembered only in legend. Her mission was to wrap *"Power's rude waist"* with a symbolic cloth of humility, reminding humanity that true authority must be tempered by ethics. As communities spread and built shrines far from Idemili's sacred lake, they replaced the water pillar with simple symbols, a dry stick, a clay bowl, or chalk, because human art can never fully capture divine grandeur. The myth establishes Idemili as a deity who protects the moral order and punishes those who seek power without integrity.

The Rituals of *Ozo:* The narrative describes the rituals required for a man to enter the prestigious *ozo* title society. Before beginning the ceremonies, the aspirant must visit Idemili's shrine accompanied by a daughter, his own or a kinsman's, because only a young woman may stand between him and the deity. She counts seven, arranges seven fragile chalk sticks, and ensures he sits lightly enough not to break one. After completing the elaborate feasts and rites, he must return to inform Idemili of his new status. She never speaks; instead, she judges silently. If she disapproves, *"she simply sends death to smite him,"* but if she approves, the only sign is that the candidate survives three years. This harsh system reflects her disdain for men's hunger for authority and her insistence that only the morally worthy may wield power.

Nwakibie and the Python's Deadly Verdict: A cautionary tale follows about a man named Nwakibie, notorious for his beauty and uncontrolled lust. Despite his reckless life, he sought the *ozo* title and performed all the required rites. Idemili remained silent, neither approving nor rejecting him. During his period of ritual seclusion, he repeatedly sneaked out at night to visit a widow he desired, violating the discipline expected of an *ozo* candidate. One dawn, while returning from his lover's place, he encountered *"Eke-Idemili itself, royal python, messenger of the Daughter of God,"* stretched across his path. The python, sacred and venomless but feared, blocked his way and compelled him toward a path that led to his death, proof that Idemili's judgment may arrive indirectly, through signs and symbols, but it is always final.

Beatrice's Hidden Heritage and Unseen Calling: Beatrice grew up far from these traditions. Raised in mission schools that emphasized foreign cultures, she barely learned about her ancestors or their gods. Nonetheless, Beatrice carries a subtle sense of dual identity, sometimes feeling like two people within one body. Her father saw in her a bold *"soldier-girl,"* Chris saw a peaceful woman with deep passions, and Ikem sensed something more: a latent village priestess capable of prophecy when inspiration seizes her. The story explains that *"baptism… is no antidote against possession by Agwu,"* meaning that even modern, educated people can be claimed by ancestral forces. Beatrice may not know her heritage, but the narrative suggests that the spiritual world knows her and may call on her when needed.

Dawn, the Bird, and an Unexpected Message: It is the day after Beatrice's nightly trip to His Excellency's party in Abichi. At daybreak, Beatrice steps onto her balcony to breathe the cool morning air and watch the sky brighten. A small brown bird perched on a pine tree repeatedly calls out a song that, as a child, her mother used to tell her meant, *"Is the king's property correct?"* She has never cared about birds before, but this one feels like a tiny palace official dutifully checking on royal treasures. When she tells him, *"The king's treasury was broken into last night and all his property carried away,"* she feels an unexpected wave of emotion, as though the bird's ritual has touched something deep inside her.

Remembering a Childhood Story: As more birds stir and fly away, Beatrice realizes they must have slept in the trees outside her flat every night, something she had never noticed. Their chorus reminds her of a childhood tale her mother used to tell about an African bird that woke the world speaking English. She recalls that the story actually came from a village carpenter-comedian who entertained mourners at Christian wakes. This memory makes her smile: Long before she earned a first-class degree in English, barely literate artisans were already reshaping language and legend. She even wonders whether her father, with his booming maxims like *"Procrastination is a lazy man's apology!"* might have been one of these early *"road-makers-into-the-jungle-of-tongues."*

A Sudden Softening toward Her Father: Thinking of her father surprises Beatrice with a sudden warmth. He had always been a stern, distant figure, *"a total stranger"* in many ways. But now she feels a thawing affection, as if the bird's unexpected presence has opened a door to forgotten tenderness. She realizes that, like the bird who lived in her tree unnoticed, her father had lived in her life without her fully seeing him. This moment of remembering softens her mood as she returns indoors, asks Agatha, her house girl, for coffee, and watches the lively morning scene unfold in the compound below.

A Restless Morning and the Hint of Anticipation: Beatrice spends the rest of the morning trying to settle herself. She watches a brightly colored male lizard chase a plain female, thinking amusingly that *"we can safely leave grey drabness in female attire to the family of lizards."* She drinks coffee, flips through the Sunday papers, and grows irritated at their shallow obituaries and boastful portraits. She puts on Onyeka Onwenu's "One Love," lies back on the sofa, and closes her eyes. But she becomes increasingly restless, checking her watch, changing records, even picking up the phone before putting it down again. Something, or someone, is on her mind, and the calm morning only sharpens her awareness of it. Finally, Chris calls and says he is coming to see her.

The lovers: Chris and Beatrice

The Fight: Chris finds Beatrice in a foul mood. For long minutes they do not exchange a word. Chris wants to know what the matter is. Beatrice confronts Chris about his casual attitude toward her frightening experience the previous night. She reminds him that he asked her, *"the girl you want to marry,"* to travel forty miles at night and *"keep all options open,"* only for him to sleep peacefully, listen to the BBC, eat breakfast, and call her at midday as if nothing had happened. Her anger is not about Abichi itself, but about what his behavior reveals: She wants a man who cares enough to worry, to be curious, to check whether she is safe. Chris tries to defend himself, but Beatrice insists he is *"damn too reasonable"* for her, and the argument escalates until she screams at him not to touch her.

The Reconciliation: After the outburst, both Beatrice and Chris fall into a long, tense silence. Chris eventually notices Beatrice's shoulders trembling and realizes she is crying. He sits beside her, lifts her chin, and she allows him to hold her. What follows is a sudden, overwhelming reconciliation that turns physical. They move to the bedroom, shedding their clothes *"like things on fire,"* and enter a deeply symbolic, almost spiritual lovemaking. Beatrice becomes a guide, a priestess leading Chris through imagined groves and streams, pulling him up when he slips, commanding him at the moment of climax. She becomes a figure of power, ritual, and initiation, while Chris experiences the encounter as transformative, even mystical.

Prophecy and Warning: After love, as Chris lies in her arms, Beatrice tells him she sometimes feels like Chielo, the priestess from *Things Fall Apart*. She tells him that the prophetic feeling is *"on now,"* and she foresees trouble coming for all of them, Ikem first, then Chris, then herself: *"What I heard and saw last night frightened me. Ikem was being tried there in absentia and convicted. You have to save him, Chris"* (108). She urges Chris to repair his strained relationship with Ikem, insisting that Ikem is in danger and has no

sense of how serious the situation is. Chris resists, saying he is exhausted and emotionally drained, but Beatrice insists he has more strength than he thinks.

The Unbridgeable Rift: Beatrice recounts the disturbing events of the previous night, and Chris becomes so outraged he cannot eat. She tries to lighten the mood with coffee and brandy, coaxing him back into conversation. Chris explains rumors about Alhaji Mahmoud, a powerful and possibly dangerous millionaire who may be secretly fronting for the Head of State. When Beatrice again urges him to help Ikem, Chris explains the core problem: He and Ikem do not disagree on substance but on "style," which he believes is impossible to reconcile. He feels trapped, too drained to resign from the Cabinet, too afraid of the Head of State's threats, and too frustrated by Ikem's refusal to *"lie low."* Their discussion ends unresolved, with Chris saying that trying to restrain Ikem is like trying to hold back a fanatic: *"all he'll ever get for his pains is to be knocked flat on his face."* (109).

CHAPTER 9**: Views of Struggle**

The Delegates

Ikem Goes to the Palace: Ikem goes to the Presidential Palace not as a journalist but because he wants personal understanding of the Abazon delegation's visit. He arrives just as the official meeting ends, manages only a polite exchange with the white-bearded leader, and arranges to meet the group later at their hotel. He learns that the delegation is not the rumored five hundred people but only six elders, accompanied by Abazon migrants living in the capital. The crowd had frightened His Excellency, prompting Ikem to think, *"I would too if I were in his shoes."*

Warm Welcome at Harmoney Hotel: Ikem finds the delegation at Harmoney Hotel, a lively but shabby place in the city's northern slums. The Abazon people greet him with excitement and honor, offering him a seat beside their leader. A self-appointed master of ceremonies praises Ikem loudly, saying, *"An animal whose name is famous does not always fill a hunter's basket."* The elder eventually interrupts the flattery and begins to speak with authority, thanking the community and gently correcting their expectations of Ikem's role.

The Elder's Lesson: The elder explains that everyone has a different kind of work in life, and Ikem's calling is not to attend every wedding or meeting but to serve the wider nation through his writing. He uses vivid metaphors, saying the morning cock *"belongs to one household but his voice is the property of the neighborhood."* He insists that the storyteller's work is essential, even greater than the warrior's, because *"it is only the story that can continue beyond the war and the warrior."* His speech captivates everyone, including hotel patrons who were not part of the meeting.

Abazon's Struggle for Water: The elder recounts how the government punished Abazon for voting "No" in a referendum by halting the drilling of water boreholes. He describes the manipulative tactics used to pressure villagers, including claims that the Big Chief was being "forced" to rule forever against his will. So, they saw it fit to free the big Chief of this unwanted burden. And their water project was interrupted. Now they have come to the capital to plead for water, to say "yes" to the Big Chief in the hope of getting water. The elder compares their journey to the tortoise facing the leopard, saying they want future generations to know: *"My people, that is all we are doing now. Struggling. Perhaps to no purpose except that those who come after us will be able to say: 'True, our fathers were defeated but they tried'"* (118). The courtyard erupts.

CHAPTER 10**: Impetuous Son**

Unexpected Visitors at Ikem's Door: Just as Ikem and Elewa are leaving for Mad Medico's gathering, two smiling taxi drivers appear at his door. Their exaggerated friendliness is disconcerting at first, especially in a city where armed robberies have made people wary. When Elewa joins Ikem at the door, one driver recognizes her and says, *"Ah, madam, you de here."* It is the driver who had driven her to her home a week earlier. Their presence seems odd, but they insist they have come only to *"salute this oga"* (to greet this boss).

A Surprising Apology: Once inside, the real reason for the visit emerges. One of the men is not only Elewa's former driver but also the taxi driver who had clashed with Ikem in a traffic jam. He has come to apologize, bringing a friend from the Taxi Drivers' Union. Ikem tries to stop them, saying, *"You don't owe me any apology,"* but the men insist. Their sincerity touches him deeply. They explain that they admire his writing because he uses his influence to defend ordinary people: *"He's a big man … he can stay in his house, eat his fancy foreign food, drink his cold beer, put on his air conditioner, and forget about us. But he didn't do that. So, we came to salute him"* (125).

Gratitude from the Streets: The unionist offers a concrete example of Ikem's impact. He recalls how Ikem's articles pressured the city to clean the filthy taxi park on Slaughterhouse Road. Their praise is heartfelt but mixed with teasing honesty. They admit they never imagined Ikem was an important figure because he drives an old, battered car. One jokes that he assumed Ikem was *"some jagajaga person"* who couldn't afford a driver. Their candor makes Ikem reflect on how poverty and admiration coexist in strange ways.

Ikem's Reflection on Power and Perception: As Ikem drives to Mad Medico's house afterward, he thinks about the paradox the taxi drivers revealed. In their eyes, a leader should not live simply but should display status, preferably in a Mercedes with a chauffeur. They admire him for fighting for the poor, but they also expect him to embody the symbols of power. Ikem wonders how such expectations shape oppression itself, noting that even in revolutions, people often tolerate or admire elite privileges. Elewa reinforces this view bluntly, telling him, *"A car like this makes a person feel ashamed,"* and urging him to take a government Peugeot like others. Their conversation leaves Ikem pondering how deeply social conditioning shapes ideas of leadership and dignity: The oppressed know their condition but insist that their oppression be performed in style, by a *"Mercedes-Benz-driving, private-jet-flying, luxury-yacht-cruising oppressor."*

CHAPTER 11**: His Excellency Wants Ikem Fired**

A New Mind on Fire: Ikem spends the day in a state of exhilaration after the unexpected visit from the taxi-drivers, a mood that carries into the night and even softens Elewa into *"new reserves of tenderness exceptional even for her"* (129). After driving Elewa home, he brews strong black coffee to stay alert and begins thinking in exaggerated images. He imagines himself as an explorer who has just overcome a difficult stretch of terrain and now senses, *"more by intuition perhaps than logic,"* that although the final destination is still hidden, the obstacles he has just cleared point toward eventual success. The drivers' visit is not the cause of this feeling but the spark that awakens something long dormant in him.

A Yearning to Connect with the People: As he reflects, Ikem realizes that this thrill is the culmination of many recent events, perhaps even something rooted deep in his subconscious, *"waiting like a dormant seed in the dry season soil for the first rain."* He has always felt a vague but insistent need to connect his life and work to ordinary people and to the earth itself. The question was never *whether* he should do so, but *how* to do it with integrity. For a time, he naively believed that "public affairs" might offer the right path, but experience has taught him otherwise. His involvement in politics has left him disenchanted, revealing that these affairs are detached from the real lives of the population. Ikem now sees that what is called "public affairs" is little more than the private dealings of *"soldiers-turned-politicians, with their cohorts in business and the bureaucracy."* Even his own editorials, his condemnation of public executions, his critiques of government policy, his quarrels with Chris, now seem to him like a mirage, noble but insubstantial.

Seeing the Government's Failure: Ikem begins to understand that the government's deepest failure is not simply corruption, foreign manipulation, bad economic policy, or violent repression, though all these are terrible. The real failure, he realizes, is the rulers' inability *"to re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country."* The nation's heart has been weakened by parasitic regimes and a strange cultural habit of admiring oppression *"conducted with panache."* Despite its wounds, this heart still holds integrity and a communal warmth that allows ordinary people, like Elewa and the taxi drivers, to form spontaneous bonds that Ikem himself envies. Ikem asks himself how he can genuinely connect with this moral core of the nation. He knows he cannot renounce his experience or knowledge; these are part of him. Becoming like the poor would be fake, and he refuses to insult them with imitation. Instead, he imagines

himself as a complex atom with many arms, one reaching down to the earth, another raised toward the sky, symbolizing a readiness both to help and to be helped.

Why the Oppressed Insist on Seeing the Oppressor Clearly: This reflection leads Ikem to a deeper insight: Perhaps the poor insist that the powerful remain visibly powerful, not to flatter them, but to preserve a kind of moral transparency. He imagines that the oppressed want the oppressor's *"badge of privilege"* to remain visible so that, on the day of reckoning, the guilty will stand out *"as conspicuous as a peacock."* This insistence may come from the earth's *"primitive integrity,"* or perhaps from its *"peasant cunning,"* but either way it reflects a desire for truth. The poor do not want camouflage; they want honesty, even in inequality, so that justice, whenever it comes, will not miss its target.

The Accusation and the Demand: His Excellency storms around his office *"like a caged tiger,"* furious and impatient, before ordering Chris to suspend Ikem immediately. He claims intelligence reports show Ikem helped organize the Abazon protest and even met secretly with *"motor-park touts, drug pushers and other criminal elements."* Chris refuses to accept the allegations, insisting he cannot suspend Ikem based on unverified stories. His Excellency grows more threatening, hinting that Ikem, and even Chris, may be implicated in sabotaging the old referendum. His Excellency warns Chris that resisting would be *"most unwise."*

Chris's Defiance: Chris stands his ground and refuses to write the suspension letter, finally declaring, *"I hereby tender my resignation."* His Excellency laughs mockingly: *"Resignation! Ha ha ha ha. Where do you think you are? Westminster or Washington, DC? This is a military government in a backward West African State"* (133). Resignations are not accepted unless the Head of State requests them. He tells Chris that the era of shared decision-making is over: *"I will be doing the calling from now on."* He orders the letter delivered by close of business, dismissing Chris with authoritarian finality. Chris leaves determined to pack his belongings and prepare to vacate his office.

The Sudden Reversal and a New Threat: Before Chris can begin clearing out his papers, his secretary hands him the phone. It is His Excellency again. In a sudden shift, the Head of State says he has *"reconsidered this matter,"* claiming he only wanted Chris to appear in charge. He announces that the suspension will now be handled directly by the presidency. But the reversal is not mercy: He warns Chris that the SRC Director will soon question him about *"the bungling of the referendum and other matters,"* and demands *"maximum cooperation."* Chris realizes that the political storm is far from over, and that both he and Ikem are now squarely in the regime's crosshairs.

A Suspicious Suspension: His Excellency follows through on his threat to act *"constitutionally"* by having Ikem suspended through a letter signed by a phantom Chairman of the Kangan Newspapers Corporation, a board that has been *"moribund for the past three years."* Ikem, astonished but strangely serene, carries the letter to Chris's house like a trophy. Beatrice notices his unexpected calm, wondering if it is the look of a man who has already accepted martyrdom, whose gaze is fixed not on the danger ahead but on the *"crown of glory"* beyond it. Chris and Ikem sit together quietly, exchanging details of their troubles with the odd tenderness of *"hypochondriacs reminiscing on their sweet injuries,"* while Beatrice watches in stiff, silent concern.

Old Wounds, New Dangers: Ikem insists that the government's actions are not just hostile but deadly: *"The fellow wants to kill us!"* (135). Chris argues that His Excellency is more interested in humiliating them than murdering them. Chris then reveals a crucial secret: After the failed life-presidency referendum, His Excellency accused both him and Ikem of abandoning him and allowing him to be *"disgraced."* Ikem is stunned that Chris never told him about the allegation. He insists that if he had known, they should have resigned immediately. But that moment is gone, and now they must decide what to do. Chris plans to resign the next morning, while Ikem rejects Chris's advice to remain silent, arguing that silence is exactly what the regime wants: *"Because he makes reams of paper available to you, he believes he owns your voice"* (137).

Elewa's Arrival: Elewa bursts into the house, breathless and distraught, throwing herself at Ikem: *"Na true say dem done sack you?"* (Is it true that they fired you?). The men attempt to comfort her. She explains that the whole neighborhood is talking, that even her sick mother heard the news on a neighbor's radio. Ikem clarifies that he is suspended, not fired. Beatrice gently reassures her, and the conversation shifts to Elewa's mother's illness. Elewa explains that they cannot afford a hospital: *"My sister, na chemist we small*

people de go" (My sister is a pharmacist to whom ordinary people go). Her presence brings the severe reality of ordinary life crashing into the room, reminding them all of the human cost behind their political crisis.

The News Breaks and Ikem's First Shock: Elewa catches the faint sound of a radio news broadcast from a nearby compound, and she shouts *"News!"* Chris immediately switches on his television, just in time for the eight o'clock national bulletin. Ikem's suspension is announced first, and he reacts with calm, until the next news hits him: *"In another development … six leaders from Abazon who were involved in a recent illegal march on the Presidential Palace without police permit as required by decree had been arrested"* (138). These elders are innocent men, and hearing they have *"made useful statements"* signals that they are being coerced or mistreated. Ikem sees this as a violation of the *"holy men of the earth."* He shouts, *"They can't do that!"* He demands the television be switched off, only stopping when he remembers he is not in his own house. He sinks back into his seat, biting his thumbnail, then suddenly stands again and tells Elewa, *"Let's go*."

CHAPTER 12**: Ikem Speaks at the University of Bassa**

A Crowd Hungry for Ikem's Voice: Ikem arrives at the University of Bassa to find an enormous crowd packed into the two-thousand-seat auditorium, with people spilling into corridors and peering through windows. His recent suspension has turned him into a hero, pushing his popularity to the top. After a chaotic forty-minute delay, Ikem is presented. He announces his talk, *"The Tortoise and the Leopard-a political meditation on the imperative of struggle,"* and the crowd roars with approval.

A Story, a Shock, and a Call for Dialogue: Ikem begins with a story about a dying tortoise, told to him by an old man now held *"in solitary confinement at the Bassa Maximum Security Prison."* The revelation sparks cries of *"No!"* and *"Impossible!"* from the audience. Ikem explains that storytellers are feared because *"they threaten all champions of control."* His short twenty-five-minute meditation unfolds like an epic prose-poem. When he ends abruptly, the audience protests with chants of *"Fire! Fire! More! More!"* But Ikem refuses, joking that *"there is nothing left in the pipeline."* Instead, he invites them into dialogue, insisting that conversation is richer than monologue. He opens the floor, ready to *"exchange a few blows"* with the crowd he has just electrified.

The First Question: The first question comes from a young faculty member who delivers a mini-lecture on the failure of reformism and asks whether Kangan should adopt a *"democratic dictatorship of the proletariat."* Ikem rejects the idea outright. When the Chairman helpfully defines the proletariat as workers and peasants, Ikem repeats the phrase with dry humor, prompting laughter when a voice adds *"And students!"* His playful challenge, asking peasants in the hall to stand, exposes the absurdity of the revolutionary rhetoric being thrown at him.

Exposing the Absence of the Real Poor: Ikem pushes the point further by noting that peasants and market women are not present, nor have they sent *"proxy forms"* to represent them. He even jokes that his prospective mother-in-law, a simple tie-dye seller, qualifies as proletariat but has given him no authority to speak for her. This leads him to focus on those actually present, workers and students, and he begins a sharp critique of workers' unions, calling their leaders *"extraordinary riff-raff."* He reminds the audience of his past clashes with the Civil Service Union, who once labeled him a *"running dog of imperialism."*

Turning the Mirror on Workers and Students: Ikem argues that many so-called workers are not oppressed but part of the machinery of exploitation, sabotaging national progress through fraud and low productivity. He mocks May Day parades where civil servants wear *"ridiculously undersize T-shirts,"* insisting they are not victims but contributors to national decay. Then he turns to students, calling them *"the cream of parasites,"* citing their destruction of a maternity clinic during National Service. He challenges them to rise above tribalism, mediocrity, and intellectual laziness, urging them to *"purge yourselves"* before claiming moral authority.

A New Radicalism: Ikem proposes a new kind of radicalism: One that sees beyond simplistic blame of capitalism and imperialism. He uses an ancestral proverb: *"If you want to get at the root of murder … look for the blacksmith who made the matchet"* (147). explaining that remote causes must not overshadow immediate ones. He insists that revolutions fail not only through betrayal but through *"stupidity,*

incompetence, impatience and precipitate action." After nearly midnight, the chairman closes the event, praising Ikem's contributions but gently criticizing his *"individualistic and adventuristic"* notion of struggle. Ikem ends with a final joke: *"Writers don't give prescriptions, they give headaches!"* sending the hall into laughter.

CHAPTER 13**: Ikem is Accused of Regicide**

Ikem's Joke Becomes a National Scandal: During his lecture at the University of Bassa, Ikem answers a question about a rumor that the President's face might soon appear on the national currency. He jokes that any leader *"foolish enough to lay his head on a coin should know he is inciting people to take it off"* (149). The audience laughs and applauds, but the government reacts very differently. The next morning, the National Gazette publishes a sensational headline: *"EX-EDITOR ADVOCATES REGICIDE!"* twisting Ikem's joke into a call for the President's assassination. Major Johnson Ossai, head of the State Research Council, has already been building cases on multiple fronts. One of these involves Mr. John Kent (Mad Medico), the controversial expatriate administrator at Bassa General Hospital. Ossai has kept Kent under discreet surveillance for over a year, and the information gathered is described as *"of such crucial importance"* that it could have justified action even without Ikem's lecture. Still, the lecture provides a convenient opening for a swift and coordinated crackdown.

A Sudden Deportation and a Strategic Promotion: Kent is arrested, interrogated for four days, and deported under heavy secrecy. Only after he is already airborne does the government announce his removal for *"activities prejudicial to state security."* The timing of Kent's deportation and Ikem's suspension creates a sense that the political calm of the past year is collapsing. Hours later, the Army Council issues another announcement: Major Ossai has been promoted to full colonel. Chris, hearing this, reflects that Ossai is *"sticking to his promise to do things constitutionally,"* even as repression intensifies. The next morning, Chris tunes in early to the BBC and discovers that Kent's deportation has already made international news.

A Morning of Panic: Chris wakes up early, glued to his small radio, trying to understand the shocking news about "Mad Medico," Mr. Kent. He immediately tries calling Ikem, but the houseboy says Ikem went out the previous afternoon *"with dat gal,"* and now no one is answering the phone. Ikem is famous for sleeping late, but given the tense political climate, Chris finds his silence alarming. He calls Beatrice next. She wakes up groggy but becomes alert the moment she hears his voice. She tries to tune in to the BBC but complains that her radio only picks up *"that infuriating thing in special English from the Voice of America."* When she fails again, Chris urges her to come over immediately.

The Search for Ikem Begins: By the time Beatrice arrives, Chris is frantic. He has been calling everyone he can think of, but no one has seen Ikem. They drive together to Ikem's flat, where the houseboy lets them in through the kitchen. Inside the place is a wreck, books, clothes, and papers scattered everywhere, and an alarm clock smashed beside the bed. As they try to make sense of the chaos, two neighbors enter hesitantly. Recognizing Chris as the Commissioner for Information, they relax and begin recounting what they witnessed during the night: two jeeps arriving around 1:15 a.m., loud banging on Ikem's door, and men identifying themselves as State Research Council officers.

The Neighbors Reveal the Truth: The neighbors explain that they were too frightened to intervene, as armed robbers often pretend to be soldiers. But they heard Ikem open the door. The officers stayed for over an hour and left around 2:30 a.m., taking Ikem with them. The wife adds that his hands were in handcuffs and that his face might have been swollen, though it was too dark to be sure. Their testimony is the first solid information Chris and Beatrice receive. Chris thanks them and reassures them they will not be mentioned. The grim reality becomes clear: Ikem has been taken violently.

The Official Account of Ikem's Arrest: The State Research Council claims it has uncovered a plot to overthrow Kangan's government, supposedly organized by Ikem Osodi, the recently suspended editor of the *National Gazette.* According to the announcement, Ikem acted as a link between local conspirators, foreign collaborators, and dissatisfied chiefs, and even used a university lecture to stir rebellion. The SRC says that security officers arrested him early this morning, but while being transported for questioning, he allegedly grabbed a gun from one of the guards and was fatally shot during the struggle. A high-level inquiry

has been appointed to investigate the *"accident,"* and the government promises to continue probing the supposed conspiracy and punish anyone involved, no matter their status. The statement ends with patriotic slogans and is signed by Colonel Johnson Ossai.

Chris's Countermove: Chris realizes that the government is deliberately keeping quiet about Ikem's abduction. So, Chris decides to fight back by spreading the truth through foreign journalists and the powerful local rumor network known as VOR (Voice of Rumour). By evening, both channels are buzzing. But at six o'clock, the State Research Council releases a dramatic broadcast accusing Ikem of masterminding a treasonous plot with *"foreign adventurers"* and inciting students to rebellion. Chris immediately begins drafting a rebuttal, insisting that people must understand Ikem is not wounded but dead, arguing that the government chose a phrase *"popularly misunderstood"* to soften the shock.

Elewa Faces the Painful Truth: When Beatrice returns home late at night, she finds Elewa distraught and confused, having misunderstood the announcement. For a moment Beatrice considers delaying the truth, but she realizes that would be cowardice. She tells Elewa that Ikem is dead, and Elewa releases one piercing cry that echoes *"like a rifle-shot in salute to a fallen comrade."* Surprisingly, Elewa becomes calm afterward, while Beatrice finally breaks down after a long day of frantic calls. The next afternoon, the State Research Council begins searching for Chris. Colonel Ossai even calls Beatrice, pretending to look for him on behalf of His Excellency. She answers coldly that she doesn't know his whereabouts.

The Students Rise: Chris meets secretly with the President of the Students Union, who is furious about the *Gazette's* false story. Students have begun seizing copies of the newspaper from distributors and burning them in Freedom Square. The young leader declares that *"This government has now committed suicide."* He promises to print two thousand copies of a statement Chris has prepared so every student will have one by morning. Chris warns him to be careful, but he is grateful for the support. As they part, Chris tells him, *"This country counts on you,"* knowing that the struggle has entered a dangerous new phase.

Chris Speaks Out: Chris's fight to expose the truth reaches a new level when the BBC airs an interview with him. He is introduced as a senior government figure and Ikem's close friend, and he calmly but firmly calls the official story *"patently false."* He explains that contrary to the official account of Ikem's arrest, Ikem was taken away in handcuffs and therefore could not have wrestled a gun from his captors. He concludes: *"I am saying that there is no shred of doubt that Ikem Osodi was brutally murdered in cold blood by the security officers of this government"* (159). The BBC correspondent is deported, but the damage is done. Students seize the story, demanding a judicial inquiry and Colonel Ossai's prosecution. When police try to arrest student leaders, they fail, and the humiliated officers explode into violence, beating students across campus.

International Fallout and Rising Danger: The crisis spreads beyond Kangan's borders. The British High Commissioner protests the deportation of two British nationals, only to be shown an intercepted letter in which a foreign visitor describes Ikem casually discussing treason and calling the dictator *"a comic fool."* This letter becomes ammunition for the regime. Chris's movements are severely restricted as army and police roadblocks appear everywhere. Beatrice, scouting the city, sees riot police stationed at Chris's official residence. She tries to rest that night, but Elewa, grieving, pregnant, and terrified, cannot sleep. Beatrice comforts her, urging her to protect herself and *"the pickin inside your belle."*

A Midnight Raid: Just as Beatrice begins to doze, three jeeps arrive. Soldiers pound on the door: *"Miss Okoh. This is State Security."* In panic, Beatrice throws on jeans, helps Elewa dress. She unlocks the door. A huge soldier bursts in, knocking both women aside. Elewa falls to the floor. The officer in charge speaks politely, but his politeness is chilling. He tells Beatrice he has orders to search her flat and warns that *"anybody in the flat should come out right away … anyone trying to escape will be shot."* One red-eyed sergeant tears apart Beatrice's bedroom, throwing sheets on the floor and stomping over them. He rummages through her belongings with hostility. Beatrice catches in his eyes *"a flash from the utmost depths of contempt and hatred."* The search is an intimidation ritual.

Elewa Reduced to an Object: The officer begins questioning Beatrice about Elewa, asking who she is, what job she has, and whether she lives there. The tone is clinical, as if he were inspecting property rather than speaking about a human being. Elewa sits quietly in oversized jeans and a dressing gown, looking

almost comical in her distress, her eyes darting nervously as they discuss her *"like the seller and prospective buyer of some dumb animal."* Beatrice checks on her repeatedly, worried about her fall, but Elewa, perhaps numbed by Valium, keeps saying she feels no pain. For nearly an hour the soldiers search every corner of the flat. As Beatrice inquires why a soldier is rummaging through her books, the officer replies: *"… a man whose horse is missing will look everywhere even in the roof"* (163). Then, unexpectedly, the officer apologizes for disturbing Beatrice's sleep, salutes, and leaves.

CHAPTER 14**: Chris is a Fugitive**

A Warning Call Before Dawn: As Beatrice is getting dressed for work, the bedside phone rings. A mysterious voice says, *"I know where the horse is. But I don't want to find him. Get him moved. Before tonight"* (164). The warning terrifies her: Was it a trap to flush Chris out into *"soldier-infested streets"* or a genuine attempt to save him? Unable to ask anyone for guidance, she wipes her tears and checks on Elewa, who is still sleeping. At work, Beatrice spends the day in restless torment. When she finally leaves at 3:30, she pretends to go shopping but instead heads to a safe telephone. The relief she feels afterward gives her a new lightness, and she even buys perfume, two bottles, one for Elewa, before heading home.

News from the Hideout: Chris's hideout is raided at midnight, but he escapes. Beatrice calls the house early the next morning using coded language: *"Any visitors? Yes, they came at twelve."* She returns home reassured through the kitchen and finds Elewa eating dry bread dipped in Ovaltine while Agatha watches her coldly. Outraged, Beatrice scolds Agatha: *"What kind of breakfast is this? … Agatha, you are a very stupid girl and a very wicked girl … get out of my way"* (167). Beatrice prepares a proper breakfast and insists Elewa eat. Her anger at Agatha slowly transforms into pity as she reflects on the harsh lottery of life in Kangan, where two people born equal can end up as *"President shitting on the heads of the people"* or *"nightman carrying the people's shit."*

A Tale of Two Women: As Beatrice watches Elewa, she realizes the young woman possesses a natural warmth and dignity that her poverty could not erase. She wonders why Elewa, *"a half-literate salesgirl,"* radiates confidence while Agatha, equally unlucky, has grown sour and sanctimonious. Ikem's death intensifies this reflection: Elewa carries *"a living speck of him within her,"* giving her a new luminosity. Beatrice even begins to see Agatha differently, imagining a narrator's voice saying, *"It is now up to you women to tell us what has to be done."* Perhaps Agatha's stubborn unhappiness keeps the memory of oppression alive.

Another Warning: For the first time, Beatrice reaches out to Agatha, placing a hand on her shoulder and saying, *"I am sorry, Agatha."* Shock turns into a shy smile, an unexpected moment of healing. Later that day, the mysterious voice calls again, praising Beatrice for moving *"the horse"* and warning that if Chris is still in Bassa, she must prepare for *"a cross-country gallop."* The caller insists he himself will never betray Chris, but others are far more efficient at *"finding horses."* The danger is growing, and Beatrice knows the next decisions will be even more perilous.

A Hangman's Humor: Beatrice is left bewildered after the hangman's cryptic warning, and she even catches herself asking, *"Are you genuine?"* A question that sounds as strange to her as his message. He doesn't answer at first, but later that evening he calls back with a sly joke: *"If you mean do I like horses, yes. I am a horse-fancier"* (170). His gallows humor unnerves Beatrice, reminding her that kindness from a man in his profession is never simple. Her anxiety deepens when the *National Gazette* publishes a bizarre lie claiming Chris fled the country disguised as a priest *"wearing a false beard."* Soon after, a police broadcast declares Chris wanted for treason, warning that anyone who hides him faces death

Fear, Faith, and Solidarity: After the announcement, Beatrice, Elewa, and Agatha sit in heavy silence. The phone rings, but this time it is only a friend expressing concern, easing the dread that had begun to cling to every call. When Beatrice hangs up, she overhears Elewa and Agatha quietly reassuring each other. Agatha, usually sour and sanctimonious, says with calm conviction, *"Madam, make you no worry at all. Whether they look from here to Jericho, they no go find am. By God's power"* (172). Elewa answers,

"Amin. Na so we talk." In that small exchange, Beatrice witnesses a rare moment of solidarity, two women, frightened but resolute, placing their faith in something larger than the terror surrounding them.

CHAPTER 15**: Chris Melts in the Ordinary Crowd**

Chris Becomes the Hunted: Chris is now a fugitive. He throws himself into a frantic rhythm of activity inside the cramped spaces of his hideouts. In this strange new life, he sometimes feels as though he has become the hunter rather than the hunted: *"the very spider manning a complicated webwork of toils and not the doom fly circling in orbits of seeming freedom …"* (173). This illusion of control gives him moments of exhilaration, even as danger tightens around him. His friends hide him in spare rooms, Boys' Quarters, and even once in the steaming darkness of a ceiling, turning the crisis into a risky but oddly conspiratorial game.

The Danger Sharpens: Everything changes when the police announce that anyone helping a coup suspect faces the death penalty. Chris and his host realize that fear might push someone to betray him. They decide he must leave Bassa entirely, though the move cannot be done in one step. Emmanuel, the Students Union President, joins Chris in hiding. Emmanuel is also wanted by the police, though considered too minor for a televised manhunt. Emmanuel reveals that he himself planted the false story in the *National Gazette* claiming Chris fled the country disguised as a priest. The ease with which the lie was published shocks Chris: *"One telephone call! Unbelievable!"* For his own escape, Chris adopts a simpler disguise: Braimoh's worn clothes, a cap, and pot-black smudged on his skin. His week-old beard is shaved off, partly because Emmanuel's priest story might make soldiers suspicious of anyone with facial hair. The plan is for Chris to travel with Braimoh in his taxi while Emmanuel moves separately.

The Roadblocks and the Close Call: Braimoh picks up Chris with two passengers already in the back seat. He hands Chris kolanuts, saying, *"Anybody wey see you de knack am so go think say you never chop breakfast"* (yone who sees you hitting it that hard will think you haven't eaten breakfast yet). They pass several checkpoints easily, but at the Three Cowrie Bridge they run into a major combined army-police operation. Braimoh panics and tries a U-turn, drawing attention. Chris and one passenger quickly abandon the taxi and walk away. A scar-faced soldier stops them, questions Chris harshly, and demands his name. Chris improvises: *"Sebastian Ojo"* but begins to falter until he offers the soldier a kolanut. The soldier's face softens, and he accepts it gratefully, launching into a wistful speech about poverty and hope.

Walking Away as "Small Men": Chris and his companion cross the bridge on foot, waiting for Braimoh to rejoin them. Chris's confidence returns, and he jokes that walking through checkpoints may be their best strategy. His companion teases him for nearly revealing his true identity, reminding him that *"to be big man no hard but to be poor man no be small thing."* They laugh together, sharing the strange triumph of having fooled the soldier. Chris realizes that passing as an ordinary man requires its own kind of training: *"I must remember that … To succeed as small man no be small thing."* The danger remains, but for the moment, they have survived.

CHAPTER 16**: Chris Spends a Night with Beatrice in Abazon**

Choosing Abazon and a Difficult Farewell: Chris's escape north begins five days later, with Abazon chosen as a natural refuge. It is Ikem's homeland, a place of *"generalized disaffection"* toward the regime and, crucially, a region where *"you could count on having your secrets kept secret."* Braimoh's wife is from southern Abazon, making the journey feel both strategic and symbolic. The night before departure, Beatrice insists on seeing Chris. She arrives in old clothes, accompanied by Elewa, intending a short visit. But the emotional weight of recent events overwhelms her, and she refuses to leave, declaring, *"I shall stay here till morning."*

Beatrice's Shame: Her decision triggers logistical chaos: where should everyone sleep? Plans are made to move Braimoh's five children to a neighbor's house, but Chris suddenly objects, stamping his foot and insisting the children must not be displaced. He explains to Beatrice that he already feels guilty for

occupying the parents' bed and refuses to push the children out too. She agrees, ashamed she hadn't considered the family's cramped living conditions. She realizes she had unconsciously assumed there were *"other rooms used by Braimoh and his family,"* forgetting that many urban poor live entire lives in a single windowless room.

A Cramped Night: Beatrice finally joins Chris on the bed, stepping carefully over sleeping children. Their lovemaking is awkward, with children nearby, a squealing bed, mosquitoes singing in the dark, and bedbugs biting. Chris senses she carries an aura of the "goddessy" Beatrice he has always half-feared. She responds to him, but only within the *"obligatory demands of her ritual."* They distract themselves with childhood fables about mosquitoes and bedbugs, and Beatrice marvels at Emmanuel's sensitivity. He had argued that buying insecticide would insult their host, who could not afford it. Their whispered conversation is interrupted when a child urinates on a sibling, causing a noisy commotion. The light snaps on, freezing Chris and Beatrice like *"a couple of mice interrupted far from their hole."* Eventually the children quiet down, restoring darkness.

CHAPTER 17**: The Great North Road**

The Harsh Realities of the Road: Chris, Emmanuel, and Braimoh decide to travel by bus rather than taxi to avoid attracting attention. At a roadside stop, a waitress offers Chris and Emmanuel a bowl of murky water to wash their hands. Both decline, and Braimoh boldly asks for clean water. The proprietress laughs, explaining that *"a tin now costs one manilla fifty"* and that water tankers haven't arrived. Outside, men carry tins of yesterday's water, selling it at *"two manilla."* The scene reveals the scarcity and hardship of Abazon, where even basic water is a luxury. A few kilometers north of Agbata, the bus crosses a dry riverbed and a sign reading *"WELCOME TO SOUTH ABAZON."* Immediately the landscape changes into scorched scrubland, cactus fences, and ancient baobab trees storing water in their massive trunks. The air feels like it is blowing from a furnace. Chris is struck by how British-drawn provincial boundaries align with real environmental divides.

A Strange Celebration in the Desert: A large crowd appears ahead, an unusual sight in the treeless expanse. As the bus approaches, passengers see beer bottles, dancing, and people throwing their heads back to drink straight from the bottle. The driver slows, then stops. The word *"COUP!"* explodes inside the bus like a grenade. Everyone panics and evacuates. Chris rushes into the crowd and finds a police sergeant who explains that the radio announced a coup, and a government beer truck happened to pass at that moment. The sergeant laughs, saying, *"As Government done fall now, na who go drink the beer?"* (197) (Now that the government has fallen, who is going to drink the beer?). The crowd treats the coup as a drunken festival.

A Missing President and Murder of Chris Oriko: The sergeant reveals that *"the President done disappear … unknown persons enter Palace and kidnap am."* Drunks around him joke about Africa's endless political absurdities. Chris pulls Emmanuel aside: They must return to Bassa immediately. But the crowd is descending into mayhem, bottles smashing, feet bleeding, people too drunk to answer questions. A girl's desperate scream cuts through the noise. The police sergeant is dragging her toward a cactus-fenced cluster of huts. Chris intervenes, ordering him to stop and threatening to report him. The sergeant snarls, *"I go blow your head to Jericho,"* then cocks his gun. Chris stands firm, staring him down. The sergeant fires point-blank into Chris's chest. As Chris collapses, a bystander cries, *"You have just shot the Commissioner for Information!"* Emmanuel and the girl kneel beside him, trying to stop the bleeding. Chris forces a final smile before dying. The sergeant flees into the savannah, with Braimoh chasing him briefly before the man disappears into the red sunset.

CHAPTER 18**: Beatrice Becomes the Anchor**

Beatrice's Decision and the Weight of Recent Loss: Beatrice decides to hold a naming ceremony for Elewa's newborn daughter in her flat. She does not want anything elaborate, because she feels emotionally unable to face a real ceremony after the violent events of the past weeks. Still, she believes a baby must

have a name, even one born *"into deprivation"* and without a father to lift her up on her naming day. She invites the small circle of friends who have stayed close to her and Elewa through the crisis. This gathering reflects how much she has changed. In earlier times, Beatrice would have retreated into solitude after Chris's death, hiding like a wounded animal.

Beatrice's Grief and Her Turn toward Care: Although Beatrice is known for her toughness, she suffers more deeply than Elewa in the first shock of Chris's death. For weeks she lies in emotional ruin, unable to function. Her turning point comes unexpectedly on the morning Elewa nearly miscarries. The emergency forces Beatrice out of her grief and into action. From that day onward, she focuses on Elewa's well-being, guiding her through the remaining weeks of pregnancy. When she later tries to revisit her own sorrow, she discovers that she has grown steadier. Caring for Elewa has given her a new kind of strength, allowing her to stand upright again.

Beatrice's Slow Return to Herself: Beatrice begins to recover from the emotional devastation that followed Chris's death. She can finally revisit the nightmare of those days without collapsing. She wonders whether she was right to refuse the new Head of State's invitation to Chris's state funeral, questioning if her absence honored his memory or betrayed it. Her disgust toward Major-General Lango's sudden public grief still lingers, especially since he appeared only after His Excellency was murdered. When Captain Abdul Medani arrives in mufti to tell her about Chris's death before she hears it on the radio, she reads the tragedy on his face even before he speaks. After that moment, her home becomes a gathering place for Emmanuel, Braimoh, and sometimes Abdul, who come together to support one another and discuss the worsening crisis in Kangan.

Trust, Suspicion, and a New Beginning: As Beatrice becomes more engaged, tensions arise within the group. Abdul confides that he has been assigned to watch them, prompting Emmanuel to accuse him of being an agent provocateur. Beatrice defends Abdul, calling her judgment *"woman's intuition,"* which irritates Emmanuel but eventually softens him. Their conversations shift to rumors about Colonel Ossai's disappearance, and Abdul shares disturbing details about the ruthless nature of power in Kangan. All of this unfolds in the weeks leading up to the naming ceremony for Elewa's baby. When Elewa whispers that her mother may not come, Beatrice decides to perform the naming herself. She lifts the baby and begins a simple, improvised ritual. The group responds warmly, and the moment becomes a celebration of survival, shared suffering, and the belief that *"ideas cannot live outside people."* The ceremony marks a turning point: Beatrice has regained her voice, her strength, and her place within this fragile community.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

HIS EXCELLENCY (SAM) *(authoritarian, insecure, manipulative)*

His Excellency is an authoritarian leader who demands obedience and shuts down dissent. He is deeply insecure, always afraid of being challenged or embarrassed. This insecurity makes him manipulative, using charm or intimidation whenever it suits him.

Authoritarian His Excellency embodies the authoritarian ruler whose power depends on fear, intimidation, and absolute control. In cabinet meetings, he snaps at ministers, shuts down discussion, and treats disagreement as rebellion. His command *"Finish! Kabisa!"* captures his instinct to end debate rather than engage with it. He rules through mood rather than policy, forcing everyone around him to read his temper like a weather report. Achebe

Insecure Beneath the loud commands and military swagger of H.E. lies deep insecurity. He fears petitions, crowds, and even his own cabinet. When the chanting outside the palace begins, he panics, bursting back into the room to demand answers no one has. He suspects Chris simply because they share a long personal history, and he asks the Attorney General whether Chris is "loyal," revealing how fragile his trust has become.

Manipulative His Excellency is manipulative in the way he shapes narratives, manages appearances, and uses flattery or humiliation to keep people off balance. He instructs Professor Okong to "humour" the Abazon delegation, telling him to mention phone calls with the U.S. President or the Queen to impress "peasants." He forbids television coverage not for national stability but to prevent others from gaining symbolic power. Even his sudden friendliness, such as calling Chris by his first name or inviting Beatrice to his party, is strategic. It is meant to disarm and confuse.

CHRIS ORIKO *(principled, disillusioned, courageous)*

Chris is principled, holding firmly to honesty even in a corrupt system. He grows disillusioned as he watches power twist his old friend into a tyrant. Still, he remains courageous, acting with integrity even when it puts him at risk.

Principled Chris is principled in a way that sets him apart from the other members of His Excellency's Cabinet. When fear dominates the room, Chris refuses to flatter or manipulate the truth. His silence in meetings is not submission. It is a refusal to participate in lies. He understands that loyalty to people matters more than loyalty to a ruler.

Disillusioned Chris's disillusionment grows as he watches the government decay from within. He sees intelligent men shrink into frightened servants, and he recognizes how power has transformed His Excellency into a paranoid autocrat.

Courageous Despite his disillusionment, Chris remains courageous. He defends colleagues when they are unfairly attacked, speaks up when others remain silent, and ultimately risks his life to protect the innocent. His courage is steady and rooted in integrity rather than bravado. Even in danger, he refuses to abandon his principles.

IKEM OSODI *(idealistic, provocative, compassionate)*

Ikem is idealistic, convinced that ideas can change society. His bold criticism makes him provocative, pushing people to confront uncomfortable truths. Yet he is deeply compassionate, driven by genuine concern for ordinary citizens.

Idealistic Ikem is idealistic in his belief that words can change society. His editorials are passionate, challenging injustice and urging the people to think critically. He sees writing as a moral duty, a way to confront power with truth. His idealism is fierce and deliberate, shaped by witnessing suffering and oppression.

Provocative Ikem is provocative because he refuses to soften his message. He pushes boundaries, questions authority, and confronts hypocrisy head-on. His speeches and editorials disturb the powerful precisely because they expose uncomfortable truths. This makes him both admired and feared, a voice that cannot be easily silenced.

Compassionate Beneath his fiery rhetoric, Ikem is deeply compassionate. He cares for ordinary people, listens to their stories, and believes their struggles deserve national attention. His empathy is evident in his outrage at the public execution, where he sees not criminals, but human beings crushed by a brutal system.

BEATRICE *(insightful, resilient, nurturing)*

Beatrice is insightful, understanding people and situations with lucidity. She proves resilient, finding strength after loss and becoming a steady presence for others. Her nurturing nature creates a space where healing and support can flourish.

Insightful Beatrice is insightful, able to read people and situations with remarkable discernment. She sees through political games, understands emotional undercurrents, and often articulates truths others avoid. Her reflections on history, power, and responsibility reveal a mind capable of connecting personal experience with national crisis.

Resilient Beatrice's resilience emerges after Chris's death. Though devastated, she rises to care for Elewa and organizes the naming ceremony of her child. She becomes the emotional anchor of her small community. Her strength is visible in her ability to rebuild herself after trauma.

Nurturing Beatrice is nurturing in the way she supports Elewa, comforts her friends, and creates a safe space in her home. Her home becomes a refuge where grief can be shared and healing can begin. She embodies a form of leadership grounded in care rather than authority, showing how nurturing can be a political act.

ELEWA *(vulnerable, loyal, grounded)*

Elewa is vulnerable, facing love and grief with open emotion. She is loyal, standing firmly by those she loves. Her grounded nature keeps everything anchored in simple, everyday truth.

Vulnerable Elewa is vulnerable, navigating love, pregnancy, and grief in a world that offers her little protection. Her emotional honesty, crying openly, expressing fear, demanding care, reveals the vulnerability of women living under political instability.

Loyal Elewa is fiercely loyal to Ikem, to Beatrice, and to the small circle that forms around her. She stands by those she loves, even when she does not fully understand their political struggles. Her loyalty is expressed through presence, affection, and a willingness to trust others in moments of crisis.

Grounded Elewa is grounded in everyday realities. She speaks plainly, reacts instinctively, and brings a practical perspective to situations that others intellectualize. Her straightforward nature cuts through emotional complexity and reminds the group of the simple human truths beneath their political turmoil.

THEMES

Society

Class and Power Achebe articulates *Anthills of the Savannah* around a sharp class triangle: the dictator, the revolutionary elite, and the proletariat. This threefold arrangement exposes how power operates in Kangan and how each group shapes, resists, or suffers under the political order. At the top stands His Excellency, the praetorian ruler whose authority rests on fear, military discipline, and the myth of destiny. He embodies the upper class of the postcolonial state: a small circle of men who control resources, silence dissent, and treat the nation as personal property. His moods determine policy, his paranoia fuels repression, and his distance from ordinary people reveals how far the ruling class has drifted from the society it claims to protect. His Excellency's refusal to visit Abazon, his contempt for petitions, and his humiliation of ministers show a leader who sees the masses as threats rather than citizens.

Below him is the revolutionary elite, represented by Chris, Ikem, and Beatrice. They are educated, articulate, and politically aware. But they are trapped inside a system they cannot fully change. Achebe uses them to show the contradictions of the middle class: They understand injustice, but their proximity to power limits their ability to act. Ikem's editorials, Chris's attempts at reform, and Beatrice's moral ethics reveal a class struggling between complicity and resistance. Their disillusionment marks the failure of the elite to transform the state from within.

At the base is the proletariat, the ordinary people of Kangan: taxi drivers, market women, the Abazon delegation, and domestic workers like Agatha. They suffer most from drought, corruption, and violence. But Achebe portrays them as the true carriers of renewal. The Abazon elders who travel to the capital, Elewa's raw honesty, and the old man's prayer during the naming ceremony show a class that, despite hardship,

still holds moral authority. Achebe's message is that the future of Kangan will not be shaped by the dictator or the elite alone. It will depend on whether the revolutionary class learns to listen to the people at the bottom of the triangle.

The Elders: *Style of Veerition* The elder's speech at the Harmoney Hotel is characteristic of the rhetoric of orature. It unfolds in a deeply oral, traditional style, rich in digressions, repetitions, circumlocutions, silences, and proverbs. His message is not linear. It emerges through the winding, rhythmic movement of storytelling. He begins with a simple thanks, then veers into admonition, proverb, and metaphor, telling the crowd that *"a man who answers every summons by the town-crier will not plant corn in his fields"* (112), a digression that both rebukes those who blame Ikem for not being present at every community event and blesses Ikem's activism. His speech loops and circles, returning again and again to the idea that every person has a divinely assigned role: *"Everyone and his own!"* the elder's speech goes through long, vivid detours about bush-fowl, farmers, battle-drums, and the division of labor in the world. He pauses often, letting silence thicken until even the waiters' footsteps become part of the performance. Then, he resumes with new images: the boa mistaken for a tree trunk, Agwu choosing his storytellers, the puppy foolishly farting at fire. These circumlocutions are method of persuasion, drawing listeners into a shared cultural memory where truth is revealed slowly, through repetition and metaphor. His voice moves, weaving proverb into narrative, narrative into warning, warning into prophecy, until the crowd falls under his spell and understands that the story, its telling, its keeping, its moral weight, is the true authority that outlives warriors, rulers, and even the "Big Chief" himself.

Gender: *Womanhood as a House of Many Corners* Achebe presents womanhood as shaped by social conditions, expectations, and unequal access to dignity. Through Beatrice, Agatha, and Elewa, the novel shows that womanhood contains many rooms, each defined by class, education, emotional burden, and the pressures of a patriarchal state. These women do not share the same experience, but their lives intersect in ways that reveal how society assigns value and limitation to female identity.

Beatrice represents a corner of womanhood shaped by education and professional achievement. She holds a senior government position, speaks with confidence, and moves through elite spaces. Her independence is respected, but it also isolates her. She carries emotional responsibilities that society does not acknowledge, such as comforting Elewa, managing crises, and navigating political danger. Her strength is expected, even when she faces grief and fear. Achebe uses her to show how educated women must balance public competence with private vulnerability.

Agatha occupies a different corner, one marked by hardship and social invisibility. As a house girl, she lives within the home but outside its affection. Her resentment toward Elewa comes from a lifetime of limited choices and constant judgment. She watches others receive tenderness she has never known. The narrative suggests that her bitterness is shaped by the conditions that keep her at the bottom of the social ladder. Her role shows how womanhood can be defined by labor, obedience, and the absence of recognition.

Elewa stands in a corner shaped by emotional instability and social precarity. She is young, pregnant, and grieving. Her dependence on others exposes how society treats women who lack education or status. But she also displays surprising resilience. Her cry after learning of Ikem's death is powerful, and her calm afterward reveals a depth that others overlook. Achebe uses her to show that womanhood includes courage that emerges from pain. These three women illustrate a theme: Womanhood is not a single path but a structure with many corners, each shaped by the forces of class, culture, and political instability.

<u>Politics</u>

Leadership: *Image of the Praetorian Leader as Achebe's Warning* In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe builds the image of the praetorian leader through His Excellency, Sam, a military ruler whose authority rests on fear, insecurity, and the constant performance of power. A praetorian leader is one who rises from the military and governs with the habits of the barracks: suspicion, bluntness, and a belief that force is the only reliable tool. Achebe uses Sam to show how such leadership destroys institutions, relationships, and even the leader himself.

From the opening cabinet meeting, Sam embodies the praetorian style. He snaps at Chris, refuses to visit Abazon, and treats disagreement as personal betrayal. His language is absolute: *"Finish! Kabisa!"* His ministers sit stiffly around him, terrified of his moods, waiting to see whether the day will be safe or

dangerous. Their fear is not respect; it is the result of a system where one man's temper decides national policy. Achebe shows how praetorian rule turns intelligent men into anxious performers, flattering the leader to survive. Sam's insecurity is central to his praetorian image. He insists he is *"still a soldier, not a politician,"* but he clings to power with the desperation of someone who knows he cannot govern without intimidation. He mocks his police chief, humiliates his cabinet, and treats petitions from citizens as threats. When the crowd gathers outside the Palace, he panics, revealing how fragile his authority truly is. The praetorian leader is powerful only as long as everyone else is afraid. Achebe also shows how this type of leader depends on myth. Sam's ministers call him *"the nation's Man of Destiny,"* feeding his belief that he is chosen rather than accountable. This myth blinds him to reality and isolates him from the people he claims to protect. Through Sam, Achebe warns that praetorian leadership is a dead end: It creates fear instead of stability, obedience instead of progress, and ultimately collapses under its own paranoia.

Power: *as Service and as Abuse* The narrative presents power as a double-edged force. It can serve the public, protect the vulnerable, and guide a nation toward stability. But it can also be twisted into a tool for domination, fear, and personal gain. The novel's political landscape shows how easily authority shifts from responsibility to abuse when leaders lose their sense of duty. His Excellency personifies the abusive side of power. He begins as a soldier who claims to be straightforward and honest, but his leadership quickly becomes shaped by insecurity and suspicion. Cabinet meetings reveal how he uses power to silence disagreement, humiliate ministers, and control information. Power becomes a shield against criticism rather than a channel for public good.

Achebe contrasts this with characters who understand power as service. Chris, as Commissioner for Information, tries to use his position to encourage transparency and protect citizens. Even when he disagrees with His Excellency, he remains committed to the idea that leadership should respond to people's needs. Ikem, through his editorials, uses the power of language to challenge injustice and speak for those who cannot. His belief that ideas must remain free reflects a vision of power rooted in responsibility rather than control. The Abazon delegation represents the people who suffer when power is abused. They come peacefully, hoping the government will listen. Instead, they are met with manipulation and empty gestures. Their drought becomes a symbol of what happens when leaders forget that power is meant to serve. Power is not inherently destructive. It becomes destructive when leaders treat it as personal property. True leadership requires humility, listening, and a commitment to the common good.

<u>Psychology</u>

Disillusionment Disillusionment runs through the story like a slow, heavy wind. Achebe shows a society where people begin with hope, trust, or idealism, only to watch those expectations collapse under the weight of political violence, corruption, and betrayal. The novel's characters do not lose faith all at once. Their disillusionment grows gradually through daily encounters with power that is careless, insecure, or openly cruel. Chris Oriko's journey captures this clearly. At the start, Chris still believes he can reason with His Excellency, still imagines that the Cabinet can function, still hopes that intelligence and loyalty matter. But each meeting chips away at that belief. He watches ministers shrink in fear; he sees His Excellency twist simple issues into personal insults, and he realizes that the government he once helped shape has become a machine of paranoia and oppression. His reflection shows how disillusionment can trap a person in inertia in a system long after they know it is broken.

Ikem's disillusionment takes a different form. He begins as a passionate idealist, convinced that words can change society. But the public execution he witnesses shatters that confidence. The crowd's excitement, the officials' theatrics, and the cruelty of the moment force him to confront a painful truth: The people he writes for are themselves shaped by fear and brutality. His editorials become sharper, angrier, more desperate, because he now understands that the struggle is larger than he imagined. Even ordinary citizens feel this destruction of hope. The Abazon delegation arrives with faith in leadership, only to be met with manipulation and empty promises. Their drought becomes a symbol of spiritual dryness, a reminder that the state has abandoned them. Disillusionment in the novel is a sign of awakening, a recognition that real change requires more than loyalty or good intentions. It requires courage to face the truth.

Death and Renewal: *The Novel's Deep Pulse* In *Anthills of the Savannah*, death is a thrust. It reshapes relationships, identities, and the future of Kangan. Achebe uses death to expose the brutality of

political power, but he also uses it to open unexpected paths toward renewal. The novel's emotional movement depends on this tension: endings that feel absolute but generate new beginnings. Chris's death is senseless, violent, and deeply personal for Beatrice, Elewa, and their small circle of friends. But the aftermath of his killing becomes the moment when Beatrice begins to transform. She collapses at first, unable to function, but the crisis of Elewa's threatened miscarriage pulls her back into life. The story shows this shift clearly: Caring for Elewa becomes the first step in Beatrice's renewal. Her grief does not disappear. It becomes a source of strength rather than paralysis. Ikem's death also carries this dual meaning. His murder exposes the cruelty of the regime, but his ideas continue to shape the living. Emmanuel recalls *"The Last Grin,"* the moment Ikem faced death with courage and humor. That memory becomes a message for the survivors, a reminder that truth and integrity can outlive violence. Ikem's editorials, his warnings, and his belief in ordinary people become seeds for a new political consciousness. Even the naming ceremony for Elewa's baby symbolizes renewal. The child is born into loss, but the ritual becomes a moment of healing. The old man's prayer, *"May her path be straight,"* marks a turning point: The community chooses life, unity, and hope despite everything. The message is clear: Death is real, painful, and often unjust. But renewal grows in its shadow. Through memory, solidarity, and the courage to rebuild, the living reclaim the future.

Relationship

Loyalty and Disloyalty*: the Moral Fault Lines of Kangan* In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe uses loyalty and disloyalty to expose how political systems twist personal relationships, distort moral judgment, and create fear among those who serve the state. Loyalty becomes a currency, a weapon, and sometimes a trap. Disloyalty becomes both a danger and a necessary act of conscience. His Excellency demands absolute loyalty but offers none in return. His cabinet lives in constant fear of appearing disloyal. A simple correction, a faint smile, or a hesitation can be interpreted as rebellion. His Excellency even asks the Attorney General whether Chris is loyal, framing suspicion as "intelligence." The Attorney General responds carefully, knowing that one wrong word could destroy him. This moment shows how loyalty becomes a performance rather than a genuine bond.

Chris's position reveals the complexity of loyalty. He has known His Excellency for twenty-five years, but their friendship cannot survive the demands of authoritarian power. Chris's honesty is interpreted as defiance. His Excellency calls him *"a professional dissident,"* suggesting that loyalty to truth is treated as disloyalty to the regime. Chris's refusal to flatter the ruler marks him as dangerous, even though he has not betrayed anyone. Ikem faces similar accusations. His editorials are seen as threats, not contributions. Professor Okong warns that Ikem and Chris might *"foment disaffection,"* showing how the regime labels criticism as treachery. Ikem's loyalty is to the people, not the government. His commitment to justice makes him vulnerable in a system that rewards silence. Achebe also shows loyalty among ordinary people. Beatrice, Elewa, and their small circle form bonds of trust that contrast sharply with the paranoia of the state. Their loyalty is rooted in care, not fear. In the end, Achebe suggests that true loyalty belongs to truth, community, and moral courage, not to rulers who demand obedience.

Friendship: *Where Personal Histories, Friendship, and Power Collide* *Anthills of the Savannah* shows how personal histories and friendships become entangled with political power in ways that are both intimate and dangerous. The novel's central relationships, especially those among Chris, Ikem, and Beatrice, reveal how private bonds are reshaped, strained, or destroyed by the demands of an authoritarian state. Political power is never abstract; it reaches into homes, memories, and long-standing friendships.

Chris and His Excellency embody the most telling example. They share a long personal history, having known each other for twenty-five years. But that history becomes a liability once Sam becomes Head of State. The Attorney General alleges that Chris's "trouble" is that he cannot accept how "this same boy" he once knew has become the nation's ruler. Sam himself fears that boyhood friends pose the greatest risk to his authority. Their friendship, once a source of trust, becomes a source of suspicion. The novel shows how political power rewrites personal memory, turning familiarity into threat.

Chris and Ikem represent a different intersection. Their friendship is built on shared ideals, intellectual respect, and years of debate. But political pressure strains even this bond. Chris worries that Ikem's editorials are too fiery; Ikem believes Chris has changed after entering government. Their personal history keeps them connected, but the political environment forces them to confront uncomfortable truths about

each other. Achebe uses their relationship to show how friendship can survive political tension, but not without pain.

Beatrice stands at the emotional center of these intersections. Her personal history with Chris shapes her grief, while her friendship with Ikem and Elewa becomes a refuge from political chaos. In her flat, political trauma and personal loyalty blend into a fragile community of survivors. In a broken state, personal histories and friendships cannot escape the reach of power. They become sites of conflict, resilience, and, sometimes, renewal.

Solidarity: *Sisterhood as Survival and Shared Burden* In *Anthills of the Savannah*, sisterhood is a force that helps women survive political violence, personal loss, and social marginalization. The narrative builds this reflection through the intertwined lives of Beatrice, Elewa, and Agatha, three women from different social backgrounds who gradually form a fragile but meaningful solidarity. Their bond is shaped by crisis, grief, and the need to protect one another in a collapsing state. Beatrice's flat becomes the emotional refuge where this sisterhood takes shape. After Chris's death, she is devastated. However, she rises from her grief when Elewa nearly miscarries. The story shows how caring for Elewa pulls her back into life: *"From that day she had addressed herself to the well-being of the young woman."* This shift marks the beginning of a protective, almost maternal solidarity. Beatrice's strength does not erase her vulnerability. Instead, it becomes a shared resource that Elewa later returns when she comforts Beatrice during the naming ceremony, saying *"E good make person cry small"* (it's good for a person to cry a little). Their mutual care reveals sisterhood as reciprocal healing.

Elewa, though younger and less educated, contributes emotional honesty and resilience. Her grief for Ikem is raw, but she steadies Beatrice when needed. Her presence reminds the reader that solidarity does not require equality; it requires recognition of shared suffering. Even Agatha, who initially resents Elewa, becomes part of this circle. She joins the ritual with song, her hands *"clapping her own accompaniment,"* signaling a moment where class tension gives way to communal belonging. Achebe uses these women to show that in a society fractured by authoritarianism, sisterhood becomes a counter-force to fear and isolation. These women's solidarity is built through gestures of care, shared rituals, and emotional honesty. Together, they create a small but resilient community that resists the violence and instability surrounding them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does His Excellency's behavior in the cabinet meeting reveal the dangers of authoritarian leadership?
2. In what ways do Chris, Ikem, and Beatrice show different responses to political disillusionment?
3. What does the Abazon delegation's visit reveal about the relationship between ordinary citizens and the government?
4. How does Achebe use friendship, especially between Chris, Ikem, and Sam, to show how political power can reshape personal relationships?
5. What role do women, Beatrice, Elewa, and even Agatha, play in creating emotional survival and community in a collapsing state?
6. How does Ikem's belief in the power of storytelling challenge the government's attempt to control information?
7. What does Chris's death in Abazon suggest about the vulnerability of moral courage in a violent political system?