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**Completel Chapter By Chapter Summary Of Independence By Sarah Ladipo  
Mayinka JAMB Recommended Book For UTME**

**Chapter One**

In chapter one, the story begins with preparations for Tayo's imminent journey from Ibadan, Nigeria to England to take up a scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford; a scholarship which was in the past exclusively reserved for the whites, such that Tayo is the first Nigerian to win this kind of scholarship. Tayo and his father are in high spirits as a result of this scholarship which on-wishers described thus:

*‘Na special scholarship dey don make for de boy...’ (page 8)*

He is very glad that he is travelling away from home and strongly hopes for the best in the white-man's land. This is revealed by the narrator thus:

*Pg 10: ...’he had been looking forward to travelling far away from home- to having his freedom...’*

After him, his parents and siblings had finished greeting relatives in Ibadan, they move to Lagos and also visit their relatives in Lagos. This kind of greeting is customary in Yoruba culture for anyone who wants to embark on a long journey. After this, Tayo's family and well-wishers escort to the seaport where he boards the ship and sets sail to England.

**Chapter Two**

Tayo write a letter to his father, notifying him of his arrival at Oxford. He makes friends with two students on the ship: Mr. Lekan Olajide from Ogbomosho and Mr. Ibrahim Mohammed from Kaduna. He also informs his father about meeting with influential people; his being introduced to a British army Colonel who dined in their college, a Lord, as well as the fact that King Olav's son is also a student like him at Balliol. He also expresses his surprise at the strangeness of things in England compared to what he has been used to in Nigeria. Such things include the cold weather as opposed to the warmness in Nigeria, the fact that people don't greet each other in passing unlike Nigerians who put so much value in greetings and the non-appetising nature of English food. He also sends his regards to his relatives.

Mr Ajayi, Tayo's father replies his son's letter telling him how thankful they are to God for getting Tayo safely to England. He spells out in the letter that he has told his colleagues at work

about Tayo's meeting with King Olav's son and other influential people (in a boastful manner to his colleagues at work) and how impressed they are. He also gives information about the progress that Tayo's siblings are making in their studies, such as Bisi receiving the highest honours for geography, and Biyi being made school prefect. Similarly, he talks to him about their high expectations from Tayo to do the family proud. He promises to send him some articles in the newspapers. He encourages his son to study hard and reminds him of the Ajayi motto: 'in all things moderation, with exception of study' which means studying should not be done with moderation but with extra effort.

### **Chapter Three**

Tayo meets for the first time with Mr Barker (his headmaster Mr Faircliffe's old colleague) and his wife. The narrator describes the traits of the couple which is very peculiar to that of his father and mother. Isabella cooks wonderful meals in a way that reminds Tayo of his mother while Mr Barker talks politics like Tayo's father. They invite him to a drinks party for foreign students. This is how he meets Christine, the famously beautiful third year student. She is described as arrogant on account of her beauty but Bolaji (Tayo's friend) is surprised that she interacted well with Tayo.

Christine and Tayo eventually become friends and even graduate into a romantic relationship. Tayo sometimes feels guilty about Modupe, his girlfriend back in Nigeria, having started a relationship with another lady.

### **Chapter Four**

Vanessa Richardson, Tayo's colleague in Balliol College who is a young and beautiful English lady and whose father is a colonial man (to Nigeria) and an unrepentant racist; is being cruelly beaten by the rain on a wet October night and gets drunk. Her friends help her dry herself and take her home. She wakes up with a headache the following morning and manages to write her friend in Cambridge, Jane about an article she is trying to write on the status of women in Oxford and the trouble with Oxford men in response to a 'silly article' arguing that Oxford women are to blame for distracting the men. She complains in her letter that women there are treated like second-class citizens. She also informs her that she has signed up for the Labour Club, the JACARI (Joint Action Committee Against Racial Inequality) and the College music. Unlike her father who is a promoter of racism in Africa, she advocates for the racial equality and emancipation of Africa.

### **Chapter Five**

We are made to know that Christine had sent a letter to him few weeks after their argument that their relationship is over: she was called 'clingy' and the fear of her boy being snatched by some woman. Here it is revealed that Tayo does not want a long-term commitment. A meeting holds (The West Africa society meeting) wherein he meets and makes new friends like Chris, Ike, Bolaji. They exchange greetings in pidgin – their language of fun. He tries to wade off the thoughts of her by getting involved in some emotion-distracting activities such as setting the projector, welcoming men guests.

Tayo plays the film on Nigeria. It starts with a brief history of Nigeria's colonial rule, serving as a backdrop to a much longer treatment of Nigeria's recent independence.

Vanessa is interested in Senghor, Christine is interested in Okigbo. Tayo and Christine meet for a coffee at her place. Tayo remembers home whenever he comes here because of her cooking which reminds him of mama and the juju and highlife music she plays. Christine talks to him about her fears. There is a reference to a book – lonely Londoners which Tayo jovially says that it will tell him why he shouldn't look at English girls. Tayo kisses Christine to stop her from crying.

## Chapter Six

Vanessa and Tayo are on a work discussing Malcom X's visit to Oxford. Vanessa says "I wish that England was less racist than America. Tayo says he believes in change especially in the younger generation. He says he has hope in the British. He shows a considerable level of optimism. Here, Vanessa notices his habit and composure; picking up twigs to play with while he walks. His cleverness and yet his humility, "never flaunting his knowledge in the way she dislikes in men like Charlie and Mehul. She deems/ evaluates him as being more serious and less flirtatious. This makes her confident in him such that she is prompted to share something that has been bothering her, which she tags "small confession" she has connections with Africa: her father and grandfather were in the colonial service. She expatiates further about her father's colonial tour in West Africa.

She strives to say this in a positive light so she does not create a bad impression in Tayo of his parents such as saying her father is "won over to the idea of African independence. The manner of her narration compels Tayo to tell her she ought to be proud of him which makes her feel guilty. He tries to make her feel at ease telling her his father has been in the British administration; first as a court messenger, then, an interpreter and currently an inspector (of police). She has misled Tayo into thinking her father is one of those colonial officers being loved by locals. She regrets this. She went to grab a drink where they were harassed by two men. Vanessa becomes scared but lies to him that he wanted to punch them there. Tayo names her Moremi. Moremi invites 'Mr sincere' (she also named Tayo this) to her grand parents' Christmas party.

## Chapter Seven

Vanessa travels to London for the holidays. Her parents go to pick her at the railway station. Her mother makes delicacies such as chicken pie and cake to welcome their daughter. In spite of the long time she has invested in making these things, her husband does not appreciate it, complaining that it is soggy in the middle.

The narrator expresses Vanessa's constant irritation towards her dad. Her mother talks about preparations for the Christmas party and asks Vanessa who is inviting. Her father does not allow her to answer this question before he sharply grumbles that: "better not be anti-apartheid

people” because he has invited his mining friends. Vanessa becomes angry as she dislikes the men who exploit the blacks in South Africa to enrich themselves. Nessa is in a dilemma as she can’t tell those she has invited not to come any longer, yet she is worried about what they will think on meeting with her father’s racist South African friends.

### **Chapter Eight**

The party comes to play. Tayo is being introduced to her grandfather who is very chatty, talking about their family ties with Lord Lugard, then her mum and finally the father with his colonial South African friend who mistake him for a servant. He is glad when the party was over. He puts to record this day which at the time last year, he was with Chris. He decides to write his father after a long break in writing him for weeks. In his letter, he describes the house of the Richardson as an old house (about 200 years old) but spectacularly punctuated with affluence having 7 rooms, a stable and servants’ quarters. It is at this point he hears a knock on his door which turns out to be Vanessa. She comes to apologise for any embarrassment caused by her father. Tayo tells her that he is not offended. They also talk about Tayo’s parents and Tayo concludes that: “We all get embarrassed by our parents”

Vanessa describes her father as conservative. They move to the subject of polygamy and monogamy and she asked which suits him. He replies: “monogamy, happy monogamy”.

### **Chapter Ten**

Vanessa visits Tayo in his room, Tayo is admired by Vanessa for his tidiness, for example, his way of organising his jazz in one pile and high life in another. It was initially his gentleness and genuineness, attentiveness, his build; fine muscles that set her mind aflutter. They change records after records. They engage in an intellectual discourse, especially about books, essays and debates. Vanessa asks to know more about Tayo’s parents which Tayo does. He even shows her pictures of his family. After these, they play several records and dance to them. He kisses her on the forehead.

### **Chapter Ten**

This chapter starts with plans for Easter between Tayo and his friends: Vanessa (his new girlfriend), Simon (his friend), and Nina (Simon’s girl). Simon, one of his friends suggests that spend Easter in Paris. Tayo and his girlfriend stay in Simon’s Uncle’s apartment. They tour the beautiful city for days. The rowdy and bustling atmosphere reminds Tayo of home in Nigeria. Vanessa buys him his first writing journal to record his thoughts. In this, Tayo pens down the ecstatic love he has for Vanessa. The ultimate happens on their last full in France as they were preparing for a picnic when a telegram arrives, announcing the death of Tayo ex-girlfriend, Christine who was now Ike’s girlfriend. Ike gives him the details of her death, mentioning that she committed suicide. Everyone is stunned and wonder why she did it. Tayo, in deep thought tries to figure out the reason and concludes that he is to blame because he refused to respond properly the many letters she sent to him. In her letters, she revealed her anxiety and despair about her academic success to please her family as well as her feeling of

being an outcast “caught between two lands”, never fully belonging to England or Nigeria. Her words keep resonating in his mind:

“Bolaji tells us you are busy with your new girl. Please, spare a few moments for your old friend”. His heart and eyes are heavy due to her death and similarly because he has lied to Vanessa that Christine was his cousin so that Vanessa does not get jealous. For the rest of the day, he grieves for Christine.

## **Chapter Eleven**

Vanessa is worried about Tayo because of the loss of his supposed cousin, Christine (his ex). She hopes that Tayo would return to France with her, but he is determined to spend the summer with the only family he has in England, his cousin, Tunde. Therefore, she also decides to go to her family in France, although she dreads staying with her parents. Jane joins her there. Vanessa’s mother (Elizabeth) receives a letter from the chatty meddling Nancy Murdoch (whose first letter of her name, ‘N’ stands for notoriously nattering nitwit Nancy), her husband’s friend’s wife, informing her that she and her husband would visit them over the Bastille holiday. Vanessa’s mother’s reaction and that of her father’s (Jonathan) are symbolic of marriages without couple’s harmony wherein the ideas, opinions and mentality of the couple are always opposing, such that they cannot compromise their differences. The narrator says:

“father is delighted, mother is furious”

This is why Mother also insists on inviting Uncle Tony, her brother. Father detests Tony as he is unconventional to him and because he had the opportunity of achieving a place at Cambridge University which Vanessa’s father didn’t have. Mother likewise detests Nancy.

Mr. Murdoch and Jonathan have been friends since they met at Oxford in preparation for colonial service. At the meal, there ensues a string of conversations particularly on Vanessa’s articles against American foreign policy and about Africa as she supports independence movements. Her father comments in a pessimistic way about this: “Well, she might not be supporting them for long. Wait and see if they last”. Mother cautions him. Nancy also makes her disapproving remarks and she is being snubbed by Vanessa and Uncle Tony. She is being described as having a ‘supercilious (arrogantly proud) tone and feigned generosity’. She even says that Tayo resembles Jonathan’s gardener in Jos. Elizabeth becomes upset and leaves the room in anger. Jane and Vanessa also leave for their room.

Vanessa is worried at the persistent misunderstanding that occurs between her parents. Jane persuades her not to be bothered and changes the topic of discussion to that of Vanessa’s boyfriend, Tayo. Jane out of her own sexual experience with guys expects that Vanessa would have had sex with Tayo, but Vanessa denies. Truly, she has not. Jane also asks what impression

Nessa's parents have of Tayo and whether they wouldn't worry about how people will view their children who would be brown (mulatto/ half-caste). Jane hopes big for Tayo, foreseeing him as a Prime Minister or a Professor, and indeed, he becomes a professor.

## Chapter Twelve

Here, there is a letter written by Vanessa to Tayo. She demands that he writes her many more letters, telling her how much he has missed her and dreamt of her; otherwise she "will start to wonder what he is up to with those northern lasses". She wishes he was there with her and talks about the warm weather. She also narrates how much she dreams of him and how she has been enjoying the books he suggested to her for reading which she intends to review, such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*, that highlight the dilemmas of post-independence.

Vanessa comments on the 'Perham review' sent to her by Tayo. She suggests that he ought to provide background information on Dame Margery and that he should structure the review more tightly around his principle criticisms of Perham's work which include:

An underestimation (dismissal almost) of Africa's pre-colonial history (as the white racists think the Africans had no history and that their history only began when they visited Africa to colonise it)

Failure to acknowledge the potential of Africa's new leaders

The belief that independence was granted too swiftly to African states.

Moreover, Tayo replies her letter after about two weeks. He also teases her in his letter that she should not allow French men whom he heard are quite romantic to woo her and to remind them she has him who is sweeter than they are. He reassures her that he will also ward off the northern lasses who admire him. He also tells her that his stay at his cousin's place makes him realise how fortunate he is to get a scholarship at Balliol College because he witnesses the life of struggle most African students live, engaging in ridiculous and exhausting jobs such as bakery and hospital work to make ends meet. This highlights the unspoken suffering the blacks experience in the white man's land, whereas those in Africa especially Nigeria think they live a life of fortune and comfort. The narrator also hints at the air of racism all around England, some shown in action, some in speech and some in writing. For example, there are signs around Northern England which read:

"No Dogs, No Irish, No Coloureds" (Africans and Indians). The novel also shows that it is not only Africans who suffer discrimination, but the Pakistanis and Indians who do 'the hardest and dirtiest work' in the bakery, while the 'least strenuous job in the bakery' is reserved for the English; Pakistanis and Indians on the bottom, Africans in the middle and English at the top.

## Chapter Thirteen

This chapter talks about the Tayo's experiences in his cousin's house, a house known as a 'two up, two down', with a living room and kitchen on the bottom floor, 2 bedrooms upstairs and a toilet outside. There is no bathroom, so bathing is done in a tin bath in the kitchen or at public baths. Tunde shares his room with Tayo and Yusuf (Tunde's friend) uses the living room as bedroom because two other Nigerians shared the second room, so no room for him. Due to the absence of these two Nigerians, Tunde and Yusuf decide to have a party for Tayo and to celebrate Gambia's independence (although they are Nigerians but they rejoice so far it is an African country).

Before the party commences, Tayo realises how morally bankrupt Yusuf is. He says that his aims are to please ladies. He mocks Tayo for being naive in drinking, smoking and being a womanizer. They chat further and Tayo asks him if he intends to marry his current white girlfriend, Joyce. He says the 'English lasses' are 'for fun, but not for marriage'. He says determinedly that when he is ready to marry, he will get married to a hundred per cent Nigerian, who will definitely be a good northern Muslim. He emphasizes that "Nigerian women are the best". He says:

"...Nigerian women know how to care for us, how to cook our food and maintain the culture for our children. But the English women...dem no fit do dat...". (page 84-85). Tayo argues with him that there is no difference between a white woman and an African woman, stressing that a woman is to be loved for who she is and not her colour.

The party begins. Joyce and her two friends Norma and Jean arrive. There are food, drinks and music. Girls reach for Tayo's hands in admiration. In the evening, he finds himself wrapped around a woman's waist. There came a shout and someone strikes him in the jaw and swears at him for touching his sister. Tayo fights back and dares the man to call the police if he likes. A policeman arrives, arresting Only Tunde, Yusuf and Tayo since the others have fled. They are tortured in different cells and eventually released.

## **Chapter Fourteen**

Tayo returns to Oxford. He goes to a wedding (Yusuf's). Tayo presumes that the bride must have fallen pregnant, considering the speed of arranging the wedding. The bride's people are dressed in traditional Nigerian wedding lace (a hint that the bride is a black and a Nigerian), which surprises Tayo as he thought Joyce (Yusuf's white girlfriend) is the bride. Contrarily, the bride is Joy Williams, not Joyce. The vows are taken and rings exchanged. Vanessa arrives to join Tayo at the event, in a 'fine lace wrapper and buba' which she borrowed from a friend.

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Tayo becomes worried as to how he is going to tell Vanessa that the bride is not Joyce but Joy. Vanessa, on hearing this exclaims. This suddenly changes Vanessa's mood and despite his entire attempt to cheer her up or make her talk becomes futile. Joyce appears at this moment, lurching towards the newlyweds:

“You bastard! Bastard!

Everyone is shocked. This is her way of protesting against Yusuf's abandonment of her and going for another woman. She is being led out to avoid trouble. Eventually, Tayo and Nessa leave the party and on their way back to Oxford, Tayo succeeds in making her talk. Filled with fury, she asks him why he lied to her, first about Christine being his cousin, while she was her lover in reality; and then about the bride. Tayo denies having lied about Christine. Tayo fails in trying to calm Nessa. He even calls her the Yoruba name he gave her: Moremi. She objects: ‘No! Don't Moremi me’. She then goes her way.

### **Chapter Fifteen**

On New Year's Eve, Tayo wakes up homesick. Suddenly, he decides to cook and goes to buy chicken from the Covered Market. He is challenged by his ignorance of the spices to cook the chicken with, but eventually gets help from the stallholder. As he chops the chicken, the bell rings. It turns out to be Vanessa. He is so excited. They cook and eat together. Thereafter, they settled their issue. They dance to music and make love.

### **Chapter Sixteen**

Tayo's favourite uncle, Uncle Kayode pays Tayo an unexpected visit. This is an opportunity for Nessa to meet a member of Tayo's family for the first time. They are to meet at the Randolph Hotel, Oxford's finest hotel. Nessa is nervous and anxious about whether his uncle will accept her or not. She relays the Yoruba greeting that she had memorised when he shows up. Surprisingly, he makes her feel at ease with his friendly chats with her. Vanessa is happy about this and hopes the rest of Tayo's family will also be lovely.

### **Chapter Seventeen**

Mr Richardson (Vanessa's father) invites Tayo to lead his school assembly with a lecture on Nigeria which surprises Tayo. This is not the first time Tayo gave talks on Nigeria, but since the invitation came from the racist Mr Richardson, it has to be exquisite. So, he takes his time in preparing all the necessary facts, and practising his delivery very well. The manner in which he started, beginning with his childhood held the boys' attention. The speech was a success.

After his speech, Mr Richardson shouts "Bravo" and he leads Tayo to his study. Tayo is nervous as he does not know what he will say. Richardson starts:

"What are your intentions with my daughter?". Tayo is caught off-guard. Richardson continued by telling him that it is a difficult thing to embark on a cross-racial marriage, citing his marriage as an example. He stresses that his in-laws do not approve of him, even though; his marriage to Elizabeth is not as difficult as that of inter-racial one. His own kind of marriage was cross-class marriage, as his wife is from the upper-class. He therefore discourages Tayo from having any further relationship with his daughter.

Tayo returns to Oxford. Vanessa is eager to hear things out. She notices his quietness and asks him what the matter was. He says he is fine. Due to her persistence, he opens up and tells her that her dad didn't approve of them.

"Vanessa, we can't be together when your father is so opposed"

Vanessa says she doesn't care and that she will sacrifice her family for him. She challenges him to be a man and go for what he wants. They depart. Tayo reflects on her challenge, concluding that she is right. He gets back to the college and he is told by the porter that there is a telegram waiting for Tayo. It was from his mother:

"Baba is in hospital, recovering. Return home immediately".

## **Chapter Eighteen**

Tayo is back at home. His return witnesses a lot of negative happenings which transform Nigeria from a peaceful country into that of warfare and degeneration at different angles. Everything seems strange for Tayo: the sticky heat, the smoke from his mother's cooking and the kerosene lamps, the change in size of his siblings. He is amused when his father, in attempt to call one of his children, he calls several names at a time as his children are numerous such that he can't keep track of all his children's names. He then shouts "ki ni won pe e paa paa?" (what name are you called exactly?).

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Tayo starts to write Vanessa a letter. He pauses to reflect on his last encounter with Mr. Richardson whom he despises for 'bigotry', yet he sees this as less struggle compared to the one he will face at home in his bid to persuade his own family to accept a white woman as his wife, remembering his father's comment the previous day when a family friend announced that his son will be marrying a white woman: 'How will the woman fit in?'. The only relative who supports his talk of Vanessa is Uncle Bola (whose interest in women remains as strong as ever) in his comment: 'bring de lady come my house when she come Nigeria'. It is at this point of reflection that Tayo gets a knock at the door. It is Remi, his younger brother who comes to inform him that there is a coup. The whole courtyard becomes disorderly.

In the middle of the crowd, he sights Modupe, his first love who is now pregnant. He also meets her husband at the scene, the couple seeming happy. Suddenly, Dele, the village drunk appears, confirming the coup and adding that some individuals tried to kill Ironsi the previous day. Nobody believes him until Tayo's father listens to BBC which confirms it. It also says curfew has been declared from 6:30pm. Tayo, realising that everyone was watching him, enjoins them not to panic and suggests that they return to their homes.

### Chapter Nineteen

The news of the coup delays Tayo's completion of his letter to Nessa. She eventually gets his letter although he didn't say when he will be back. She hopes to see him soonest. There is an irony of situation when Nessa hopes he will be back by March, but this month marks the time his letters stopped. She writes to him, phones and sends telegrams, none is replied. She becomes worried.

Nessa eventually receives Tayo's letter after several weeks. He conveys his apology for taking so long to write to her. He intimates her of the various factors that made him unable to write her, namely the coup, the start of the civil war and his father's second heart attack as a result of these. He states that his family is in a difficult time, so he isn't sure when he will return to England.

Vanessa feels pity for him. She decides to stop waiting for him and rather go to meet him in Nigeria. Tayo picks her up at the airport in Lagos and they check into a hotel. Tayo shows her around and they eat at a restaurant. They return to the hotel and make love.

The following morning, Tayo is seen pacing by the window. Nessa asks him what is wrong. He says nothing and claims he has got to buy a few medicines for his father. He insists on going

alone. He returns without the drugs. He tells her he didn't go to buy drugs but went for a walk to clear his head. Something is obviously heavy in his heart which he finds difficult to talk about. He eventually reveals that he has had an affair. Vanessa is relieved at this, since is also guilty of having an affair with Charlie when Tayo stopped writing to her. The ultimate happens when Tayo continues that the woman with whom he had an affair is pregnant. Nessa becomes mad at him and immediately walks out on him, gets out of Nigeria and out of his life. This is how their relationship crashed.

## **Chapter Twenty**

After some years, Vanessa is seen in Dakar, living with Salamatou who has taught her many vocabularies in Wolof (a language). Salamatou is a single mother of half-caste Sulaiman. The narrator emphasizes the handsomeness of this child such that even Nessa wishes for a child like him.

Salamatou asks after Abubakar, one of her admirers, a married man to whom Nessa is thankful for introducing her to those who helped her find stories to send to Reuters as well as contacts with the local paper, Paris-Dakar. These mark the beginning of her journey as a successful writer and journalist for the Africans. He intends to take Nessa as second wife but she refuses.

Nessa's stay in Dakar afforded her the opportunity to fulfil her dreams: writing about African art and culture. She continues in her chat with Salamatou who asks her if she never had a lover before coming to Dakar. She says yes and tells her about Tayo and how things didn't work out for them. From their conversation, Salamatou realises that Vanessa still loves Tayo, but Nessa says it is over between them. She goes back to her flat and cries about Tayo "for the first time in many months".

## **Chapter Twenty One**

For years now, Tayo has been writing about Nigeria's problems which he believes are principally GREED and MISMANAGEMENT which paved way for oil corruption and a broken civil service. Tayo is in his house, searching through the bookshelf for an exemplary text to use as a prototype for the preface of his manuscript which his publishers requested for. Tayo

believes that the West through the World Bank worsened Nigeria's problems. However, he does not view Nigeria's problems as insurmountable in spite of the depth of her decay.

Tayo decides to dedicate his book to Vanessa and to his father. Something falls from his pocket which turns out to be his yesterday's shopping list containing household needs, written by his wife, Miriam (the woman he had an affair with and that was pregnant). It is his duty to do the shopping because his wife is usually out of home for night shifts.

One of the latest developments in Tayo's life is that he has grown disenchanted with organised religion. He is irritated by the way new church services cry out confessing their sins in public. He hardly attends services, whereas his wife is very religious. After his wife and Kemi's (his only daughter) return from church, He takes them to Yelwa Club as is their custom one Sunday a month. He looks happily at his wife, feeling thankful for her present pregnancy after several miscarriages.

He meets with Yusuf and they discuss Nigeria. Yusuf opines that the only way to solve Nigeria's problems is for her to have a strong ruler, like Rawlings of Ghana. Tayo moves to another topic after this. It is a disgraceful story of a so-called Professor of Economics who was passed on as a candidate to be employed by the university. Tayo interrogated this Professor who claims he is a graduate of Oxford like Tayo. Yusuf comments that he knows his reputation, but Tayo shrugs off the comment and Yusuf says:

‘‘Haba, Tayo, you're too humble my friend.’’ This is another instance that shows how humble Tayo is despite his achievements. He continues his narration about the professor who said he attended Oxford College, whereas such name does not exist in England. He even claimed he read Economics whereas there is no Economics course in England. In short, he is a fake professor. This portrays the height of corruption in Nigeria.

Tayo is being offered a job at Birmingham University but he is reluctant to accept it although he knows life will be better there, but feels an obligation to remain in Nigeria for no other reason than his students. His wife is strongly against this. She tries hard to convince him.

## **Chapter Twenty Two**

Tayo discovers Vanessa's old diary in his study. This takes his mind back to the thoughts of Vanessa who is now a well-known writer and one of Africa's most loved journalists. He regrets impregnating Miriam (even though he did not intend to sleep with her, but she was the one who gave out herself freely to him as a way of comforting him after his father's operation)

and he could not have abandoned her. She is also loved by his family (she nursed Tayo's father when he had stroke), so he had no option than to marry her. He imagines how happy he would have been if he married Nessa.

### **Chapter Twenty Three**

The Ajayis fly to Lagos for the summer holidays as usual spending a specific period of time with each relative, starting with Uncle Kayode. His house is a luxurious and striking building that it has been featured once in a design magazine under the caption, 'Beauty in the Heart of Darkness'. There is also an abundance of art in this magnificent house which thrills Kemi. Helene, Uncle Kayode's new wife decides to give Kemi a treat by inviting two local artists to the house to talk about their craft. Kemi asks them seemingly endless questions.

While one of the carvers, Mr Akin talks about his inspiration for his art being a great uncle who had worked for Lord Lugard before and enjoys telling stories about him, Tayo becomes interested as he has been interested in sourcing for information about Lugard from the perspective of a Nigerian, which is not included in the books written about him. Akin offers to take Tayo to see the uncle. Tayo grabs the opportunity even though his wife reminds him that his mother is old and such a trip to the uncle will delay their visit to his mother.

When they get to the village, Tayo is asked to wait for the old man. While waiting, he engages in deep thought feels remorse for being impatient with Mariam and for taking his journey to this village as priority over visiting his aged mother. His thought also flies to Ike (his college friend) who works in the Ministry of Education but has done nothing to improve the condition of his fellow Nigerians. When Tayo challenged him, he says Tayo is unreasonable in his expectations of a review of higher education. Ike is symbolic of hypocritical individuals who, before getting to a governmental position, criticise those in power, but when they also get to power, they do the worst.

Tayo eventually meets with Akin's uncle and he is loaded with a lot of useful information about Lugard even though he spent more days than he planned at the village before he could discuss with the uncle. He returns to Lagos and finds out that his mother died in an accident on her way to Lagos. He blames himself for her death because, had he not gone to visit Akin's uncle, he would have gone to see his mother earlier and she would not have had any reason to travel to Lagos anymore. If only he had put family first, his mother would not have died.

### **Chapter Twenty Four**

Another coup happens a year after Tayo's mother's demise. A strong military ruler comes to power in whom Nigerians invested their hopes for the stamping out of corruption in Nigeria. However, the optimism vanishes as their hopes were buried by the decree of this new leader. University students protested which leads to the closure of university for months. It is no

longer racial war, but war among kinsmen (Nigeria). Tayo supports his student activists. He also strives in his own way to fight this negative development through his writings.

Tayo is in his study and his wife comes to him, showing him her newly braided hair. He comments that she is beautiful. He then tells her “No cooking tonight” that he is going to take her out. Unfortunately, Miriam spoils his mood by breaking the news of Tayo’s many close friends such as the Gordons, the Adewales, the Shahs, and beloved writers such as Wole Soyinka and Achebe who have left the country for England. This is another strategy by her to make Tayo see more reason to leave the country with her and their daughter.

She draws his attention to the fact that there are no essential foodstuff in the kitchen such as rice, bread, egg and sugar. This is because there is little or no income for the couple since the universities have been closed and hospital workers are not paid salaries, as Miriam works in the hospital. Tayo remains resolute, saying he has to wait a little more for his students. Here, it is obvious that Tayo takes his students as priority over his family, which he regrets later in life. They argue until Miriam leaves the room angrily.

### **Chapter Twenty Five**

Now, Miriam and Kemi have left him for a life in England. He is left alone in Nigeria, and he resorts to reflecting on memories of them and drinking. In the bar where he is drinking, he meets two profit-conscious businessmen planning on how to start an import-export business, wanting to take advantage of the degeneration in Nigeria. Nigeria’s Electrical Power Authority has become ‘Never Expect Power Always’. Therefore, one of them believes in Electric generators, saying that 90% of Nigerians will be begging for it. The other man, unconvinced, suggests the import of Mercedes Benz spare parts and export of Nigerian curios and thorn carvings. Tayo having listened to their discussion feels pity for his country in which chaos and greed is taken for granted. Tayo, like his father believes the best investments were in lands (farming).

Tayo faces challenge upon challenge which compels him to seriously doubt the wisdom of staying in Nigeria, while his family had left for England. The first is the broken water pipe which mechanics insist could not be fixed without spare parts from China. The next headache comes when his houseboy informs him that he is returning home to Kafanchan for the final burial of his relative. Yet another one is that of his disappointment and waste of time in a meeting he had put his mind to and even sacrificed his plan to travel to New York where he was to receive an award for his book. The meeting was arranged by his friend Simon who is newly appointed Chairman of a prestigious London Foundation to meet with Mr Peters, Simon’s Africa Director in a bid to help in funding the University where Tayo teaches. To his surprise, the foundation offered second-hand books, old software programs that are useless because the university needs computers to access them but lacks them. The ultimate challenge he faces is that of threats to his life. He received a suitcase full of cash the previous month (an anonymous bribe from the authorities) to stop writing against government policies, which he refused.

### **Chapter Twenty Six**

Tayo gives his students an exercise to discuss the parallels between Indian and Nigerian experience and he is disappointed that many of them plagiarised, but he couldn't blame them. He puts the blame on the appalling situation of Nigeria wherein physical conditions they live in does not provide an enabling atmosphere for students to study.

Tayo's relatives are against his outspoken views against the government because of the potential danger in it. Everyone abandons him. His sister, Bisi has written him "angry letters" about this, his brothers and sisters have stopped asking him to take care of their children, and Hawa is away visiting relatives in Abuja. Thus, Tayo lives in a 'no-man's land', having no supporters and lives all by himself. He remembers his daughter who is grown up now. His wife and daughter feel abandoned. He thinks of how he is to wake up early around four or five just to get fuel at Dogun Dutse Mobil station where he hears there is fuel. He marvels at how crazy it is for a country exporting millions of gallons of oil each day not to have any for its own people. What an irony!

Tayo is challenged by soldiers on his way home. After questioning him for his licence they ask him to get out of his car, but he stubbornly refuses until he is forced out of the car and thrown to the back seat, while another soldier drives his car and heads for the barrack. A superior officer mocks him, saying that Tayo is not a professor at the moment because it is of no use and that he (the soldier) is the professor now. He is being tortured and warned to stop writing pejorative articles against the government, or else, he will be killed. He crashes to the floor as he is struck by a pistol. It is at this point that he wakes up in his room. He whispers with fear: "I won't write. I won't write anymore." He hears some footsteps and he is frightened, thinking he is still at the barrack. It is Nuhu, his houseboy who enters. Tayo whispers: "where are the soldiers? Nuhu replies: "Dem bring you come house when dem see say you no drive well-well and enter accident for road". He is surprised at the soldiers' false explanation, because they have actually beaten him.

### **Chapter Twenty Seven**

The New York Times names the biography of Lord Lugard written by Tayo 'biography of the year', while The Observer described it as 'the most significant historical text to hail from Africa in recent times. Vanessa knows that Tayo would be touring England for the promotion of his book and therefore gets his tour dates from her editor, so, they could meet.

Tayo arrives and he is being introduced. He does not notice Vanessa until the end of his talk. On sighting her, he shouts her name, and Vanessa, out of nervousness tells him she would be right back. She rushes to the toilet to gather her composure. She returns to the seminar room. Tayo gestures to her not to leave and she gestures back that he should take his time, so she waits for him. They eventually meet to talk. They are both excited to see each other after so long a time (28 years). They have now aged but they are still elegant-looking. They have dinner

together. They talk about each other's present status such as Vanessa being married to Edward Barker, Tayo's old benefactor, how she becomes a journalist, her adoption of Suleiman (her only son), the loss of her mother to cancer, Tayo's loss of his both parents, (his mum died in an accident while his dad died of stroke).

Samir (Tayo's college mate) sees Tayo at this point after so many years. He talks endlessly about Nigeria's military rule which makes Nessa uncomfortable. He has diverted Tayo's attention to himself, thereby not allowing her to discuss with Tayo. Out of boredom, she tells them she has a train to catch. Tayo apologises for Samir's intrusion. Tayo tells her how much he missed her. He seeks her permission for him to kiss her, but she says she will miss her train.

## **Chapter Twenty Eighteen**

Vanessa is deep in thoughts and memories of Tayo. She also thinks about her son. When she was in Dakar, she did not worry about how to raise him because she was never alone, but here in England, mothering is a lonely job for her, in spite of old Edward's presence. He is now eighteen and he is very different from his charming self as a boy. Other mothers empathised with her, saying that it's a symptom of teenage years, but she perceives that what they actually had in mind is that: "that is the problem with having a black child".

Again, she remembers that it is their anniversary day (18 years of marriage). Edward, her husband had shown kindness to her and has treated her like a father and eventually proposed to her. She refused the first time but accepted it the second time, thinking it would be foolish to refuse again; after all, he became her closest friend and benefactor when times were hard for her. Nevertheless, she still dislikes those things she had disliked about him in the beginning. Now, it has gone worse for him as he is now forgetful, talkative, he no longer thirsts for Africa and his smell of old age.

When she gets home, her husband gives her a surprise. He got a book for her in the bookshop (which he thinks she would like as a literary mind): "Long Walk to Freedom". She appreciates it as the book had just come out. She opens it and finds a note on the inside cover written by Edward: "To the woman I love, and with whom I have walked the best 18 years of my life". She feels loved.

## **Chapter Twenty Nine**

Tayo writes Vanessa. He furthers their discussion the last time they met about the role of the artist. He complains that he does not know where he fits which has to do with a sense of cultural

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non-belonging. For instance, he does not comply with the demands of his extended family, he is no longer certain of the existence of a god. These are fundamental elements in African culture which are not meant to be questioned. He also adds that he's tired of social interaction. 'These are all markers of African society'. He asks the rhetorical question: 'What then is my African personality?' He also expresses how much he enjoyed the conversation he had with Vanessa when last they met.

Vanessa replies Tayo's letter. She tells him how lovely it was to hear from him. She expresses how alarmed she is to hear of his detention even though he does not state it in his letter. She demands him to promise her that he will be careful. Moreover, she intimates him of her nostalgic feelings for her days in Dakar and her restlessness in England. She identifies with Tayo's feeling of not being able to define his personality as she does not feel particularly English. She asks rhetorically: 'What then is my personality – African, European or Afropean?' Is this restlessness the price we pay for having lived in other countries and tasted other cultures?... she continues to ask an endless stream of questions which tell how restless she really is. Similarly, Vanessa expresses her guilt in not being good enough mother to her son: She had focused too much on her career and not spent enough time with Suleiman.

Tayo's reply of Vanessa's letter follows. In his letter, he assures her that she is a wonderful mother and that Suleiman himself knows (Tayo tries to make Vanessa not feel guilty as the cause of Suleiman's strange behaviour). He explains that Suleiman is 'only going through a stage and the stage will pass'. He talks about his temporary detention just because he showed his students Perry Henzel's film, *The Harder They Come*.

In addition, he also mentions that things have not gone well with him and Miriam. The previous month, he decided that he must move to England for the sake of his family, but it was too late. His wife is already asking for divorce. He expresses his guilt in the fact that he placed his profession before his family. His daughter, Kemi also holds him responsible for what happened between her mum and him because he places priority on his students over his family. He talks about his lack of conviction when he prays. He concludes the letter by telling Nessa he misses her.

## Chapter Thirty

While thinking of Tayo's most recent letters, Vanessa remembers an old story which her mother had told her about love. It is about a common saying that a person never marries their first love but they are reunited later in life after being married to someone else. This is referred to as the pick-up-your-stick-and-sandals marriage. She wonders if this is applicable to her and Tayo.

The narrator expresses Nessa's state of mind concerning the surprises Edward always gives her and the last encounter she had with her son. She does not like surprises anymore especially when it involves lots of people, like the party he threw for her on her birthday, the week before. Suleiman had also presented her with a bunch of wilting flowers which cost £4.99. She remembers how they quarrelled when she drove him to the airport for his journey to North England. Here is a part of their argument:

Suleiman: You've wanted me to do this trip anyway

Vanessa: I'm happy you're going, Suleiman, but it's just the timing. You've only just started university and what happens when you return?

Suleiman: who said I'm coming back?

Nessa: don't be ridiculous

Suleiman: Ah, fuck you, Mum!

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Nessa: What? How dare you speak to your mother like that?

Suleiman: Mother? What mother? Did you think you were doing some nice charity work for Africa when you decided to adopt me?...

Nessa; Go then, but remember I adopted you because I love you, because your mum was my best friend and I promised Salamatou to take care of you...

After their arguments, there was silence till they got to the airport and Suleiman disappears from her sight.

Vanessa, after her deep thought and reminiscence, she writes a letter to Tayo. She makes it known to him that Tayo's last letter has lifted her spirit and that she has been imagining how life would have been like with him. She also tells him of the pick-up-your-stick-and-sandals marriage.

### **Chapter Thirty One**

Vanessa goes to check on her aged father in The Carrington Home for the Elderly which always smelt of disinfectant and urine. This is the same home Nancy Murdoch is kept. Vanessa's father has really aged such that his hearing is supported by hearing aids and he keeps looking for things that are not there. For example, He searches for his pen in a briefcase that is empty. Nessa comes to his aid, assuring him that she will help him find one in his bedroom.

After helping her father cut his nails and listening to her father's numerous complaints, she informs her father of her decision to go to the airport the following day. Her father hastily concludes that Vanessa is off to interview the coloured people again. She says no, that she is going to meet Tayo. Vanessa's father starts yelling, warning her that Tayo is interested only in her body and that he has used black magic on Nessa. She shuts her father up.

Nessa waits for Tayo at Heathrow being the day Tayo is meant to arrive. She waits for so long and she is forced to go to the desk to enquire if Tayo is on the list of passengers. Tayo is not on the list.

## **Chapter Thirty Two**

Tayo decides to leave Nigeria and this time for a long time. His driver, Abdou drives him down to the airport. Abdou tells his master to help him find a job in England. Tayo says he will see what he can. Abdou also tells him that he may find an English woman to marry so as not to be troubled by authorities. Tayo corrects his opinion about marriage and tells him that "marriage is a serious thing" and that he should not marry a woman just for the papers, but out of love. A storm occurs on the road and leads to an accident whose victims are Tayo and his driver.

## **Chapter Thirty Three**

Kemi arranged Tayo's trip to the United States so as to take care of him. She lives in a one-bedroom apartment in San Francisco (US). Tayo reflects on the accident and the aftermath of it. Abdou eventually died after a long period of internal bleeding. Tayo is also badly injured in the leg and he is not capable of independent movement for a period of time.

It is this accident that foils his plan to visit Vanessa and it makes him short of cash such that he depends solely on the dollars that his daughter gives him. He is also stuck in the U.S. as he cannot afford to travel to England. What a change of fortune! Kemi tells her father to see her therapist as she senses her father's depression, but he argues that he is perfectly fine and that he does not believe in therapists. He wonders what his daughter needs a therapist for. Kemi claims that it helped her in difficult times, when she lived without a father and her parents' divorce. This leads to a stream of arguments which makes the atmosphere gloomy.

Kemi returns home in a better mood and reconciles with her father, taking back all the resentful words she had thrown at him in the morning. Tayo discovers that it is Miriam who has been sending money for his treatment. Kemi also discovers who Vanessa is to Tayo. They become excited about their re-union.

## **Chapter Thirty Four**

Vanessa is busy thinking in the quietest time of the night. After her father's death, Edward suggested that she publishes her father's book. She is at first reluctant to do so because of the poor relationship between her and her father. She discovers that it is a manuscript full of racist comments about Africans, although it also contains many interesting details of the colonial period, therefore having some historical significance. The only thing missing in the manuscript is the perspective of the Nigerians who worked with her father. This is why she wrote to friends in Nigeria, hoping to get information from his old workers. Nobody replied except Saratu, the daughter of Vanessa's mother's maid. She tells her part of the story, making positive comments about Vanessa's mother and praising her kindness.

Another thing that Vanessa tries to find out is the reason for her mother's return to England before her father. Since childhood, she is made to believe that it was for her education, but a year ago, Uncle Tony told her another version of the story saying that something had upset her mum and that her father travelled a lot, leaving her mum behind. Vanessa then makes deductions from the facts she has at hand and discovers that her mother had an affair with their gardener, Danjuma. Her father discovered and sacked Danjuma, while her mother returned to England with young Vanessa, while her father remained in Nigeria. She looks at her mum's picture and begins to cry. Suleiman finds her crying and consoles her. Vanessa tells her son that if he is interested in books, Tayo could help him. Suleiman gets a hint that his mum must have some feelings for Tayo considering how frequent she talks about him. He therefore teases his mother about him.

### **Chapter Thirty Five**

John Harris, a Professor of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco is introduced to Tayo by Kemi and he offers Tayo a part-time job which he would have declined if not that he knows Kemi needs money. He teaches the political history of West Africa and Oral histories in Northern Nigeria. It is here that he meets Kwame. He is excited to have someone of like minds with him and someone with whom he can talk to about Nigeria and about his experiences in America.

Eventually, Obasanjo is back in power. Tayo deems it fit to return to Nigeria and looks forward to participating in a new Nigeria. He discusses the extent of racism in America with his Kwame. Kwame asserts that:

‘‘Look, Tayo, if you live in America long enough, you’ll see there is no way of avoiding race. Race is a part of the fabric of this nation. You’re either black or you’re white, and this affects every aspect of your life’’

This shows the extent to which the blacks suffer discrimination in the hands of the whites. Tayo also complains that: ‘‘I see race playing out in my classroom between blacks, whites and Latinos.’’ Kwame then suggests that he holds a debate between his students by asking them to debate on a provocative topic. The outcome of this was a fight in the class. Tayo receives a package from the Nigerian Embassy. He opens it and finds a letter inside it which says Tayo has been awarded an honorary degree from Oxford. Tayo could not believe his eyes. Kemi congratulates him.

### **Chapter Thirty Six**

Tayo receives an honorary degree (Doctorate of literature). This event is graced by Tayo's loved ones such as Kemi, Vanessa and her son (Suleiman), Bisi, Bolaji, Uncle Kayode and Miriam (his estranged wife). Kemi and Miriam surprisingly receive Vanessa pleasantly. Kemi even tells Nessa when she wanted to leave:

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*‘No, you can’t. Dad’s been dying to see you’’. Vanessa is touched by Kemi’s kind words.*

Vanessa and Tayo take a walk together, talking about each other’s wishes. Tayo says that “he wishes he could go back in time and re-live his life”. Vanessa asks him what would change if it happens, and Tayo replies that he would have married her. They embrace each other. A middle-aged couple, who request that Tayo and Vanessa help take a photograph for them, spurs them into action as they also offer to take a photograph of Vanessa and Tayo too, thinking they are married. They are made to make a romantic pose for the photograph. This further leads to an affectionate kiss between Tayo and Nessa. They sit on a bench, ‘hand-in-hand with her head on his shoulder’. They show each other love to the extent that the three students who had passed them on their way to the river now pass them again and comment that Tayo and Nessa must be mad because the weather is freezing. This is a hint to a new love life between Tayo and Nessa.