

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A 500 NAIRA NOTE

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6:00am

The banker's fingers, scented with greed and cologne, releases me to a world of petrol and dust. Inside the danfo* driver's grasp, my spine bends in defeat to a palm thicker than cowhide dried in sunlight. He then buries me in the heat of his pocket, a damp crypt where his privates threaten to steal breath from my lungs.

9:00am

Rescued for the fizz of Coca-Cola's sweetness, I may have gasped too soon, relishing the hawker's cold fingers for in a split second, I am made captive in a cave of naira notes, clutching the salty skin of a fish-seller.

2:00pm

Some hours later, I am traded for peppers to a woman whose fingers burn me alive with her touch; I shout, but my voice is lost in the noise. Somehow, the wind of commerce carries me into a corn-roaster's hand, charred by the fire's orange tongue. Again, my owner changes to a drunkard. He drowns me in the stench of burukutu and laughs as he wipes phlegm on my body. I wait for a moment in his unsteady grasp, then let myself loose in a deliberate fall. Suddenly, a goat claims me, its teeth gnawing on my forehead till a beggar's mild prying frees me, unrepulsed by the stench I now wear.

7:00pm

I flee, with the help of the wind from the hollow of the beggar's cap, a frantic push for a different fate. Now, I nest in this trash heap, my once-bright skin is now a palimpsest of filth, smeared with the DNA of a thousand lives.