

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 cowskin 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 sweet-
ness, 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.