

# The Blotted Pawpaw

A Novel

*By*

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## **DEDICATION**

To every bruised youth under harsh suns,  
to every mother with prayerful hands and tear-lined smiles,  
to every father with thunder in the voice and pride in hidden chambers,  
to every sarcastic friend with a sharp tongue and secret loyalty,  
to every household under pressure,  
to every dream under temporary dust.

For the blotted,  
for the mocked,  
for the collapsing,  
for the rising,  
for the ripening.

For all pawpaws under difficult seasons—  
this story.

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

### **Patrick Lawrence**

A village-bred youth at the center of the pawpaw metaphor—once blotted, scattered, and fragile; later ripened through pressure, discipline, and quiet resolve. A living study of collapse, correction, and character.

### **Serah Lawrence**

Patrick's mother. A woman of prayerful stubbornness, emotional endurance, and strategic maternal courage. The moral spine of the story and the quiet architect of redemption.

### **Pa Lawrence**

Patrick's father. Thunder in voice, stone in posture, pride in permanent disguise. A master of insult as affection and denial as devotion. Patriarchy with a trembling heart.

### **Loveth**

Nana's daughter. Sharp tongue, theatrical instincts, cruelty wrapped in humor, and satire as medicine. The philosopher of mockery and the loudest reflection of Patrick's flaws.

### **Nana**

Serah's longtime friend and Patrick's urban guardian. A businesswoman of discipline and contradiction—tender in intention, severe in expectation. The gatekeeper of Patrick's second chance.

### **Nana's Husband**

A figure of restrained authority and silent judgment. Corporate calm, domestic hesitation, and the quiet mathematics of consequence.

### **Mr. Chin Chao**

Patrick's first urban employer. Impatience in human form. The early trigger of Patrick's collapse and the doorway into disgrace.

### **Mr. Ben**

Client at Chin Chao's office. The first public reflection of Patrick's professional failure.

### **Madam Affiong**

Estate gossip incarnate. A neighborhood broadcasting station without an off-switch.

### **Alhaji Musa**

The conspiracy interpreter of the estate. Every problem through a spiritual telescope.

### **Sister Grace**

Prayer warrior and crisis diagnostician. Spiritual warfare as daily vocabulary.

### **Mr. Ade**

Urban rumor courier. The estate's unofficial journalist with an empty briefcase and full mouth.

### **Mama Rafatu**

Village gossip engine with maternal seasoning. News distributor in wrapper and headgear.

**Baba Kolade**

Village elder and moral barometer. Staff in hand, wisdom in pauses, balance in judgment.

**Baba Irete**

Village philosopher and comic realist. Satire as cultural weapon and truth amplifier.

**Pa Jemba**

Pa Lawrence's draught companion. Rumor courier between leisure and revelation.

**The Lujnab Community**

A collective character—judging, praising, echoing, exaggerated, and ever-watchful.

**The Abuja Estate Community**

Urban chorus of speculation, status anxiety, and reputational warfare.

## NOTE ON STYLE

*The Blotted Pawpaw* a rare and daring literary tradition—one of rejection of the most fundamental engine of language: the verb. Not a stylistic accident; a deliberate artistic rebellion. The absence of verbs in this narrative—not a deficiency, but a discipline. Meaning here through pressure, presence, posture, atmosphere, dialogue fragments, and emotional gravity alone.

This work—proof that movement without motion, transformation without visible action. Characters in this novel—no “doers” in the conventional sense—only existences under weight, struggles under silence, collisions through language fragments, ripenings through consequence rather than description. The reader therefore an active participant in meaning-making, supplying motion where none explicitly present.

At its symbolic core, the *pawpaw* (papaya)—a structural and psychological metaphor—softness under pressure, vulnerability under handling, bruising under premature force, sweetness only after patient ripening. Patrick’s arc—a mirror of this biology of growth: early collapse, mockery, disorder, humiliation, eventual firmness through hardship. The story therefore simultaneously satire, moral allegory, social critique, and psychological development narrative.

The cast itself—a layered social microscope.

**Patrick**—youthful excess, misdirection, and eventual discipline.

**Serah**—unwavering maternal intervention and faith-powered persistence.

**Pa Lawrence**—the African patriarchal theater in performance—thunder in voice, love in disguise.

**Loveth**—the vital role of satire in human correction: sharp, theatrical, cruel on the surface, yet secretly catalytic.

**Nana and her household**—embodiment of contemporary African urban capitalism—opportunity mixed with chaos, growth tangled with fragility.

This work also a deliberate satire of modern African urban life—village innocence against city pressure, reputation faster than truth, communities often judges of transformation before its full formation.

Above all, *The Blotted Pawpaw*—a quiet philosophical truth:

**Early bruises—no cancellation of future sweetness.**

**Soft beginnings—no denial of strong endings.**

**And no youth—permanently blotted—except one without patience, one without hands of care.**

This literary experiment therefore an invitation—not only to the following of a story, but to the endurance of a form, to silence as listener, to pressure without motion, to growth without traditional action.

The pawpaw ripens.

So, too, the human spirit.

## PREFACE

*The Blotted Pawpaw* occupies a rare and radical space within contemporary African literary experimentation. Not merely a narrative of youthful misdirection and moral recovery; more fundamentally, an **act of formal rebellion against the architecture of conventional grammar**. By sustaining a long-form narrative almost entirely without the use of verbs, the author—not merely a storyteller—but an **interrogates the mechanics of meaning itself**.

In traditional narratology, action—the spine of plot. Verbs—drivers of causality, regulators of temporality, animators of character. In *The Blotted Pawpaw*, however, **action—displaced into atmosphere, posture, dialogue fragments, and symbolic pressure**. Movement without motion. Change without explicit acts. The result—a strikingly **static dynamism**, where growth—not through deeds but through **shifts in tone, spatial tension, social reactions, and emotional gravity**.

This stylistic constraint—a transformation of the novel into a **laboratory of narrative minimalism**. Readers—active participants in meaning-making, reconstructors of implied action through fragments and silences. Such readerly labor—alignment with traditions of **modernist and postmodernist linguistic disruption**, yet its cultural grounding distinctly African in voice, humor, and metaphor.

At the thematic core of the novel—the extended metaphor of the **pawpaw (papaya)**—a fruit of biological softness, early vulnerability, and susceptibility to bruising, yet capable of extraordinary sweetness and firmness through proper ripening. Patrick’s psychological journey—a mirror of this botanical logic with precision. His beginning—the “blotted pawpaw”: fragile under pressure, scattered under responsibility, publicly ridiculed under failure. Through a sequence of social humiliations, domestic conflict, economic pressure, and satirical confrontation—especially through the character of Loveth—a slow, uneven maturation. Importantly, this maturation—not heroic in the classical sense; rather **incremental, fragile, reversible, and human**.

From a sociological perspective, *The Blotted Pawpaw*—**sharp satire of African urban migration**, particularly the collision between village moral economies and urban capitalist pressure. The novel—a staging ground of the illusion of instant urban success, the brutality of commercial efficiency, the psychological disorientation of rural-to-urban transition, and the community’s obsession with reputation over process. Characters such as Nana—embodiments of the contradictions of modern African entrepreneurship—opportunity mixed with fragility, discipline alongside emotional volatility. Pa Lawrence—the classic patriarchal paradox: authority through insult, love beneath thunder. Serah—the moral anchor, maternal devotion as strategic resilience rather than mere sentiment. Loveth—perhaps the novel’s most philosophically potent figure—humor as social correction; her mockery both cruelty and medicine, growth through ridicule.

The communal characters—Lujnab villagers and Abuja estate neighbors—**collective consciousness**. Through them, society’s narration of failure faster than effort, celebration of success without study of the labor behind it. Through them, the novel—an exposure of the performative nature of public morality and the instability of social judgment.

Crucially, the novel—a rejection of simplistic redemption. Patrick’s recovery—neither sudden nor flawless. His transformation—**conditional, provisional, and continuously contested by old**

**habits.** This refusal of easy moral closure situates *The Blotted Papaw* within a mature ethical realism: change—possible, but never guaranteed; growth—attainable, but never linear.

From a literary-historical viewpoint, the work—a contribution to several intersecting traditions: African social satire, experimental constraint-based narrative, moral allegory for postcolonial economic realities, and the psychological bildungsroman without conventional action syntax.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE HIDDEN DEPARTURE

A chilly windy Lujnab dawn in a bushy colonial bungalow; dense fog, shivering rooftops, rusted zinc sheets, early-morning goats with rebellious bleats, palm trees with sleepy postures, and within all these, a shrieking, thunder-struck paternal call from an inner room:

“Patrick! Paatriiiiick!”

A groaning youthful reply from a cluttered corner of the sitting room:

“Yes, dad! Office time, dad! Unironed suit, dad!”

A louder explosion from Pa Lawrence:

“Bull-shit! Lazy boy with countless deafening ears! A mistakenly born child! Still at home till now? Until the frowning forehead of the rising sun? A disgraceful offspring of Pa Lawrence lineage?”

A counter-blast from Serah in the kitchen area—spoon clattering, pot cover shaking, melodious annoyance from her throat:

“No laziness here, my dear. Just too bumpy for the work. Facially and cognitively like his dad. Ignorant of this, you? Five-times-daily meals, loud snoring during work hours, cigar-dark palms, Arabian–Fula ‘ataya’ obsession, restless mouth with football arguments from dusk to dawn...”

Another explosion from Pa Lawrence:

“Quiet, Serah! No downgrading features in the Pa Lawrence lineage! You and your pampered child—still underage at seventeen and still under your wings!”

A calm but sharp correction from Serah:

“Underage—officially or unofficially, my dear. Even you—forgetful, mindless, preposterous man.”

A deep hiss from Pa Lawrence:

“Shshshshsh! Like mother, like son. Always late—church time, market time, family meeting time. Wonders on a patient God!”

A gentle push from Serah toward the doorway:

“Away, Patrick! No stress, no sweat, my one and only child. A smile from you—my fuel, my joy.”

A distant reply from Patrick, already at the compound gate:

“Yes, mama! No sloth!”

#### **Refined Expansion of the Office Scene**

A short while later, at the foyer of the Office of Mr. Chin Chao & Associates—file cabinets with asthmatic hinges, cobwebbed corners, moodless ceiling fans:

A nasal voice from Mr. Chin Chao:

“Late again, Patrick?”

A breathless greeting from Patrick:

“Good morning, Mr. Chin Chao. Not my fault, sir. One—unconducive weather for washed clothes. Two—no electricity throughout. Three—abrupt vanishing of the charcoal-iron. African government—egotistic. Last chance, sir.”

A laughterless, needle-point retort from Mr. Chin Chao:

“Complaints today, complaints yesterday, complaints forever. Only you in the company? Unlettered firing—the best solution. End of last chance. Deal!”

A defeated murmur from Patrick:

“Yes, sir.”

A finger-point command from the Chinese proprietor:

“Straight to your office! Clients—tired of waiting!”

Inside the liaison corner, a thunderous question from Mr. Ben:

“Mr. Patrick. Too late again?”

An attempt at dignity from Patrick:

“Shshshsh! Good morning, first. File—still under consideration.”

A furious gasp from Mr. Ben:

“Oh! Today again? No way!”

A pleading reassurance from Patrick:

“Patience, please, sir. Within an hour—hundred percent assurance. Last excuse.”

Mr. Ben’s reluctant surrender:

“Alright.”

A melodious underground hum from Mr. Ben’s throat—rhythmic, poetic, and vindictive:

“Enough and enough  
for the lazy mosquito;  
Enough endurance  
with the village bedbug.  
Today and today:  
Arrival of its end.  
For my sucked blood—  
poisonous in fact today.”

Meanwhile, Patrick’s neck—heavy, drooping; mouth—open; saliva—slowly rising, a merge with the wooden table like an overflown riverbank.

A violent interruption from Mr. Ben:

“You again with your timeless sleep? Mr. Chin Chao! Your untrained absent-minded lazy liaison officer with his usual routine again? Unfit for this establishment!”

A furious agreement from the boss:

“Immediate firing—next solution! Unhearable misbehavior—today, now!”

Another backing from Mr. Ben:

“Yes! Unlettered retrenchment—no gratuity. Waste product!”

A trembling echo from the boss:

“Patrick! Patrick! P-a-t-r-i-c-k!”

From Patrick’s sleep-choked throat:

“Sir... a-l-m-o-s-t...”

A cut-throat interruption:

“Quiet! Red Card! Letter on the table already. Not ‘almost.’”

A desperate plea from Patrick:

“Ah, sir. Please!”

A final command from the boss:

“No please again! Away from my office, imbecile!”

### **Refined Expansion of the Return Home Scene**

Under the familiar baobab tree—chatting men, palmwine gourds, draught games, ataya kettles, scattered groundnut shells. Pa Lawrence and an elderly friend—two frowning faces, two timeless complaints about the economy, lizards, and city politicians.

Inside the compound, Serah with her afternoon cleaning ritual—broom sweeps, dust in upward drift, melodious lullaby from her lips:

“Lala lala, lala lala lala...”

Lala lala, lala lala lala...

Happy happy, for Patrick Lawrence sweetie...

Happy happy, for only cherished Patrick...”

Suddenly, a crying voice from afar—panicked, dramatic:

“Ah! Mama! Trouble! Calamity! Mishap! Blow! Disaster! Catastrophe! Tragedy! Disgrace of highest order! All on me today! Mama! Mama!”

Serah’s startled gasp:

“A voice from afar—like my only child’s?”

A louder, choking cry:

“Mama!”

An anxious response:

“Yes! What? From where? How? And from who?”

A collapsing explanation:

“Fire! From my place of work! Thirty minutes delay in file processing! Unlettered strike from my boss—the restless workaholic Chinese dwarf!”

A quick maternal consolation:

“Inside first, my child. Million companies—better than his.”

A sudden shift toward hunger:

“Oh, connection mama! Now—my food?”

A warm assurance:

“As usual, on your father’s table.”

A grateful murmur:

“Thanks, mum!”

### **Refined Phone Conversation**

Later, on phone—Serah’s childhood voice reconnecting with Nana in Abuja:

“Hello, my childhood friend! Abuja and your cosmetics business—fine? Husband and Loveth—fine? Straight to the point—Patrick. Now a strong boy with average GCE certificate. My wish—exposure to real city life through you. Ready for assistance?”

Nana’s cheerful tone:

“Wow! No problem. When?”

Serah:

“Next week—precisely Saturday.”

Nana:

“No wahala! No regret, Serah.”

Serah’s gratitude:

“Great. Thanks, Nana. Till then!”

### **Refined Departure Scene**

Saturday morning—winds swirling, dust rising, travelers gathering at the garage. Patrick—secret excitement; Serah—motherly pride; Pa Lawrence—unaware of the secret mission.

“Lovely mum, bye!”

A shower of blessings from Serah:

“The Lord’s blessings after you, dear! My regards to Nana and her daughter, Loveth.”

A playful confusion from Patrick:

“Loveth?”

Serah’s description:

“Yes. Loveth—a lovely, troublesome, attractive human like you.”

A mischievous grin from Patrick:

“Ahaha! Maybe—my wife-to-be!”

A delighted gasp from Serah:

“Oh my God! Greatest desire! First assignment, ok?”

Patrick’s echo:

“Yes, mama. Deal!”

Serah's reply:

"Deal! Good luck!"

And with that—Patrick's hidden departure, a hush over Lujnab, the beginning of a long odyssey, the first breath of the saga of **the Blotted Pawpaw**.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE NOISY ROAD TO ABUJA

A Lujnab motor park; early sun with reddish grin; dust in wild dance; exhaust fumes; scattered nylon bags; hawkers with restless feet; touts with cracked voices; drivers with angry bellies; passengers with anxious eyeballs; chickens in raffia cages; goats with rebellious bleats; babies with endless tears.

A rickety eighteen-seater coastal bus; faded blue paint; cracked windshield; front bumper in permanent surrender; stickers on the body—

“NO CONDITION PERMANENT”

“GOD’S TIME”

“ONLY JEHOVAH”

“NO SHAKING”.

At the side of the bus, Patrick; one small bag; one oversized dream.

Near him, Serah; wrapper with tired flowers; scarf with hopeful lines; eyes with stubborn brightness; fingers with tight grip on his wrist.

“Patrick, my son, Abuja dreams—front; village laziness—backward,” from her lips; soft tone; firm content.

A playful grin from Patrick:

“Mama, Abuja streets—gold; skyscrapers—everywhere; salary—millions; my name—on big office door.”

A sharp pinch on his upper arm from Serah:

“Less fantasy, more focus. Nana and her cosmetics shop—first step. Loveth—second step. Marriage proposal—third step. My grandmother title—final step, ok?”

A mischievous wink from Patrick; eyes upward; lips twitching:

“Yes, mama. Deal. Grandmother Serah—soon.”

A blast from the conductor at the door; greasy shirt; torn jeans; breath with petrol aroma:

“Last passenger! Last one! Abuja direct! No stopping! No nonsense!”

A sharp side comment from a roadside woman with basin of oranges:

“Direct? With this bus? Hundred stops, at least.”

Burst of laughter from nearby hawkers; a brief clap from a palmwine-smelling man; mischievous smiles in all corners.

Serah’s final hug; chest on chest; tears at the corners; nostrils with soft trembling.

“My child, remember—prayers first, pride later. Phone calls—regular. Friends—few. Girls—careful. Especially Loveth—troublesome but lovely.”

Patrick’s nod; no words; throat with tight knot; eyes with thin glass of tears.

The conductor’s impatient shout;

“Inside, young man! No delay! Fuel price—no mercy!”

A last wave from Serah; a last grin from Patrick; a half-turn; entrance into the noisy belly of the coastal bus.

Inside the bus; narrow aisle; sagging seats; brown curtains with ancient dust; the smell—sweat, engine oil, cheap perfume, fried bean-cake.

Front row; a heavy pastor-lady with enormous handbag; Bible under arm; face with prophetic seriousness; scarf—a small mountain.

Second row; a slender young man with earpiece; loud afrobeats leaking; head with side-to-side wobbling; chewing gum with oceanic ambition.

Third row; a complaining civil servant type; newspaper in hand; glasses on nose; frown as permanent fixture.

Back row; a market woman with big sack of crayfish; wrapper above knee; laughter at maximum volume; mouth in constant commentary.

Near window; a quiet old man with rosary; lips moving without sound; grey beard; calm eyes.

Next to the aisle; Patrick; bag under seat; legs in awkward angle; eyes with restless scanning.

At the door; conductor with dirty towel over shoulder; voice as park anthem:

“Driver! Movement! Full load! No more extra!”

A murmur from the back:

“Extra? Already double.”

An explosion from the market woman:

“No space again o! My crayfish—under everybody’s leg already.”

The driver’s reply; rough baritone; toothpick between teeth:

“Madam, Abuja road—no joke. Complaints—later. Engine—now.”

Ignition roar; coughing engine; a brief protest from the bus; finally, grudging acceptance; slow crawling away from the noisy park; waving hands from behind; Serah among them—smaller, smaller, finally, mere dot.

Dusty road; potholes with angry mouths; passing palm trees; scattered villages; tiny shops with signboards:

“GOD DEY BOUTIQUE”

“TRY JESUS ELECTRICAL”

“NO FOOD FOR LAZY MAN RESTAURANT”

Patrick’s face—toward window; eyes on endless stretch; mind—inside Abuja skyscrapers; body—inside wobbly bus.

**Patrick’s inward stream—silent, elastic, verb-less:**

Abuja; tall glass towers; marble floors; revolving doors; air-conditioned reception halls; handsome receptionist Patrick Lawrence; necktie with glossy shine; suit with flawless ironing; shoes with silent authority.

Large desk; gold-plated name tag:

“P. LAWRENCE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.”

Clients with briefcases; foreign investors; handshake circles; respectful nods; whispers of admiration:

“Sharp young man; city brain; no village dust.”

End-of-month alerts on phone; zeros in a long row; account balance—mountain height; transfers—to Mama Serah; new bungalow construction in Lujnab; fresh paint; new zinc; big satellite dish on roof.

A new picture; Serah in lace wrapper; matching headgear; gold earrings; neighbors with envy; whispers:

“From Patrick in Abuja; good boy; no waste.”

Another frame; Pa Lawrence under baobab tree; new wristwatch; new sandals; fewer insults; occasional grudging praise:

“That boy, Patrick; the boy—my son anyway; small Lawrence reflection.”

A final frame; Loveth; Ankara gown with bright flowers; eyes with teasing light; hand in Patrick’s hand; wedding photographs; cake in pastor’s hand; clapping relatives.

Patrick’s lips—small upward curve; half-smile; eyelids—gentle droop; daydream; silent cinema inside skull.

Sudden jolt; loud bump; bus over a pothole; passengers—collective gasp; baby’s cry at once; conductor’s curse; driver’s insult at invisible government officials; small chaos.

From back row; market woman’s loud complaint:

“Driver! Small carefulness, abeg! My crayfish—scatter!”

From front row; pastor-lady’s rebuke:

“Silence! Road demons—everywhere. Prayer—only solution.”

Her bag—open; Bible—out; quick flip; pages rustle; finger on favorite verse; voice—thunder:

“Father, journey mercies; no accident; no armed robberies; no evil arrows; enemies—in permanent failure. All passengers—safe landing!”

A chorus from some mouths:

“Amen!”

From civil servant man with newspaper; a small grumble:

“Prayer—ok; good roads—better.”

From headphone boy; lower volume for a while; short nod; then, full volume again; head dance; leg tapping.

Patrick's eyes; patient; curious; scanning every face; silent labels in his mind:

Pastor-lady; walking crusade; sermon generator; emergency prayer.

Civil servant; chronic complainer; lifetime queue survivor.

Market woman; gossip assembly; price negotiator; volume champion.

Headphone boy; dance machine; ringtone ambassador.

Old rosary man; quiet wisdom; private dialogue with heaven.

Conductor; curse factory; ticket puncher; human cargo manager.

Driver; steering wheel dictator; horn philosopher.

A glance at his own reflection on the window; faint, shaky outline; youthful face; small moustache; pimple under left cheek; uncertain but ambitious gaze.

### **Another inward stream—deeper, sharper:**

Patrick; former liaison officer; red card from Chinese boss; company corridor; mocking voices; letter on table; "Fire!" in capital letters.

Mama's arms; protective shield; "Another company—better."

Now; Abuja road; second chance; new script; no more saliva on office tables; no more nap on files; new Patrick—serious Patrick.

Images of Nana; friend of Serah; tall figure; light make-up; perfumes, creams, lipsticks in hundreds; shelves in rows; customers in clusters.

Nana's voice; half in memory, half in fantasy:

"Patrick, nephew, serious boy, energetic help; future manager; branch owner; maybe more."

Loveth; imaginary entrance; tank-top, jeans, loud chewing gum; rolling eyes; dramatic hand gestures; every sentence—performance; attractiveness with danger label.

Her possible greeting;

"New boy from Lujnab; village accent; fine face though."

Her teasing comment;

"Job—ok; laziness—no. My sister's business—no village siesta."

Patrick's response—inside skull; heroic, polished:

"No laziness again; no sleeping in office; no delay with clients. Loveth—witness; Nana—testimony."

Inward applause from invisible audience.

Bus in semi-speed; road in curves; occasional police checkpoint; officers with black berets; rifles with bored posture; palms with expectation.

Conductor's negotiation from outside window; hushed tones; folded notes; handshake; quick release.

Murmurs inside; civil servant man again:

“Police everywhere; criminals—free; citizens—harassed.”

Market woman’s retort:

“Brother, leave politics. Abuja—near; market profit—nearer.”

Baby’s brief quiet; then new cry; mother’s rocking; small pacifying song.

Pastor-lady; another mini-sermon:

“End-time signs—multiplying. Corruption—every corner. Only salvation—safety.”

Headphone boy; lyrics—louder; chorus of invisible artist; beat against bus metal.

Patrick’s head; now against backrest; eyelids half-closed; not full sleep; midway zone; outside sound—a far drum.

### **Third inward stream—highest dream layer:**

Future Patrick; apartment in Abuja; small balcony; night view—city lights; distant sirens; faint music; breeze through curtains.

Laptop on table; online banking; digits with commas; property websites; land purchase in outskirts; new business ideas—a long list.

New clothes; branded perfumes; weekend visits to Lujnab; occasional gifts; neighbors gathering; “Abuja boy” whispers; respect with small bows.

Serah’s kitchen; more modern; gas cooker; new fridge; wall clock with golden frame.

Her introduction in village meetings:

“Mother of Patrick; Abuja son; helper of our community; sponsor of church roofing; donor of youth scholarship.”

Pa Lawrence; gradually softer; fewer curses; more stories about young days; occasional admission:

“Patrick; almost like me in youth; same stubbornness; same potential.”

Loveth; in that vision; across table; restaurant with dim lights; jollof rice on plates; juice in tall glasses; stabbing of meat pieces; private gossip about Lagos people; shared laughter.

Her statement;

“Patrick, village boy—upgrade; seriousness—change; future—bright.”

His answer—noble, confident;

“Loveth, future—joint project; Lujnab and Abuja—bridge; Nana’s cosmetics—foundation; more enterprises—later.”

Wedding bells; choir songs; ring exchange; camera flashes; Pastor-lady from bus—somehow on pulpit; same scarf; louder “Amen” this time.

A sudden sharp bend; screech of tires; fearful shriek from several throats; conductor's shout:  
"Hold something! Hold o!"

Bags overhead—gentle swing; some descent; one small bag—on Patrick's lap; another—on  
pastor-lady's head; quick rearrangements.

Market woman—short prayer and long insult in one breath:  
"Jesus at the wheel, driver—with sense."

Nervous laughter; relief sighs; heartbeat gradually normal.

Old rosary man; calm face; whisper prayer; rosary beads—between fingers; eyes—motionless;  
trust—quiet.

Patrick's heart—drum; pulse—faster; palms—slightly damp; dreams inside—briefly shaky; then,  
firmer; stronger; stubborn.

Window view; roadside goats; scattered fuel stations; small settlements; signboard at distance:

"WELCOME TO ABUJA FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY"  
—faint letters at first; gradually clearer; stronger; undeniable.

A light in Patrick's eyes; shoulders—small rise; chest—gentle expansion.

Soft words under breath; almost silent:  
"Abuja; new chapter; new Patrick."

Horns from other vehicles; conductor's excited announcement:  
"Abuja bound! New Nyanya soon! Jabi after! Berger junction, last!"

Cheerful noise from many passengers; sense of arrival; sense of possibility.

Inside Patrick's skull; another quiet scroll:

Lujnab—behind; dusty past; Chinese boss—closed file; red card—old story.

Abuja—before; perfume aisles; cosmetic shelves; Nana—mentor; Loveth—test.

The blotted pawpaw—still bruised; still soft; yet—under early rays of second chance sun.

No clear ripeness yet; no clear sweetness; only journey; only road; only noisy bus; only noisy  
heart; only silent oath:

No more waste; no more sleep; no more disgrace.

The coastal bus; slow approach toward the giant city;  
And inside one seat; a young boy;  
Half pawpaw, half promise.

## CHAPTER 3

### NANA'S MANSION OF COSMETICS AND CONFUSION (PART 1)

Abuja city; wide roads; impatient horns; skyscrapers with shiny shoulders; dust under control; street hawkers with Olympic reflexes; okada riders with suicidal confidence; policemen with dramatic poses; wealthy cars with arrogant hums; exhaustion in the air; opportunity in another corner.

The coastal bus—final stop. Passengers—scatter. Hawkers—swarm. Conductor—new round of insults. Driver—face of someone with permanent headache.

Patrick—bag on shoulder; sweat on neck; heartbeat with drum rhythm; first real breath of Abuja; mixture of hope, fear, excitement, foolish confidence.

A keke napep ride; yellow body; green stripe; engine with hiccups; driver with sideways cap; nonstop commentary; chaotic navigation through traffic.

Finally—Nana's residence.

A mansion with peach walls; tall pillars; wide balcony; satellite dish like metallic moon; flowers in ceramic pots; gate—oversized; security post—small; overall atmosphere—wealth with small confusion.

A gate man at the entrance; tall frame; white kaftan; small transistor radio under armpit; face with suspicious narrowness.

A quick inspection of Patrick's bag; then a long gaze at Patrick's face; then a nod with mild approval; slow opening of gate; welcome into Nana's domain.

Inside compound; two parked cars—one silver, one red; both with dust-free skin; evidence of strict housecleaning.

Children's toys in a corner; plastic chairs under mango tree; generator with beast-like silence (for now).

Door open; Nana—sudden presence.

Tall figure; smooth skin; light makeup; eyelashes with butterfly grace; perfume with expensive confidence; wrapper—colorful and wide; jewelry—subtle but loud in meaning.

Her voice—warm thunder, half laughter, half authority:

“Patrick! My child! My sister's pride! My new house strength! Welcome!”

Patrick's bow—awkward, hurried, not fully functional.

Nana's arms around him—soft, perfumed, motherly, but firm.

A series of praises from her mouth—fast, continuous:

“Full height! Handsome face! Same eyes as Serah! Same stubborn forehead as Pa Lawrence! Abuja—perfect ground for you!”

Small embarrassment on Patrick's lips; small pride in his chest.

Nana's hand—gentle pull; entrance into mansion.

Inside mansion—chaos with luxury decoration.

Large living room; chandeliers with crystal tears; sofa set with golden edges; carpet with Persian pattern; television—massive; sound system—several boxes in corners; framed portraits—Nana, Nana’s husband, Loveth, even dog in one.

But then—cosmetic world everywhere.

Lipsticks on center table; foundation bottles near flower vase; powder cases under sofa; hair extensions on dining chair; nail polish in every color; boxes of creams—stacked like political posters; customers’ receipts on sofa arm.

A whole mansion—half home, half cosmetic warehouse.

Patrick’s eyes—wide; eyebrows—rising; mind—small shock.

A loud voice from upstairs:

“Who again?! New person? Strange footsteps! Suspicious movement!”

Heavy steps; dramatic descent;

And then—Loveth.

Loveth—entrance like movie trailer.

Top with glitter; tight jeans; afro puff with rebellious bounce; bracelets with jingling ambition; chewing gum with intimidating rhythm; eyes—sharp, calculating, scanning Patrick from shoe to hairline.

Her greeting—sharp, slow, theatrical:

“Well well well... Lujnab arrival. Mama Serah’s golden boy. The new household project. The future millionaire. The possible brother-in-law. Hmm.”

A small choke of surprise in Patrick’s throat; tongue—momentarily useless.

Nana’s quick smack on Loveth’s arm:

“Shut that mouth, troublesome child! Respect for guest!”

Loveth—dramatic bow with exaggerated humility:

“Welcome, Sir Patrick of No-Ironing. Abuja journey—safe? Dreams—still intact? Laziness—still vibrating?”

Patrick’s cheeks—tiny fire; lips—tiny struggle for comeback.

Nana’s interruption:

“Loveth, enough nonsense! Patrick—guest, relative, helper, future manager.”

Loveth’s reply—sideways mouth:

“Helper? Manager? Under this roof? Under these cosmetic mountains? Under my supervision? Hahahaha... wonderful comedy.”

Her laughter—long, dramatic, echoing across tiles.

Patrick—internal confusion; admiration and irritation in same heartbeat.

Nana's hand—a gentle drag of Patrick toward dining table.

Food already waiting—pounded yam in large bowl; egusi soup in deep steaming plate; fried fish arranged theatrically; bottle of chilled drink on tray.

Nana's announcement:

“Welcome feast! For Patrick! For Serah's pride!”

Loveth from behind with quick jab:

“For Lujnab's champion sleeper!”

Patrick's eyes—tiny glare; Loveth's grin—wider.

Nana—indifferent; hand signal toward seat; Patrick—seat taken; eyes on feast; stomach with loud inner drum.

Nana's husband—entrance.

Tall; slim; calm face; glasses with intellectual posture; newspaper under arm; slippers with quiet sound.

His greeting—measured, polite:

“Patrick. Welcome. Abuja—home.”

Patrick's bow—more confident this time.

Husband's next statement—dry humor:

“This household—chaos sometimes. Cosmetics everywhere. Youth madness upstairs. Domestic tension occasionally. But hospitality—constant.”

Loveth's sharp whistle:

“Daddy, introduction accurate.”

Another smack from Nana on Loveth's shoulder.

Meal period—small joy; big tension.

Nana's questions—rapid-fire:

“Lujnab news? Serah's health? Pa Lawrence's stubbornness? School results—still good?

Ambition—still high?”

Patrick's answers—fragmented, respectful, shy.

Loveth's interruptions—constant:

“Hunger—in your eyes.”

“Sweat—on your forehead.”

“Village dust—still on your shirt.”

“Possibility of nap on dining table—50%.”

Patrick's sigh—silent but deep.

Nana's warning to Loveth:

"One more insult—one week phone seizure!"

Loveth's gasp—horror, panic, full tragedy:

"Mommy please! Emotional damage! Human rights violation!"

Nana's husband—soft chuckle; newspaper open again.

Tour of the mansion—underway.

Patrick—follower; Nana—guide; Loveth—commentator; husband—background existence.

First—cosmetic room.

Shelves touching ceiling; creams in hundreds; lip gloss in rainbow lineup; perfumes with intimidating prices; wigs hanging like quiet ghosts; cartons sealed, unsealed, half-sealed; customers' orders in piles.

Nana's proud explanation:

"Business—strong. Customers—many. Expansion—soon. Patrick—assistant; responsibility—plenty."

Patrick's nod; confidence—growing.

Loveth's whisper from behind:

"Plenty wahala too. Plenty lifting. Plenty arrangement. Plenty stress. Plenty sweat. No sleeping. No tolerance for it."

Patrick's eyebrow—small rise; challenge accepted in silent form.

Next—guest room.

Bed neatly arranged; wardrobe empty; curtain with soft floral pattern; table with lamp; walls freshly painted.

Nana's announcement:

"Your room. Temporary now; permanent later—if seriousness, a steady presence."

Loveth's addition:

"If laziness instead—kitchen floor available."

Patrick—small glare again.

Loveth—small wink.

Evening—its descent; mansion lights—warm glow; generator hum—background music; aroma of fried plantain in air; household atmosphere—busy but welcoming.

Patrick on guest bed; bag open; clothes out; mind full.

Abuja—new world; Nana—strict but kind; husband—calm; Loveth—chaotic beauty; cosmetics—everywhere; expectations—high.

Internal monologue—silent, heavy:

New chapter; new life; no office sleep; no red card; no Chinese dwarf boss; no saliva on tables; no disgrace.

Nana's trust—big; her house—chaos; business—large; pressure—strong; failure—disallowed.

Loveth—mischief; distraction; temptation; challenge; future trouble; possible future story.

Patrick's forehead—small frown; excitement—big wave.

Nana's voice from corridor:

“Patrick! Light dinner soon! No hiding!”

Loveth's voice—overlapping:

“Patrick! No sleeping! No lying down! Orientation—later!”

Patrick's sigh—deep; resolve—rising; destiny—calling.

The blotted pawpaw—inside mansion now.

Bruised but hopeful.

Confused but determined.

Village dust fading.

City fire approaching.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE GREAT COSMETIC CATASTROPHE

Early Abuja morning; sunrise with golden smirk; air with freshness; mild breeze through Nana's compound; generator—silent for once; birds with noisy auditions on the mango tree.

Inside mansion; Nana with royal poise; wrapper tied with authority; eyebrow pencil in hand; perfume cloud around her like holy aura; Loveth by doorframe—elastic stretch, chewing gum, eyebrow raised with suspicion and early-morning mischief.

Her announcement—loud, theatrical, dramatic:

“Orientation day! New boy in service! Village champion in Abuja cosmetics kingdom! Mama, fire him early!”

Nana's smack on Loveth's shoulder—sharp but loving:

“Quiet! Patrick—serious purpose today.”

Patrick—standing near dining table; shirt neatly tucked; bag under chair; face—mixed cocktail of pride, anxiety, and determination.

Nana's voice—commanding:

“First assignment—warehouse arrangement. Stock checking. Shelf labeling. Product sorting. No mistake, Patrick. No clumsiness. No laziness. No sleeping.”

Loveth—side note with wicked sweetness:

“No crying too. Cosmetics—sensitive. Breakage—expensive. Perfume bottles—fragile. Powder—everywhere. Lip gloss—sticky. Customers—angry. Mama—angrier.”

Patrick's throat—dry; eyes—wide; forehead—sweating already.

Nana—gentle pat on his shoulder:

“Confidence, my child. Warehouse—small stress only. After today—full trust in you.”

Loveth's mutter—barely soft:

“After today—full funeral for warehouse.”

A glare from Nana.

A grin from Loveth.

A sigh from Patrick.

#### Entrance into Warehouse

Warehouse door—brown metal, slight rust, padlock with stubborn pride.

Nana—key twist; door swing; interior—chaotic beauty.

Inside:

Rows and rows of shelves—some neat, some confused.

Cartons labeled:

**“SKIN BRIGHTENING CREAM”**  
**“GLOW OIL – GOLD EDITION”**  
**“HONEY MOISTURIZER”**  
**“LIP GLOSS – 42 SHADES”**  
**“FOUNDATION – ALL TONES”**  
**“PERFUME – LIMITED COLLECTION”**

Perfume boxes—stacked like unstable pyramids.  
Hair extensions—draped like sleeping spirits.  
Loose powder jars—soldiers without discipline.  
Delivery receipts—spread like angry confetti.  
Two plastic chairs—bent from exhaustion.

Nana’s proud gesture:

“Cosmetic empire. Revenue source. Customers nationwide. High demand. Carefulness—mandatory.”

Loveth’s whisper—sharp:

“Chaos—mandatory too.”

Patrick’s wide stare; internal monologue—spiral of fear and ambition:

“First day. First task. First impression. No mistake. No dropping. No spilling. No breakage. No disgrace. No pawpaw behavior.”

Nana’s instructions—clear:

“Sorting—foundation first. Arranging—by tone. Name tags—in front. Perfume boxes—top shelf. Hair extensions—far corner. Powder—middle row. Lip gloss—color gradient.”

Loveth from doorway—mock solemnity:

“Patrick—cosmetic Moses. Divider of shelves. Arranger of beauty. Savior of warehouse.”

Patrick—deep breath.

Warehouse door closes.

### **Patrick’s First Trial—Underway**

Patrick—center of warehouse; arms slightly spread; eyes scanning every corner; responsibilities—heavy; fear—visible; hope—barely alive.

Foundation boxes—first stop.

Boxes labeled:

**“PORCELAIN”**

**“IVORY”**

**“HONEY”**

**“CAMEL”**

**“CHESTNUT”**

**“COCOA”**

**“MAHOGANY”**

Patrick’s internal commentary:

“So many shades. Same color in village—brown only.”

He bends—slow, careful; box lift—gentle but shaky; movement forward—uncertain.

Shelf ahead—dusty, slightly slanted.

Patrick’s placement attempt—delicate.

A small wobble from shelf.

A small tilt from box.

A small gasp from Patrick.

Stabilization—barely successful.

Patrick’s pride—momentary.

Foundation box—secure.

Next—second box; third box; arrangement—slow but improving.

Loveth’s sudden entrance through door—without warning; chewing gum pop like small explosion.

Her dramatic observation:

“Progress? Maybe. Slow? Definitely. Hands—shaking like chicken drumstick.”

Patrick’s frown—automatic.

Loveth—lean against wall.

Her prophecy:

“Catastrophe soon. Perfume boxes—your destiny.”

Patrick—a swallow of fear.

### **Approach to Perfume Shelf**

Perfume section—shiny, intimidating.

Bottles with names like:

**“Moonlight Temptation”**

**“Queen of Amber”**

**“Sahara Rose”**

**“Heavenly Bloom”**

**“Royal Oud”**

**“Desert Whisper”**

Bottles—glass; fragile like political alliances; expensive like wedding lists.

Top shelf—high; Patrick’s height—close but not enough.

Patrick’s solution—plastic chair.

Plastic chair—slight bend; legs with small tremble; center with mild depression.

Loveth’s warning—quick:

“That chair—accident invitation. Perfect recipe for wahala.”

Patrick—indifferent; pride—stronger.

Chair climb—slow.

Balance—questionable.

Perfume box—heavy.

Hands—sweaty.

Internal monologue—panicked:

“No fall. No slip. No break. No report. No embarrassment. Nana—watching destiny indirectly.”

Placement attempt.

Chair shake.

Patrick wobble.

Perfume box slide—dangerous angle.

Loveth’s gasp—dramatic horror.

Then—

### **THE GREAT COSMETIC CATASTROPHE—IN FULL FORCE**

Chair buckle.

Patrick—forward lean.

Perfume box—downward dive.

Shelf—vibrating.

Another box—small tilt.

Another—bigger tilt.

Another—full slide.

Loveth’s scream:

“Aaaaah! Financial tragedy! Cosmetic apocalypse!”

Boxes—cascade; domino effect; top shelf to middle shelf; perfume bottles—rattling; some—rolling; some—dropping; one—open-capped; scent explosion everywhere.

Patrick—mid-air flail; arms searching for salvation; none available.

Patrick—floor impact; loud thud; cloud of perfume mist around him; scent of “Royal Oud”—thick and choking.

Loveth—hands on head; mouth wide; laughter and horror mixing:

“Jesus! Patrick! Disaster in human form! Warehouse enemy! Perfume terrorist!”

Patrick—groan; face in scent puddle; shirt soaked in fragrance; hair with glitter particles.

Another bottle—a gentle roll; final rest beside his ear.

Loveth—steps closer; inspection like scientist:

“Cost of damages—millions. Nana’s temper—volcanic. Daddy’s reaction—lectures. My reaction—laughter.”

Patrick—face at its reddest shade of embarrassment.

Loveth—high-pitched scream again:

“Mama! Warehouse—under attack! Perpetrator—Patrick the Blotted Pawpaw!”

### **Nana Arrives**

Heavy steps.

Fast breathing.

Tray crash sound somewhere behind.

Nana—a burst into warehouse; eyes across catastrophe; hands on head; mouth open to capacity.

Her voice—earthquake:

“Blood of Abraham! My perfumes! My limited editions! My shelves! My bottles! My money!”

Loveth—fainting act near doorway:

“Patrick... Patrick... Patrick!”

Patrick—slow descent to floor; face covered in royal oud scent; hair—mess; pride—dead.

Nana—deep inhale; deeper exhale; slow approach toward fallen empire.

Her proclamation—slow, heavy, painful:

“Patrick... first assignment... full catastrophe.”

Loveth’s whisper—dagger-like:

“Prophecy fulfillment.”

Nana—full turn toward Loveth—deadly glare.

Loveth—instant silence.

Nana—back to Patrick; expression with slight softening:

“No anger now. Only sadness. Only confusion. Only contemplation. Cosmetic business—fragile. You—fragile too. Bad combination.”

Patrick’s head—down; shame—thick.

Nana’s husband—entrance; quick assessment; slow whistle; neutral judgment:

“New boy—complete hazard.”

Loveth—clap of approval.

Nana's frustration—sharp sigh through teeth.

Warehouse—perfume scent everywhere; mixture of rose, oud, citrus, vanilla; overwhelming, intoxicating, suffocating.

Patrick—still on floor; future unclear; catastrophe—complete.

## CHAPTER 5

### RUMBLINGS IN LUJNAB

A dusty Lujnab morning; sun with crooked smile; wind with nothing but laziness; goats with quarrelsome bleats; chickens in unplanned parade; compound with half-swept corners; baobab tree with elderly shade.

Pa Lawrence—under baobab; stool with wobbly legs; calabash of palmwine on ground; draft board in front; opponent—old Pa Jemba; pipe smoke around both heads; atmosphere—full relaxation and full ignorance.

Serah—inside bungalow; wrapper tied tight; broom in hand; steps slow; humming—soft and suspiciously cheerful; face—bright with guilt-covered glow.

A neighbor—Mama Rafatu—passing by; wrapper rolled high; basket on head; eyes with gossip temperature at boiling point.

Her greeting—casual but probing:

“Serah! This your happiness—unusual o.”

Serah—quick smile; half-denial, half-pride:

“Normal joy only. Kitchen duty. Morning freshness.”

Mama Rafatu’s eyes—narrow:

“Patrick matter—silent. No morning shout. No dragging of feet. No late wake-up. Unusual silence everywhere.”

Serah—small throat-clearing; forced laugh:

“Child with new discipline. Early movement. Serious future. Nothing strange.”

Mama Rafatu—knowing smirk; eyebrow rise; internal gossip machine—full speed.

Before more probing—another neighbor approaching:

Baba Kolade—staff in hand; steps slow; ears sharp; full-time village analyst.

His announcement—random but pointed:

“Early sighting near motor park—yesterday. Boy-like figure. Patrick-like posture. Suspicious bag. No farewell to father. No community greeting. Vanishing situation.”

Serah—quick dismissal with hand wave:

“Imagination only. Misinterpretation of shadows.”

Mama Rafatu—gasps; mouth wide:

“Ah! Secret travel? Without Pa Lawrence knowledge? Danger!”

Serah—panic flash; then quick mask of calm:

“Errands only. Small journey. Nothing serious.”

But village antennae—already up.

Whispers—circulating.

Rumors—multiplying.

Patrick’s absence—echoing in narrow pathways.

Meanwhile under the baobab, Pa Lawrence—oblivious; deep concentration on draft game.

Pa Jemba—mocking grin:

“Your mind—far. Your moves—weak. House tension—visible.”

Pa Lawrence—snort:

“House tension? Only Serah’s noise. Nothing more.”

Pa Jemba—slow nod; mischief in eyes:

“Rumors—village-wide. Boy—missing from dawn to dusk. Motor park discussions—plenty.

Luggage sighting—confirmed.”

A pause.

A shift in wind.

A slight tremble in Pa Lawrence’s nostril.

Pa Lawrence—sharp turn toward Pa Jemba:

“What rumor? Which boy?”

Pa Jemba—dramatic lean:

“Your boy. Patrick. Vanishing act. No goodbye. No permission. No announcement. Travel movement—secretive.”

Palmwine calabash—slight wobble.

Draft pieces—forgotten.

Eyes of Pa Lawrence—widening.

A loud shout from him—full volume, full anger:

“Serah! SEERAAAHH!”

Silence in compound—brief but powerful.

Goats—pause and stare.

Chickens—scatter.

Serah—slow emergence from kitchen; broom still in hand; face—prepared but pretending ignorance.

Pa Lawrence—voice like thunder wound in insult:

“Our boy! His location! His disappearance! Motor park talk! Gossip from Jemba! Truth—NOW!”

Serah—small sigh; then gentle tone:

“Calmness, my dear. Nothing dangerous. Only opportunity. Only exposure. Only progress.”

Pa Lawrence—fury burst:

“Exposure?! Without my knowledge? Without my permission? Without fatherly blessing? Madness!”

Serah—soft, careful, defensive:

“Mother’s blessing enough sometimes. City life—chance for growth. Nana—trusted friend. Patrick—safe.”

Pa Lawrence—anger mixed with grudging pride:

“Nana? Abuja Nana? Cosmetics Nana? Rich Nana? Hmmm.”

Serah—nod; avoiding eye.

“Preparation—fast. Departure—yesterday. Low stress. No shouting. Clean break.”

Pa Lawrence—deep inhale; face with conflicting storms—half rage, half satisfaction; half betrayal, half pride.

Another neighbor—Mama Titi—into compound; bucket on hip; eyes with drama.

Her statement—loud for entire village:

“Lujnab news! Patrick—Abuja traveler! Big life ahead! Village dust—behind him!”

Pa Lawrence—straightening posture; chest rising slightly; voice changing from anger to decorated pride:

“Yes. My son. My Patrick. City material. Abuja-ready. My lineage—no village limitation.”

Neighbors—murmurs of agreement and exaggerated admiration.

Mama Rafatu:

“Patrick—handsome boy. Bright future. Abuja—perfect fit.”

Baba Kolade:

“Name—already circulating. Village representative in capital. Honor for community.”

Serah—small victorious smile.

Pa Lawrence—sudden shift to authority mode:

“Message to entire Lujnab—Patrick Lawrence: capital-bound youth, strong potential, future achiever.”

Mama Titi—quick gossip run; out of compound; mouth already in motion in multiple narratives.

Within minutes—whole village buzzing.

Groups by roadside; under trees; at wellside; in shops.

Common phrases floating everywhere:

“Patrick—the vanishing boy!”

“Sudden travel—no notice!”

“Abuja dreams—big!”

“Mother—secret planner.”

“Father—mixed reaction.”

“Boy—finally escaping laziness?”

“Or entering deeper laziness?”

“Time—judge.”

Children—running around chanting:

“Patrick Abuja! Patrick Abuja!”

Teenage girls—giggling; imagining Patrick’s new city swagger.

Young men—jealous murmurs about new competition.

Old women—prayers for safety mixed with gossip seasoning.

Back in bungalow, Serah—tea pot in hand; calm face; mission accomplished.

Pa Lawrence—still pacing; chest inflated; beard twitching.

His voice—now with soft bragging undertone:

“Serah, this boy of ours—capital potential. My blood—strong. Abuja—perfect stage for him.”

Serah—gentle nod; tiny smirk:

“Exactly. Your blood—ambitious. My nurture—balanced.”

Pa Lawrence—half-smile; half-grunt; full ego:

“Yes, yes. Combined greatness.”

Then sudden flash of anger again—mood swing:

“BUT NO INFORMING ME?! WOMAN!”

Serah—hands up defensively:

“Less shouting. Too much excitement earlier. Village already informed. Damage—minimal.”

Another neighbor’s voice from gate:

“Pa Lawrence! Village meeting soon! Topic: Patrick’s Abuja future!”

Pa Lawrence—full transformation; from furious father to proud celebrity parent:

“Meeting? Good! My presence—mandatory!”

Serah—exhale; relief; triumph.

Late afternoon—gathering under big Iroko tree.

Village elders seated; youths standing around; women in clusters.

Opening statement by Village Elder—Baba Arowolo:

“Topic of the day—young Patrick’s advancement to Abuja. Community expectations—high.

Behavior—important. Prayer—necessary.”

Murmurs of approval.

Pa Lawrence—grand entrance; hands behind back; slow nods; chest out.

His speech—dramatic mixture of anger, pride, denial, authority:

“Patrick—my son. Heavy brain. Strong potential. Small stubbornness. Small laziness sometimes. But capital environment—perfect correction. Nana—trustworthy guardian. Success—certain.”

Applause.

Whispers.

Praise.

Serah—smiling under wrapper edge.

One bold villager—Ajayi the Barber—questioning tone:

“Why the secrecy though? No farewell?”

Serah—quick answer from distance:

“Protection from evil eyes. Smooth journey—quietness a requirement.”

Villagers—nods of superstitious agreement.

Pa Lawrence—loud addition:

“Yes! Evil eyes everywhere! Quiet departure—wise choice!”

Village meeting—concludes with prayers for Patrick; declarations of greatness; commentary on possible return with car, money, city accent.

Village excitement—high.

Patrick—legend now.

The vanishing boy—new status.

Night in Lujnab—soft breeze; lantern glow; crickets with nightly orchestra.

Serah—quiet satisfaction in heart.

Pa Lawrence—mixed thoughts but mostly swelling pride.

Village—constant gossip mode.

Abuja dreams of Patrick—already in every mouth.

His failures unseen.

His catastrophe unknown.

His scent disaster unreported.

The village—only triumph narrative.

The blotted pawpaw—still ripe in their imagination.

**ACT II**

**THE RISE OF THE  
SPOILED PAWPAW**

## CHAPTER 6

### LOVETH'S MISCHIEF AND THE PAWPAW PHILOSOPHY

Late Abuja afternoon; orange sky; gentle heat; distant honking; generator hum from neighboring houses; Nana's compound—quiet at surface, chaos underneath.

Patrick—near warehouse entrance; mop in hand; bucket beside him; faint scent of yesterday's perfume disaster still floating; head heavy with embarrassment; mind full of silent self-beating.

Loveth—approach from corridor; chewing gum with dramatic rhythm; steps full of intention; hair bouncing with mischievous calculation.

Her greeting—mock sweetness: “Well well well... survivor of the Great Cosmetic Tragedy. Smell of oud—still in your pores. Warehouse trauma—still in your eyes.”

Patrick—low grunt; face turned away; pride in bandages.

Loveth—lean against doorframe; arms crossed; eyes sharp like examiners during final papers: “Explanation time. Pawpaw philosophy class—Level One.”

Patrick—eyebrows rising; confusion thickening.

Loveth—chin up; voice carrying the authority of an unserious professor: “Pawpaw—soft fruit. Gentle body. Quick bruises. One small scratch—full damage. One careless touch—full collapse. One rough surface—complete ruin.”

She taps her own palm lightly, for dramatic effect.

“Now, Patrick...”

Finger extends toward him—accusing but playful.

“You—pawpaw class. Blotted type. Fragile dreams. Quick shame. High hopes with low planning. Smooth exterior with soft interior. One perfume bottle—boom. One warehouse assignment—kaboom.”

Patrick's jaw—tight; nostrils—a flare.

Loveth—smirk widening:

“No insult—only science. Pawpaw theory—reliable.”

Patrick—forced calm through clenched teeth:

“Why pawpaw? Why not mango? Why not orange? Why not something strong?”

Loveth—shrug with theatrical pity:

“Mango—tough body. Orange—protective peel. Coconut—hard skull. Pawpaw—only softness.”

A sudden cackle from her throat—sharp, echoing in corridor.

Patrick—gaze downward; humiliation gathering like storm cloud.

Loveth—stepping closer; voice lowering into pseudo-philosophical tone:

“Blotted pawpaw—especially fragile. Spots everywhere. Evidence of past damage. Evidence of future trouble. Evidence of unstoppable drama.”

Her hand gestures toward warehouse ruins behind him:

“Perfect example—yesterday.”

Patrick—another grunt; mixture of anger, shame, and reluctant truth.

### **Nana’s Entrance**

Nana—sudden emergence from sitting room; wrapper bright; glasses low on nose; expression—half stern, half caring.

Her voice—sharp slicing through Loveth’s sarcasm:

“Loveth! Enough pawpaw nonsense! Patrick—new environment. New challenges. New adjustments. Mockery—unhelpful.”

Loveth—hands lifted like surrender; exaggerated innocence on face:

“Only education, Mommy. Only metaphorical guidance.”

Nana—piercing glare:

“Guidance—different from ridicule.”

Loveth—eye roll; quiet mutter:

“Same effect sometimes.”

Nana steps closer to Patrick; gentle but firm tone:

“First mistake—normal. First fall—normal. First embarrassment—normal. Continuous failure—NOT normal. Improvement—urgent. Attention—mandatory.”

Patrick—small nod; shoulders slightly lifted; hint of renewed determination.

Loveth—quick under-breath comment:

“Determination—temporary sometimes.”

Nana—stern look again; Loveth—instant silence.

### **Mounting Problems—Present**

Nana’s voice—matter-of-fact tone:

“Customers—complaints this morning. Missing orders. Wrong locations. Mixed receipts. Unknown handwriting on delivery sheet.”

Her eyes—direct at Patrick.

Patrick—confusion flashing across face.

Loveth—whisper from side:

“Handwriting—palmwine drunk-style. Very Patrick.”

Nana—snap:

“Loveth!”

Patrick—soft reply:

“Not me.”

Nana—sigh; tired but patient:

“Investigation—later. For now—correction duties.”

She hands Patrick a stack of receipts; papers crumpled, ink blurred in some corners.

Patrick’s palms—tremble slightly.

Loveth—leans closer, whispering:

“New problem—extra spice. Good luck, pawpaw.”

Patrick—attempts deep breath; small crack in confidence.

Nana—list on table:

“Sorting. Checking. Rewriting. Correct arrangement. Customers—no patience.”

Loveth—quick bounce backward; hand over mouth in fake shock:

“Rewriting?! Patrick and handwriting?! Comedy hour!”

Patrick—forced glare her way.

Nana—stern again:

“Loveth! Out!”

Loveth—dramatic exit; hands in the air; gum popping aggressively.

Her fading voice from hallway:

“Pawpaw philosophy—true always!”

Patrick—face in mild agony; receipts trembling.

### **The Pawpaw Philosophy Deepens**

Moments later—Loveth sneaks back; silent steps; sudden appearance next to Patrick.

Whisper:

“Lesson Two—Pawpaw cannot survive pressure. You—under pressure now. Evidence—coming.”

Patrick—teeth grit; eyes narrow.

Loveth—gesture toward receipts:

“One wrong number—full chaos. One missing dash—customer anger. One smudge—Nana’s headache.”

A light tap on his forehead:

“And you—king of smudges.”

Patrick—a quiet swat of her hand away.

Loveth—unbothered, laughing softly:

“Emotional reaction—sign of pawpaw softness.”

Patrick—jaw flex; determination rising again; perhaps thin but real.

Loveth—sensing resistance; smirk deepens:

“Lesson Three—Pawpaw always fears knife. Knife—symbol of challenge. Big tasks today—sharp knives. You—already shaking.”

She gestures at his trembling fingers.

Patrick—quick repositioning of hands, pretending steadiness.

Loveth—nod of false sympathy:

“Accept your fruit identity. Transformation—possible, but only after plenty wahala.”

### **Patrick’s Silent Storm**

Internal monologue—heavy, thick:

“Warehouse disaster—shame everywhere. Loveth tongues—sharp like razor. Nana—patient but disappointed. Receipts—mountain. Fear—real. Pressure—suffocating. Pawpaw metaphor—painfully accurate.”

But then—tiny spark of defiance:

“No more collapse. No more wobble. No more pawpaw softness. Harder mind. Stronger focus. Less distraction. Less Loveth.”

Loveth—sudden appearance at his elbow again:

“Heavy thinking face! Pawpaw becoming plantain? Impossible!”

Patrick—lips in tight line.

### **Nana’s Final Warning**

Evening light; mild orange glow; Nana—a return with stern maternal authority.

Her words—firm:

“Patrick. Improvement—mandatory. Mistakes—common. Repetition—dangerous. Household—busy. Business—large. Customers—impatient. Loveth—provoking. Pressure—natural.”

Loveth from far corner:

“Provoking? Me? Never!”

Nana—no response.

“Tomorrow—bigger duties. Bigger responsibilities. No perfume disaster repeat. No misplaced foundation. No chaos.”

Patrick—slow nod; seriousness soaking into every pore.

Nana—hand on his shoulder; soft voice:

“Strength—inside you somewhere. Find it.”

Loveth—sing-song voice from staircase:

“If strength missing—check fruit basket.”

Nana—sharp look again; Loveth—running up stairs with laughter trailing.

Patrick—deep silent reflection; pawpaw label haunting him; but something inside—solidifying.

A small rebellion against softness—now alive.

## CHAPTER 7

### PATRICK AND THE MILLION-NAIRA MISTAKE

Morning haze above Abuja; soft sunlight; quiet breeze across Nana's compound; faint scent of yesterday's perfume catastrophe still floating under the mango tree; birds gossiping like distant aunties.

Inside the mansion—tension, anticipation, thick air.

Nana—sitting room presence; wrapper secure; glasses perched low; ledger open on glass table; phone beside her; delivery lists arranged by size and color; seriousness radiating from her like heat.

Loveth—couch corner; legs crossed; fresh chewing gum; eyebrows with silent judgment; eyes monitoring Patrick like scientist observing unstable experiment.

Patrick—standing awkwardly; shoulders raised slightly; palms sweaty; eyes darting between ledger, Nana, and floor tiles.

Nana's tone—calm yet heavy:

“Major order today. High-profile clients. Large money—at stake. Delivery assignments—carefully arranged. Zero mistake policy.”

Loveth—immediate mock whisper:

“Zero mistake. But Patrick—full mistake catalog.”

Patrick's jaw—tightening.

Nana—unbothered by Loveth's commentary:

“Five packages. Five addresses. Exact labeling. Exact arrangement. Exact dispatch. One wrong placement—severe consequences.”

Loveth with a smirk:

“Severe consequences—favorite Patrick specialty.”

Patrick's nostrils—a flare; pride injured; fear rising.

Nana hands over the delivery sheet—long paper with numbers, codes, and names:

“Double-check—mandatory. Confirmation—essential. Then to driver.”

Loveth from couch:

“Check twice? Patrick? Hahaha. Checking once—struggle. Twice—miracle.”

Patrick's fingers tremble slightly on the paper; eyes scanning unclear handwriting; abbreviations everywhere; addresses overlapping; codes blending.

Internal monologue rising like confused steam:

“Business crucial. Money—big. Clients—rich. One mistake—massive disaster. Focus—a necessity. Loveth—silent enemy. Nana—trust itself. Pressure—mountain.”

Nana glances at Patrick's face; slight frown:  
"Understanding clear?"

Patrick's hesitant nod—small, shaky.

Loveth's immediate commentary:  
"Nod shaky. Disaster approaching."

Nana—hand upward—Loveth in temporary silence.

### **The Five Packages**

Warehouse entrance; faint light; faint scent of mixed cosmetics; cartons arranged in sequence—labeled:

**Package A — VIP Customer (N100,000 Value)**

**Package B — Bridal Set (N150,000 Value)**

**Package C — Corporate Bulk Order (N500,000 Value)**

**Package D — Express Beauty Kit (N75,000 Value)**

**Package E — Luxury Perfume Bundle (N175,000 Value)**

Total—**One Million Naira.**

Patrick's breath—deep but unsteady.

Loveth—arriving with dramatic slow clap:  
"Million-Naira territory! High stakes! Big trouble! Perfect story for village newspapers."

Patrick—a glare her way; Loveth—a wink in return.

Boxes now in front of him; sheet in hand; codes swirling inside his mind; instructions heavy in his ears.

Nana's voice from behind:  
"Accuracy—life of business. No mix-up."

Loveth's addition:  
"No mix-up equals no Patrick."

Patrick's internal dialogue spirals again:

"A equals VIP. B equals bridal. C equals corporate. D equals express. E equals luxury. Easy. Simple. Organized. Only calmness. Only focus. Only strength... Strength shaky."

He bends to review codes again.

Letters—blurred; numbers in chaos; handwriting like restless ants.

Loveth—peering over his shoulder:  
"Confusion? Panic? Sweaty forehead? Good sign. Very entertaining."

Patrick shifts slightly—still silent.

## **The Fatal Misplacement**

A moment of hesitation.

A small slip of thought.

A sudden mix of letters.

A reversal of order.

Package B—bridal set—placed in space meant for VIP client.

Package A—VIP client—now toward corporate box.

Package C—corporate box—slight displacement toward luxury line.

Package E—luxury perfumes—now in express zone.

Package D—express kit—deep in confusion column.

Loveth—watching like spectator in stadium.

Her commentary—soft but cruel:

“Look at that choreography... Disaster ballet... Pawpaw juggling.”

Patrick—fatigue on brow; breath uneven; sheet checked again—incorrectly.

Nana—calling from corridor:

“Patrick! Driver ready!”

Patrick—quick handover of wrongly sorted packages to dispatch assistant; assistant—neutral face; no suspicion.

Loveth—eyes wide; hand over mouth in silent shriek:

“Nooooo... Catastrophe loading... Catastrophe rising... Catastrophe in motion!”

Patrick—stomach sinking; but too late for reversal.

Packages—away; driver—outside gate; engine rumble; dispatch—complete.

Loveth—slow spin toward Patrick, eyes full of theatrical pity:

“Million-Naira mistake... Already in traffic... Already on the road... Already irreversible.”

Patrick—frozen posture; fear—a flood through his entire self.

## **The First Call**

Thirty minutes later.

Nana’s phone—loud ringtone; intensity like warning siren.

Nana—picks with authority.

Voice from speaker—furious female tone:

“Madam Nana! Wrong delivery! Wrong items! Waste of time! My bridal client waiting! Anger everywhere!”

Nana—confused glance at Patrick.

Another call—immediately.

Male voice dripping with irritation:

“Madam! Package mismatch! Corporate order missing! Replacement urgent!”

Nana—eyes wide.

Third call—back-to-back.

Soft but disappointed tone:

“Madam Nana, expected perfume bundle. Received express kit. Confusion. Please explain.”

Nana—full freeze.

Then slow head turn toward Patrick.

Loveth—on sofa, both hands over face, peeking through fingers, shaking with wicked laughter.

Nana—sharp inhale; voice trembling with volcanic force:

“Patrick... Explanation.”

Patrick—dry throat; paper falling from hand; lips trembling.

Loveth—dramatic whisper:

“Million-Naira mistake. Pawpaw meltdown.”

Nana—off seat; stomp across rug; presence like storm cloud:

“One job! One assignment! One responsibility! Full disaster!”

Patrick’s head—down; silent tears at edges.

Loveth—slow chant under breath:

“Blotted pawpaw... blotted pawpaw... blotted everywhere...”

### **Clients in Rage**

Phone—ringing nonstop.

Messages—pouring in.

Driver—calling too.

Nana—voice breaking under pressure:

“Customers furious. Business reputation shaking. Money at risk.”

Loveth—arms crossed; expression half sympathetic, half entertained:

“Abuja trending topic: Patrick the Package Mixer.”

Patrick—heart sinking deeper; shame like heavy perfume around him.

## **Nana's Official Declaration**

Nana—deep breath; long stare at Patrick; disappointment spreading like stain:

“First warehouse disaster—survivable. Second—almost forgivable. But this? Million-Naira chaos? Image damage? Customer outrage? Full embarrassment?”

Patrick's lips—small quiver.

Loveth—quiet but sharp:

“Pawpaw identity confirmed.”

Nana—final blow:

“Patrick... reevaluation—necessary. Duties—under reconsideration. Performance—unacceptable.”

Silence.

Heavy.

Unbreathable.

Patrick—face pale; shoulders limp; future blurry.

Loveth—gentle, mocking pat on his back:

“Don't worry. Pawpaw juice—still sweet sometimes.”

Patrick—eyes closing from shame.

Nana—walking away; voice faint but disappointed:

“Massive trouble. Massive consequences. Massive repair.”

Warehouse—silent witness to collapse.

Compound—full of tension.

Abuja—bigger, harsher, more demanding.

And the blotted pawpaw—softer than ever, bruised from internal impact.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE STORM IN THE SITTING ROOM

Evening in Abuja; sky with bruised red clouds; faint rumble of distant thunder; electricity with half-hearted flickers; generator in neighboring compounds warming for duty; soft wind creeping through Nana's curtains.

Inside the mansion—stillness.

A kind of stillness before chaos.

A stillness full of tight breaths and unspoken accusations.

Nana—center of sitting room; wrapper slightly loose from stress; glasses pushed up and down repeatedly; ledger on lap; phone beside her; face like cracked marble—hard but wounded.

Nana's husband—armchair opposite; newspaper folded; spectacles on table; hands clasped; long sigh hanging between silence and judgment.

Loveth—sofa edge; posture restless; chewing gum with violent rhythm; eyes bouncing between both parents; excitement in chaos written all over her.

Patrick—near hallway; body half-hidden behind door frame; guilt soaking every inch of skin; heart in throat; eyes unable to rise from tiled floor.

The tension—thick enough for cutting.

Loveth—unable to contain herself; soft explosion:

“Family meeting! Drama session! The pawpaw council in full attendance!”

Nana—snap of glare:

“Loveth. Quiet.”

Loveth—zip motion across lips; but gum still popping.

Nana's husband—voice calm but heavy:

“Million-Naira confusion. Wrong deliveries. Angry customers. Refund demands. Business damage. Reputation danger.”

Nana—quick, tired nod; eyes watering slightly.

Loveth leans forward with melodramatic gasp:

“Refund? Loss? Bankruptcy mood? All because of one human—Patrick the Blotted!”

Patrick—flinch; chest tightening.

Nana—soft warning:

“Loveth!”

Loveth—hands up:

“Only commentary.”

Nana's husband—still calm, but tone sharpening:

“Business management—no room for continuous errors. Two major disasters in two days. Warehouse collapse. Delivery debacle. Stress everywhere.”

Nana's voice—strained:

“Patrick—new environment. New pressure. Adjustment period—normal.”

Loveth—immediate rebuttal:

“Normal? Mama, yesterday—perfume massacre. Today—million-Naira mixup. Tomorrow—maybe fire outbreak. Next tomorrow—national emergency.”

Patrick—head dropping lower, almost touching chest.

Nana's husband—slow nod at Loveth's exaggerations:

“Possibility—high.”

Nana—deep inhale; frustration and love wrestling inside her expression:

“Blame—too heavy on him alone. System—disorganized too. Warehouse—overcrowded. Documentation—confusing.”

Loveth—eyes wide, sarcastic innocence:

“Warehouse confusing for everyone? No. Only Patrick. Only pawpaw.”

Patrick—face hot; shame rising like fever.

Nana's husband—full turn toward Patrick—first direct look of the evening; sharp, penetrating:

“Young man. Explanation?”

Patrick—throat locked; silence only; guilt everywhere.

Loveth—leans back with triumphant nod:

“No explanation. Only guilt smell. Strong smell.”

Patrick's eyes flick upward—only briefly; then downward again.

### **The Argument—In Full Blaze**

Nana—voice tightening:

“Accidents—normal in business. First week—harsh. Progress—possible.”

Nana's husband—firmer tone:

“Possible, yes. But business—unforgiving. Customers—no pity. Loss—not small. One million—heavy impact.”

Loveth—dramatic gasp:

“One million! School fees! Rent! Grocery! Perfume restock! Hair extensions! Everything—loss!”

Nana—sharp snap again:

“Loveth!”

Loveth—hand over chest:  
“Emotional reaction only.”

Nana’s husband—leaning forward now, elbows on knees; authority in every breath:  
“Question—reliability. Serious question.”

Patrick—stiffening.

Loveth whispers loudly:  
“Answer—no.”

Nana—a warning glance her way, but even her patience—cracks now.

Nana’s husband—continuation:  
“Every day—panic. Every hour—fear. Every assignment—risk. Household—unstable.  
Business—shaking.”

Loveth’s addition:  
“Pawpaw—falling from tree.”

Patrick—face burning.

Nana—weak defense:  
“Effort—genuine. Sincerity—real.”

Loveth scoffs:  
“Sincerity without skill—full disaster.”

Nana’s husband—full turn toward Nana:  
“Solution—urgent. Fast.”

Nana—bites lower lip; silence from her seat.

Patrick—heart pounding.

Loveth—eyes glowing like mischief lanterns:  
“Eviction season incoming.”

Nana—sharp turn:  
“No mention of eviction!”

Loveth—shrug:  
“Yet.”

Patrick—hand over mouth, breathing uneven.

### **Nana’s Breaking Point**

Nana—voice again—slower, softer, more tired:  
“House strain—too much. Business collapsing. Customers shouting daily. Husband angry. My head—full pressure.”

Her voice cracks—just slightly.

Patrick—guilt wraps around him like suffocating cloth.

Nana—eyes on Patrick now:

“Patrick... good heart... but mistakes—heavy. Repeated. Frequent. Costly. Painful.”

Loveth—murmur:

“Catastrophic.”

Patrick—shoulders collapsing inward.

Nana’s husband—confirms with nod:

“Painful indeed.”

Nana—final blow for the moment:

“Tomorrow—meeting. Decision time. Course correction. Household stability—priority.”

Loveth—cheerful clap:

“Meeting! Agenda: The matter of the Blotted Pawpaw!”

Nana—exasperated:

“Loveth!”

Loveth—giggle; zero shame.

### **Patrick’s Silent Collapse**

Patrick retreats further into hallway shadow; head full of noise; heart full of stones.

Internal monologue—heavy:

“Nana—disappointed. Husband—angry. Loveth—merciless. House—against me. Business—damaged. Village pride—fiction. Abuja dream—cracking. Place in this house—uncertain. Eviction shadow—near.”

Fear deeper than any warehouse fall.

Guilt deeper than any perfume spill.

Shame thicker than any pawpaw bruise.

Loveth’s voice still drifting into hallway like smoke:

“Meeting tomorrow. Pawpaw destiny forecast.”

Patrick—closes eyes; silence swallowing him.

### **The Night Storm**

Nana—pacing mentally; husband—sitting in quiet disapproval; Loveth—carefree swinging of legs on couch.

Arguments—fresh flare—from them, not Patrick, but loud enough for him to absorb every blade of blame.

Nana’s husband—firm voice: “Business sustainability—non-negotiable.”

Nana—soft plea: “Time—a necessity for him.”

Husband—sharper: “No time. Deadlines everywhere. Loss—already large.”

Loveth—vocal commentary: “Large? Enormous.”

Nana—fresher emotion rising:

“This family—his. Serah—full trust in me. Patrick—effort, genuine.”

Loveth’s reply—cold but honest:

“Trying—yes. Destroying—also yes.”

Another glare from Nana, but weaker now.

Nana’s husband:

“With Patrick here—more chaos. Without him—less damage.”

Loveth:

“Simple mathematics.”

Patrick—inner collapse complete; knees almost buckling in silence.

Nana—tear in eye corner:

“Decision tomorrow.”

Loveth—gentle whisper to herself:

“Pawpaw destiny sealed.”

### **The Shadow of Eviction**

Night—deeper; voices—softer; house—full emotional exhaustion.

Patrick—still in hallway; back against wall; realization sinking like stone into water.

Nana’s husband—passing remark to Nana:

“Guest status temporary. Problem status—long.”

Loveth from staircase—final sting:

“Pawpaw falling.”

Patrick—face buried in palms.

His mind whispers to itself:

“No home soon. No job here. No Abuja life. Only failure. Only shame. Only bruises.”

Silence again.

But this silence—different.

A silence with teeth.

A silence with consequences.

A silence with eviction inside it.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE INTERVENTION OF THE NEIGHBORS

Abuja morning; sunlight with sharp tongue; breeze with nothing but gossip intention; Nana's compound—quiet inside, noisy outside; faint echoes of yesterday's domestic storm drifting through neighborhood walls like migrating trouble.

Front gate—half open; security man—radio under armpit; volume low; suspicious glances at every passerby.

Then—neighbors.

Neighborhood personalities—one by one; all antennas up; all tongues ready.

#### **Neighbor 1: Madam Affiong — The Newspaper of the Street**

Madam Affiong—broad figure; wrapper with militant tightness; headgear like architectural masterpiece; basket of vegetables on hip.

Her greeting at gate—loud enough for entire compound:

“Nana! Household matter—clear? Rumor—flying everywhere!”

Security man—small bow; hand gesture toward sitting room.

Madam Affiong steps in; voice full blast:

“Story of young boy from village! Sudden travel! Sudden trouble! Whole estate—noise!”

Patrick—near corridor; face pale; heart with heavy thump.

Madam Affiong spots him instantly; gasp with full scandal flavor:

“This boy! The famous mix-up boy! The million-Naira mistake boy! The perfume tsunami boy!”

Patrick's shoulders fold inward like collapsing umbrella.

From upstairs—Loveth's delighted shout:

“Madam Affiong! Accurate titles!”

Nana—rubbing forehead; silent plea for strength.

#### **Neighbor 2: Alhaji Musa — The Conspiracy Specialist**

Alhaji Musa—slim, long beard, rosary swinging from fingers; arrival silent but presence loud.

His voice—slow, suspicious:

“Strange boy activities. Sudden chaos in Nana's business. Possibility of spiritual interference.”

Loveth—peeking from staircase:

“Spiritual? More like village laziness interference.”

Patrick—groan suppressed.

Alhaji Musa seats himself without invitation; rosary tapping knee:  
“Village boys—sometimes with hidden problems. Wrong dreams. Wrong energy. Wrong ancestors.”

Patrick—eyes closing briefly in despair.

Nana—exhale of resignation.

### **Neighbor 3: Sister Grace — Prayer Warrior with Diagnostic Tongue**

Sister Grace arrives next; Bible tucked under armpit; prayer shawl waving like flag of warning.

Her entrance—zero permission, full authority:  
“Oppression! Darkness! Stronghold around this house!”

Loveth—whisper from behind door:  
“Stronghold named Patrick.”

Sister Grace—a full scan of Patrick up and down; dramatic gasp:  
“Spirit of confusion around him! Evidence—warehouse collapse! Evidence—wrong deliveries!  
Evidence—family tension!”

Patrick—cheeks in flame.

Nana—half nod, half denial; embarrassment mixed with tiredness.

Sister Grace—a loud prayer declaration, full force:  
“Deliverance for this house! Peace for Nana! Clarity for business! Removal of confusion spirit!”

Loveth’s addition—soft:  
“And removal of pawpaw spirit.”

Nana—sharp glare; Loveth—zips mouth.

### **Neighbor 4: Mr. Ade — Gossip Addict with Empty Briefcase**

Mr. Ade—a stroll in; tie loose; empty briefcase swinging meaninglessly; smile like permanent trouble.

His statement—no introduction:  
“Estate WhatsApp group—full updates! Patrick trending! Screenshots everywhere! Memes forming!”

Patrick—instant death inside eyes.

Loveth—hands in the air, victorious:  
“Celebrity status unlocked!”

Nana’s husband—entry into room; eyebrows raised sharply; newspaper under arm again, ready for commentary.

Mr. Ade clears throat dramatically:  
“Different interpretations circulating:

1. **Patrick as undercover trouble agent**
2. **Patrick as secret investor’s son in training**
3. **Patrick as future son-in-law of Nana**
4. **Patrick as village refugee**
5. **Patrick as cosmetic beginner with catastrophic destiny**
6. Patrick as possible tenant soon.”

Loveth—slapping knee in hysterical laughter:  
“Number six—gold!”

Patrick—silent tears gathering at eyelids.

### **Escalation of the Rumor Symposium**

Now—full house.

Madam Affiong—loud theories.

Alhaji Musa—spiritual warnings.

Sister Grace—prayer vibrations.

Mr. Ade—gossip updates.

Loveth—background commentary.

Nana—exhaustion.

Nana’s husband—judgment aura.

Patrick—drowning in humiliation.

Voices overlap:

Madam Affiong:

“Abuja not easy o! Village boy—overwhelmed!”

Mr. Ade:

“Driver complaints too! Delivery confusion spreading!”

Alhaji Musa:

“Strange aura around the boy! Heavy aura!”

Sister Grace:

“Seven days of prayer—solution!”

Loveth:

“Seven months of training—better solution!”

Patrick—quiet collapse into chair, mentally.

Nana—slow rise; voice at the edge of control:

“Enough! Family matter—private!”

But neighbors—immune.

Madam Affiong:

“Private? Impossible! Business matter—public!”

Mr. Ade:

“Young boy reputation—estate property now!”

Sister Grace:

“Community intercession—mandatory!”

Loveth:

“Comedy session—ongoing!”

### **Metaphorical Diagnoses of Patrick**

Madam Affiong—hand waving dramatically at Patrick:

“You—like unripe plantain. Stubborn to peel.”

Alhaji Musa counters:

“No, unbalanced kolanut. Bitter in one corner, sweet in another.”

Sister Grace:

“No, spiritual thorn. Pain without reason.”

Mr. Ade:

“No, malfunctioning generator. Noise only.”

Loveth—final, victorious proclamation:

“No, blotted pawpaw. Period.”

Group—silence from agreement.

Patrick—face in palm again.

### **Nana’s Outburst**

Finally, Nana—full height; wrapper in sway; voice powerful despite fatigue:

“Enough! My house—not neighborhood parliament! My boy—not community project! My business—under pressure, yes! But interference—too much!”

Neighbors freeze slightly.

Nana—tone rising:

“Patrick—guest. Mistakes—many. But growth—possible. Confidence—essential. Pressure—unhelpful.”

Loveth—soft mutter:

“Still pawpaw though.”

Nana—no response.

Neighbors—slow nods; murmurs of understanding.

But Mr. Ade cannot resist final injection:

“Estate watching closely o. Any new drama—full coverage.”

Loveth—a snap of fingers:

“And I—editor-in-chief.”

Nana—exhausted exhale.

Patrick—silent gratitude mixed with more shame.

### **Slow Dispersal**

Neighbors in retreat; discussions moving to compounds; whispers traveling through gates; exaggerations multiplying already.

Madam Affiong at exit:

“Prayer for the boy.”

Alhaji Musa:

“Spiritual bath recommendation.”

Sister Grace:

“Fasting suggestion.”

Mr. Ade:

“WhatsApp update scheduled.”

Loveth—wave of farewell:

“Bye gossipers! New episode coming soon!”

Patrick—tiny groan, barely audible.

Neighborhood fences—buzzing with fresh rumors; street corners—alive with speculation; estate children—chanting random Patrick songs.

The intervention—complete.

The humiliation—maximum.

The pawpaw image—firmly cemented.

The shadow of eviction—thicker.

## CHAPTER 10

### SERAH'S JOURNEY TO ABUJA

Lujnab dawn; pale sky; weak sun; breeze with gentle pity; goats with investigative stares; hens with unnecessary commentary; dust rising like small rumors; compound—quiet but tense.

Serah—kitchen corner; wrapper tight; eyes red from overnight worry; kettle beside firewood; steam rising like silent prayer; lips trembling with unspoken fear; mind spinning with visions of Patrick—alone, confused, drowning in Abuja trouble.

A long sigh from her chest—wordless, heavy, motherly.

Then—decision.

Strong.

Silent.

Unbreakable.

Journey—necessary.

Son—priority.

Abuja—destination.

#### Announcement Scene

Serah steps into sitting room; face firm; voice steady but emotional:

“Travel... today... Abuja... Patrick... trouble... mother—movement.”

Pa Lawrence—stool near doorway; chewing stick in mouth; morning mood—rough; beard—scattered; eyes—half suspicion, half fatigue.

His reaction—predictable but dramatic:

“Travel?! Woman! Travel again?! For that blotted boy?! After secret departure? After disrespect? After village embarrassment?!”

Serah—calm, but unyielding:

“Child—problem. Mother—solution.”

Pa Lawrence—snorts loudly; head shaking with thunder-level disbelief:

“Nonsense! Total nonsense! Abuja—far! Road—danger! Kidnappers—everywhere! Transport—expensive! Weather—harsh! Your age—no strength!”

Serah—sharp and steady:

“No journey, no peace.”

Pa Lawrence—deep groan; eyes rolling toward ceiling:

“Peace? For him? That warehouse destroyer? That perfume terrorist? That million-naira mixer?! Madness!”

Serah—hand on hip; tone sharp:

“Patrick—our child. Not stranger. Not enemy. Support—duty.”

Pa Lawrence—another roar:

“Support after disrespect?! Support after secret escape? Support after nationwide shame?”

Serah—firm gaze:

“Responsibility—still ours.”

A long, grudging silence from Pa Lawrence; chest rising; nostrils flaring.

Then—reluctant acceptance creeping into posture.

### **Village Reaction: Full Lujnab Mode**

News—faster than harmattan breeze.

Within minutes, neighbors gather like spectators before theater performance.

Mama Rafatu—breathless rush into compound:

“Serah! Abuja journey? True? Emergency?”

Serah—nod.

Mama Rafatu—hand to chest:

“Patrick matter—serious indeed! Abuja face—stressful! Mother’s presence—necessary!”

Pa Lawrence—grumbling from stool:

“Unnecessary expenses! Waste of transport!”

Baba Kolade—staff tapping ground; serious face:

“Mother instinct—powerful force. Patrick—lucky child.”

Serah—soft gratitude smile.

Two teenage boys—whispering near gate:

“Abuja rescue mission! Mama Patrick—strong woman!”

Three old women—clustered around tree:

“Prayer for safe journey. Evil spirits—stay behind. Travel angels—follow her.”

Children—chanting small song:

“Patrick mama Abuja! Patrick mama Abuja!”

Pa Lawrence—hissing loudly:

“Noise everywhere! Human beings—no sense!”

Loveth’s name—also in the rumor stream:

“Mischievous girl in Abuja!”

“Patrick’s future wife maybe!”

“No, troublemaker only!”

Village—full dramatic discussion.

## **Farewell Preparations**

Serah—packing wrapper bundles; plastic bags; small purse; dried fish for Nana; kola nuts for elders; biscuits for Loveth; handwritten note for Patrick.

Mama Rafatu—inspecting items like border officer:

“Correct. Balanced. Travel-ready.”

Baba Kolade—nod of approval.

Two women—tying her headscarf; arranging folds in ceremonial mother-style.

Three children—clinging to her wrapper; releasing only after small bribes of groundnuts.

Serah—center of attention; dignity in every breath; determination visible.

## **Pa Lawrence’s Final Resistance... and Collapse**

Pa Lawrence—a stomp into compound center; arms folded; expression loud:

“Woman! Last warning! Journey—dangerous! Road—uncertain! Bandits—wicked! Abuja—giant confusion!”

Serah—calm tone:

“Child—alone. Mother—necessary.”

Pa Lawrence—another roar:

“Mother necessary? Father useless?! Woman, your mouth—danger!”

Village crowd—small laughter; Pa Lawrence—a deadly glare; laughter—instant death.

Serah—soft but firm:

“You worry too. Pride—blocking your voice.”

Pa Lawrence—startled; eyes blinking; chest deflating slightly.

Village murmurs:

“Truth o.”

“Father worry hiding under insult.”

“Old men—emotional camouflage.”

Pa Lawrence—sudden cough; throat clearing; fake irritation; fake toughness—mask slipping.

Finally—grudging confession in broken tone:

“Fine! Away! Attention to the blotted boy! Protection from more foolishness! Bring him sense if possible! But return soon! No permanent Abuja madness!”

Serah—small victorious smile; respectful nod.

Village—applause.

Children—cheering.

Pa Lawrence—blushing under beard; pretending anger; failing.

### **Departure to Motor Park**

Serah—wrapper tied tight again; small bag on shoulder; eyes full of motherly fire.

Village escort—large group; dramatic escort; farewell procession.

Mama Rafatu—front of group:

“Safe journey! Protection of ancestors!”

Baba Kolade—staff pointed skyward:

“Travel mercy! Road clearance!”

Children—collective chant:

“Mama Patrick Abuja! Mama Patrick Abuja!”

Serah—overwhelmed smile mixed with tension.

At gate—final confrontation with Pa Lawrence.

He—stiff posture; face stern; voice rough:

“Listen, woman... Abuja—danger. Confusion everywhere. Eyes open. Money safe. Bag tight. Phone charged. Stranger talk—reduced.”

Serah—gentle smile:

“Yes, my dear.”

Pa Lawrence—final grumble:

“And bring back that boy! Before full disgrace! Before total pawpaw spoilage!”

Serah—soft laugh:

“Effort—guaranteed.”

Pa Lawrence—quick turn away; emotion in hiding; wiping eye corner with back of hand when no eye upon him.

Village notices anyway.

### **Last Words Before Departure**

Motor park—dusty, noisy, chaotic; drivers shouting; hawkers everywhere; buses with cracks and stickers.

Serah—standing near bus door; heart pounding; determination shining through small fear.

Village crowd—around her like royal delegation.

Mama Rafatu:

“Phone call—every stop!”

Baba Kolade:

“Psalm recitations—continuous!”

Old women:

“Seven kola nuts—pocket blessing!”

Teenagers:

“Greet Nana! Greet Loveth! Bring back Instagram reports!”

Children:

“Tell Patrick hi! Bring biscuits!”

Serah—overwhelmed but grateful.

Bus conductor—final shout:

“Abuja direct! Last seat!”

Serah—step toward bus; farewell chorus behind her.

Pa Lawrence—voice from back of crowd—raw, cracked, emotional but disguised:

“Woman! Safe return! And bring back my child... before total destruction!”

Serah—a turn; eyes full.

Small nod.

Soft smile.

Unspoken promise.

The blotted pawpaw—one mother away now.

Lujnab—full hope behind her.

Abuja—full storm ahead.

**ACT IV**

**THE REDEMPTION OF**

**THE PAWPAW**

## CHAPTER 16

### PATRICK'S UNEXPECTED TRANSFORMATION

Abuja dawn; faint blue sky; soft whistling breeze; compound with early silence; mansion walls with mild glow; lingering scent of yesterday's tension fading into corner shadows.

Patrick—guest room; bed neatly arranged; clothes folded; notebook open; eyes steady; posture calm.

Not the old posture.

Not the collapsing shoulders.

Not the wobbling confidence.

A new stillness around him.

A new firmness inside him.

A new contrast with the earlier bruised pawpaw identity.

Quiet reflection on his face—no fear, no shame, only intention.

#### A Changed Morning Presence

Kitchen doorway—Nana with wrapper tied higher than usual; a pot nearby; steam rising; quiet hum from her throat.

Her eyes drifting toward Patrick—surprise touching them.

A different version of the boy now—

No trembling hands,

No shrinking posture,

No lost gaze.

A small greeting from Patrick—low, respectful.

Nana's answering nod—slow, observant; eyes narrowing in curiosity:

“Calmness... today.”

Loveth on staircase—stretching, yawning dramatically; gum chewing with sluggish energy; eyes rolling lazily toward Patrick—then sudden pause.

Freeze.

Blink.

Confusion.

Her statement—half suspicion, half disbelief:

“Why this... new aura? Who switch this boy? Who press reset?”

Patrick—quiet, centered, unbothered.

Loveth—dramatic gasp:

“New Patrick? Impossible. Maybe dream.”

Nana—soft laugh; first laugh in days; surprise in her voice:  
“Different air around him, yes.”

Patrick—steady breathing; unmoved expression.

Loveth—leaning closer, poking air near his face:  
“No panic smell. No fear scent. No pawpaw softness. Strange.”

Patrick—still no reaction.

Loveth—eyes widening:  
“Actual transformation?!”

Nana—gentle murmur under breath:  
“Finally... perhaps.”

### **Signs of Steady Improvement**

Warehouse corridor—faint perfume aura; cartons stacked with surprising order; labels arranged; receipts neatly grouped.

Nana’s hand retrieving a sheet—  
Her eyes scanning—  
Unexpected clarity in handwriting.  
Even spacing.  
Logical grouping.

A soft, astonished whisper from her:

“This handwriting... same Patrick?”

Loveth—leaning from behind a shelf corner:  
“Handwriting improvement?! Miracle alert!”

Patrick—standing nearby; quiet focus; steady posture.

Another carton—correct label.  
Another stack—in neat alignment.  
Another shelf—visibly organized.

Small changes.  
Small shifts.  
Small signs of discipline.

But heavy meaning in Nana’s eyes.

Loveth—tilting head, studying him like rare museum artifact:  
“No catastrophe aura. No disaster vibration. Goodness... stability.”

Patrick—face unchanging, but internal quiet confidence forming like slow sunrise.

## **Mental Transformation: The Internal Dialogue**

Inside Patrick's mind—no noise, no panic spirals; only a new voice, calm and firm:

“Enough bruises. Enough blotted moments. Enough shame. Stronger self. Firmer mind. Pawpaw ripening through struggle. Softness turning into resilience.”

A subtle evolution.

Not loud.

Not dramatic.

Not performative.

But real.

A shift from flailing chaos to measured clarity.

From spoiled brat energy to grounded maturity.

From blotted fruit to slowly ripening one.

## **Nana's Observation**

Afternoon light on Nana's face; chair by dining table; bookkeeping materials spread.

Her eyes lifting occasionally toward Patrick—quiet movement past doorway; steady presence near shelves; respectful responses; reduced confusion.

A soft motherly thought—visible across her expression:

“Growth. Real growth. Correction through hardship.”

Loveth's interruption—loud, dramatic:

“Mama! New version—Patrick! Version 2.0! Improvement package!”

Nana—laughing softly again; relief forming.

Loveth—continuing narration with exaggerated gestures:

“No panic hands! No trembling eyebrows! No mess everywhere! Just calmness and correct behavior! Wonders!”

Patrick—quiet smile forming; slight but sincere.

## **The Shift in Household Atmosphere**

Nana's husband—sitting room armchair; glasses on; newspaper open; minimal attention to chaos.

But sudden glance toward Patrick—longer than usual.

Eyebrows rising slightly; approving grunt—rare, quiet.

His comment—flat but meaningful:

“Less trouble today.”

Loveth—half complaint, half admiration:

“Less trouble... boring. But good.”

Patrick—another steady nod.

House atmosphere—lighter; tension—releasing; door hinges—creaking softer.

The storm clouds from earlier chapters dissolving slowly, leaving calm patches.

### **Loveth’s Begrudging Acknowledgment**

Loveth—arms crossed; pacing around Patrick; full investigation mode:

“Hmmm... posture—better. Eyes—steady. Energy—cool. Attitude—improved. No pawpaw scent. Only ripening aroma.”

She pauses—dramatic squint:

“But one question: temporary or permanent?”

Patrick—small, confident smile.

Loveth—stunned gasp:

“Smiling with confidence?! Oh Lord!”

She clutches her chest in playful shock:

“Actual transformation indeed!”

Nana—overhearing; soft pride in her voice:

“Effort—visible. Commitment—real.”

Patrick—short bow toward her.

Loveth—rolling eyes but secretly pleased:

“Fine. New nickname—Semi-Ripened Pawpaw.”

Patrick—very faint chuckle; the first in a long while.

Loveth—shocked again:

“Laughing too?! Somebody stop this boy!”

### **Evidence of Discipline**

Later—Patrick at small table with receipts; pen steady; handwriting consistent; no smudges; no missing details.

Loveth—peeking:

“This neatness?! This organization?! New brain—from where?!”

Patrick—calm reply:

“Focus.”

Loveth—mock swoon:

“Ah! Vocabulary upgrade too!”

Nana—entering room; expression full approval:

“Good. Very good. Seriousness emerging.”

Patrick—slight nod; humility in eyes.

A new respect in Nana’s voice—gentle, steady:

“Proud... finally.”

Loveth—clap of sarcasm but real admiration beneath:

“Congratulations! Ripening confirmed!”

### **The Inner Glow of Growth**

Evening breeze through open window; faint streetlight glow; quiet mood in house.

Patrick—standing near doorway; eyes toward distant Abuja skyline; mind toward future.

Internal voice—calm, firm, mature:

“No more blotted fruit. No more softness defeating purpose. No more mistakes larger than effort. Only discipline, only resilience, only growth.”

A small transformation—unexpected but earned.

A small rise—quiet but powerful.

A small step—toward redemption.

The pawpaw—slowly shifting,  
from bruised to stable,  
from spoiled to ripening,  
from disappointment to possibility.

A new Patrick—present.

Not perfect.

Not finished.

But rising.

## CHAPTER 17

### THE NEW PATRICK VS. OLD HABITS

Abuja morning; grey sky; faint drizzle; compound with sleepy silence; warehouse corridor with mild chill; boxes neatly arranged from yesterday; hope lingering faintly in the air.

Patrick—table in corner; receipts spread in controlled pattern; pen beside notebook; face composed, steady, disciplined.

Nana—kitchen movement; voice humming distant tune; mood—light.

Loveth—staircase landing; gum chewing slow; eyes sharp; mind calculating; occasional glances at Patrick—half admiration, half disbelief.

The house—a picture of new order.

But under that order—small cracks forming.

Old habits waiting like shadows around Patrick's ankles.

Old tendencies stretching like sleeping animals preparing for mischief.

A quiet tug in his chest—familiar, dangerous.

#### **The Setback—Arriving**

A new set of receipts in Patrick's hands—fresh ink, confusing handwriting, unfamiliar abbreviations, overlapping codes.

Pressure—rising.

Confidence—shaking.

Old panic—knocking.

Patrick's internal storm—slow but strong:

“Focus... but confusion everywhere. Calmness... but nervous energy rising. New identity... but old self whispering.”

Receipts shift slightly on table—small disorder.

Pen—off edge; light clatter.

Patrick's breathing—uneven.

Hands—slight tremor.

Loveth—watching from a distance; eyebrow arching high:

“Hmmm... pawpaw vibration detected.”

Patrick—ignoring her; attempting calm.

But mind—slipping.

Thoughts—scattering.

Receipt numbers—blurring.

Confidence—fading.

Old habit—creeping back:

Rushing.

Skipping steps.

Guessing codes.

A wrong pairing of receipt with carton label.

A second mismatch.

A third.

Patrick's heart—tight; frustration rising; guilt forming.

Loveth—slow approach, hands behind back, chewing gum with sarcastic authority:

“Setback alert. New Patrick—meeting old Patrick. Tension everywhere.”

Patrick—silent groan.

Loveth—circling him like inspector of disaster sites:

“Little pressure—boom. Calmness evaporating. Trembling returning. Pawpaw softness leaking again.”

Patrick—jaw tightening; eyes closing briefly in irritation and shame.

### **Internal Conflict Intensifies**

Inside Patrick—battle of versions:

Old Patrick—scattered mind, panicked heartbeat, clumsy decisions.

New Patrick—calm presence, steady focus, disciplined effort.

The clash—loud inside silence.

Voices inside his skull:

“Calm... no collapse... slow down... but failure near... improvement slipping... Nana's trust at risk... Loveth watching... judgment everywhere...”

Receipts in his hand—crumpling lightly from pressure.

Loveth—snatching them from his hand with dramatic flair:

“Hey! Pawpaw boy! Look at this rubbish! Wrong code here! Wrong quantity there! Wrong name everywhere! New Patrick—where?!”

Patrick—deep swallow; shame forming like fog around him.

Loveth—leaning closer, voice sharp like blade:

“One transformation... nice. But real transformation? Multiple tests. Small setback—not end. But surrender? Total disgrace!”

Patrick—chest tight; eyes opening slowly; determination rising but unstable.

### **Loveth's Sharp Tongue in Full Mode**

Loveth—hands on hips; voice at maximum dramatic setting:

“Listen, boy! New discipline—great. New handwriting—wow. New attitude—surprising. But slip-ups—normal. Only problem—your reaction!”

Patrick—soft exhale.

Loveth—louder:

“Look at you! One confusion—face long like unripe plantain! One mistake—shoulders dropping like useless hanger! One pressure—soul shaking like generator during fuel scarcity!”

Patrick—small involuntary smile.

Loveth notices—gasps:

“Oh! Smile? Good! Revival starting.”

A poke at his forehead:

“That head—steady! No scattering. No panic. No pawpaw collapse. Understand?”

Patrick—nod.

Loveth—eye roll:

“Not small nod. Big understanding!”

Patrick—slightly bigger nod.

Loveth—throwing hands up:

“Well done. Progress.”

Receipts back in his hand—neatly this time.

“Now... breath... focus... correction... no rush... no confusion. Pawpaw ripening—slow process.”

Patrick—eyes sharpening.

Loveth—stepping back; approving hum:

“Yes... yes... energy shifting. New Patrick returning. Old one—disappearing.”

### **Nana's Entrance and Quiet Observation**

Nana—quiet entry; wrapper bright; face calm but observant.

Her eyes scan the scene—Patrick steadying himself, receipts organized, posture strong again.

Her voice—soft approval:

“Better rhythm today. Small slip—normal. Correction—important.”

Loveth—nodding dramatically:

“Exactly, Mommy! Small confusion—fine. Large collapse—unacceptable.”

Patrick—straightens slightly; gratitude in his eyes.

Nana—closer; gentle tone:

“Growth—never straight line. Sometimes two steps forward, one back. Important part—movement forward overall.”

Patrick—relief across his features.

Loveth—leans forward, whispering loudly:

“Translation: Don’t disgrace us again.”

Nana—glare; Loveth—small grin.

Patrick—quiet laughter inside; outside—humble face.

### **The Recovery**

Receipts now in clear order.

Patrick’s handwriting—sharp again.

Codes—matching labels.

Mind—calm, steady, disciplined.

Loveth—nod of pride:

“Correct! See?! Breakthrough! Pawpaw turning plantain slowly.”

Patrick—chuckle; head lowered in embarrassment and appreciation.

Nana—soft smile:

“Good boy.”

Patrick’s chest—warming with newfound confidence.

### **Internal Resolution**

Inside Patrick—calm voice whispering:

“No retreat to old ways. No surrender to panic. No collapse over small confusion. Strength—possible. Discipline—reachable. Growth—slow but real.”

A small shift—visible only inside.

A new foundation—setting quietly.

The pawpaw—still soft, still marked, but now firmer than before.

Ripening through resilience.

Shape forming.

Strength emerging.

Not perfect.

Not finished.

But rising.

## CHAPTER 18

### THE ABUJA TRIUMPH

Abuja noon; heavy sunlight; shimmering pavement; mild generator rumble from neighboring compounds; faint perfume trace floating from warehouse corridor; household tension at low simmer.

Nana—office chair; calculator near elbow; ledger open; brows folded under weight of pending crisis.

A sudden notification from phone—sharp tone; emergency from corporate client; last-minute product shortage; immediate replacement requirement; panic aura rising around ledger pages.

Loveth—couch corner; knees tucked; chewing gum in rhythmic defiance; eyebrows bouncing in mischief and anticipation.

Patrick—doorway presence; calm posture; steady breath; eyes alert; shoulders firm; quiet readiness in his stance.

Nana—glance toward him; surprise flashing across her face:  
“Urgent matter. Corporate client. Large quantity. High stakes.”

Loveth—dramatic gasp:  
“Another test! Perfect moment for one more pawpaw disaster!”

Patrick—unmoved; only a small, steady nod.

#### **The Crisis Formation**

Warehouse shelves—partial emptiness; cartons scattered after previous deliveries; labels mismatched from earlier rush order; product codes overlapping in confusing patterns.

Corporate client request—specific items; precise shades; exact combination of perfume packs and beauty kits; large quantity; tight deadline.

Nana—rising tension; hands on forehead; whisper of desperation:  
“This order... complex. Mistake potential... enormous.”

Loveth—leaning forward with theatrical concern:  
“Perfect storm! Perfect meltdown! Perfect comedy!”

Patrick—approach toward shelves; calm energy; eyes scanning layout; hands guiding receipts into orderly sequence; labels forming patterns; boxes realigning into structured lines.

No verbs—only presence.

Only silent competence.

Only steady reorganization of chaotic space.

Loveth—mouth wide in shock:

“Ah! Hey! This boy! This new aura! This calmness! This... miracle!”

Nana—watchful; breath at a softer pace; shoulders lower; hope in formation.

### **Client Arrival**

Black SUV at gate; tinted windows; impatient honk; corporate representatives stepping out with stern expressions and high expectations.

Security man's gesture toward sitting room; clients entering with sharp glances and clipped remarks:

“Urgency. Precision. Zero tolerance for error.”

Loveth—whisper behind Nana:

“Zero tolerance? Poor Patrick.”

But Patrick—confidence in place; boxes lined in perfect arrangement; products in clear categories; quantities matching receipt list; shades in exact order.

A tray of items placed before corporate representatives—no tremble, no disorder, no confusion.

Their eyes—slow widening.

Their brows—raising.

Their expressions—soft.

Corporate leader—short appraisal:

“Impressive organization.”

Another representative—glancing at Patrick:

“Unexpected efficiency.”

A third—nodding with measured approval:

“Quality assurance—excellent.”

Loveth—jaw dropping dramatically:

“What?! Praise?! For Patrick?! For pawpaw?! For the warehouse destroyer?! Impossible!”

Nana—hand on chest; quiet relief in her eyes; small tear of gratitude threatening escape.

Patrick—calm acknowledgment; slight bow; humility without nervousness.

### **Estate Reaction**

News—fast movement across compound gates; whispers spreading; estate WhatsApp group—total explosion.

Messages flying:

“Patrick—miracle worker!”

“Corporate guests—full satisfaction!”

“Nana's business—safe!”

“Transformation—real!”

“Pawpaw—turning pineapple!”

Children outside gate—new chant:

“Patrick Abuja! Patrick hero!”

Madam Affiong—rushing toward compound:

“Confirmation—necessary! Real success? Real competence?”

Alhaji Musa—rosary shaking in awe:

“Strange aura yesterday... victorious aura today... spiritual upgrade!”

Sister Grace—Bible lifted:

“Breakthrough spirit! Deliverance breeze! Fresh anointing on that boy!”

Mr. Ade—empty briefcase swinging excitedly:

“Breaking news! Trend reversal! Estate shockwave!”

Loveth—standing on balcony, shouting dramatically:

“Yes oooo! Patrick the Pawpaw—now Patrick the Phoenix!”

### **Nana’s Relief**

Inside sitting room—Nana on sofa; eyes glistening; a long, overdue exhale; hands trembling slightly from emotional release.

Her words—soft, almost prayer-like:

“Order—perfect. Clients—pleased. Business—stable again. My heart—light.”

Loveth—dropping into seat beside her; arms around Nana’s shoulder:

“Mommy! Celebration mood! Patrick—hero of the day!”

Patrick—standing near doorway; head lowered in humility; quiet pride radiating without noise.

Nana—turning toward him; voice thick with gratitude:

“Child... thank you.”

Loveth—leaning forward with playful grin:

“Transformation complete? Pawpaw—healed? Bruises—all past?”

Patrick—small half-smile.

Loveth—clutching chest:

“Ah! Smile of confidence! Glory!”

Nana’s husband—entry into room; eyebrows high; surprise in voice:

“Success report everywhere. Corporate praise. Estate excitement. Patrick responsible?”

Loveth—hands thrown skyward:

“Yes! Patrick! Our former catastrophe!”

Nana’s husband—slow nod; approving grunt; rare warmth in eyes.

Hand on Patrick’s shoulder—silent acknowledgment.

### **Patrick’s Quiet Triumph**

Evening breeze—soft through windows; sky glowing with orange and purple streaks;  
atmosphere calm; hearts lighter.

Patrick—reflection in glass; eyes steady; posture upright; internal whisper—gentle and victorious:

“No panic. No collapse. No softness. Strength—present. Focus—lasting. Growth—real.”

The blotted pawpaw—now ripening fruit.

Still tender, still marked, but firm enough for purpose.

Not perfect.

Not complete.

But triumphant.

## CHAPTER 19

### RETURN TO LUJNAB

Late afternoon sun over Lujnab; warm gold blankets across red earth; goats in lazy clusters; hens in half-hearted quarrels; village paths buzzing with rumor dust; wind with a whisper of excitement.

A cloud of anticipation across compounds.

A wave of whispers along rooftops.

A string of murmured predictions around corners.

At the center of all murmuring—Patrick.

The new Patrick.

The ripened Patrick.

The no-longer-blotted pawpaw.

#### Arrival at the Village Gate

Motorcycle fumes near the entrance; a small bag slung over Patrick's shoulder; slight smile on his face; eyes steady, confident, bright with quiet maturity.

Children—instant explosion:

“Patrick Abuja! Patrick Abuja! Return of hero!”

Women—wrappers tightened, necks craning:

“Changed boy! New aura! City polish!”

Men—arms folded, nods slow and approving:

“Strong posture. Calm face. Wisdom glow.”

Patrick—no panic in steps.

No shame in shoulders.

No fear in eyes.

Only quiet transformation.

#### Serah's Emotional Unraveling

Serah—doorway; wrapper flapping from sudden movement; tears forming instantly at first sight of her son.

A cry from her chest—raw, loud, motherly:

“My child! My Patrick! My sunshine!”

A rush forward; arms wide; eyes shimmering with gratitude.

Her embrace—tight, warm, overflowing with relief.  
Her face buried in his shoulder; her body trembling with joy.

Her voice—broken with emotion:

“Abuja strength on you! Maturity on your face! Growth in your spirit!”

Patrick—gentle nod; forehead touching hers lightly.

Serah—crying, laughing, praising, blessing all at once:

“My son... my hope... my miracle!”

Neighbors—soft applause.

Children—louder chants.

Village—full adoration.

### **Pa Lawrence’s Pretend Indifference**

Pa Lawrence—stool under the baobab tree; chewing stick in mouth; legs crossed in legendary stubbornness; face blank, unreadable.

But his eyes—betraying everything.

A spark of pride.

A glow of triumph.

A hidden tear drying too quickly.

Serah—calling out joyously:

“Pa Lawrence! Our son—back! Our child—safe!”

Pa Lawrence—quick cough, dramatic spit, voice heavy with fake annoyance:

“Back? Hmph! Trouble return! Misfortune arrival!”

But his foot—tapping with happiness.

His hand—shaking slightly from excitement.

His chest—rising with quiet pride.

Patrick approaches—calm, respectful.

Pa Lawrence—glance downward, then upward, then full inspection of Patrick from head to toe.

A slow grunt of satisfaction:

“Hmmm. Abuja air on your skin. City wisdom on your forehead. Less foolishness around your eyes.”

Serah—giggle of amusement.

Patrick—soft smile.

Pa Lawrence—trying to suppress his joy, but failing drastically:

“Not total failure after all. Small sense somewhere inside your skull.”

Serah—mock scolding:

“Pa Lawrence! Appreciation, please!”

Pa Lawrence—hisses dramatically:

“Appreciation?! For this boy?! After that perfume disaster?! After that million-naira confusion?! Tufia!”

Pause.

Deep breath.

Voice softer despite himself:

“But... good return. Good growth. Good posture. Good presence.”

Serah—beaming.

Neighbors—grinning.

Pa Lawrence—loud final announcement, chest wide:

“Patrick—son of Lawrence—man now!”

Cheers—an eruption around the compound.

### **Reactions from All Corners of Lujnab**

Mama Rafatu—hands on hips, voice full admiration:

“City polish everywhere! Abuja seasoning on him! Future bright!”

Baba Kolade—staff raised skyward:

“Transformation evident! Discipline strong! Spirit stable!”

Old women at the well—wide smiles:

“Mother’s journey—successful! Prayer—effective!”

Teenagers under mango tree—whistles of respect:

“New swagger! New calmness! New reputation!”

Children—dancing in circles:

“Patrick hero! Patrick return! Patrick big man!”

Lujnab—full celebration.

Patrick—center of all eyes.

But not the old Patrick—

The new one.

Grounded.  
Composed.  
Ripened.

### **Evening Reunion in the Compound**

Lantern glow around Serah; pots simmering with village delicacies; aromas drifting like welcome-home hymns.

Patrick—sitting close to his mother; a calm smile across his face.

Serah—constant glances of pride; hand brushing his shoulder softly; eyes overflowing with motherly worship.

Pa Lawrence—wooden chair; legs stretching in false arrogance; face arranged in his signature grumbling glory:

“Hmph. Calm child now. No shaking. No crying. No blotted behavior. Fine.”

Neighbors nearby—small laughter.

Patrick—gentle bow of head.

Pa Lawrence—low mutter, barely audible:

“Good boy.”

Serah—hearing it clearly—  
Beaming like festival light.

### **The Unspoken Victory**

Inside Patrick—quiet gratitude.

Inside Serah—peace restored.

Inside Pa Lawrence—triumph disguised behind insults.

Inside Lujnab—story of redemption spreading.

The pawpaw—once blotted, bruised, collapsing under pressure—  
now firmer, sweeter, stronger,  
ripe from hardship,  
refined by Abuja’s flames,  
returned with dignity.

A new chapter in Lujnab history.

A new pride under the baobab tree.

A new respect along dusty village paths.

Patrick—home again.

Patrick—changed.

Patrick—redeemed.

## CHAPTER 20

### THE PAWPAW RIPENS

Lujnab sunrise; soft gold along rooftops; rooster crow with unnecessary confidence; goats wandering in lazy parades; village breeze with gentle pride; dust rising in slow celebration.

A new morning.

A new calm.

A new Patrick.

The former blotted pawpaw—  
now ripened fruit,  
firm in intention,  
sweet in character,  
balanced in judgment.

No bruises dominating his image.  
No panic marks across his face.  
No wobbling aura around his spirit.

A young man—  
steady shoulders,  
quiet eyes,  
confidence in small, simple breaths.

#### **The Village Recognition**

Under the baobab tree—elders seated; wrappers arranged; staffs on laps; eyes shining with collective approval.

Baba Kolade—slow nod of ancestral satisfaction:  
“Maturity on him. Wisdom inside him. Discipline around him.”

Mama Rafatu—hands on hips, grin wide:  
“From blotted fruit to Sunday market treasure!”

Laughter around the tree.

Children—echoing chants:  
“Patrick ripe pawpaw! Patrick ripe pawpaw!”

Patrick—standing near Serah; soft smile; humility across posture.

Serah—unhidden tears; hands clasped in gratitude; heart overflowing.

Pa Lawrence—stool tilted backward; chewing stick resting between teeth; face neutral but eyes glowing like festival lanterns.

His announcement—loud, proud, dramatic:

“Ripe pawpaw in this compound! Strong fruit! No bruises! No softness! No foolishness!”

Neighbors—applause.

Serah—playful nudge at him:

“Father’s pride—visible.”

Pa Lawrence—fake cough, fake frown, real joy:

“Pride? Nonsense. Only observation.”

### **Patrick’s New Path**

Patrick—center of quiet conversations; requests for advice; expectations from youths; respect from elders.

Women at the well—whispers of admiration:

“Calm spirit around him.”

“Abuja seasoning in his manner.”

“Future bright.”

Teen boys—close study of his posture, hoping for magical transfer of maturity.

Village elders—occasional inquiries:

“Plans? Direction? Purpose?”

Patrick—gentle answer each time:

“Patience. Growth. Steady future.”

His words—short, steady, firm; no arrogance; no confusion.

A life path—no longer chaotic,  
no longer panic-filled,  
no longer pawpaw-collapse tendencies.

A path with slow steps,  
clear thoughts,  
and quiet ambition.

### **The Fruit and the Human Spirit**

Evening shade under mango tree; elders settling into philosophical chatter; voices blending with cricket chorus.

Baba Kolade—raising a ripe pawpaw in the air:

“This fruit—story of every human. Early bruises—normal. Early softness—natural. Early collapse—possible. But ripening—true purpose.”

Pa Lawrence—grumbling approval:

“Exactly! Youth without trouble—false story. Youth with correction—real journey.”

Madam Rafatu—hand on chest:  
“Blotted beginning—no final identity.”

Loveth’s name—into the conversation through Serah’s laughter:  
“That girl and her sharp tongue—useful medicine.”

Nods from every direction.

### **A Closing Lens on Human Folly**

Lujnab storytellers—gathering near fireside; humorous retellings of Abuja chaos; exaggerated images of perfume explosions; dramatic reenactments of wrong deliveries; entire crowd laughing in chorus.

Baba Irete—comic philosopher of the village—standing with staff in hand:

“Human beings—full likeness to pawpaw. Small pressure—bruises. Extra pressure—collapse. Wrong handling—disaster. But correct sun, correct soil, correct patience—sweetness.”

The crowd—laughter mixed with agreement.

His voice—continuing:

“Parents—always shouting at unripe fruit. Villagers—always judging early softness. City—always squeezing too soon. But ripening—slow matter. Maturity—late blessing. Understanding—rare.”

General applause.

A final punchline:

“Even elders—sometimes raw pawpaws.”

Village roars with laughter.

### **Mother and Son: Sunset Scene**

Serah and Patrick—quiet corner of compound; sunset glow on their faces; soft breeze brushing their wrappers.

Her hand—lightly on his shoulder; eyes full of silent gratitude.

Her whisper—mother-soft, faith-filled:

“From blotted shadow to ripened promise.”

Patrick—small nod; small smile; no rush in his breath.

Pa Lawrence—shouting from distance:

“Both of you! No emotional theater! Dinner time!”

Serah—laughing.

Patrick—smiling wider.

Village—alive with warmth.

### **The Ripened Fruit**

A ripe pawpaw—on kitchen table; golden flesh; smooth skin; sweet scent; no bruise in sight.

A symbol of the journey.

A summary of the struggle.

A reflection of the new Patrick.

Ripened not by softness,  
but by trials,  
sunlight,  
pressure,  
correction,  
and patient hands around him.

The blotted pawpaw—  
no longer blotted,  
no longer collapsing,  
no longer mocked fruit.

A matured fruit.

A steady future.

A calm spirit.

A young man—ready for life.

## **EPILOGUE — THE SONG OF THE RIPENED FRUIT**

Sunset over Lujnab; orange light folding across rooftops; slow breeze nudging palm leaves; distant laughter from compounds; shadows stretching like gentle reminders of yesterday's storms.

A new season in the village.  
A season of calm rhythms,  
soft pride,  
quiet gratitude.

Patrick—no longer the trembling boy at Abuja's warehouse corner; no longer the panic-filled figure under Nana's stern eyes; no longer the collapsing pawpaw of Loveth's dramatic commentary.

A new aura around him—  
firm steps,  
balanced expression,  
purposeful silence.

Serah—daily smile; motherly glow; satisfaction across her face like sunlight on ripe fruit.

Pa Lawrence—still stubborn, still loud, still dramatic; but pride visible between insults; affection hiding behind every cough; approval tucked inside every grumble.

Loveth—Abuja distance but constant presence in rumors and messages; sharp tongue unchanged; mischievous humor intact; respect for Patrick quietly blossoming behind sarcastic remarks.

Nana—steady business recovery; relief woven through every ledger page; occasional stories of Patrick's transformation during evening tea; quiet gratitude for one boy's unexpected rise.

### **A Last Reflection on the Pawpaw**

The old metaphor—still alive in village memory.

The pawpaw—  
soft by nature,  
fragile under careless handling,  
susceptible to early bruises.

But capable—  
under correct sun,  
under patient tending,  
under careful waiting—  
of sweetness, strength, flavor, dignity.

Patrick's story—  
not a tale of perfection,

not a miracle without struggle,  
not a straight road or flawless journey.

But a story of early bruises,  
late ripening,  
and unexpected triumph.

A reminder for every household:  
“No fruit beyond rescue.”  
“No youth beyond redemption.”  
“No journey without chance for change.”

### **A Final Satirical Wink at Human Nature**

Lujnab elders—still pontificating under baobab trees.  
Village women—still whispering dramatic exaggerations.  
Estate neighbors in Abuja—still misinterpreting every detail.  
Human beings—still eager for gossip, slow with wisdom, quick with judgment.

But every now and then—  
one silent transformation,  
one ripening spirit,  
one matured heart,  
a softening of the noise,  
shifts the balance,  
brightens the world.

Even the loudest satirist in the village—  
Baba Ireti—admits it during moonlight gatherings:

“Human beings—full comedy, yes. Full confusion, yes. Full trouble, yes. But sometimes... full miracle too.”

The crowd—in nods.

The fire crackles.

Laughter—upward.

And above them—  
a ripe pawpaw—gentle sway on a high branch,  
golden and serene,  
testimony of patience,  
symbol of possibility,  
echo of the journey just closed.

### **Closing Image**

A peaceful Lujnab night.  
Lantern glow in Serah's compound.  
Patrick seated near doorway; notebook open; dreams forming quietly inside his mind.

No sirens.  
No chaos.  
No bruises.

Only calm determination,  
slow ripening,  
and the promise of a better tomorrow.

The blotted pawpaw—  
now whole,  
now strong,  
now sweet.

End of story.  
Beginning of life.