From a distance, the attire appears sparkling white. In actual fact, it is not. There is a red stain on the skirt that provides a contrast to the immaculate appearance of the white skirt and blouse. The stain even seems to emphasise the white colour of the attire. The boundaries of the stain make an irregular rectangular shape that juts out towards the right base like the problematic peninsula in the country. Sule nudges Tunde who is dozing. “Ol’ boy.” Tunde is a bit irritated by Sule’s disturbance. Nevertheless he raises his chin from his hands. “Wetin?” he asks.

“Make you see for yourself,” Sule replies nodding his head towards the direction of the young woman who is walking slowly to the counter for her card. Tunde scrutinises the red shape, juts his mouth, stretches his neck and juts his mouth again.

“Ol’ boy, you wan get convulsion?”

“Me?” asks Tunde straightening his face and transferring his gaze from the red colour to his friend before replying, “I dey craze? Na di map I been dey study.”

“That na map of ... Nigeria?”

“Of wetin?”

“Of ... of Chicks and co. You know.” Sule says laughing. “God don catch dis one, one time.”

At this point, Madam, the woman on the afternoon shift arrives to take over from Tunde. “Tunde, my pickin, dis one wey your face dey look like oily puff-puff wey I dey fry for my children, ‘im be like say you never sleep?”

“Madam, no be dis Hot-Shift wey dem open. Na ‘im I go check out last night.”

“Wetin be Hot Shift?”

Sule nudges Tunde and signals towards the young woman who is now receiving her card. Madam also turns to the object of their attention wondering whether it is the answer to her query about Hot Shift. She is scandalised by what she sees. She
wonders whether the young woman is not aware of the stain on her skirt. If she is aware of it, does she not know that it constitutes a disgrace to womanhood? Sule and Tunde have turned their attention from the young woman at the counter to watch Madam's face. She pushes out her mouth in disgust. Her colleagues expect her to spit as she usually does when she is irritated. She thinks that the "girl must be one of those useless girls who do not know that certain things are better hidden than exposed." Her colleagues watch as her jutted mouth becomes normal again. In fact her face relaxes and she does not spit. Instead she makes to go and advise the "ignorant girl." But just then, the young woman leaves the counter with her card, her ample hips swinging sluggishly as she makes her way towards the treatment room. Madam does not follow her. Instead, she settles down to her work as she contemplates the matter. She finally voices out another opinion.

"Na these useless girls," she declares. "Where di man who do am now?" she wonders. "Na di thing wey I been dey tell my small sister. 'When una enjoy am finish, na only you as woman go suffer am when di suffer-suffer come.' Today, I hear new one. Na Hot-Shift dem dey go now." Tunde and Sule burst out laughing. With a frown, Madam dismisses Tunde.

"You no go go your house? Go home! Go prepare for another hot one."

"Madam, no be wetin we dey do there. Na only dance we dey dance for Hot-Shift. Na better nightclub." He replies defensively, still laughing.

"I hear," is her curt reply. A patient walks in with a prescription in his hand.

After the examination, doctor Omaru goes to his table at the other end of the large room. Sister Jane brings out a darkish blue bedsheet from the cupboard and instructs Miss Chizoba Akari to tie it round her waist in place of the skirt before going to the doctor's table. Instead she ties it across her big breasts, knots the two ends of the bedsheet behind her neck, and walks out of the cubicle made by a green screen. Doctor Omaru's examination has not revealed any physical cause of the haemorrhage, so he decides to probe her psychological condition. He presses the bell for the nurse, who is about to leave.

"Sister Jane, please get an attendant to bring some coffee and clean her dress."
“Of course, doctor,” she replies as she leaves. “Chizzy,” he calls her by her pet name, "Please relax." She sits back on the chair looking at the doctor expectantly.

"The examination does not reveal any abnormality. Except of course the present symptom which is unusual with your cycle. I have to know the background of your present mood in order to trace the source of this ... this haemorrhage ... I mean heavy bleeding. So open up, please."

"It is not that I want to be secretive, but ..."

"But what?"

"I am afraid that discussing it might upset me," she answers sniffing.

"You are now in my hands or don't you trust your doctor any longer?"

"You know that I do."

"Let the tears flow. It might do you some good."

"Well ..."

"Yes, go on."

"Well," she repeats looking around. Doctor Omaru shoves a pack of tissue papers towards her. She pulls out some and begins.

"Well. I just got this letter and became ill." She starts sobbing as she remembers the humiliation she went through.

"Is it from your boyfriend?" The doctor's use of the word boyfriend is deliberate. He hopes to elicit a protest about his use of that word to describe the person she calls her oppressor. She is not in the mood for argument. She does not even show that she has heard the doctor's provoking question. She just hands the letter over to him, picks up more tissue papers and blows her nose while he reads the letter.

"When ... when did you receive this letter?"

"This afternoon. I just received it. As I was reading it, I started feeling very ill."

"I see. But this letter is not the end of the world, you know. You are still young. Other avenues are still open, you know."

"It is not just because of the letter per se that I am ill, but the humiliation." She begins to sob again. The doctor allows her exhaust herself knowing that this is a case that requires a full discussion for him to properly diagnose the cause of her ailment. He looks at her tenderly as he recalls how as a young medical
student, he assisted the Consultant in delivering the healthy baby girl who has grown to become this young woman, now his patient. He smiles as he remembers her father's joy and the generous gestures to the hospital staff as a mark of his appreciation of their careful and gentle handling of his beautiful wife. The door opens. An attendant brings in a tray and leaves. The doctor observes Chizzy take a cup from the tray. Her hands shake and the spoon drops as she is about to make the coffee. Doctor Omaru comes to her rescue. She clasps her shiny black arms across her chest, as if she is hugging herself. Her face, exposed black arms and the darkish blue bedsheet blend like the feathers of a wet hen in search of shelter. The doctor frowns slightly for he notices the blend which has emphasised the gloomy effect of her forlorn appearance. Since the colour of the bedsheet is the same one usually used for mourning, it now assumes a new tragic dimension on Chizzy's body for the doctor remembers that her mother died recently leaving her only daughter in the care of her old father. He has finished making the coffee for her. His eyes move from the cup back to her face and he finds it remarkable that the colour of her skin is similar to that of the coffee with a little milk added to it. He again takes in the dark shade of her skin, the coffee, and the bed sheet; all blending with her gloomy visage. He waits for her reaction. She unclasps her arms. Instead of picking the cup, she uses her palms as props for her jaws. In spite of the forlorn appearance on her face, doctor Omaru observes that she has controlled herself sufficiently for his diagnosis to continue.

Unexpectedly, the doctor asks, "How is the old man these days?"

"He is fine but lonely and aging rather fastly."

"Does he know about this?"

"No. I do not want him to worry about me. I have to face my problems myself in my own way as an adult. I don't have to be a child always running to her father for help."

The doctor feels that Chizzy is not completely right about her assertion of independence for she still relies on her father and other people in some ways. He however refrains from contradicting her in order to get on with the diagnosis especially since she has managed to be in more control of herself than before.

"Tell me how this condition started."
"Well, I was in my office preparing for a class when the letter was delivered by our messenger. As I read it, I started feeling this sensation on my head. It soon spread to my stomach and in fact my whole body. I started choking. I sat down hoping I would soon overcome the strange sensation. But I did not. So I knew I just had to see you." She looks at him, her large pupils focusing on him expectantly. Though he finds her pair of eyes disarming, he ignores them and instead chooses to concentrate on the more serious issue concerning her health.

"Was that when you started menstruating?"

"I don't know. I just came out of the taxi and felt wet. I did not even know that my skirt was stained because I was expecting my period in eleven day's time."

"How did the situation get to this strange extent?"

"Well, precisely a month ago, he told me that he did not want to see me around the place again if I did not comply, that he had given me enough time to become reasonable and that his patience had run out."

"Did he really put it that way?"

"He did. I knew what his threat meant. He would contrive to make me lose my job. I told him pointedly that I would never agree to that sort of thing. I also told him that I would always do my work well so that he would not have cause to find any fault with me in my professional duties. You won't believe it but I am always in my office before eight in the morning although he sees to it that my classes are always fixed in the evenings between four and eight."

"But you don't have to be in school that early if you have classes only in the evenings."

"I have to, because he once wrote me a letter of warning in which he claimed that I was not found in my office by nine in the morning. That letter showed that he was really serious with his sinister motives. I mean, some of my colleagues come to the office much later than nine and he does not even notice it let alone molest them."

"You should have replied the letter and explained things to him."

"I replied it. I said that I did not think I should be in my office all day since I usually have lectures till eight in the evening."

"That was good."
"But he adopted another strategy. He called me and told me that I should be reporting in his office daily by eight in the morning for some special duties. Well, I started doing so only to discover that there was no duty."

"What do you mean?"

"He just used the opportunity to humiliate me. I sat in his Secretary's office for hours and when he finally came to work, he pretended not to know my mission there. 'Young lady, what do you want from me this morning. I am really busy, so state your business quickly.' I reminded him that I was there on his instruction. The next day, I did not report in his office. That was it. He chose to reprimand me in writing."

The doctor appears dumfounded. He is certainly lost for words. He stares at Chizzy's smallish body as if to verify the credibility of her information from it. Chizzy is not surprised by the doctor's reaction because she would have thought the encounters incredible if not that she experiences them herself. She however continues to dwell on the issue.

"You might ask why I am still there receiving such treatment. Why not? The devil you know is better than the one you don't know. Moreover, leaving this place would certainly destabilise my father."

The doctor's recollection of his patient's other encounters with her boss convinces him of the truth.

"Couldn't you have reported to a higher authority?" He finally asks.

"Which higher authority? The Assistant Director? Isn't he also a man? How many times has he himself called me to his office for no just cause. 'Just to chat,' he has always said."

The doctor winces at her acknowledgement of her appeal to men and her careless manner of lumping all men together. He scrutinises her again as if seeing her for the first time. "Her face cannot be considered pretty," he thinks, "because it is just ... just, almost rectangular." He glances at the almost rectangular map of Nigeria on the wall. Chizzy follows his eyes and begins to scrutinise the dignifying map hanging imposingly in the centre of the wall while he continues with his appraisal. "She has an appealing black colour that looks like burnished mahogany," he admits, "fleshy body and arresting eyes, but I still would not classify her as a beautiful woman." His gaze shifts to the object of Chizzy's attention. There is no public visage or private image
competing for attention with the map on the wall. Nothing, in fact, distracts interest from the green map. Yet, the doctor’s gaze returns to Chizzy’s face.

“She is not good enough for my taste,” he muses as if trying to convince himself that the ‘little baby’ he helped to deliver can attract him. “She is too short, just ....” He flips through her file for her exact height. She is just four feet plus eleven and half inches. That is short for him ... although the fleshy body might compensate for that. He raises his eyes from the open file to look at her. Her eyes turn from the map to the doctor and again the large pupils arrest his attention. He averts his eyes and concedes that she is attractive. Chizzy expects to hear what he has to say about the country whose map they both have scrutinised.

“All men cannot approach that issue in the same way.”

“The Nigerian map?”

“I am talking about you.”

“Me? What have I or my ailment got to do with the map?”

“I am talking about your assertion that all men are the same. I for one cannot victimise a woman who has refused to accept me. In fact the question of using my authority to go after a woman is ruled out!” He argues as if he is on trial and striving to convince not just the woman but himself also of his innocence. From her expression, he can see that he has not convinced her so he insists. “All the same, you should have tried to follow the normal official procedure by reporting him to the higher authority, the Assistant Director, Director, Dean and so on, even the highest authority in the University.”

“I did report to the Director himself once and after that experience ...”

“Yes. What happened?”

“He listened sympathetically. His fatherly look encouraged me to go into details. I told him about that incident in the Chairman’s office.”

“Which one?”

“That one in which he told me to pick a book from the shelf.”

“Did you tell him everything?”

She nods and he continues, “How ... how he lifted your skirt from behind?”

“Not just that. I told him how my dress was torn while I was struggling with him, how I gave him a wound on the face with
the heel of my shoe, and how I spat on him. You know the details yourself, Doctor."

"Of course I do. How will I forget an incident that created so much problems for us here as we tried to control your blood pressure."

"Well, I told him how the man has been pestering me, how he once came to our house when my father was away."

"He dared to come to your father's house?"

"Yes."

"How did he know when your father was away? Who told him? Why is it that you never mentioned it to me?"

"A woman cannot mention everything that happens to her to a man no matter how concerned he is." She retorts defensively, if not defiantly. "As for how he knew that Papa was away, I did not find out because I did not even allow him enter the house."

"Wrong again. Was that the proper way to treat your boss?" He asks hoping that she would fall to his bait and talk about it.

"With the little you know of me, do you really expect me to allow myself to be in the same house alone with him?"

Doctor Omaru feels that she might have a point here yet he suspects that instead of wounding the Chairman's ego, she could have adopted another approach which might have dampened the man's anger.

"What many of you young women don't realise is that there are other ways of tackling this kind of problem. Antagonising the man is not the answer."

"So, giving in is the answer. Doctor, I'm surprised at you!" She says and covers her face with her hands in a bid to push back tears that gathered around her eyes. The doctor suspects that she is shielding her eyes from seeing his face which might have become loathsome because of what he said.

"Please, you misunderstand me. Of course you must not give in. What do you take me for? I am only trying to think of other tactics for tackling the problem."

Chizzy heard his talk about tactics. She releases her hands from her face and rests her chin on her hands as she recalls the scenario of another approach which she once tried on the advice of a colleague.

The doctor gets up and comes round the table. Placing his hands soothingly on her shoulders, he asks, "What is it Chizzy?
I'm sorry if I have upset you. I just ... " The door opens and the maid enters with Chizzy's clothes.

"Ya cloth don ready-o!" She says hanging it on the green screen.

"Thank you." Chizzy says feebly getting up to go and put on her skirt. The doctor retires to his chair to wait for her. Instead of changing, she sits dejectedly on the bed thinking of the other approach she once adopted.

It was her colleague, Dr. Idowu who gave her the advice. She had informed her that she was thinking of finding another job.

"Why? I thought you are enjoying teaching."

"Yes, but you know, I have not been finding it easy with the Chair."

"So, you want to run away like a child?"

"I am tired of the struggle. The tension is too much."

"And if the teacher gives up, what will her students do?"

This question surprised Chizzy because she had not thought of the students' reaction, especially some of the female students who were having similar problems.

"So you will advise the students to withdraw from here and go to another school. If they encounter similar problems there, they should continue running until they reach paradise? That was how I ran from my first job."

"Really?"

"Yes. What you are going through is not new. I was jobless for one whole year. By the time I got this job, nobody told me to hold on tight to it in spite of everything."

"But you don't have my kind of problem. You are married."

"It is not true."

"Does the Chairman also ..."

"I nip it in the bud!"

"How."

"Confrontation and friendliness. A mixture of the two works for me."

"And your husband too."

"No. I don't bring him into the battle. But the fact that I can bring him in might be a check. So that is a factor but I have not exploited it. Would you like to hear my opinion on the matter of your leaving?"

"Yes."
"I cannot claim to know the extent of what you are going through. As a woman I watch you two and I see things which others don't see maybe because I have gone through similar and even worse experiences. If not that the antagonism shows sometimes at meetings I would have said that most of our colleagues would believe that things are normal."

"So, what are you saying in effect?"

"I am trying to say that it can be worse than it is now. There are men who would be brutal in matters like this. This is their world."

"It is also my own world."

"Good! So, you cannot run away. Tackle him. At least, he is not brutal."

"You mean that a man can tight me for refusing him."

"Not physical fight maybe but other kinds of extreme antagonism. But this one manages to contain his passion for now at least."

"Passion?"

"Yes. Passion. I saw it in his eyes the day he was opening a bottle of wine for you in his office."

"He was not opening it for me-o. I told him that I would not drink and he said he would drink. So he was opening it for himself."

"And maybe hoping to persuade you in the end if not that I came in."

"He does not persuade. He orders me and when I refuse, he regards it as insurbodination."

"Well, he is still better than some other men. Do you know the kind of boss you'll have where you are running to? Moreover, why run from a problem? There are problems everywhere."

"I have tried all I can on this particular problem."

"You have not tried to befriend him."

"What?"

"Yes. Without going to the full extent. Just be nice and friendly."

Doctor Omaru cuts into her reverie. "Are you alright, Chizzy?"

"Yes." She replies. "I am just having a little rest. I'll be with you in a short while."

"Take your time. I had finished with my patients for this morning before you came in. And I am free till night when I'll be on call."
Chizzy unties the bedsheet in order to put on her skirt, her mind recalling her first attempt to befriend her antagonist.

The opportunity came when he sent her a query letter for locking her door during office hours. Instead of replying it, she went to his office holding the letter conspicuously for the secretarial staff to see that her mission was official.

"Sir, I did not know that you called me yesterday."

"You locked yourself in your office so that my messenger would not get to you!"

"Sir, I locked the door because I was very busy and students were disturbing me."

"We gave you an office so that students can interact with you, you know what I mean, bring their problems to you. Your duty in this place is not just to teach. You know what I mean. It is also your responsibility to guide the students so you should not lock them out and by so doing also lock out the Chairman who might want to discuss important matters with you."

"There is a notice on my door indicating when I see students. And I saw many of them before eleven when I locked my office to prepare my evening lecture."

"That is no excuse!"

"I am sorry sir. She said and decided to try the first line in her rehearsed speech.

"Excuse me sir. You hate me and at the same time you want me. I cannot reconcile the two."

"On the contrary, Ma'am, I like you. Very much, you know what I mean. But it is my duty as the Chairman of the department to see that you perform your duty appropriately, you know what I mean? If you have an aversion to your boss, you know, you shouldn't take it out on your work."

Miss Akari resisted the urge to remind the Chairman that he was the one who was bringing his private emotions to bear on his official relationship with her as his subordinate by creating problems for her because she rebuffed his overtures. However, since her new approach was that of making friends with him, she merely contradicted his assertion that he liked her very much.

"There is nothing in your attitude that shows you like me."

"My dear, only a man who loves you would want you the way I do."
She was lost for words. He removed his glasses and looked at her evenly with his naked eyes scanning the full length of her body as if daring her to deny her sexual appeal for him. Her large pupils with all its fire focused on her boss. She wondered how to say her next line, a sentence she had rehearsed many times before this confrontation. He was the one who broke the silence.

"Yes? Your silence means that you know I love you. Look at those."

"What?" She asked looking around and pretending that she did not know what he was pointing at.

"Those pairs of tantalising breasts and eyes." Miss Akari winced at the crudity of the assertion and the reference to parts of her body. She wondered how she could afford to be friends with the Chairman and probably bear the humiliation of listening to his bizarre jokes. She however continued to converse with this budding 'friend.'

"Sir, I know that you have many female friends. Female students, workers and so on visit you. Why can't you leave me alone."

"It is not everyday that one sees champagne to drink," was the curt reply.

"Champagne?"

"Yes. One easily gets local beer, burukutu and ogogoro, even tonic wine and sherry. But not champagne."

In spite of the situation, Miss Akari credited the Chairman with extraordinary use of insulting metaphors in classifying women.

"So what am I in your array of drinks sir." She asked sarcastically.

"You know it. Champagne." He grinned feeling very happy with his achievement so far.

"And do I take it as a compliment?"

"Of course, my dear. I love you just like my favourite drink." He laughed heartily enjoying the ingenuity of his extraordinary imagery. Miss Akari regarded him evenly, his smallish head perching on his long neck like a bird's. She loved birds very dearly, so one would have expected her to admire this likeness to a bird. She did not. It in fact infuriated her that this likeness existed in the man. She frowned as she remembered her resolution. The man had stopped laughing and was savouring
the joy of the new found friendship with a funny smile on his lips. In spite of her misgivings, she decided that it was time to come up with the next line in her prepared speech.

"I like you too ... Sir. But ... but ..."

"Then show it. Let us go out now." He got up from the chair. Miss Akari was startled by his sudden move.

"But ... we are at work. Everybody will notice sir."

"Leave that to me. You are trying to make excuses." He came round the table, snatched the offending letter from her hands and threw it into the dustbin. Miss Akari's heart was pounding very fastly. She did not bargain for this when she was planning the encounter. She breathed in heavily and released the air noisily in a bid to cool her nerves.

"Sir, there is another thing."

"What other excuse? I'll destroy the bad record in your file."

"I am engaged to marry."

"What does it matter? I don't want to marry you. I have a wife already in my house and one ..." He hesitated before adding, "Listen my dear, all I want from you is my own cut, my piece of the action, you know what I mean. Or ... come to think of it ... you can give me a child. Yes?"

He had raised both his hands to wrap round her shoulders when he dropped them suddenly. His proximity to her had enabled him appreciate the large pupils closely. There was fire in them, very hot fire, raging and vengeful. On her own part, Miss Akari was able to see another kind of fire in his eyes. The fire was blazing red, his mouth was twitching, and he was panting, with passion and lust. The fire was raw and repulsive. It was stinking. She stepped back from the man.

"You may leave my office now, Miss Akari," he said as he opened the door to the Secretary's office, "and I want a reply to that letter within twenty four hours!"

It is her sobbing that brings doctor Omaru into the cubicle where Chizzy is still sitting with her skirt in her hands.

"Chizzy, it is enough now."

"I am coming, doctor." She slips into her skirt and goes back to her former chair.

"Chizzy. We have to find a final solution to this problem. Tell me how the Chairman's boss handled the case when you reported to him."
"He listened sympathetically."

"What action did he take to settle the matter?"

"I don't know. He never called me to tell me anything. Chairman's action, however, indicated that both of them discussed it."

"What happened?"

"Well, he summoned me in his usual overbearing manner and told me that he had since suspected that I was evil and that I wanted to malign him but have failed very shamefully. He did not stop there. He told me that before long, he would deal with me permanently. I was so infuriated by this threat that I started telling him off."

"That was a wrong move."

"I don't care! As far as I was concerned, he could not do anything more demeaning than he was already doing. I do my work well. At least, the students attest to that and he knows it. He opened the door and told his secretary to take me out. I went straight to the Director to tell him about the threat."

"What did he say?"

"I was not prepared for what I got. He informed me that my boss told him that I was in fact the one who had been molesting him. My boss had told him that he gave me evening classes just to keep me at a distance. Instead, that I embarrass him by sitting with his secretarial staff every morning waiting to harass him."

"Amazing."

"Just wait. The most disturbing aspect of the whole thing was that the director felt he had investigated the matter by merely confirming with the Chairman's office staff if truly I used to sit there in the morning."

"Why didn't you explain your presence there in the morning?"

"He gave me no chance before he proceeded to insult me in the name of advising me. He said that I was still young and should not spoil my reputation but should try to find my own man."

"What!"

"Just wait. He further advised me not to put the man's marriage in jeopardy because his wife would not take kindly to the situation."

"You never told me this one."

"It happened only last week. I felt like taking the matter to
even higher quarters and telling my father the whole story but I knew that it would complicate his health problem at this time. I wept. I cried out to my God. I kept to myself. Finally, I resolved to fight. I searched for evidence. From piles of papers here and there, I found two of the notes he had written to me. One of them was accompanied by a bottle of tonic wine which I instantly returned to him. I couldn't find the one he sent later with a bottle of sherry but I found another incriminating one. It actually ends with, 'Love you, stubborn girl'."

As they discuss the letters, the doctor marvels at the sudden transformation of her countenance. Her eyes have assumed a defiant glint. She even smiles. Her nostrils widen as she continues,

"All these have made me realise the motive of my mother's advice when my father and I were jubilating for my success in getting the job."

"What did she say?"

"I remember her exact words. She said, 'My daughter, I am very happy that you have got this kind of job. It is something we have all wanted. We thank God for it. But let me warn you about the world of men which you are going into.' I protested and argued that it was not the world of men. She then told me that I would learn from my own personal experience but that I must always remember that if I could not solve a problem, I should face its reality with maturity. She went into details which made little sense then."

"Do they make sense now?"

"Yes. These problems have made me remember my mother. She must have gone through some experiences in her own adult life which made her resign her job as a secretary to become a full time housewife, a situation she did not cherish either."

"She appeared happy with your father. At least, she never complained to me about him and she used to confide in me especially during her long illness."

"Not about him but maybe about situating herself in the home and limiting her experience."

"It gave her enough time to take care of herself. Your father is a good man."

"Yes, and a good father to me but only my mother can talk about his quality as a husband. It was not easy for my mother
as a housewife. And it is not easy for me as a working woman either." She says adding pensively, "So, it is not easy for a woman in this world of men."

"Not only for women," adds the doctor.

There is a gentle knock on the door. The attendant enters and removes the tray with its contents. After she has left, silence engulfs the room. The doctor is thinking of how best to help this woman with whom he is becoming more friendly than is usual with a patient. On her own part, Chizzy dwells on the alternative avenues open to her for seeking justice.

Madam beckons on the attendant as she comes out of the treatment room towards the dispensary.

"Wetin she still dey do inside there. Since dat time when 'im enter, na other doctors dey see patients."

"Dem jus dey look." The attendant replies.

"Look wetin?"

"Dey look 'im body no-w."

"Wetin dey worry di gal?" Madam asks.

"I no know bo-o. But di tin wey me I no like na to wash another woman 'im bo-o. But di tin wey me I no like na to wash another woman 'im flower."

"Na flower? No be abortion?"

"No be di same tin?"

"'Im dey lie down? Wetin ..."

"A beg go inside find out yourself. I no know. My own be say, as diiz gals dey come here come chase doctor, make dem no treat me like shit."

"Hey! Wetin dem dey do?"

"Make she do anything she like with doctor. Dat one no concern me. Wetin me I no like be to tell me wash 'im dress when 'im no sick."

"So na fake 'im dey fake? I no understand."

Inside the treatment room, Chizzy and the doctor are mapping out plans for dealing with the problem.

"You don't have to involve your father. Let us leave him out of it. My lawyer will handle it at no cost to you whatsoever. You are my patient and this problem concerns your health, so he will take it up."

"I shall pay. And I shall find another lawyer, a woman."

"Don't worry. You won't have to. Just watch and see how this case will turn round. We'll put fear in him. I'll show him that I
am personally interested in this case. You will see how he would beg for a settlement."

In her sparkling white attire that appears to bear no trace of the earlier stain, Chizzy leaves the treatment room with the doctor. They are approaching the dispensary when Sule sees them and nudges Madam. "Madam, see am." The two watch her. Her attire has lost its red stain. Even its irregular boundary has disappeared leaving a small obscure line that almost disappears in the overwhelming white background. Her determined strides belle her earlier hesitant steps. Even her face wears a new glittering look. She smiles at the world of the hospital forgetting that men also rule the place. She winces at her partner in the struggle who is also happy with the outcome of his long meeting with the patient. Her mood must have emitted pleasant vibrations for Madam's earlier derision now turns to admiration.

"You no see my fellow woman as 'im dey shake 'im bottom."

"Madam, that one na young chick-o, pickin. No be your mate at all."

"Pickin wetin! Because 'im fry 'im hair, rub better cream, dey shake 'im bottom?" She asks, before declaring, "Na old woman like myself."

"But di chick fine sha-a. See as 'im body dey shine."

"I don tell you say na cream dey make 'im body shine like dat. You never hear say, 'good soup, na money make am.' If I get better money now, I go buy better cream and dress better and you no go know me again."

Sule laughs at the prospect of the matronly Madam becoming a young woman. Again he tries to provoke Madam.

"'im map don disappear?"

"You no see as dem treat my fellow woman. Na dat poor gal, di attendant, na she wash di thing."

"But na 'im job 'im dey do."

Madam has no rejoinder. She is clearly annoyed. None of them said anything about the doctor.