

ITALIAN



I speak English, Yoruba and I am becoming fluent in Italian! I guess we can call this story an intriguing or odd fusion of culture - kind of like me. I am always greeted with surprise (and even admiration) when I say that I study Italian, considering it is not as commonly taught amongst the modern foreign languages; and arguably the biggest thing of all, I am a Nigerian woman from South London.

This story is the beginning of an adventurous voyage for our protagonist. It touches on commonly diffused ideas and tropes surrounding travel such as airports being regarded as 'non-places' and even the romanticisation of home. The protagonist is in a foreign place finding their feet - and even possibly love. There are a thousand different possibilities for how the love interests meet but I imagine the mystery suitor says "Ekaasan, come stai?"

13. EKASAN, how are you? (KS3-5)

Yvonne Awotula

Without thinking twice, my parents bought me a plane ticket. I was on my way to the airport in - well, is it really important? All airports look the same. There aren't many differences. Lots of people - all in a hurry - large windows and bright lights. Large flying machines embellish the outer sky. In my opinion, this is the only redeeming aspect of this place (if we can call it that).

"This is the final call for gate 42, all passengers for Lagos, Nigeria". My flight. I didn't want to go but the choice had been made. I walked towards the gate to board the plane. With

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each step heavier than the previous one, finally, I had arrived in my place; after passing all the people staring, as well as the smell of coffee and all the way to the gate. 15E: that was my place. I slumped into the seat and closed my eyes; wishing, hoping, this was all a dream. The only thing that came to mind were the beautiful Venetian streets, the canals and the culture, the streets full of tourists and the scent of bigoli in salsa. Venice is a magical place and how much I wanted to go back. More images of the city flooded my mind. Then I remembered Bologna, the sweet Bologna. Last summer I went there with my friends. It was incredible, the landscape was practically all red, a city full of culture and a lot of history behind every portico.

"Excuse me, excuse me," whispered a voice tapping me lightly on the shoulder. To my right, there was a smiling young woman, she said to me "We' ve landed, didn't you hear the clapping? "

"No, sorry"

"Well, you can leave the plane now"

I was greeted in the arrivals section by a tall, dark man with smooth brown skin. "Hello, sewa?" What! I've never heard anything like it.

"Hello, how are you?" he repeated reassuringly, but this time in an understandable way.

After collecting our bags, we left the airport. Well, this was certainly not Italy. The sun was hotter than usual, the air was humid. Different smells, different textures - the whole atmosphere so different. The tall man put my bags in the car

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and waved me through the door he had opened. Right away, on a bumpy road, he started asking questions: "Are you excited to look after the family business?"

No, no, no, no, no. I was only here because my parents wanted me to take care of business. A decision made without taking me into consideration, and without giving me the opportunity to say no.

~ The second day ~

I decided to take a walk and get my head straight.

I saw a beautiful boy. It was a positive surprise. I didn't know how to talk to him or what to talk to him about. How wonderful! A boy with dark brown eyes, long eyelashes. Was it the sun beating so furiously on my chest, making me sweat? Or was this dangerously handsome stranger less than two meters from me? What I was sure of was that a second never seemed to pass, it seemed like an eternity. He walked past me without even taking a second look in my direction, as if I didn't exist, as if he hadn't just totally intruded on my mind. I blinked twice and the moment had passed much faster now, I turned one last time to take a sneaky look, but he had already vanished into the crowd.

QUESTIONS:

KS3 & 4

- 1) Where is the protagonist at the beginning of this story?
- 2) Is the protagonist of the story happy to make this trip?
- 3) Who is the person who welcomes the protagonist when he/she lands?
- 4) Why does the protagonist not understand immediately the words this person tells him/her?
- 5) Who is the boy the protagonist describes at the end of the story?
- 6) How does this story continue? Try to imagine how it goes on with the help of a classmate.

KS5

- 1) Is it a common feeling to travellers that places like airports seem all the same, and people travel through them as if they had no past and no future? Do you ever feel the same way as the character of this story?
- 2) Have you ever felt like the character in this story while travelling to a new place, knowing you were leaving behind something you felt really close too: not only the landscape, but also the culture that linked you to that place?

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- 3) 'Have you ever felt disoriented and out of place after arriving in a new place that is very different from what you were used to?'
- 4) The pressure our family puts on us is sometimes very unpleasant. How can we learn to say "no" firmly to really avoid doing things which are not part of our plans? How do we make our family understand our reasons for not behaving according to their expectations?
- 5) Sometimes people we do not know have a big impact in our life, and we get inspired by them. Has something like this ever happened to you?
- 6) How does this story continue?