

# LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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# SEEING LAGOS

## Alessandra Ebulu

# Love Has No Boundaries

*An M/M Romance series*

## SEEING LAGOS

**By Alessandra Ebulu**

### Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love Has No Boundaries* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a free gift to you.

### What Is Love Has No Boundaries?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what they do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love Has No Boundaries*.

Whether you are an avid M/M romance reader or new to the genre, you are in for a delicious treat.

### Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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## Photo Description

Photo 1: An aerial view from a city's bridge. In the background are several high rise buildings, and in the foreground, a multitude of cars are parked in an open space, with African people walking by the area.

Photo 2: A face bright with a smile, deep brown eyes, and a head full of dreads. The man's dark skin, a beautiful contrast to his white teeth set off nicely by his eyes.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*I have no photograph to post, because all I want is a story set in some place that never or rarely appears in M/M Romance. Maybe someplace like Kiribati, or Singapore, or Lithuania, or Botswana. Take your pick, dear author.*

*I have no preference whatsoever about the content of the story. It can be whatever you want it to be, as long as at least one of the MCs is native to the unusual setting, so we get some insight into the local culture.*

*Everything else is up to you.*

*Sincerely,*

*Kathleen*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** holiday, Africa, sweet no sex, mini-travelogue, nervous breakdown recovery

**Word count:** 6,582

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Dámilólá woke up with a jolt to the screeching sounds of the alarm clock. He buried his head in his pillow, hoping against hope that the act would mute the volume. A minute later, he accepted his fate that he wouldn't be getting any more sleep and pushed off from the bed, until he rested with his thighs curved beneath him.

He blinked owlishly and looked at the clock. Five thirty in the morning. He suppressed a groan, unfolded his legs, and climbed out of the bed. He had an interview for nine, and he was already running late.

With the speed of one accustomed to being late, he rushed through his morning wash, brushed his teeth, and got dressed. He glanced at his wristwatch that now read 5:45 a.m., grabbed his keys and wallet, and ran out of the house. “Bíódún, lock the door,” he shouted to his roommate and jogged to the bus stop.

It was pitch black, and the cold air had his body breaking out in goose pimples. Dámilólá rubbed hard at his chilled arms and took a deep breath.

The harsh glare of an oncoming car's headlights illuminated the area, and he put out his hands to signal to the driver, praying fervently that the lights he saw belonged to a *dánfó*—a commercial bus—and not a privately-owned vehicle. The sooner he left Ìkòròdú, the sooner he would be in Ìkejà, and the sooner he could run his errands at CMS. It was going to be another busy day. He wondered if it was too much to hope for something surprising, relaxing, and out of the ordinary to happen to him today. Something to help him snap out of the rut he was presently in.

The *dánfó* came to a stop in front of him and he hopped inside. The conductor called out in a shrill voice, “Mile twelve, Kétu, one fifty; Ojóta, two hundred; Maryland, two fifty; Yába three hundred. *Mú chángè e dání. Mi ò ní chángè lówó o.*”

Dámilólá rolled his eyes. That was the usual closing phrase uttered by every conductor and cab driver in Lagos. They *never* had any change. If a person was going to Yába and handed a one-thousand-naira note to a driver, that driver would complain, spew out some curses about one's family and, with a lot of grumbling, reluctantly hand over the person's change.

Some drivers were rude enough to ask that a passenger forget about the change because they didn't have any. Yet, if the reverse was the case, the conductor or driver would not leave their change with any passenger. It was just not possible.

Dámilólá took out a two-hundred-naira note from his wallet and handed it to the conductor. All that was left was for him to get some breakfast and some sleep. It would take him about two and a half hours to get to Ojóta, considering the traffic, and there was no way he was going to stay awake for that period of time.

The bus crawled from the Ìkòròdú garage to the Agric bus stop, where it had to stop to load up on more passengers.

Dámilólá noticed a girl with loaves of bread and called, "Bread."

She immediately rushed over with her tray and began to push her wares at him. He decided on eighty-naira bread and seventy-naira *Àkàrà*, along with a sachet of water.

He settled back in his seat, cut off a bit of bread, and placed an *Àkàrà* ball in between the bread. He bit into his food, and his mouth was filled with the delicious taste of bean balls fried in palm oil and spiced with pepper and onions. Dámilólá moaned and polished off the rest of the meal. With a few gulps, he emptied the sachet of its contents. That done, he rested his head against the windowpane and dozed off.

He woke up to a light tapping and opened weary eyes to stare at a fellow passenger who pointed outside. "We're at Ojóta."

Dámilólá mumbled his thanks and alighted from the bus. He joined the crowd of people who were all heading to the *dánfós* that were in a queue. Ìkejà

was a busy part of Lagos. It was an area that housed a lot of companies, so everyone was heading towards the Ìkejà *dánfós*.

There was a lot of pushing and curses, and the stench of the Ojóta waste disposal vans permeated the air. Dámilólá walked around a crippled man begging for alms and called out, “Allen Avenue.”

The conductor for the Allen Avenue *dánfó* waved his hands and pointed at his bus.

Dámilólá glanced at his wristwatch and then hurried onto the bus. He only had fifteen more minutes before the interview was to start. This was the sixth advertising agency he had applied to. The others had informed him that they would get back in touch with him, but never did.

It was a surprise when he received the phone call from S, O & U asking him to come in for an assessment test. It had been a bigger surprise when he was informed that he had passed the assessment test and therefore should come in for an interview.

He had his fingers, toes and even mid-section crossed with the hope that he would finally receive good news and employment with a respected advertising agency.

The level of unemployment in the country was high, and to make matters worse, companies were always requesting employees with “experience”. Any time he saw a vacancy ad in the papers or on the Internet and saw the dreaded tagline “... Years of experience wanted,” he felt the need to slam his fist into something. How the hell was anyone supposed to get any experience if they were not even offered the opportunity to gain the experience in the first place?

“Employ me, so I can gain the bloody experience, damn it,” he always felt like screaming.

Dámilólá took in a deep breath. No need to get all worked up before a major interview. He needed to keep calm. Hopefully, this interview would go well. If it didn't, well, he would have to find something to do. The rent would soon be due, and he needed to give Bíódún his share.



He kept his eyes on the Ìkejà landscape as the driver drove into the heart of Lagos' heartbeat, and in his own heart, he kept a prayer that things would turn out well.

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Solá buried his face in his pillows and pressed his hands hard against his ears. When that didn't work, he turned around until he was looking up at the ceiling and released a frustrated shout. The thump-thump sound of the pestle hitting the mortar was grating on his nerves.

It was made especially worse because it was still six thirty in the morning. Nobody deserved to wake up to such a racket. It was completely inhumane. Human beings need sleep. And little children need a balanced meal that would fill them up, give them energy, and provide their bodies with the nutrients for development, not the crap Mrs. Bólújòkó fed the little ones. Someone should set her straight. Solá rose from the bed, yanked on trousers and a shirt, and ran down the stairs. He was just the right person to do that. That woman's ignorance had to be rectified.

Outside the Bólújòkó's house, he could hear the racket even more clearly. Early risers, who were headed to work, didn't even seem to notice. Some were focused on their phones, and others had their ears plugged as they all drifted towards the end of the street where there was a bus stop. They'd probably heard the pounding sounds for so long that they'd gotten used to it.

Solá knocked and heard shuffling sounds as someone approached the door. The door swung open, and Solá glanced down at the little boy. His school uniform had obviously been recently thrown on, and the buttons done up haphazardly.

"Is your mother at home?" Solá asked. It was silly, because they both knew that the boy's mother was around. Who else would be pounding yam so early in the morning?

The boy nodded his head, jabbed a finger behind him, and disappeared into one of the open doors, leaving the front door open for Solá to come in.

Solá made a mental note to tell the boy's mother about the boy's carelessness with security. The world was not so safe that a child should give anybody easy access to his home.

He spent some time glancing around the living room. There was a fourteen-inch television on a wooden cabinet, with a DVD player in the slot beneath. A standing OX fan provided the space with adequate ventilation, and on the walls were framed pictures of people of different ages, probably members of the family. The walls were a pale blue, and the worn curtains were a royal blue that matched the rug that lay in the middle of the room, on which there was a small table that held various remotes and glasses.

After he had spent enough time observing the room, and no one had appeared yet, he called out, "Mrs. Bólújòkó? It's Solá Michael. Solápé's younger brother. I came to talk with you about something."

"Come to the kitchen. My hands are busy at the moment," a female voice called out.

Solá shrugged and followed the pounding sounds to the kitchen.

Mrs. Bólújòkó was a short woman with a slim physique. Her arms, however, were heavily muscled, and she handled the pestle expertly, tossing slices of boiled yam into the mortar and pummeling the pieces into a paste. As he watched, she added some water, turning the mixture with the pestle until the mixture's consistency was acceptable. She scooped it out and dished it into a big cooler.

That done, she straightened up and looked hard at Solá. "Aunty Solápé's younger brother you said? The one visiting her from London?"

*You mean her crazy brother who was advised by his shrink to take some time off because he couldn't seem to turn his brain off and would soon suffer from exhaustion? The one who doesn't want to be in this country and simply wants to be back in London with his friends.*

Solá kept his thoughts to himself, however, and nodded. "Yes."

“Well then, what can I do for you?” Mrs. Bólújòkó asked and wiped her hands on a clean napkin attached to the *wrapa* round her waist.

Just as Solá opened his mouth to reply, she held up a finger and shouted, “Gbémi, Lékè, come and take your food *o*. It’s already fifteen minutes to seven. You’ll be late.”

An older girl and the little boy who opened the door came running into the kitchen. The girl grabbed the steaming bowl of *Ogbono* soup and carefully carried it out of the kitchen while her younger brother carried a smaller bowl in one hand and two small glasses in the other.

“That’s actually what you can help me with. Mrs. Bólújòkó...”

“Call me Détóún,” she interrupted.

“Détóún. I understand the need to have your kids fed, but at six thirty, I’m still sleeping, and the pounding sounds are too loud. I don’t know if others have mentioned it to you, but I just wanted us to talk about it,” Solá said, watching her eyes.

“Really? I didn’t know that,” Détóún said.

Solá observed that she looked genuinely surprised. Obviously, no one in the neighborhood had come out to mention that her pounding was a nuisance. “Besides, no offence meant, but pounded yam and soup is not the most nutritious meal to serve to young kids at this time of the day.”

Détóún’s eyes hardened slightly. “Are you trying to tell me that I’m not feeding my children properly? *E mà gbà mí?* Have you seen how strong they are?”

*Okay. I don’t think my words came out the proper way. She seems very pissed. What does E mà gbà mí mean again? Oh yes! Please save me. Okay, I need to rephrase my words before she starts ranting in Yoruba again.*

“I didn’t mean it that way, Détóún. I just meant that pounded yam is a heavy meal. Eating such a meal in the morning will make the kids very tired and they won’t be able to assimilate what they’re being taught in school as well as they should,” Solá backpedaled.

Détóún took in some deep breaths. “But that’s what I’ve been feeding them for so long. And no one has complained. Their grades haven’t turned bad.”

“I’m not saying that they will suddenly start failing. I’m just saying that they won’t perform as well as they should. Just try something different for some months. Try some cereal like Golden Morn or cornflakes. Give them oats, spaghetti, rice, and occasionally boiled yam. It will help.”

Solá held his breath as he watched multiple emotions flash across Détóún’s face as she considered his words. She finally nodded. “All right. I will do as you suggest. Although, what is also helping your case is that my pounding yam disturbs you in the mornings,” she added.

Forty-five minutes later, his stomach full of the pounded yam and *Ogbono* soup that Détóún had insisted he eat, he entered the house. He spotted the note that his sister left on the center table.

*I’ve gone to work. Whenever you can, please can you help me out by picking up some clothes and books at CMS? There’s a tailor’s shop just beside the First Bank branch at CMS. Just ask for Adéòtí. Tell her I sent you, and she will hand over the package. I’ve already called her, and she’s expecting you. I really do need them today, but it will be too late for me to pick them up. Take the time to enjoy Lagos a bit while you’re at it.*

She’d included a smiley face at the end of the note. Solá shook his head at his sister’s silliness and placed the note in his back pocket. He glanced at the clock hanging on the wall. It now read seven forty-five. There was no need to rush. He would watch some reruns of *Law and Order* and be on his way at about four.

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Lagos in the evening was loud. It was like a rock concert, with the screeching and the horns representing instruments, and people’s movements like dancers. The conversations, arguments, and shouts were all lyrics to the song of people who live in and have grown to love the city.

Solá could see it in their eyes, in the jaunty way a majority of them walked. They loved Lagos, every part of it. Their excitement couldn't be faked.

He'd reconsidered the wisdom of driving around, constantly halting in the middle of the road to ask where the First Bank was located. Besides, with the narrow routes that were all too common, there was a chance that he might have to walk to get to the tailor's shop.

So he'd decided to park his sister's car and asked for directions from a bus driver who pointed out the road he should take. Solá thanked the man and immediately began to walk. He'd been walking now for about ten minutes, and he still hadn't gotten to the place that the driver had informed him was just "round the corner".

The sun was high in the sky, and the heat turned his shirt into a soaked mess that he was sure did not smell anything like it had when he left the house. His throat felt parched as well. Immediately he had the thought, he motioned at a little girl with a bucket of drinks on her head and asked, "Do you have Teem?"

She reached into her bucket, which was still on her head, and brought down a bottle of Teem, the condensation on it indicating the coldness of the drink.

He downed the drink in quick gulps and handed her the money. He raised a hand to shield his eyes from the sun and scanned the area, looking for the familiar white elephant set in a blue background, the logo of First Bank.

Solá caught a glimpse of something blue in the distance and began moving forward, with the hope that he had finally gotten to his destination.

He was so focused on the building that he paid no attention to anything around him, not even the person who bumped into him. There was nothing unusual about the act. CMS was teeming with people, and everybody was in a hurry to get to where they were headed. Bumping into others was inevitable during the ever-present rush hour. Sometimes, he wondered if Lagosians ever went to work. No matter the time of the day, the roads were always busy and traffic congestion was forever a fact.

It took him a while to notice that his shoulders had been relieved of a great weight. By the time his brain processed the information, the young thief had covered quite a distance with Solá's laptop bag in tow.

"Thief! Thief!" he screamed and watched the young crook race away with his bag. He mentally went through the valuables he had kept in the bag: his wallet full of cash and his ATM cards, his external hard drive, some gum, an extra pair of shoes that he planned to have a shoemaker—the local cobbler—to fix for him, and most importantly, his laptop.

Solá debated running after the boy, but the thief had gotten quite a head start and had chosen the most opportune time to carry out the theft. Cars were moving swiftly, and he couldn't start chasing the boy through traffic. None of those who were behind him did anything to help apprehend the thief, either.

Solá chewed his lower lip and contemplated returning home to tell his sister about the theft when someone raced by him, bumping into him in a hurry to get to wherever it was the other person was going. Solá swallowed an expletive. Today was just not his day.

He stooped down to pick up the package of books that had dropped when the pedestrian ran into him, when two sneakered feet walked into his line of vision. Solá's gaze travelled up.

He saw well-worn gray jeans, a T-shirt depicting a beach scene, a face brightened up with a smile, deep brown eyes, and a head full of dreads. The man's dark skin was a beautiful contrast to his white teeth and was set off nicely by his eyes.

Solá was so caught up in the man's gaze that it took him a while to notice that the man had his stolen laptop bag swung across his shoulder.

The stranger stooped down and picked up a copy of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* that had slid away from Solá's reach. He brought the now-torn paperback to Solá and said with a sheepish look, "I'm sorry I ran into you. I was in a hurry to apprehend the thief and it didn't occur to me that at the speed I was running, I would bump into you or damage your books."

The man handed Solá the bag and they both rose to their feet.

Solá couldn't take his eyes away from the thief-catcher. He was particularly fascinated with the way the other man constantly licked his lower lip, all the while keeping his focused brown gaze on Solá.

Solá was just about to ask for a name when someone bumped into him, knocking him against his helper. He felt warm arms hold him gently until someone yelled out, "Disgusting."

The word sent a shock through Solá's system, and he and the other man jumped apart. This was Nigeria. A country that handed out jail terms to homosexuals. This was not a country where a man could admit to be tempted to kiss another man in public. Public Displays of Affection of any kind were frowned upon. A display of homosexual attraction was grounds for a lynching.

"Thank you for the help," Solá murmured and tightened his hand on the strap of his laptop bag. "I'm Solá Michael."

"I'm Dámilólá Adérèmi. And it was no problem," Dámilólá said with a laugh. "Although, I'll advise that now you are in Lagos, it's best you keep your eyes and hands on everything you have on you, and at all times. A man who is lax about his things and his environment is soon parted with his belongings in Lagos. And it's not every time you'll find someone come to your rescue like I did. Quite a lot of people will conclude that since you were stupid enough to be taken advantage of, then you don't deserve to have that item."

"But that's not fair," Solá protested. "Why should I be blamed for getting robbed?"

Dámilólá raised a hand. "Nobody's actually going to blame you for having your pocket picked. They just won't see the sense in running to your aid and helping to apprehend the thief. Everyone's in a hurry to get to their destination. They don't have the sympathy to help someone retrieve an object that he should have kept a careful eye on in the first place. It's just the way Lagosians are." Dámilólá shrugged.

“Lagosians sound a lot like jackasses,” Solá retorted, then inhaled sharply. Maybe he had spoken too harshly. This was the city Dámilólá lived in, and that made him one of the Lagosians being spoken about.

Dámilólá laughed hard. “Well, some of us are,” he admitted with a smile. “But you’ll grow to love us and see the city as beautiful, enchanting, and utterly engaging.”

Solá shook his head. “I do not intend to stay here for long enough to witness all the wonders of Lagos. I have a life to return to, a career. Plus, I do not think Lagos is actually the place for me.”

“Who said anything about months—or even weeks?” Dámilólá asked with an impish grin. “Give me one night. Just a night, and I’ll open your eyes to some of the wonders of this city I call home.”

Solá stared at twinkling brown eyes, the infectious smile, and a lithe body that was presently balanced on its owner’s heels and vibrating with contained energy. At that moment, Dámilólá looked like a big cat about to spring.

Slowly, the lethargy that had been with Solá ever since he got to Lagos began to lift, although he still retained his doubts about Lagos being captivating. The Lagos he knew was filthy, loud, and annoying. He didn’t see how Dámilólá could make him love the place. However, only a fool would turn down an invitation with a beautiful man as his guide, and Solá Michael was not a fool.

He presented his hand to Dámilólá and said, “You have yourself a deal. Enchant me.”

Dámilólá laughed. “Sure. Your first lesson is this. People don’t really shake hands on the streets, unless they’re business associates. Rather, we bump our fists.” Dámilólá indicated that Solá should make a fist, and they bumped fists. “Now, where should we start?” Dámilólá mused and tugged on one of his dreads. His eyes scanned the area.

Solá however remembered his errands. “I need to pick up a dress for my sister. That was where I was heading when we bumped into each other. She said the tailor’s shop is beside the First Bank.”



Dámilólá nodded his head. “I know the place. It’s a good place to start.” He began walking briskly.

Solá followed him, wondering what could be fascinating about a tailor’s shop in Lagos, and why it was a good starting point for getting him to understand Lagosians and fall in love with the city.

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Solá dropped the bags containing his sister’s clothes on her bed. When the seamstress’s girls began to pack his sister’s clothes, he had wondered if maybe they had miscalculated. His sister didn’t need so many dresses made from lace—beautiful, coloured, fabric with holes meant to reveal bits of skin that tantalized men’s vision—skirts made from ankárá—the locally made material with its richly-coloured patterns that showcased the artistry and imagination of the men and women who designed them—or jackets that were made of the sophisticated Guinea brocade. What was Solápe doing with so many clothes? Clothes that, more often than not, she rarely wore?

Solá shook his head at the question. Women. He would never understand them or their burning desire to own as many articles of clothing as possible. They were a conundrum in his book.

Dámilólá had laughed at his amazement. Solá, though, hadn’t been offended. His attention was captured by the busyness of the place: little girls rushing about carrying bolts of fabric; older girls threading sewing machines, their legs working the pedal as the machines made stitches on the materials; still-older women with their needles, creating intricate embroidery on ready materials; and finally, the head seamstress who moved around, giving advice and help, until she finally settled at her own sewing machine and continued with her work. It was artistry, speed, organization, a dramatic scene; with the end result, the joy and praises that came from satisfied clients who took their packages and left.

Solá had also spent part of his time staring hard at a little girl of about twelve, whose hands moved steadily and well over the swatches of fabric she was embroidering. She spoke animatedly with the other girls, laughed at their

jokes, but like the others, there was no misstep, no mistake in her work. She went through the swatches quickly, but it did not affect the quality of the work she was creating. The women all worked hard, mastered their craft, enjoyed their work, and were relaxed.

He and Dámilólá had been caught in mild traffic whilst they headed to his sister's house. Dámilólá had expressed disappointment at that but cheered up saying that the traffic they would encounter heading out of Lagos island would make up for it. The scandalized look he had given him made Dámilólá laugh before Dámilólá said, "There's no need to worry. Lagos traffic at its height is one that every Lagosian has to experience. Especially traffic on the Third Mainland Bridge, and you'll soon see why."

Dámilólá's voice from down the stairs jolted him out of the memory. "How long does it take to drop off some bags? Hurry or we'll miss the show."

"I'm coming," Solá replied, shutting his sister's door and hurrying out the door, all the while wondering what show they might be late for. The only thing Dámilólá had seemed excited about him seeing was the Third Mainland traffic. How was that a show?

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Third Mainland Bridge at night, in the thickest of traffic, was a sight to behold. Cars covered every inch of the bridge, and with their headlights shining strongly, the bridge was ablaze with colours and cars that looked like tiny ants moving slowly. The lights reflected on the ocean, multi-coloured flashes dancing on the surface of the water. It called to him, entranced him.

The cool air breezed into the car, cooling them off.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" Dámilólá asked, grinning brightly. "This is how a lot of us relax on weeknights. Seeing this, listening to music and being tempted to jump into the ocean that calls to us to forget our worries and sorrows."

Solá shook his head. "I have no plans to jump into any water, thank you very much. I happen to value my life a lot."

“Just because you feel the urge doesn’t mean you should give into it. It’s enough to feel the call and know that you’re one with nature.”

At his disbelieving look, Dámilólá cranked up the volume, and the voice of the radio presenter filled the car. Solá, though, was focused on where else Dámilólá wanted to take him. He hoped it didn’t involve jumping onto the beach under some misguided notion that it was a way to connect with nature’s force.

“We’ll soon get there,” Dámilólá said, interrupting his thought process.

“Where’s there? And what exactly are we going to do there?” Solá asked.

Dámilólá smiled. “*There is Yába. And we’re going to watch a rendition of Olá Rótímí’s *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, whilst devouring a plate of hot àmàlà and àbùlà soup and drinking gourds of palm wine. It’s an experience I want you to have.*”

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Lagosians definitely knew how to enjoy themselves. That was the thought that went through Solá’s mind as he cut a bit of *Àmàlà*— a thick paste made from yam flour and hot water— and mixed it with hot *Àbùlà* soup— a mix of *Gbègìrì* and *Ewédú* soup. He tossed it into his mouth, followed by bits of fish and meat. He took the meal with copious amounts of palm wine that left him feeling hazy.

This feeling contributed to his enjoyment of the play, and he laughed hard with the audience at the hilarity of LÉjokà-Brown and the way the return of his American wife, Lisa, threw his entire household into pandemonium, causing him to say good-bye to his political career and his traditionally-married wives.

By the time the actors and actresses gave their final bow, Solá found himself on his feet, clapping along with the rest of the crowd. Hell, he wished he could contact the playwright so he could congratulate Olá Rótímí on a story well written.

“I can see you’re having fun,” Dámilólá breathed into his ear. “But the night is just beginning. Next stop is Ozone cinema. Let’s watch a movie.”

Amidst Solá's protests that they just finished seeing a play, Dámilólá dragged him to the cinema, where he paid for both their tickets. Soon they were seated in the back of the hall, waiting for the movie to commence. As they waited, Solá looked around.

People had big bags of popcorn and drinks and held on tight to their movie partners. There was a hushed reverence as the movie started, and the hush continued till the end of the movie, letting up for a couple of times when the audience was sympathetic to the characters on screen. The audience laughed when the scene was funny, shouted at the action scenes, and remained quiet otherwise.

Solá briefly let his eyes sweep across the room. Everyone in that room, man, woman and child stared intently at the screen, completely captivated by the plot, and Solá realized that in Lagos, the cinema was almost a religious experience. Be it a stage drama or people on screen, Lagosians liked a good story.

"Next stop is Ìkejà. You need to see how we move, and our clubs," Dámilólá whispered in his ears as the credits flashed on the screen.

The cool air on his ears caused Solá to shiver slightly. He turned to Dámilólá. "I've been to Ìkejà before. There were no clubs there."

Dámilólá grinned. "Of course there weren't clubs at that time. Ìkejà is a corporate area. Offices are a dozen a mile there. What you saw was serious Ìkejà in the daylight. I want to show you Ìkejà at night. The chameleon that changes its appearance to suit the environment. That's Ìkejà for you. It's the perfect representation of the average Lagosian spirit. We work hard, but when work is over, we're quite capable of transforming into party animals who want to relax, with as minimal effort as possible."

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They'd been to three clubs already, all within a time frame of four hours, and there were three things the clubs all had in common. The lack of lights, the music of Nigerian stars like Iyanya, Terry G, Timaya, Psquare, Wizkid, et

cetera, and the throngs of bodies pressed closely to each other. Bodies that moved sinuously to the music.

Alcohol—beer, spirits, and wine—flowed freely, and everybody in the clubs had that half-dazed look of the drunk. Men ground against each other, women made out with women, and heterosexuals fucked in the corners all over the room. Nobody made a fuss. The haze that had descended on the clubs made everything seem normal. Couples that would have otherwise hidden during the day came out freely at night. It was like the entire city let down its hair and was more receptive.

At the moment, Dámilólá was grinding against him to the hard rhythm of Timaya’s “Málonògèdì”. He had his ass placed just in the right place in front of Solá’s jeans.

Solá tried various images to get out of thinking of his companion’s ass, but Dámilólá spun around and covered Solá’s lips with his. Before Solá could moan, Dámilólá’s tongue had gained entry into his mouth and began to slide against his tongue. Solá’s hands drifted to Dámilólá’s hips, bringing him closer, as they ground together to the beat of Timaya’s song until it ended, and both their jeans were soaked.

The switch to Psquare’s more upbeat “Alingo” had Solá jerking back in panic. What had he done? He hadn’t even confirmed if Dámilólá was okay with it, before he had grabbed the other man’s hips. The amused look in Dámilólá’s eyes reassured him somewhat, though.

They walked in silence to the car, the reverberating beat of the songs playing in the club still reaching them at the car park. Dámilólá leaned his folded arms on the top of the car and asked, “So what do you think of my city?”

“It’s beautiful. I can see why you like it,” Solá replied honestly, his mind flashing back to the sights of Lagos. He smiled as he remembered a little girl they had come across, dancing in front of her mother’s shop. They had caught sight of the girl at a traffic point, and it had been entertaining watching her move and grow more confident as people congratulated her skill.

“That’s just a little bit of Lagos. I wish I had the time to show you more. Show you the great bargains you can get at Balogun market, watch the carvers at Lekki, dance with the musicians at Surulere, eat the *mallam’s Mishai*—a breakfast of bread and fried eggs with tomatoes, peppers, onions, garlic and seasoning—at Agege. I wish you could see the Eko festival with the canoes coursing across the ocean or the Eyo festival with the masquerades. I wish I could show you Oshodi and where you can get designer knockoffs at Abé e Bridge,” Dámilólá’s eyes flashed. “I wish I could show you so much.”

“Well, you still can,” Solá smiled. “I’m not leaving yet, and I’m sure there’s ample time for you to show me everything. And when I do return to Lexington, you can come visit any time you’re around, so I too can show you my own home, the wonders that await at every corner.”

Dámilólá’s grin was wide. “You’ve got yourself a deal. And I might just take you up on that offer sooner than you expect. I’m processing my Master’s application into the University of Leeds. If it does go through, you can return the favour.” He looked at the rising sun, looked down at the car timer that read 6:05 a.m. and said, “Time for you to get a taste of the *Mishai* and get some shut eye. We have more wonders to see today and more living to do in the city that never sleeps.”

**THE END**

## **Author Bio**

*For as long as she can remember, Alessandra Ebulu has always had her nose buried in a book. The characters appeal to her, and it is not uncommon to find her talking to the various characters in her head—both the ones she has read about and the ones she has created. When not reading or writing, Alessandra can be found watching movies, sitting in front of her laptop (watching animes, reading mangas, or surfing the Internet), or listening to all the genres of music that make her life complete.*

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