

It rained heavily the day Ade Coker died, a strange, furious rain in the middle of the parched harmattan. Ade Coker was at breakfast with his family when a courier delivered a package to him. His daughter, in her primary school uniform, was sitting across the table from him. The baby was nearby, in a high chair. His wife was spooning Cerelac into the baby's mouth. Ade Coker was blown up when he opened the package—a package everybody would have known was from the Head of State even if his wife Yewande had not said that Ade Coker looked at the envelope and said "It has the State House seal" before he opened it.

When Jaja and I came home from school, we were almost drenched by the walk from the car to the front door; the rain was so heavy it had formed a small pool beside the hibiscuses. My feet itched inside my wet leather sandals. Papa was crumpled on a sofa in the living room, sobbing. He seemed so small. Papa who was so tall that he sometimes lowered his head to get through doorways, that his tailor always used extra fabric to sew his trousers. Now he seemed small; he looked like a rumpled roll of fabric.

"I should have made Ade hold that story" Papa was saying. "I should have protected him. I should have made him stop that story."

Mama held him close to her, cradling his face on her chest. "No," she said. "O zugo. Don't."