“Did you hear what happened to Professor Okafor’s son?” Aunty Ifeoma’s friend finally asked. She spoke more Igbo than English, but all her English words came out with a consistent British accent, not like Papa’s, which came on only when he was with white people and sometimes skipped a few words so that half a sentence sounded Nigerian and the other half British.

“Which Okafor?” Aunty Ifeoma asked.

“Okafor who lives on Fulton Avenue. His son, Chidifu.”

“The one who is Obiora’s friend?”

“Yes, that one. He stole his father’s exam papers and sold them to his father’s students.”

“*Ekwuzina*! That small boy?”

“Yes. Now that the university is closed, the students came to the house, to harass the boy for the money. Of course he had spent it. Okafor beat his son’s front tooth out yesterday. Yet this is the same Okafor who will not speakout about what is going wrong in this university, who will do anything to win favor with the Big Men in Abuja. He is the one who makes the list of lecturers who are disloyal. I hear he included my name and yours.”

“I heard that, too. *Mana*, what does it have to do with Chidifu?”

“Do you try to treat cancer sores or the cancer itself? We cannot afford to give pocket money to our children. We cannot afford to eat meat. We cannot afford bread. So your child steals and you turn to him in surprise? You must try to heal the cancer because the sores will keep coming back.”

“*Mba*, Chiaku. You cannot justify theft.”

“I do not justify it. What I am saying is that Okafor should not be surprised and should not waste his energy breaking a stick on his poor son’s body. It is what happens when you sit back and do nothing about tyranny. Your child becomes what you cannot recognize.”

Aunty Ifeoma sighed heavily and looked at Obiora, perhaps wondering if he, too, could turn into something she would not recognize. “I talked to Phillipa the other day,” she said.

“Oh? How is she, how is *oyinbo* land treating her?”

“She is well.”

“And life as a second-class citizen in America?”

“Chiaku, your sarcasm is unbecoming.”

“But it is true. All my years in Cambridge, I was a monkey who had developed the ability to reason.”

“It is not that bad now.”

"That is what they tell you. Every day our doctors go there and end up washing plates for *oyinbo* because *oyinbo* does not think we study medicine right. Our lawyers go and drive taxis because *oyinbo* does not trust how we train them in law."

Aunty Ifeoma cut in, quickly, interrupting her friend. "I sent my CV to Phillipa."

Her friend brought the ends of her boubou together and tucked them in, between her stretched-out legs. She looked out into the dark night, her eyes narrowed, either in thought or maybe in an attempt to figure exactly how far away the crickets were. "So you, too, Ifeoma," she finally said.

"It is not about me, Chiaku." Aunty Ifeoma paused. "Who will teach Amaka and Obiora in university?"

"The educated ones leave, the ones with the potential to right the wrongs. They leave the weak behind. The tyrants continue to reign because the weak cannot resist. Do you not see that it is a cycle? Who will break that cycle?"

"That is simply unrealistic pep-rally nonsense, Aunty Chiaku," Obiora said.

I saw the tension fall from the sky and envelop us all. A child's crying upstairs interrupted the silence.

Questions

1. How does Adichie use the interaction between Aunty Ifeoma and her friend to develop our understanding of various aspects of the setting? What do we find out about the economic and political conditions in Nigeria?
2. Comment on the ways in which Aunty Ifeoma's friend uses the allusion to 'cancer' and 'cancer sores' to ultimately make the point that ''It is what happens when you sit back and do nothing about tyranny. Your child becomes what you cannot recognize"?
3. Discuss how Adichie builds a sense of tension in the scene when Aunty Ifeoma informs her friend about applying to teach at an American university.