

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE: Purple Hibiscus

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing. Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

"Bring two bottles of the drink they brought from the factory."

"Yes, Madam."

I wished Sisi had said "What bottles, Madam?" or "Where are they, Madam?" Just something to keep her and Mama talking, to veil the nervous movements of Jaja molding his fufu. Sisi was back shortly and placed the bottles next to Papa. They had the same faded-looking labels as every other thing Papa's factories made—the wafers and cream biscuits and bottled juice and banana chips. Papa poured the yellow juice for everyone. I reached out quickly for my glass and took a sip. It tasted watery. I wanted to seem eager; maybe if I talked about how good it tasted, Papa might forget that he had not yet punished Jaja.

"It's very good, Papa," I said.

Papa swirled it around his bulging cheeks. "Yes, yes."

"It tastes like fresh cashew," Mama said.

Say something, please, I wanted to say to Jaja. He was supposed to say something now, to contribute, to compliment Papa's new product. We always did, each time an employee from one of his factories brought a product sample for us.

"Just like white wine," Mama added. She was nervous, I could tell—not just because a fresh cashew tasted nothing like white wine but also because her voice was lower than usual. "White wine," Mama said again, closing her eyes to better savor the taste. "Fruity white wine."

"Yes," I said. A ball of fufu slipped from my fingers and into the soup.

Papa was staring pointedly at Jaja. "Jaja, have you not shared a drink with us, gbo? Have you no words in your mouth?" he asked, entirely in Igbo. A bad sign. He hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilized in public, he told us; we had to speak English. Papa's sister, Auntie Ifeoma, said once that Papa was too much of a colonial product. She had said this about Papa in a mild, forgiving way, as if it were not Papa's fault, as one would talk about a person who was shouting gibberish from a severe case of malaria.

"Have you nothing to say, gbo, Jaja?" Papa asked again.

"Mba, there are no words in my mouth," Jaja replied.

"What?" There was a shadow clouding Papa's eyes, a shadow that had been in Jaja's eyes. Fear. It had left Jaja's eyes and entered Papa's.

"I have nothing to say," Jaja said.

"The juice is good—" Mama started to say.

Jaja pushed his chair back. "Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Papa. Thank you, Mama."

I turned to stare at him. At least he was saying thanks the right way, the way we always did after a meal. But he was also doing what we never did: he was leaving the table before Papa had said the prayer after meals.

"Jaja!" Papa said. The shadow grew, enveloping the whites of Papa's eyes. Jaja was walking out of the dining room with his plate. Papa made to get up and then slumped back on his seat. His cheeks drooped, bulldoglike.

1. In what ways does Adichie's writing make this such a dramatic moment in the novel?
2. How effectively does Adichie portray Chief Eugene as a polarizing character in the novel?