



I Do Not Come to You By Chance - A Story of Love, Betrayal, Hardship and Wrong Decisions

By Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani

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Kingsley, a first-born son, struggles to provide for his beloved family when his ailing father's income dwindles. Possessed of a fine mind but poorly connected in the corrupt Nigerian job market, Kingsley falls in with his notorious uncle, Cash Daddy, the larger-than-life mastermind of a thousand e-mail scams. A silver-tongued cross between Homer Simpson and Col. Kurtz, Cash Daddy is a conman of blubbery greed, chilling wisdom, offbeat charm and unabashed naked exhibitionism -- all delightfully rendered. As Kingsley puts it, "He could probably even talk a spider into weaving silk socks for him." As Kingsley falls reluctantly under his mentor's spell and discovers his own innate flair for the art of the confidence trick, Nwaubani takes us deeper into the intricate world of the Nigerian e-mail scam. Nwaubani takes us deeper into the intricate world of the Nigerian e-mail scam. She wears her research lightly; the detailed exposition of the methods deployed to string along Western suckers is fascinating and often funny. In one scene, a young Nigerian man, to the uproarious encouragement of his friends, masquerades as a buxom makeup artist from New Jersey and texts a libidinous Salt Lake City man until he wires \$4,000 against the promise that his "babe" will come to visit him. As the scams increase in scale and audacity, the novel begins to accomplish something more than simply poking fun at the lust and rapacity that make a small but lucrative fraction of Westerners susceptible to such scams. Significantly, the names of Nwaubani's suckers are not Smith and Jones but rather Rumsfeld, Albright, Condoleezza and Letterman; they are little people with big people's names and emotional resonance. The reader is thus invited to see the whole fraught relationship between Africa and the West in the microcosm of these deceptively simple e-mails from Nigeria.

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