

The Wonders of the World

The chapter opens with Abisola, a student who joins a school geography trip at the last minute after her mother unexpectedly earns enough money from a sale. Feeling self-conscious about her borrowed sneakers and the pitying looks from the trip coordinator, Mr. Bajú, Abisola boards the bus and finds herself seated next to Zeme, a peculiar new boy whose erratic movements and unsettling aura make others uncomfortable. Zeme's unusual behavior, including his whispered prayers and intuitive understanding of Abisola's desire for the window seat, leaves her both intrigued and uneasy. Their interaction highlights the tension between curiosity and discomfort, as Abisola grapples with Zeme's enigmatic presence.

As the bus travels through Lagos, Abisola distracts herself by critiquing the exaggerated billboard advertisements, which she finds insincere and unrelatable. Zeme, meanwhile, reveals that he is praying for the journey ahead and claims his people consider him a prophet. This declaration deepens Abisola's skepticism, and she withdraws, turning her attention to the passing scenery. The chapter subtly explores themes of perception and identity, as Abisola questions the authenticity of the world around her while Zeme's mysterious nature challenges her understanding of reality.

During a bathroom stop near Ibadan, the students rush off the bus, but Abisola and Zeme remain behind, both isolated from their peers for different reasons. Abisola's aloofness stems from rejecting Musa, a popular boy, which has alienated her from her classmates. Zeme, on the other hand, is ostracized for his odd demeanor. Their shared isolation creates a tentative connection, though Abisola remains guarded. The chapter contrasts the social dynamics of the group with the quiet introspection of the two outsiders, emphasizing their marginalization.

The trip's purpose—to visit the Ikogosi springs, where warm and cold waters meet without mixing—mirrors the chapter's exploration of duality and coexistence. Abisola's

internal conflict between curiosity and distrust, her observations of societal facades, and Zeme's prophetic claims all underscore the tension between surface appearances and deeper truths. The chapter ends with Abisola and Zeme poised on the edge of a potential connection, their unresolved dynamic reflecting the uncharted journey ahead.