

## VERSION ANGLAISE

The city that summer overflowed with the hot and thirsty: panting on subway platforms, battling the sun with wide hats and light clothes, rushing to scaffoldings for shade, dashing into department stores not for the sales advertised on windows but for the AC. Those unable to escape to beaches and countrysides congregated in places where the humidity could briefly be forgotten: world music concerts with musicians from far-flung lands like Kazakhstan and Burkina Faso; rooftop revelries where everyone seemed absolutely certain of their good looks and sophistication; street fairs with too much grilled chicken and not enough moving air; sunset cruises with last-minute tickets and mediocre cocktails. There was much to do in the city, and yet the desperation remained among many to be out of it, to be in a place where the mission was pleasure and not endurance, to sit where the air moved without burden and the water went on for thousands of miles, a place like the villages of the Hamptons.

Jende could take a paid vacation in the first two weeks of August, Clark informed him as they drove down Lexington on a mid-June morning. The family would be spending late July and pretty much all of August in Southampton (Cindy and the boys, mostly), as well as random days in early July, so it should be an overall light summer of work.

“I am very grateful, sir,” Jende said without a change in his countenance, though inwardly he was grinning wider than the Great Rift Valley. It would be the first time in America he’d be paid to do nothing, though he knew he wasn’t going to sit around idle for two weeks—he was going to call the livery cab company he used to work for and get shifts so he could add to the funds he and Neni were saving for his deportation case.

“You should ask Cindy if she needs a housekeeper for that last week in July and the first three weeks in August, when Anna takes her vacation,” Clark added minutes later. “She usually gets someone from the agency. Maybe your wife would like to do it and make some extra money?”

“Oh, yes, sir. My wife... she would... we would be very grateful, sir.”

Cindy did need someone, and Neni needed a break from the oft-gloomy task of feeding and bathing incapacitated senior citizens, though it was the prospect of earning more money in four weeks than she made in three months that prompted her and Jende to discuss the offer for only five minutes before agreeing that she would skip the second summer semester (since her student visa allowed her to) and go to Southampton. She called Cindy Edwards that evening—after Jende had coached her on what to say, what not to say, how to say the right things well—introduced herself, and said she would like the job. Cindy offered her the job, though not before telling her what was involved: maintaining a spotless five-bedroom house, grocery shopping for specific items that must be gotten right, daily laundry, cooking specific recipes, serving guests in a dignified manner, babysitting a ten-year-old as needed, twelve-hour workdays with lots of downtime.

Imbolo Mbue, *Behold the Dreamers*, London, Editeur: 4th Estate, 2016, p 108-109.