

CHAPTER 7

Kenya

'I have a life in America ... but a past that comes from this small piece of land in Africa.'

When Barack got off the plane in Nairobi, Auma and his Aunt Zeituni were waiting for him. They had big plans for his visit.



A market in Nairobi

The three of them drove into Nairobi in his aunt's old Volkswagen car. That afternoon, Barack and Auma visited a market in the city. They sat and watched the people go by. In his book, Barack remembers how he felt there. Nobody looked at him because he was black. His hair grew like everybody's hair. Everybody knew how to spell Obama. Nobody called him 'Alabama' or 'Yo Mama' – as they did in America. The world was black, so Barack was just Barack.

But later in a restaurant, he felt he was back in America. He and Auma sat at a table. No waiter appeared. A white

American family arrived. They sat down and the waiter took their order. The waiter set the Americans' places and brought their food. Barack and Auma were still waiting to give their order. One of the Americans asked for ketchup. The waiter brought it at once. Auma walked out of the restaurant. She was very angry.

Their next stop was Aunt Jane's. She lived in a small two-bedroom flat. Barack met Auma's mother, Kezia, and there were more aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces. There was food for everyone on the table and there were lots of questions about Hawaii, Chicago, New York. He told them he was going to Harvard, and they were happy.

Barack loved being in the centre of the large Obama family. But life was not easy for them. A few had jobs – Aunt Jane, Aunt Zeituni and Kezia – and there was food for everyone. But clothes were not new. You only visited the doctor if you were really ill. Many people slept in the two small bedrooms in Aunt Jane's flat. And there were a lot of arguments about money.

Barack learnt more about his father from his Aunt Zeituni. His father had a hard life, she told him. He was the first person from their area to study abroad. He was the first person to go on a plane. When he came back, everybody wanted his help. He was rich and important. Everybody wanted something. But when his luck changed and he lost his job, those same people forgot him. They laughed at him, she remembered. They didn't invite him to their houses. But when he was doing well again, he gave them money again.

Barack and his new family took a night train to Kisumu in the country. From there they took a bus to Barack's

grandmother's land. When they arrived, more family waited to meet them. Barack sat down with Granny. He looked at the photos on the wall of her little house – photos of his grandparents, and his father as a baby. He listened to stories about his grandparents. He knew that this was not his real home. In a few weeks' time he was going back to America of course. But he felt like he was at home.



Barack and his family in Kisumu