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Chris Cleaves The Other Hand tells the story of a 16-year-old Nigerian girl Little Bee who is seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. She has been locked up in an immigration detention centre and she doesn't know yet whether she will be allowed to enter the country or not.

In the excerpt from the novel Little Bee tells us what she has been thinking while waiting in the immigration detention centre. The way she describes her situation makes the reader see things in a new light. Even though she tells about her thoughts quite delicately, her story is very powerful and it is her own voice speaking, trying to make us think things over.

Little Bee strongly believes that if she was a British pound coin instead of an African girl, she would have a better chance of being permitted to enter the country. Everyone would be pleased to see her coming and she would make everyone happy. Little Bee is a clever girl and not everyone might realize that in a way she is making fun of people who would be more happy to welcome a pound coin than a foreign girl.

"Of course a pound coin can be serious too. It can disguise itself as power, or property, and there is nothing more serious when you are a girl who gas neither", Little Bee tells us. It is sad that a single pound coin could get a warmer welcome than a human being who has experienced terrible things and escaped her own country. Apparently it is money that makes the world go around, not people, kindness or compassion. A girl like Little Bee gets stopped at immigration whereas a pound coin can travel freely wherever it wants. It doesn't have to worry about war or its safety since it is welcome anywhere.

According to Little Bee, a British pound coin speaks in the voice of Queen Elizabeth the Second of England making even Kings and Prime Ministers obey her every request and whim. Little Bee tells us that it is not the crown and the sceptre that has this effect but the Queen's grammar and her voice.

Little Bee believes that she is only alive at all because she learned the Queen's way to speak. That might have been the only reason she was able to leave her country and reach even the immigration detention centre. Little Bee had to forget all the best tricks of her mother tongue since it is desirable to speak the Queen's English. *"A queen would never say, 'There was plenty wahala, that girl done use her bottom power to engage my number one son and everyone could see she would end in the bad bush'"*, she tells us. Little Bee speaks English as her mother language and even learned the way the Queen of England speaks but she still has to spend two years locked up not being able to enter the

country. Is she really that different from the British that she is not welcome in their country even though she speaks their language?

Chris Cleave who has temporarily worked in an immigration detention centre wrote the novel to make it easier for us to understand the plight of asylum-seekers in Britain. Little Bee's story helps us understand issues such as political violence and globalization and the way refugees are treated by the asylum system.

Most people must already know about the difficulties and struggles of asylum-seekers. Every once in a while you hear stories about people being deported back to their home countries after spending years in an immigration detention centre. Some parents might even commit suicide since their children cannot be deported unaccompanied. People do know what's going on but they just refuse to wake up and smell the coffee. Needless to say, the asylum system needs to be more humane.

Little Bee's story made me rethink what it is that makes it so difficult for refugees to find an asylum. Immigration issues are not easily solved but they really need more open conversation and coverage so that people would really see what's going on and why. If you asked a random person on a street if they would save another person's life if they had the possibility, they would answer yes. But when it comes to immigration and refugees, the attitudes are completely different: selfish and prejudiced, even hostile. People need to see that when someone's life is at risk, skin color or mother language means nothing. We are still the same, people who fear, doubt, hate and love.