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Stella Gonye TSHUMA
Zimbabwean Author of
Peace in the storm

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Magazine



**CALL FOR
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THEME

FRIENDSHIP

**WSA Monthly Literary Magazine is accepting submissions
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We accept submissions in the following genres:

**Creative
Non-Fiction**

1,200 Words
maximum

**Children's
Literature**

700 words
maximum

**Flash
Fiction**

300 words
maximum

Poetry

24 lines
maximum

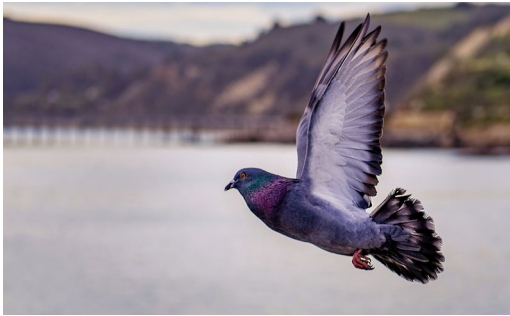
**Short
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1,500 Words
maximum



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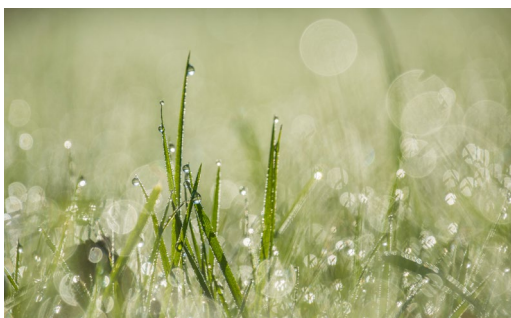
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From the Founder's Desk

Anthony Onugba (PenBoss)

The past is something time creates. It is created every second of our lives even if we do not notice the presence of the past. A memory, on the other hand, is not created second by second but is rather a creation of the sum of an encounter, activity, or even an event. A memory of a party that lasted for a couple of hours is valid when compared to a memory of our time pursuing a degree that lasted a couple of years.

The memories we have can either be good or bad.

It could either be significant enough for us to remember or just a passing phase with no impact on our lives and so we forget. But memories serve more than just a reminder of the past. Our memories can inspire us to reach for a dream from a time past. It could remind us to avoid an experience of hurt, and it can heal us... giving us that much-needed closure and a key to a new phase of life.

As you walk the literary journey, it is important to record all your memories.

Who knows, you may one day want to write an autobiography that would inspire present and future generations. But above all else, let us be deliberate in creating memories. Because at times when our lives take a slow turn or make an unexpected twist, it is memories that would comfort us and probably grant us peace through healing. Sometimes, the only way we can truly heal is to face our memories.





From the Chief Editor

Comfort Nyati, SDB
Zimbabwe

Dear Reader,

One of the fascinating traits of the human mind is its capacity to perform multiple mental and extra-mental activities in an instant. When you brush your teeth, write your name, or scratch your eye, you do this with ease. These are memories we have stored due to extensive practice, conditioning, or habits. Part of these are within our control while others are beyond our reach.

This 70th edition unveils one of the important facets of the mind; memory. Authors of African orientation have creatively

displayed the beauty of memories and how we fall prey to forgetting things. Things, both internal and external, which affect our current state: thus, emotions, life events, people and the immediate environment. These memories come to the custody of the mind.

It is without a doubt that this month is endowed with uniqueness mirrored by an amplified number of entries published. A timely gesture to evoke sentiments of hope about the future of African literature. As such, indicating that themes such

as memory have a vocal place needing exploration by an African writer.

Moreover, in the domain of memory, remembering and forgetting are in colloquy. For this reason, one cannot talk about remembering without mentioning its counterpart, forgetting. It seems that as much as we do remember, we forget even more. This marks the central point of our behaviour which is influenced by the content discharged within or without our memory.

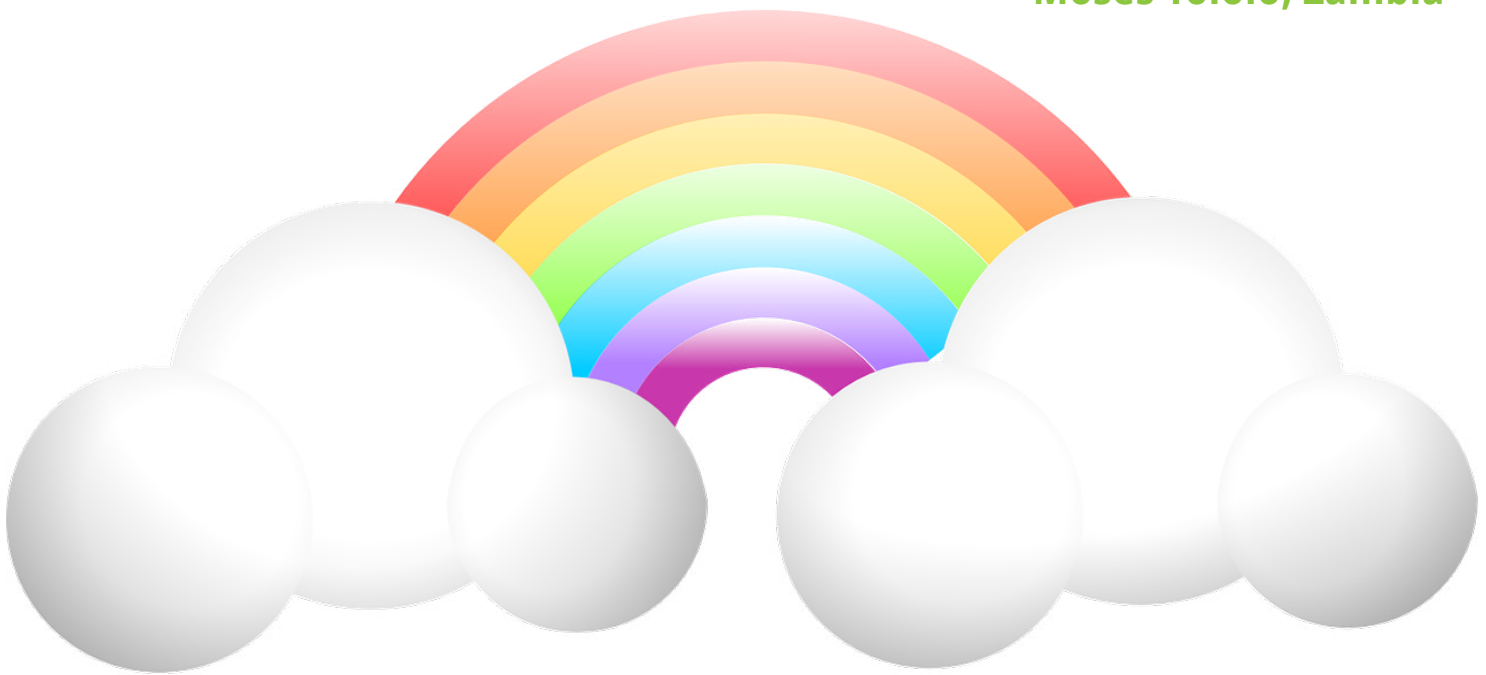
Remember, Twaweza!!!



Children's Literature

Defenders of the Kingdom

Moses Tololo, Zambia



There was once a kingdom by the Zambezi River. It was a beautiful kingdom with rivers and mountains. The kingdom had very precious minerals such as gold, emeralds and copper. The people used to sell their minerals to other kingdoms. They would make a lot of money from selling the copper. The leader of the kingdom was KK. Everyone in the kingdom loved him. He was a very wise king. People from across Africa would come to listen to his wise words.

Some years back, the British had come to

the kingdom with guns. They were bad people. They destroyed homes and made everyone their slaves. They chased KK to live in the bush. They were getting copper from the kingdom and taking it to Europe. This made the people sad. They cried out to their leader to get their kingdom back.

KK was very sad. He wanted his people to be happy. He sat with a sad face thinking of what he could do. He then remembered what he had read from the Bible. His memory was clear now. He remembered the



time Moses was sent to rescue the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. He then came up with a plan of forming a group of warriors. He was going to choose eleven warriors to go with him. He would call them 'KK 11.'

He chose people from all over the kingdom. From the North and the West, he chose Mutale and Mubita. These were very good swimmers and they would attack from the water. From the East and North West, he picked Chinyama and Mabvuto; these were warriors on land as they wore masks and carried spears and shields. From the South and North East, Mutinta and Mwaka were chosen. These were good with the bow and arrow. And from the Central part of the kingdom, Pezo and Shuko were selected. The two were very good at using catapults.

KK called the ones he had selected and told them why he had called them. He told them that they needed to work together to get the kingdom back from the British soldiers. As they were talking, they heard some noise from the nearby bush. Out of there came three people. There were different from them.

"KK, we have been looking for you," said one of the men.

"Who are you?" Asked KK. He was wondering whether they were soldiers or spies.

"We are friends," they said, "We come in peace."

"What are your names?"

"My name is Jones," said one of them, "this is Lee and he is Rajesh."

"What do you want?" KK asked.

"We hear you want warriors," they said, "we want to join you."

"KK, they can't join us," Mutale said, "they are spies."

"We have weapons which you don't have," they said.

"How can white people join the fight?" asked Mutinta, "It's not possible."

The warriors were becoming angry and wanted to attack the three men who had just come. KK kept quiet. All of them then turned to him to ask what his decision was.

"Allow me to think about this situation," he said, "let's meet tomorrow again."

The two groups left in two different directions. They left him all alone. He sat down to think about whether he could allow the three-white people into his army. He remembered what his grandfather had told him a long time ago. The lesson was in his memory.

The following day, he assembled all of them to address them. He then said to them.

"The rainbow is very beautiful, isn't it?"

"Yes," they responded.



“Where do all those colours come from?” he asked.

“From white light,” Mutinta responded.

“Very right,” KK said.

“In the same way, the African continent gives birth to different colours and tongues of people,” he continued.

“We are all different; Jones is white, Lee is yellow, Rajesh is brown, I am black and we all speak different languages,” he said.

“We are the same in that we are all Africans, born from the same soil and we have

one enemy,” he continued.

“We are going to fight as one, fighting one enemy; the British.”

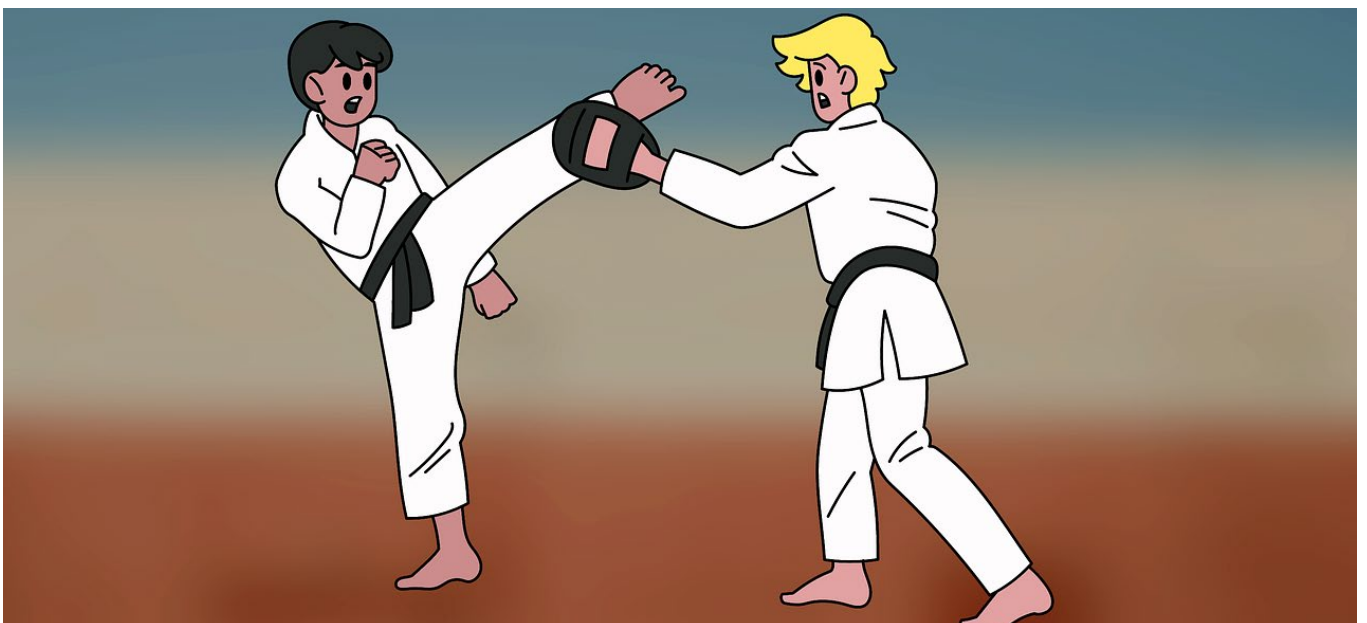
The following morning, all the warriors took their positions. At the signal given by KK, the KK 11 attacked the British. The British were surprised and surrendered immediately.

The people were free again. They were happy and thanked the KK 11. The people in the kingdom have kept that day in their memory. They always remember the day the KK 11 worked as one for their freedom.



The Karate Kid of Coronationville

C A Turton, South Africa



I was always eager and the first in line for our karate exercises. We would start our lessons by standing in a straight line. Pinnie would firmly push us on our chests testing our strength. If you moved backwards this would ensure that you do ten push-ups again and again. Some of us would deliberately step backwards just to show-off our ability in doing the exercise. Running around the park until the perspiration dripped from my body was part of the routine. I liked the exercise, exaggerated my tiredness by breathing loudly to impress the others.

The best parts of my training were always left for last. The entire group would take turns in hitting the tree with the side of their hands, hoping that one day we all will be able to smash through a pile of bricks just like in the movies. I had the bigger dream of delivering that deadly blow against the tree stump and seeing it in cracking.

We would end off our karate training session with flying-kicks. This was the exercise I liked the most. I would run, kick the tree as high as possible with the bottom of my



right foot, fall, roll over and jump up ready for another turn. Very often my mother would call-out for me to run to the shop, just when I was doing the flying-kicks. I would beg her, “mum just two more kicks.” She would laugh and say it’s okay. I always did more than two kicks but made sure I got to my mother in time, always asking “did you see my kicks ma, did you see my kicks!” “Yes, you were good. Now run to Mr Smith’s shop and buy the milk and bread”.

In the most unexpected way, we were all witness to what a flying kick could do. Walking home from the shop with my karate friends, I was stopped by Billy, the local bully. He had a bad reputation of interfering with smaller children, eating their school lunch and many times stealing their pocket money as well. I was one of the unluckiest children that fell prey to him. I had just bought the milk and bread for my mother when I was stopped.

As expected, Billy moved towards me the smallest boy in the group. I stood my ground, transfixed, not knowing what to expect. He grabbed the loaf of bread, broke off a piece and stuffed it into his mouth. I felt powerless against him as he was much bigger than me. I stood still watching him eat the bread. He laughed about it as he held his hand too, his mouth stuffing it down his throat whilst battling to swallow. Throughout this, he still had a smug smile on his face, staring at me defiantly.

Without any indication I ran, jumped in the air, and within a split second the bully turned trying to run away. The flying kick landed on his buttocks and he went sprawling on the ground with the sand over his face and clothes. He immediately turned around, sitting on his bum. He had a shocked look on his face, eyes as big as saucers, tears flowing down his cheeks. He held both hands above his head indicating, please stop.

Billy did not speak or attempt to walk away. He got up very slowly, as though he was doing an act in slow motion. All that moved was his eyes as he looked from left to right, right to left at all the people who had gathered around him. Dusting off his clothes, he lowered his head and started walking out of the circle of people.

My karate instructor looked at me in surprise. I had just given all my friends a real-life example of what a flying kick could do. For all of us this was a scene out of a Hollywood movie on the steps of our shopping centre.

I looked amongst the crowd for Billy. I shouted to him, “stop.” I stretched out my hand to shake his hand. I want to be your friend and you are welcome to join our Karate club. Billy’s eyes glowed in surprise as he gripped my hand, shaking it gently in a sign of friendship. I just knew that Billy’s bullying days were over.



Memories

Humairaa Seedat, Tanzania

Memories, oh, memories!

I love my memories!

Oh, I wish my memories stay with me
forever.

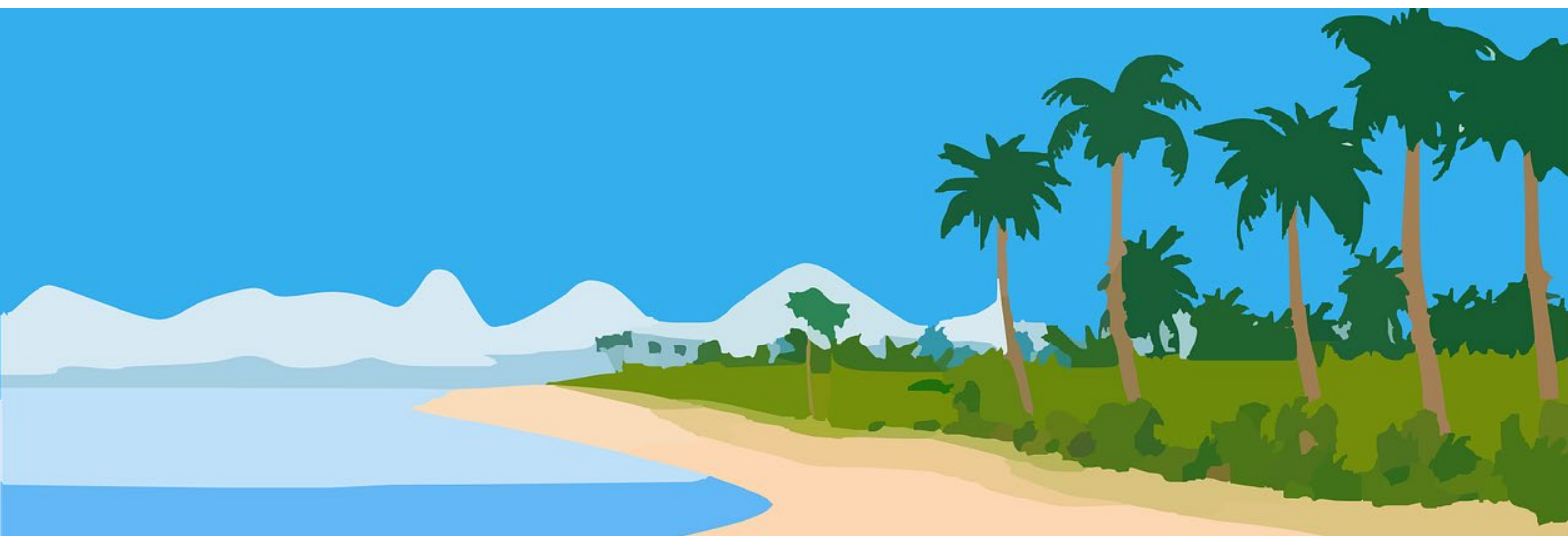
There was this one funny time
we were at the beach
and I stole money from mom.

I bought ice cream and my whole mouth was
filled with it!

That was such a funny thing to do. Memories,
oh, memories!

I love all my memories.

oh, hope they all stay with me.





Why Can't We Fly

Philip Muhia, Kenya

Mr. Hare called for a meeting in his home. He loved sharing the little he had with all the animals. No matter how hard the years had been, animals got time to meet and eat together. Apart from eating together, they would get time to share laughter and stories.

This year's host was Mr. Hare and his wife Ndiku. In the evening Mr. Hare called his wife,

"My lovely wife, tomorrow you will go out there to our friends. Inform them this year we are pleased to invite them in our house. Remind them this year we will have stew of butterfly and honey."

Mr. Hare was known to be generous. He also liked to meet young hares to teach them stories about their history.

Ndiku obeyed her husband. The following day she woke up very early. On her back she carried their four months old child

Bobby. Bobby loved riding on her mother's back. On the road they met with friends Kithaka and Kethaka. He moved his ears sideways as a form of greetings. By noon they arrived in the old village. All were at home preparing to go to work.

"Good morning," she greeted

"Good morning," they responded

"I have come to invite you for a meeting in our house tomorrow,"

"We will come,"

"You are welcome"

Ndiku followed the houses in line until she had informed all the houses. Afterwards she started the journey back home. She arrived home very tired and thirsty. She found the husband was already at home. It was already some minutes past noon.

"You must be tired and thirsty, please sit and I will serve you with something to wet



your throat.”

He served Ndiku and Bobby juice he had gathered from the trees. They enjoyed it.

The following day at 3:00 pm the first visitor arrived. Tonny Hare and Little Dolly Hare came too. They looked happy. They would play and sing:

Jingle bell

Jingle bells

Jingle all the way!

They would dance the ears this way and that way. As they danced, they would form circles and at night have butterfly stew. This really excited them.

The next group arrived an hour later. Their father was not there. This was strange! Mr. Hare went to open the gate for them.

“Good evening,” Mr. Hare greeted

Later that night, it was sadly noted he was killed. The mood became sore. Who killed him? No one knew about it. After the meals they didn’t sing the jingle bell. The adults too didn’t take coconut wine to protest the killing of their friend.

They all agreed the enemy was acting swiftly.

Mr. Hare’s family had a close friend. He was chosen and spoke to their creator. When in trouble, they would visit him. Now they needed him most for protection from the evil killer.

The prophet was in his room when they arrived. When he came out, he was happy to see his friends. When the prophet heard about the killings, he went to the prayer room. He was heard asking for his friends’ protection. The creator offered to give wings to all animals to fly high away from the enemy. But the offer came with a condition. They were to elect a leader who would be in charge of giving out the wings.

The following morning, a big meeting was called. All the animals who needed wings were convened. The antelopes, the leopard, elephant, zebras, hyena, giraffe, horses, camel and all the birds came to the meeting.

All animals with two legs, with four legs, each group was to elect a leader of their own. The ostrich was elected for animals with two legs. He was given the wings. He distributed the wings equally to all the animals. When he tacked in his, they were insufficient to lift his body in the air. But the wings were sufficient enough to run fast away from the enemy.

Those with four legs, all failed to agree on a leader. When the hyena was chosen, some animals dismissed him saying he is greedy. When the elephant was chosen, some animals cited bullying. That is why the creator did not give out the wings to the animals who walk on fours. Probably when they grow trust among themselves, they will get wings.



The Beach

Hannah Jasmine Esmail, Tanzania

We went to the beach

We heard the beautiful sound of the waves.

Also, we heard the palm trees rustling.

We stepped foot on the sand in the beach

An amazing feeling it was

It made us feel energetic and relaxed.

The beach helped me loosen up.

That's why I like the beach



I Don't Want to go to School

Blessed Atwine Mugisha, Uganda

I don't want to go to school.
First day, I would look a fool!
Maybe after a week,
That's not considered weak.
But my parents won't allow
Me to stay at home,
So, I have to fake a stomach ache.
Maybe then I won't have to wake
And by the time a doctor comes by,
Three days will have wasted away.

The doctor will make his examination
And of course, make no deduction.
He will then close the door,
Pull his chair close and ask softly:
"Are you really sick or you're faking it?
You don't want to go to school?"

"No, I don't," I'll shyly smile.
Smile back he will and with his bile,
Write on a chit, "Not anymore!"
You've grown and now better know
That school is not just a mood.
For your tomorrow, school is the only good.

Now, I will go to school today,
But hey, it's not the first day.





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Creative Non-Fiction

Reminiscent Goodbye

by
**Yipah Reuben
(Nigeria)**

It's quite unfortunate how we waste opportunities when we have them. I can't believe I didn't say all these things to you. I have some news for you at least.

Alex, 'I saw a grasshopper today'. It's funny how something so insignificant can trigger the fondest memories. I remember the first time we caught that tricky insect right outside the kitchen. Do you remember what you told me? You had a serious look on your face when you said, "Do you know some people die and come back as insects or even as animals? It's called reincarnation".

You've always been good with big words, even at the age of 10. Mum thought you'll go crazy someday from reading too much. I believed everything you said so much that I told Aunt Ruth in Sunday school that when we die, we don't go to heaven, we

become grasshoppers. In my ten-year-old mind, I was so wise. You can imagine my surprise when I was summoned to the pastor's office to be given a sermon on heaven and hell. Quite a frightening experience for a child.

I remember the day we decided to prank your mother, or rather you decided and I agreed to play along as usual. To this day, I vividly recall the look on her face when you told her you got me pregnant. It was like she managed to combine all the facial expressions in this world into one look. That's how I remember her face even in my subconscious mind. It's a thing of wonder when these days I see parents allowing



their kids to be friends with whomever they wished. My mother was always against the idea of me being close friends with a boy (still is).

Harmattan is here and Maiduguri is as foggy as ever, forcing people to mostly stay indoors. Do you know children are still told the ghost of harmattan story? My nephew cried the whole night yesterday after Pops told him the story.

I bumped into Rose the other day; she's all grown up now. Believe it or not, she had to introduce herself before I could recognise her. It was hard imagining her as the snotty girl that followed you around everywhere. I still have the love note she wrote you when we were in primary 4. Just looking at it makes me smile.

It's quite unfortunate how we waste opportunities when we have them. I can't believe I didn't say all these things to you. I have some news for you at least. Remember Emmanuel the tall boy from when we were in Children's church? Well, he asked me to marry him and I said yes, I know it's kind of sudden but life is too short to worry and wait for certainty. Aren't you the one that always said, "When faced with two options, always choose the endearing one"? I just wish you were here to laugh with me.

The last time you were here, I promised we would talk when you got back, and we even picked out a spot. Our old ugly tree. The ugly tree is blooming. I always thought

it was strange because it blooms in season and out of season. It holds all the memories that are dear to me. Remember how you gave me my first kiss under that tree when we watched Jesse's girl? And when we told each other stories about nothing for hours. Remember the time Sarah broke your heart and we tasted booze for the first time together still under that tree?

It's little wonder that I insisted you be laid to rest there much to the disdain of your mother but I finally won her over and I'm sure you appreciate the humour in it all. Even though I couldn't get myself to go to the funeral. My parents kept insisting that it would give me closure, little did they know it was the last thing I needed. Funerals feel so final, and I am not ready for that. People talk of physical pain as the ultimate kind of pain but I don't think they've gone through this pain. When you feel as if your heart is being ripped out of your chest while you stand helpless. And no, there is no remedy for this kind of pain.

You do know I love you and there's nothing you can do about it. Get the pun? I guess one day I would stare death in the face and finally get to ask why it took you from me so suddenly before I could get a chance to tell you how I felt when I dropped you at the bus stop that day. Sleep well my Alex.

P.S: I'm saving a spot beside you. Our ugly tree reunion awaits us.



When Nana Kwame

Died

by
**Alvin Akuamoah
(Ghana)**

For no reason, in particular, I turned to my left and Nana Kwame's mother was staring right at me. A cold, deathless stare. She saw all of my face and I saw all of what I thought were her feelings toward me.

When Nana Kwame died, I avoided his mother like the plague. In the weeks leading up to the funeral, I mourned him from the safety of my home – some one hundred steps away from the brown gate that I had banged so many times to call him out to play. On the odd occasion when I stepped out to run an errand, I used the longer route so I could avoid his house. The place where we once played from morning to sunset became a quagmire too dangerous to wander past. Sometimes, I would pause at a safe distance and watch the chain of elderly men entering and leaving the house with their dark cloths draped over their shoulders.

Nana Kwame's father had died just a year before. That he too was gone now was somewhat an abomination. I looked at the scowls on their faces as they came and left; their steps were rushed and deliberate. I wondered what was happening to Nana Kwame's mother. I wondered how lowly she had sunk, and imagined how much seeing me would remind her of what she had lost. As long as I lived, I would serve as a reminder of what her son could have been. It would not matter that I failed in life or succeeded, I would always be her 'what-if'.

Nana Kwame was knocked down by a car while crossing the road on his bicycle. I



was in Form one of boarding school when it happened. I found out only when I came home. A few weeks before the funeral, I had several nightmares filled with headlights and screeching tyres. I saw his body flail from the bicycle; his head resting placidly on the grey asphalt, contorted in a weird angle on his broken neck. I heard screaming as people rushed to the middle of the road, always his mother last, crooning over her son's lifeless body. I would wake up drenched in sweat and terror. I imagined there was no worse way to go. I thought back at all the little adventures we had gone on when we were younger and how much life had come between us in our early adolescent years and I was ashamed. It did not help that the last conversation we had was with him on his bicycle, riding slowly next to me as we made our way from Junior Youth Service. He had passed one of those condescending remarks that his mother liked to make about how *dadaba* I was – how easy I had it in life. “Your sisters probably don't even know how to peel yam”, he said, chuckling under his breath like he so often did, and I kept silent. He was right. They didn't. Even then, I felt ashamed of my privilege – more so now, when the privilege was my very existence.

At the funeral, I did not walk up to the coffin because my mother would not let me. She did not understand that I had to pay respect to my friend in some way. That it was the only way that Nana's mother,

without looking into my face, would understand that I did in fact mourn her son. I had to let his mother see me up there at least once so she would not think that I did not care that he was dead. The words were in my mouth, but they did not come out. I sat there quietly with my head sunk to my chest and only looked up when my parents got up from beside me to file past the casket. For no reason, in particular, I turned to my left and Nana Kwame's mother was staring right at me. A cold, deathless stare. She saw all of my face and I saw all of what I thought were her feelings toward me.

That was the last I ever saw of Nana's mother. She packed her things after the funeral and left without a single goodbye to anyone. Life had not been fair to her. I understood this probably more than she thought I did. When I heard the news, I imagined her in an old bus chucking her luggage underneath her armpit. I saw the cold deathless expression again, only this time with traces of a determination lost in the one prior. A determination to start her life anew.

I was sad when Nana Kwame died, but in hindsight, I am uncertain what made me sad the more. That my friend was gone, or that his death meant one more thing that I had that he and his mother didn't.



Granny, a Drop that Coloured an Ocean

by
**Elizabeth Hanai
(Tanzania)**

My granny enjoyed several productive television programs, particularly the evening news. I always loved sitting by her. Occasionally, she would chase me away whenever she felt I had become a bother



For three weeks a crowd had gathered at home to celebrate my grandmother's life. For three weeks the atmosphere was gloomier, tainted with sadness and frustration, and thoughts of never seeing her again scared all of us. For three weeks, her children and grandchildren sobbed uncontrollably, her siblings mourned, and neighbours and friends could not come to terms with the fact that she had gone, never to come back. My grandma was a people person, cherished by all, admired

by many and adored by her family. Her zeal was unmatched. During her warmer days, her warmth could be felt across the fraternity. Her remains finally arrived from the States, where after months of treatment, she had lost a fierce battle against cancer and slipped into an eternal slumber. 'Fare thee well and luck go with thee'. Our eyes were tired and swollen, still, we could not hold back our tears. The melancholic mood would prolong a little longer if not for a foreseeable couple of weeks. In the world



we cometh, in the world, we goeth.

My grandmother is unaverred to anyone; to me, she is a legend. A stronghold of all walks and precisely, a pillar that will stand for centuries like the pyramids of Misri. As much as I know human beings are a passing cloud, never, not once, did I ever imagine that my granny would someday lie cold and motionless. When I was a little girl, my granny used to wake me up so early every day. I groaned every time I heard her call my name to tell me that time was ripe for a stroll. We would always walk and jog for an hour, along the shores of the vast Indian ocean. The morning breeze serenaded our ears with sweet whispers. Drops of sweat sliding down our cheeks were enough evidence that we had gone out for a reason. We would talk and plan for the day ahead. When we arrived home, my granny never needed a rest, all she needed was a jembe so she could tend to her gardens. Before breakfast, we would check on her chicken. My granny never got tired as she only needed minimal help albeit my input was immense.

My granny enjoyed several productive television programs, particularly the evening news. I always loved sitting by her. Occasionally, she would chase me away whenever she felt I had become a bother and I would hesitantly run knowing very well she could not match my pace due to her age which had compromised her swift-

ness and agility. Even though I pretended not to hear what she said, a smack on my back that I could never ignore, was enough to keep things going. Now, her traditional chair is vacant but I do not feel like going for it as the house is empty. The memorable days are gone and my jig-mate is no more.

I was shaken to the core when I received the news. My mom had called me inside. She looked devastated. Her eyes were swollen as she wore a pale face. She could not look straight into my eyes as I eagerly awaited to hear from her rather trembling voice. How do you tell your daughter her best friend is gone? Where to? How will she receive such news at her tender age? Does she have the stamina to bear the weight of such magnitude?

Family prayers were always fun with her in charge of reading the Bible. Somehow she couldn't read a full sentence without cranking us up. Even with her glasses on, she would miss a letter or replace an entire word with an alien terminology unheard of, that could plunge the entire session into moments of hysteria.

Granny was always a force to reckon with and a model to emulate. The door to her home was always open for all. We were blessed with an angel down on earth, now we have a guardian watching over us from above.



I am

by
**Stephanie Chiaky
Otuteye
(Ghana)**

...when we turn three. We start rehearsing for marriage and motherhood. Nobody asks us if we want to be wives or mothers. They say marriage is a crown that a man bestows on a woman's head. An unmarried woman is a disgrace... how terrible do you have to be for no man at all to choose you?



When exactly does an eagle realize its wings are the most powerful? It's hard to tell because no one sees the number of times they have to fly, fall, and try again. We only see them soar and marvel at how powerfully they glide over clouds we only dream of reaching. Shortly after they are hatched, the wings of an eaglet begin to grow, and soon enough, they learn to use

them. People often tell me I've grown wings, that I have changed, and my personal favourite: 'I have become unbecoming'.

If my life had a chorus, it would be these words: "Hei! Shut up! How dare you? Don't say such things!" I hear them all the time now, whenever I open my mouth. I hear them when I say what I truly want out of life. Three years ago, I would have spent



time wondering why, but now, I know. Apparently, it's an error to want more out of life than a husband and babies tugging at my skirts.

I was not always like this if I am being honest. Society does a number on a young woman's mind right from the start. We are given dolls to dress up, cooking sets to play with, and brooms to sweep, when we turn three. We start rehearsing for marriage and motherhood. Nobody asks us if we want to be wives or mothers.

They say marriage is a crown that a man bestows on a woman's head. An unmarried woman is a disgrace. An unmarried woman is unfulfilled. An unmarried woman is incomplete, because how terrible do you have to be for no man at all to choose you? Divorce is even worse, you know, because how could you not keep a man – the very purpose of a woman's existence?

I was always the 'good girl'. I always tried to be the one everyone was happy with. I would never question anything if it was, indeed, what my mother and the Bible said was right. My happiness never mattered. What I wanted did not matter, because if it was not what my religion and society dictated, then it was not worth thinking about.

I remember reading a book that forced me to think. It was a compilation of stories of brave Muslim women. As I read their stories of rebellion and their quest to live the lives they wanted, every thought I had

brushed aside rose into my consciousness like bubbles from the bottom of boiling water. I had always known I wanted a different life, but I had somehow convinced myself that what I had accepted was the only way. Now, through their words, I had found people like me, who had broken free and were living life on their own terms.

Just like an eagle learning to fly, I had done this so many times: trying to be a feminist. Who would have thought it would be so difficult to accept that I am a full human being, deserving of equal opportunities and rights? These women were the inspiration I needed to break free. Thanks to them, I learned it was okay to be free, to not want your life to revolve around an imaginary man. They changed me.

I live my life on my own terms now. I do not do things because I want anyone to approve. I do things because I want to do them. I choose what's best for me. Of course, I consider the people around me, because what's the point of being liberated if my liberation oppresses other people? I have become many women throughout my entire life, but I know this is the woman the little girl I once was would love to meet. Through this woman, I will help others choose to be free because someone did the same thing for me.



The Hell in my Body

by
Enit'ayanfe Akinsanya
(Nigeria)

Everybody returned later—my mother, my father, my brother, even the Aunty Nurse who got me the first prescriptions—to see the havoc on my body. It was a canvas of bloody steaks and carved flesh.



I was eleven, and I think I was still in the throes of blinding religion because, otherwise, I would never have allowed a thing like that. I was warm and quivering with malaria. I had sticky lips, a dry mouth, a persistent dull throbbing in my head, and this awful cement in my chest. I had ex-

hausted my dosages and needed new ones. Because my father was steeped in self-inventions, he would always increase my doses. If the doctor prescribed two packets, he would buy five. If the doctor said I needed only two variants of blood tonic, my father would buy one more brand of



the purifier. Nobody asked me questions about my body. I was an eleven-year-old boy, a test-run specimen for pills and their reactions because everybody needed me to recover quickly. One of those pills was this chloroquine antimalarial. I took it, but not traditionally because there was no Piriton. There was no Piriton because my father had argued with the nurse that my body would fight the side effects of taking just the chloroquine tablets.

One evening, I lay in my room after poking through my eba, forcing measly morsels into my mouth and swallowing my prescriptions. I rolled on the sheets. I did not know I had slipped into a tired, insipid sleep until I woke up with a defined clang in my head. My mother and a friend were chatting in the parlour, and I could hear their voices like a dream. The first thing I saw in the half-light of the lantern placed out in the hallway, was the ceiling fan and—what the heck were those crawly-crawly patterns on its blades? I was unfamiliar with tryphobia but I felt my skin rise with hives. A scream stuck itself in my throat; this was more than just a hallucination. There was this intense itch all over my left arm. I sent my fingernails to the source of assault and scratched the devil out. But the devil increased and spread down to my fingers, then leapt and scattered like seeds all over my open thighs. In a bit, I was scratching like a DJ.

At first, I was muffling my fire. But it licked

me down to my ass and I slashed the atmosphere with my screams. The conversation in the parlour stopped and my mum and her friend dashed into the room. They were flustered. I couldn't reply to their "What is wrong? Ki lo sele?" I just kept hollering. My mother stripped me down to my underpants and baptized me with epo pupa – palm oil. The fire whispered across my skin. I stopped yelling and lay in my mother's arms, quelled. An eleven-year-old baby slick with palm oil.

"It's the heat. It's too much and bad for a sick child", my mother's friend muttered.

My mother looked doubtful but she nodded. The next time, she did not witness the fire. She was a civil servant whose station was far away in Imeko, the outskirts of Ogun state. She left Sagamu the following day, a Monday, and I was left at home with my brother, my father, and my cousin whom I called "Aunty Ruth". Through my bedroom window, I heard my father drive my younger brother to school. I was not strong enough to go to school, but I was able to at least go take a bath. I insisted on eating first. I sat to a breakfast of bread, fried eggs and tea, which I ate with refrains of "Eat a little more. Drink some more tea" from Aunty Ruth. I filled my mouth with hot tea and gulped down my antimalarials. Then I pulled off my clothes and made for the bathroom. Nobody taught me to rush out of there like a mad person. The moment I lathered up my head and turned



on the shower and the water flowed over my skin, the flames leapt back to life—a fierce yellow-red rage. I shot out of the bathroom like a rabbit, my prepubescent schlong dangling before my wet black ass. I shrieked my way to the parlour, where Aunty Ruth quickly had the good sense to switch on the fans on me. I lay on the floor rolling and blabbering and scratching out all the flames eating up my skin, eating up my back where my hands could not reach. I yelled at her to help me scratch that place! She dropped the napkin in her hand and set to work. She was too slow, or perhaps the flames just kept jumping from one section of my skin to another, so I found a rough wall and dragged my back along it, still bawling, soap suds all over my face. After an eternity, I was panting on the floor and my father was staring at me.

“What is wrong with you?”

Nobody in the house thought in a definite direction.

Afternoon, and he had gone out again and my younger brother was not back from school yet. I was on our veranda with Aunty Ruth, playing Ludo. I was thinking I should skip my afternoon dosage when she threw a double-six and my fires returned. I leapt up from the bench and started dancing something terrible. She was bewildered. She called for neighbours but everybody was either still at work or too buried in the dramatic slumber of the idle to bother. Two

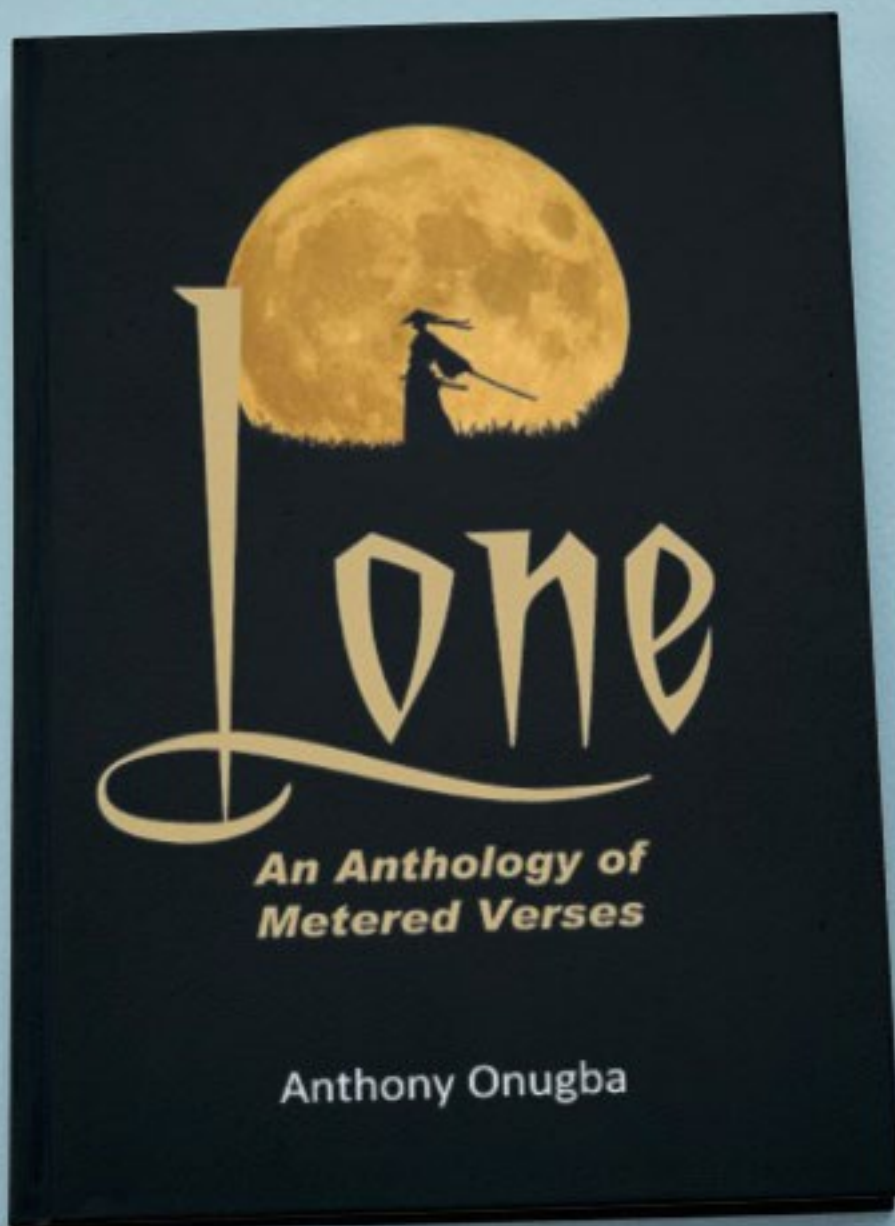
of the pastors from my church appeared on the scene. Before I could say “scratch!”, one pastor had seized my right hand and the other had barked an instruction to my cousin to hold the left, while he laid his Bible on my head and prayed vigorously. The fires in my flesh grew even more irate. They ate me up crazily but this time, I couldn’t scratch. Aunty Ruth gawped at me. I was bound in the middle of two lunatics who wouldn’t leave my hands alone for me to scratch. I just writhed in their middle, crying and begging them to leave me alone. My pleas gave them the cue to shout louder to the heavenly hosts to deliver this boy from demonic possessions and torment.

Everybody returned later—my mother, my father, my brother, even the Aunty Nurse who got me the first prescriptions—to see the havoc on my body. It was a canvas of bloody steaks and carved flesh. It was a memory of needless wrongs. My mother took the antimalarial pill packet from the cupboard and peered at it suspiciously for a long time. And everybody realized too late what the demon was.

Years later, those memories now scars that I carry on my skin, I laugh when I think about how that same chloroquine that nearly killed me turned out to be a procedural treatment for Coronavirus.

The universe cracks dirty jokes.





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Flash Fiction

Monday
16th July

Aaron-Onuigbo Kingsley
Nigeria

It was Monday, 16th July, during the wet season of 2019, you skipped breakfast and first period to eat scotch eggs with your classmate in the school's garden, knowing you were not supposed to.

You ate silently and sat with your back touching the water fountain decorated with the red roses that junior students plucked and threw sporadically around the gardens. He sat beside you, close enough you could hear his pattered chewing but not too close for your shoulders to touch. And whenever he stole glances at you, you felt the beating in your chest, and it hurt; that panging emotion like drums, like your heart wanted to forcefully escape to him. His eyes were soft and unsure; he looked like the *egwuregwu*, a teddy bear. And when his hands finally crept to meet yours, the tips of his fingers brushing the hair of your skin, your heart did a light dance: it flipped, tumbled, and swayed like butterflies. So, you focused on your chewing and counted the palm trees

that lined the garden to distract yourself from his hands tracing faint lines on your palms.

"one," "five," "sixteen,"

You must have counted nearly thirty palm trees at that moment before he pivoted slightly, kneeling, facing you, full lips and all, with his hands now fully holding yours. He asked what you were thinking about. You thought the morning sun gave his skin a glistening tan effect; it looked almost golden, like cream caramel. But you did not tell him that. Instead, you stuttered as you told him that you were counting the palm trees in the garden. Then he laughed, and it was just like the rest of him--sweet and genuine. But you did not laugh. Instead, your legs shook, and your palms were sweaty; you imagined that you had messed things up. But there he was, kneeling, still facing you, with his eyes focused on yours, like they saw into your soul. His stare consumed you with an intensity that scared you but also made you revel in the possessiveness. So, when he gently pulled you closer to himself, you did not resist. He kissed your lips, and you thought of rainbows, deciding that that was how its colours would taste: warm, soft, minty, like Richard's lips.

That Monday morning, as you hastily dumped wraps of extra scotch eggs into the bin in preparation to leave the garden and continue your secret catholic lives, he held your hands, looked into your eyes one last time, smiled, kissed you and walked away. And at that moment, you remembered that out there, Richard was just a stranger whose laugh you would recognize anywhere.



Listening to the Wind

Furstenberg Patricia
South Africa

Cocooned in black clouds, the wind jumps from behind the forest and rolls down the valley, a tsunami of gravel and branches. Winded, the woodland draws breath.

Like an invader, the wind pushes over mighty trees still dazed by a summer of sunshine, whipping their leaves about their trunks. Twisting their trunks towards heavens. Their roots scream in protest. Their tears are torn leaves, yet they stand.

Enraged, the wind leaps forward. Now wrestling and crumpling together shrubs and golden dandelions lost in its path.

Behind a boulder, a poppy flower. It quivers in the charged air, its tiny hairs like feelers, questioning life. Nearby, a sapling that grew in estranged soil, a seed dropped by a hurried bird. It lowers its branches; it tries to fight the gale. To shield the poppy.

The bluster got to them. It teases the sapling. It puffs and it pants, it spits ice lifting its branches into a dance. Strumming its bows

in a request for life, lulling it into deceptive sanctuary. The sapling bends, twists, turns this way and that in the wind. It remembers how he'd traveled, as a seed, it remembers the lesson. It bends over the poppy, a pretense bow, till the gale unfolds further.

The wind, with only a handful of twigs and sand, rumbles away hastening my way. The witness.

Angry, he shows me his size by the cacophony of scents he surrounds me. Earth, foliage, mulch, oils, dust. And steals my hat, hiding it in his clouds like molten lead.

I laugh. Wind spins around me. I am a tree. See my branches? See my leaves?

I lift my hands and feel the clouds with my fingers.

I touch raindrops. They fall like a curtain around me. And I cannot see.

'I understand now,' I laugh.



Creative Spotlight

PEACE IN THE STORM



CHRONICLES OF REAL STORIES OF
PERSEVERANCE AND CONQUERING
THE STORM

STELLA GONYE TSHUMA

ISBN 978-1

In this Edition of the Writers Space Africa Magazine, I had a chat with Stella Gonye Tshuma, the Zimbabwean author of *Peace in the storm* who currently resides in Namibia with her family. Read on as she shares snippets of her life and career with us. - *Blessing Peter Titus (PPBlessing)*

PPBlessing: Who is Stella?

SGT: Stella is a Zimbabwean from a growth point called Nembudzia in Gokwe North. A God-loving lady, wife to Shawn and mother to two beautiful girls. I'm a dental therapist by profession but as I grew older I embarked on a journey of self-discovery. I then stumbled into something bigger. I have evolved into a Certified Life coach, author, entrepreneur and philanthropist.

PPBlessing: What brought about this evolution?

SGT: I had this deep feeling inside of me that I had more in me and I believed I had a bigger purpose than being in the dental practice day and night. So I may say I had become tired of being in the same place for a long time. I yearned for more! Fortunately, around that same time - that's in 2016 - Munatsi Sande who was my Church pastor published his book Greatness Awaits. As I read that book it spoke to me and I was blessed to be among the first group of people who were mentored by Coach Natsi himself using that book. That mentorship brought clarity to my thoughts and I began to prayerfully seek answers from God. I found my purpose and I began to take small steps toward being what God created me to be.

PPBlessing: How exactly were you able to find your purpose?

SGT: One thing I would like to bring out is that we are all born with a purpose. So my journey began with me taking time to be with myself and God (Me time) asking quality questions. The book I mentioned earlier on has within it reflection questions that I had to think about and answer. Questions like Who am I? What am I good at? What can I do with what I'm good at? What is holding me back and so forth. So as I dug deeper into my thoughts and my past, there were patterns I could trace. Some of the things within my purpose, I was already doing but I was operating from ignorance.

So I started pursuing my interests, I started to look for things that move my heart and realised compassion and teaching were attributes within me and I was already practising them.

PPBlessing: Could you shed more light on your work as a Certified Life coach, dental therapist, author, entrepreneur and philanthropist?

SGT: I believe being in dentistry was my first calling because it's something that was inspired by an accident that I had which almost cost me 4 of my anterior teeth. We travelled 150 km through a rainy night to get to the nearest hospital with a dentist. I was 9 years old and when the dentist came I was pleasantly surprised to see she was a woman. That dentist refused to extract my teeth, she said she will save them. I had



wires for 6 months and my smile was restored. I'm truly grateful. From that day I said I'm going to also save other people's teeth.

So as a dental therapist I offer primary oral health care. We treat oral diseases, dental fillings on rotten teeth, cleaning, teeth extractions, and oral health education.

As a coach, I mentor and walk the journey to self-discovery and development with my mentee. I'm all about positive thinking, pursuing purpose and living a fulfilling life that God created me to live.

Being an author came by surprise. God being God, I wrote and published my first book in April. It's titled Peace in the storm. I also write daily devotions which I share on my Facebook page - Voice of Hope.

My husband and I have a printing company Reprint. I also do this and that whenever I see an opportunity. I'm also into buying and selling various products.

As a philanthropist, I co-founded African Community Health Trust which is an organisation that provides free medical and dental treatments through outreach programs. We have helped thousands of people in Zimbabwe.

PPBlessing: Wow! That's a whole lot of work. It sounds both interesting and time consuming. Congratulations on the book too. I'm

happy you made me a proud owner of one.

SGT: Thank you very much and I hope and pray the book will inspire and motivate you.

PPBlessing: How do you manage all you do in those various fields and take care of your family?

SGT: It is really a lot and sometimes I pray for a 30-hour day but when you love what you do, you make it work. I work 9-5 but I'm a morning person so waking up earlier allows me to do most of my writing and meditation. After work it's family time, homework with kids, cooking and watching a bit of TV together.

So it's all about planning. However, I also struggle especially when I'm writing a book because it needs more time than I do when writing devotions. To top it all, I don't have a helper at home. So we all help each other as a family around the house.

PPBlessing: Well done. More grace and strength

SGT: Thank you. I need it.

PPBlessing: If you were to describe yourself with a word, what would that be?

SGT: Powerhouse

PPBlessing: Let's talk about your book, Peace in the storm. What inspired it?



SGT: The book was inspired by a storm. In 2018, we got into a financial storm as a family. However, I was already mentoring people on greatness and then I was broke and lost all my other side hustles. It was at that moment that I had more time on my hands. My prayers, meditations and time with God were longer. It was in seeking answers that I had all these thoughts filling my mind and I always have my journal with me. I started writing down my thoughts and because of coaching, I began to share the inspiration on Facebook and realised I was not alone. A lot of people were in the same storm. As I wrote more to encourage others, I realised I was encouraging myself

as well.

My Mentor remarked that my writing was really good, and I should consider writing a book. My mother-in-law, Noma, and a friend also told me the same and in my heart, I said, "God has spoken I'm going to write a book" and behold peace in the storm was birthed.

As I wrote the script I realised I needed to share more on various storms of life using people who have gone through difficult times. I then approached friends and acquaintances whom I knew had powerful stories of survival. Thankfully, they readily agreed to share their experiences. Peace in



the storm contains real stories about losing loved ones, living with disabilities, cancer diagnosis, failing exams and becoming homeless. These stories are relatable and make this book more powerful. I believe it equips readers with nuggets on how to deal with the storms of life and become storm riders.

PPBlessing: Was this when you first started writing or you've been writing before then?

SGT: Yes, that's when I started writing professionally. It's something that came as a surprise to me but now I write like I was born writing.

PPBlessing: How about unprofessionally?

SGT: Unprofessionally, I'm that girl who grew up with a diary as a best friend. I was very reserved so I used to write down my thoughts, frustrations, and good memories in my diary.

PPBlessing: How can one get a copy of Peace in the storm?

SGT: Peace in the storm is available in Zimbabwe at Zi-collection. Booth 3 . Galaxy mall Corner First and Jason Moyo, Harare. +263718672501 is the number to contact.

In Namibia, it is available at Don Bosco parish book shop, Rundu. +264813374000 is the contact number.

In South Africa, you can call +27 73 522 9343. Alternatively, one can buy the e-book or order a hard copy from amazon.com from this link - <https://tinyurl.com/mtn88pch>

PPBlessing: What is the inspiration behind your Facebook page, Voice of hope?

SGT: In my book Peace in the storm, I share parts of my life which stood out for me. So Voice of Hope was birthed when the covid lockdown began. I had not yet published the book and as I reflected on my next step as an author and encourager, I realised that my life is a testimony of God's grace and His unconditional love. I realised I went through all the storms so I can become The Voice of hope to those in despair.

Voice of hope was my way of reaching out and encouraging others through the word of God, that whatever is happening around us God, is still with us, holding our hands and embracing us with His love.

PPBlessing: Interesting. Why do you want to be a voice of hope to people?

SGT: We are living in a troubled world. Social, economic, and political challenges and our future looks bleak. Stress, Depression, and mental breakdowns are the order of the day. My prayer as the Voice of Hope is always that the messages I share will bring hope and light to the darkness





that surrounds so many in our communities. To remind them that there is light within them that need to be lit by their Creator.

PPBlessing: What do you mean by the word of God?

SGT: Most of my messages in Voice of Hope are inspired by scriptures from the Bible which is the word of God.

PPBlessing: Why not psychology since you are dealing with humans?

SGT: I have studied a bit of psychology in college and as a life coach, but I believe the greatest principles that can bring about satisfactory results are found in the Bible.

And when you use the word of God you are not operating in your intellect but you are backed up by God himself the creator of the person you are trying to help.

PPBlessing: What do you hope to achieve with your writing?

SGT: I hope and desire to transform lives, to give people a different perspective on facing life and its challenges. I pray to touch lives through my inspirational motivational writing. Above all, I hope for people who read my work to live a life of peace, joy and



love whether in good or bad seasons.

PPBlessing: Amen. So far, how much of these have you been able to achieve?

SGT: It's difficult to measure but I believe I'm impacting lives. I have had times when people I know and even those I don't know personally have sent messages of appreciation or shared a testimony or sought mentorship as a result of what I shared.

PPBlessing: Looking back, if you were to give a message to yourself 10 years ago, what would the message be?

SGT: I would say you are fearfully and wonderfully made, never look down on yourself because of your background. There is a seed of greatness in you and the world is waiting for you to bear fruit that will save lives.

PPBlessing: Apart from mentees from your coaching, do you have mentees in the other things you do?

SGT: I do have mentees in the dental field as well, as I used to be a Dental Therapy tutor.

I have also had to walk with some individuals who needed to find peace and healing after they read my book *Peace in the storm*.

PPBlessing: How about Mentors?

SGT: Yes I have mentors. Coach Sande has been a great influence on my growth. I also have spiritual mentors. Through technology/social media I have learnt a lot from other mentors whom I may never meet like Terri Savelle Foy, Priscilla Shirer, and Joyce Meyer. I learn through their teachings.

PPBlessing: How about in the writing field?

SGT: In the writing field I had to learn as I go but my Coach also guided me because he is an author too. However, currently, I have taken interest in reading books by African authors.

PPBlessing: Who are your favourite authors?

SGT: Chinua Achebe is on top of my list followed by Danielle Steel then Dan Brown.

PPBlessing: Why them? I expected C.S Lewis, Myles Munroe, and other Writers who mirror God in their work.

SGT: I know it's an unusual list considering my content. Chinua Achebe has a way with words and expressions and I admire him for being a great African writer. I love love stories and Danielle Steel is great for that. Dan Brown is so creative that when you read his books you can't put them down. I like the thrill that comes with his storylines. It feels so real that I prefer reading the book to watching the films of those books. As I began my writing journey, I have become



intentional about the books I buy. I have completely switched what I read. I have a collection of TD Jake's, Joel Osteen, Napoleon Hill, Robert Kiyosaki, etc

PPBlessing: Should we expect more books from you?

SGT: Definitely you should expect more. I have completed the script for a 31-day devotional inspired by Peace in the storm. By God's grace, it will be published before the end of the year. I'm also working on my second book which will be published 2023.

PPBlessing: Congratulations already. What's the title of this new book?

SGT: Still working on the title but it's on forgiveness.

PPBlessing: What will you tell people going through a turbulent phase at the moment?

SGT: Life is filled with seasons of trials and tribulations but I want to assure you that the season you are in will not stay forever. No matter how dark the night may be, the morning will surely come with the rising sun. Sometimes what was meant to harm you, God turns it into a testimony of your victory.

Take a step back and look at your difficult situation from a different perspective. You may realise that :

- the storm may have come to pave a way for you to your destiny.

- the turbulence may come to sift and purify you so that the gold in you will be exposed.

Destinies, testimonies, healing, unity, promotion, and life's purpose may be birthed from difficult times. Peace does not come from the absence of problems but true peace will be found when you are in that fire. And that peace is free for you and me. Jesus said "my peace I give to you, my peace I leave with you" John 14:27. Open your heart and receive this unconditional peace and you will become a storm rider.

PPBlessing: Seeing that you seem to like scriptures so much, what's your favourite Bible verse?

SGT: Psalm 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. This summarizes my life. I'm a product of grace. Even though my mom died when I was 1-year old, I never lacked. I was well provided for, I was even spoiled. God has been watching over me and He still does to this day.

PPBlessing: Aside from devotionals, inspirational and motivational writing, what other genres do you write?

SGT: I'm thinking of venturing into poetry. I was inspired by brother Comfort Nyati's



Poetic manual and also, reading the poetry pieces in the WSA magazine has challenged me. I have been trying my hand at it.

PPBlessing: That's beautiful. Hope you have submitted to the magazine

SGT: Not too confident yet.

PPBlessing: Eish! What confidence do you need when you've published a book already?

SGT: It's a different way of writing. The toying around with words and phrases. It intrigues me. Mind you I was a science student from the beginning and never took up literature in school

PPBlessing: Well, as you mentioned earlier, you're a born writer. So do submit, please.

SGT: I will definitely do so.

PPBlessing: How many books do you hope to have published in the next 10 years?

SGT : 10 books and 10 devotionals

PPBlessing: One for each year?

SGT: Yes that's my goal.

PPBlessing: Godspeed. Thank you so much for your time.

Thank you our esteemed readers for staying with us through this chat. Until next month, keep reading the Writers Space Africa Magazine.



The background of the entire page is a lush green tea plantation on rolling hills, with misty mountains in the distance. On the left side, there is a stylized map of the African continent composed of three overlapping shapes: a red shape at the top, a yellow shape in the middle, and a green shape at the bottom.

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3rd Thursday

Workshops 10:00AM - 2:00PM
(poetry, shortstory,
Children's
literature).

PoetryPerformance 2:00PM - 4:00PM
Black Night Africa

4th Friday

Writers Mingle 5 2:00PM - 3:30PM
**Theme: Is there
Hope for African
Literature?**

Roundtable on 4:00PM - 5:00PM
Cameroon Literature.

5th Saturday

African Writers 10:00AM - 2:00PM
Conference.
**Theme: Writing
Africa: The Nexus of
Hope**

6th Sunday

**City tour/ Picnic/
Departure** 10:00AM - 2:00PM
**Tour locations:
Douala and Limbe**



Poetry



Poet: Grace Mayeso
Mazengera
Country: Malawi

Angel in the Wind

Five fingers, five toes
A single heartbeat of hope
Two eyes, two ears
I had waited for what felt like years
His mouth, my nose
In the end, only heaven knows
Roses, lilies and bluebells
Who delivers flowers to angels?

Three syllables before our last name
You left as soon as you came
Nine months for me, a day for him
When I sing, do you hear it in the wind?
All the promises we never made
Remind me of your unmade bed
Lullabies, bedtime stories and babbling
All I have left is the sound of mourning



Poet: Mwendu Stardusti
Country: Kenya

Black Magic

Skin like silk, chocolate and honey
Color of the earth, coal and copper
Color of the gods and gems
The fates made us black
Providence made all the thousand accents
Dance from our mouths
One black nation under Isis
Dark as night
Rich with secrets and magic.

That slavery did not break us
It made our backs into steel
That colonialism did not kill our spirits
It made us malleable, like a reed in the rain
That racism did not jaded our hope
It woke all the ecstasies
That lie vast and virgin under our skin
Rich with its whimsical wiles.

We have always known
Our history is ours and our heritage is ours
And everything
Has led us here, to this moment
We are children of fire and magic.



Poet: Olayinka Mogboyin

Country: Nigeria

Ode to the Days

Rainbow and whizzes come and go
Rosemary sprouts in the thrill
to be pecked by our innocuous souls.

A downpour of rain revives
the Virginity of arid soil
In rainfall, solace conversed
With our torsos lying on
The davenport of equanimity.

I made echoes of the wind
And talk of the mountains
As the stillness of my soul
for they lulled me to slumber
Even when mama seems
To be in hot soup and her
Heart throttles.

Then, when the sky and earth
Were walked down the aisle
And bound with a fruity vow
Sea and we the shepherd boys
Sit atop the World to display
Our thirty -two.

To me alone, if days hadn't slipped,
I would love to settle in its stillness evermore
To bring the moon down for a walk with Jeremy.



Poet: Lema Noel
Country: Tanzania

Photos of the Day

And at the end of the day,
The photos of the day come to play.
As the day ends,
After the sun kisses our skins; mine and yours my friend!
I think of the kind of person I'd been,
Think of the love and hatred I'd seen,
And I say, "Ooh! A long day it has been,
'Can't remember all despite all I'd seen."

As the day drowns,
I think of the day's photos as I lay down,
Think of all the zest I put in,
Think of the time I spent and hoped to win,
I remember of the little life jests,
Little wealth as I did best;
I keep remembering of my oldie teenage quest,
And ooh! It's just a lot for me to digest.

As I remain with a few drilled photos, and as I discard many,
I doubt if after a week or two there will be any.
As I push my body with motivations and inspirations,
And put my plans against negativism and imaginations.
As the sun to the morning dew lust,
As I try to keep my thoughts and actions truthful and just;
I thank the day for the chance and trust,
Thank the paparazzi for the day's brilliant light burst.



Poet: Elias Dodo
Country: Nigeria

After the Fall

I was the river that never stood still
a cup of broken hearts I lay in my wake
I sang sweet, the bird that you could not kill
I took your love and stabbed it with my stake

I was the proud neck that never did bend
the shaking hips that did not succumb to age
lavished your attention, your desires did you spend
These breasts stood tall, I commanded centre stage

I was the tree trunk that refused rot
gallantry and ego, your worship my swell fed
at highest noon, competing with the sun I was hot
I was enigma, your naïveté never resisted

I am a river dwarfed by the ocean
head on a broken neck, breasts gone south
elegant wax figurines caressed by the raging sun
I am a shadow of what was, a walk down the path



Poet: Lyne Nyuydini
Country: Cameroon

Ancient Star

A bright night, the pangs of loneliness nudged,
I sat in front of Yaya's hut.
Amazed by the beauty of the significant old star
that twinkled like a firefly.

the trees sang with cold breath and
memories of Yaya long buried within me emerged victoriously.
Gathered round a glowing hearth in Yaya's kitchen, we told
tales of ages.
We'd wept in joy when Yaya had sung the lingling trinkling min-
gling Limaton*
like a palm bird.
We pleased being birthed in the evening activities, like
night owls.

Looking back at the star then, it smiled sadly
And disappeared hesitantly with the glaring lightning
and the roaring thunder.

Forgive me Yaya, I exclaimed
and the thunder, lightning, roared again
And plugged me to my roots.
Could this ancient star, be Yaya?
Nyuydini Lyne Wongabee

Limaton: female's cultural dance



Poet: Comfort Naana

Adwoa Okyere

Country: Ghana

Memories

A cold and moonlit night it was
As my brain took a walk round town
The laughter, the giggles, the nods, and frowns
Hanging right there on the heart's wall.

Curtains of days
Both weary and merry
Hugged and welcomed my brain
As it continued its walk down the lane.

Hours which never again shall come
Faces and gestures
Which might never be repeated
I smiled with a glass of wine in hand
As these memories played on in my mind.



Sweaters

Poet: Esther Kinyua
Country: Kenya

I tend to think
That memories for me are like
A sweater of various palette
One that's still being knit
So when you pull one thread
It all unravels

You have to start over
Or you consider it done and over
But the curves of the thread are there
They tell something was once knit here
And though they can no longer show for it
You can feel by their changed pattern

So are memories
A touch brings them rushing like floods
Try as you might to forget
But you still feel the imprint
The beautiful, the bad, the unspoken
Our memories are all just sweaters being knit



Poet: Catherine Mponda
Country: Tanzania

All I Life Has a Sting

There is an enemy confined on my left shoulder
My village people say so
In his presence, I sense absence
My absence, our absence

I know of cruelty and the brutality of men
The hollowness the enemy creates is none to compare
He causes darkness to all he touches
Absolute despair, Absolute sorrow

Forget me not, he whispers
So, he taps my shoulder with sickness
In rebellion, I prosper
I defeat sickness, but they are defeated by sickness

Then he strikes with accidents or some say happenstance
In a broken state, I am more adamant
And so, he snatches my loved ones, one after the other
Into the unknown, like an obsolete machine

Incomprehensive news of absence
Indigestible truth about life, It all withers away
The enemy on my left, my village people, say so

The memories of the fallen live on
A mockery of his victory
On my left shoulder, he has made home
And will only walk away when I am of the absentees
Unorthodox is the expression of loss; mindlessness is our reaction to loss



Poet: Lawal Ibrahim
Country: Nigeria

Some Days We Left Behind

Yesterday was the day we pushed ourselves
Out of the childhood' cradle Mama made with cozy velvet.
Before we fell we carried our bag of dreams on our heads
-pointing at each and every hand that dandled us from infants
Trying not to be those kids once counting on stars
And building Rome with beach sand in a day
As maturity prevailed over us. We could resist to crave sweet
But life tasted lime-on-ade on our tongues
So we burnt the bridge that led to where we once called home
And kept fending for daily bread and cheese like cowboys.
We'd ambled to the downtown, seeking the anatomy of life
Before the front desks that carried portraits of unknown men's nametags.
Tiles we were to scrub after we swept the western floor under probation-
But we ne'er sidelined the traditions our fatherland grew-
Ridges we made and seeds we sowed
Knowing the fruits of our labour before the summer sprung
our black ass from behind the desk we longily laid our hands on.

After winter, we turned to icebreakers cutting across autumn;
As we crawl, we move
As we stand, we fall
As we walk, we talk
With precision we'd made it to today
As we run, soaring high from the cliff
-never back down to some days we left behind.





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PoeticAfrica is Africa's first trilingual poetry magazine published quarterly. The magazine showcases rich and diverse poetry in English, Kiswahili, and French from all over Africa to the world.

A Martian Sunrise

By: Barra Hart
Country: Nigeria



When I was 16, I dreamt of watching a sunrise on a new planet. It was a strange dream for someone of my circumstance to have, and I would not share it for quite some time. You see, I was born in the gutters of human civilization, on a continent whose leaders had no humanity to speak of. I was lucky, raised in a lucky family,

spared the worst of the squalor that festered all around me. We never starved, and enjoyed a few fleeting periods of comfort and dignity, but for most of my childhood, that was it.

When I was 18, I got accepted into the best university in my country. My father had died the previous year, and to honor his



last wishes, my mother resolved to do everything in her power to get me into that school. The fees were several miles north of our economic class. My first semester was a roller-coaster of debt and anxiety. But all that ended when a compassionate administration offered me a full scholarship to continue my studies as long as I kept my grades up and eventually paid the small fortune I still owed. I would not take any of it for granted. I learnt as much as I could about life, the universe and everything in the semesters that followed. I fed my insatiable curiosity with the massive library, the free internet, and the unbelievable privilege that had fallen right into my lap. I connected, grew, aced a lot of tests, wrote a lot of papers, had a lot of laughs, won a couple of awards, and contemplated an uncertain future.

When I was 22, an adventure was over. I had spent 4 years in what to me was nothing short of a dream; a paradise carved out of the misery around it, an oasis in a desert of woe. But I was back in that desert now, no longer a boy, but a man bearing the weight of his many burdens, ready to stare the future in the face and earn his place in a world that owed him nothing.

This, of course, was easier intended than done. When I was 23, I had gone through a hard year, trying my hand at self-reliance, and completing a mandatory national service program, an outdated farce perpetuated by my country's government for the

sole purpose of exploiting its youth, before ultimately casting them out into the cold reality of mass unemployment – a reality it also actively perpetuated. It wasn't all bad, though. I met some new people, made new connections, even dipped my toes in the waters of a better life. And all the while, I held on to my dream, learning, evolving, creating, hoping that eventually, something would stick, and give me the boost I so desperately needed. The luck of my younger years had ran out, and a global recession left a better tomorrow even less certain.

When I was 26, the storm had passed, for the world and for me, the tragedies nothing more than haunting memories now. For reasons that remain a mystery to me to this day, the world cared what I had to say. It listened, it read, it marveled. The resources gave me the power to go further, to learn more, to become more, to invest and innovate in the sciences and technologies that would bring my dream closer. And gripping at every rock, catching myself at every fall, I soon found myself at the top of a mountain I once feared I would never climb.

When I was 52, a new storm was on the horizon. Hubris and sickness had dug their claws too deep into the heart of our global civilization. A world on the brink, a world tearing itself apart. We had helped build so much, I and the visionaries I had met and befriended along the way, the very best of our generation, the Advent. We had fixed



so much. We couldn't fix this. The powerful had gone too far, sacrificing tomorrow on the altar of their greed, and time was running out. No one really knew how many people died before the first Exodus. No catastrophe in history held a candle to it. Words failed again and again to describe it. For those who survived, the calling could not be ignored. We toiled day and night, the thinkers, inventors, and builders across what was left of our world, united against the dying of the light. The masses endured, helping in every way they could, even the youngest. Old systems did not matter anymore, politics did not matter anymore, only survival, a mad fist thrust in the eleventh hour at the face of extinction.

When I was 64, the final Exodus happened. What a treat that it happened to be my birthday that day. The Advent were among the last wave. We remained until the very last innocent life was on a one-way trip to the Red Planet, now our new home, our new hope. Sparse savannas of habitat domes had since grown into metropolises bustling with life. We watched it all from afar, from the ruins of a planet our species had called home for over 200,000 years, and so many species before it. And then, we left, a once-flourishing world made barren by our folly receding into the cosmic distance, as a humanity forever changed waved it a final farewell.

When I was 83, I awoke in the early hours

of morning, slipped into my environment suit, and took the long walk out of my district's dome. A vast expanse of land that was only just beginning to bear the first fruits of over 2 decades of terraforming stretched out in front of me. I took a deep breath. It wasn't quite the same feeling with the recycled air in my helmet, but the gesture was just as rewarding. I watched the Sun peek over the horizon of Elysium Planitia, as I had done for many dawns before, and thought about that boy all those years ago, about his thoughts, his hopes, his mistakes, his pain, the dream that had kept him going through it all, the world he would eventually help change, the millions of lives he would help save, and the billions who would know no such hope.

"End simulation."

I was back in reality, gazing into the constellation of gaping eyes before me. My team and I had turned the entire UN General Assembly Hall into a fully-immersive holo chamber. I had taken them all into my mind, into my story, the story of the last 40 years of my life, and with the magic of the Entropy Engine, further into a catastrophe there was still time to avert.

"So..." I said, unhooking myself from the console's umbilical and rising from the control pod to face the world leaders again. "Are you convinced now?"



Bless the Dead



By: Ngollo Ida-Sharon
Country: Kenya



The weather today is foul. The earth seems to have taken a dreadful turn. Life is tinged with an inert kind of sorrow. The devil must be working overtime this June. My mind is going awry. There is so much doom and gloom in my head and heart.

She winces at the light bulb's glare. Her eyes are now like embers of coal; they bear no reflection of a soul. She shudders, then expires.

Heaven could not wait.



My eyelids turn heavy, my heart becomes hollow and my blood feels like acid. Obilo is gone. Most of my heroes are either dysfunctional or dead. She had been at death's door for a while but I was not prepared to let her go. One is never at ease with the fickleness of existence.

Obilo was larger than life. She was beyond love. Ahead of her time yet still on time. She had a demeanour that lit up a room. Always wreathed in a beautiful wrinkly smile; her face radiated beams of light when she smiled as if it was the map of her life! She was soulful – she saw love, smelt achievement, and heard a smile. A woman of statuesque beauty and exquisite strength, as alpha as they come.

Self-conscious, intuitive, advocative, sweet, and now peaceful and free as a dove. Your typical African grandmother, and such, had some of the obligatory traits – spontaneous deafness, an unerring ability to stand right in the way, and a bat-like sonar system that allowed her to scream out your name at the top of her lungs when you left one dish undone, but stood ten toes down when she did the same.

A birth giver to stars. A magic maker. A game changer. A queen. She had children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who would keep her on her toes – a wild ride to places she had perhaps only heard of on the radio. But I saw something striking in her liquid eyes, something that guided

me from the moment I met her – her unflappable philosophy that whatever came her way she would overcome. And because she would overcome, I would, too.

She loved God. Obilo loved God authentically. She regarded Him as a friend. My faith had perhaps been convoluted, her illness had somehow shifted my image of divinity from that childhood vision, but the simplicity of her prayers still lingers. And so does something she told me when I asked her where God lived. With her signature broad smile and a laid-back tone but somewhat cogent, she replied, “In your heart.”

I wish I did not often act as-though God was a figurine on the mantle or could fit in my back pocket. The war between my mind and heart was epic.

The good old days with her were wholesome. Peopled with warmth and wonder. Too often, I found myself reliving those seamless conversations from my childhood, in my head. She had a flair for storytelling. My fondest memories of her stories was one of Muok, a legendary man whose murder at the pinnacle of his career shook the nation. The man who had charmed the world with his messianic oration.

Jowi, another man, the oracle who lived way before his time, was another of her stories. If one knew her, one would instantly remember *Kej Dede*, the famine that had mercilessly ravished them and left their souls riddled with scars of survival, pain,



and loss. With remarkable disdain, she talked about Chombo, the man made of staggering brutality. Chombo ruled Nyumbani, a country of some millions of people, like his warehouse. He killed at will. He banished the lucky and butchered the rest. Most times, unprovoked. During Kej Dede, Chombo had already been ousted from power and two other men had tried to succeed him unsuccessfully. A third one was warming up. They said he was from the bush, and that just like Chombo, he too could speak Kiswahili fluently. It was also said that the people were pregnant with hope and expectation. I later lived among this great citizenry during my teenage years. I could tell that hope and expectation remained. Occasionally radicalised with vigilance.

This brand of men, Obilo said, had a special affinity for women. They had all types of children by all types of men. Those who know will tell you that those women were mostly anything but dark-skinned.

These men treated the presidency like kingship, like their birthright. Only death could dethrone them. There was a country that was ruled by a father, deputised by his son. This father had violently succeeded his uncle years ago. Pop culture glorified it, terming it a coup that was begging to be orchestrated. Coups and military regimes and curfews were common words in my history class. These countries followed a system of government called democracy,

invented by Jakalam. It was invented by brothers of Jakalam from a far away land named Huntville.

Jakalam was a native of Huntsville. Huntsville, Obilo articulated, experienced very strange weather patterns. The most adverse of them akin to the inside of a deep freezer. They said the natives of Huntsville were civilised. When you visited Huntsville you returned with polished English, the kind that came through the nostrils. You learnt how to dine and dance with etiquette. You learnt how to dance with rhythm. Poverty would be history. You would never know oppression. You gained an instant allure; everyone wanted to hobnob with you. Yet one needed a piece of paper called a passport, and a whole lot of cash to embark on that journey to salvation. It costed an arm and a leg. Ordinarily, those two would be inadequate. You also had to undergo a thorough scrutiny to get a small sticker to validate your passport. The code word for that rigorous exercise was visa interview. How we dreamed.

Obilo's government name was Veronica Hobble. Jakalam had baptised her as such during her Dini classes, the only formal education she ever had. Back home, that quickly got Africanised to Firnika Obilo. The Africanised version had outlived the imperialist version, seemingly. Hobble was now fondly called Obilo.

She was a descendant of the natives of one of the islands of the lake. The child of a



man of great stature, a hero who had everyone by the heart. A drum major who had been felled by Jakalam's bullet over a minor scuffle. Her kinsmen, carrying her along, had emigrated into the adjacent mainland, then further and further on. They like to say that it had something to do with population pressure and land fragmentation. Or that the kinsmen are always on the move. Folks from the mainland, she said, were modest and more submissive: children bowed to older people and women bowed to men. They were pleasantly cordial; the sugarcane and groundnut growers would gift you their produce before it got to the factories and their granaries! Their Kiswahili was rich, the kind you only experienced during the 7 o'clock news nowadays.

In high school I had concentrated more on English Literature; I wanted to create stories like Ariwa – the mercurial creature with his own unique quirk. I also wanted to end up like my countryman Mukulu; go to Makerere and leave a mark. My father liked telling me that there was a hall named Northcott, and there, great men rubbed shoulders. My mother immensely liked one Ahumuza. She said women too, like those great men, can be great. I loved words and all their nuances, connotations, and layers of meaning.

It was told that some of Obilo's older brothers had been recruited to fight Jakalam's war in a far-off land. It is also said that they were never seen or heard from again.

And that Sirkal, through the chief's baraza sitting in the local market under the jamna tree, had paid Obilo some twenty shillings in damages. The year was 1965.

Even when Obilo's health deteriorated, I could still see her infused with strength and sweetness. Such days were marred by profound grief; sad as raindrops on a graveyard, bitter and unforgiving. But she carried on each day, with hope, chance, and a fresh face. Clothing her agony in grace and honing her brave spirit, she walked quietly into a new day. Another day, to her, was a metaphor for chance. At least when nothing was certain, anything, including recovery, was possible. Seeing her frail bones inked in resilience wrung tears out of my heart. I learnt to keep feigning strength each time our eyes met. Every time I watched her breath coming in gasps. Every time the road to recovery seemed anything but linear. What a woman of staggering rebound!

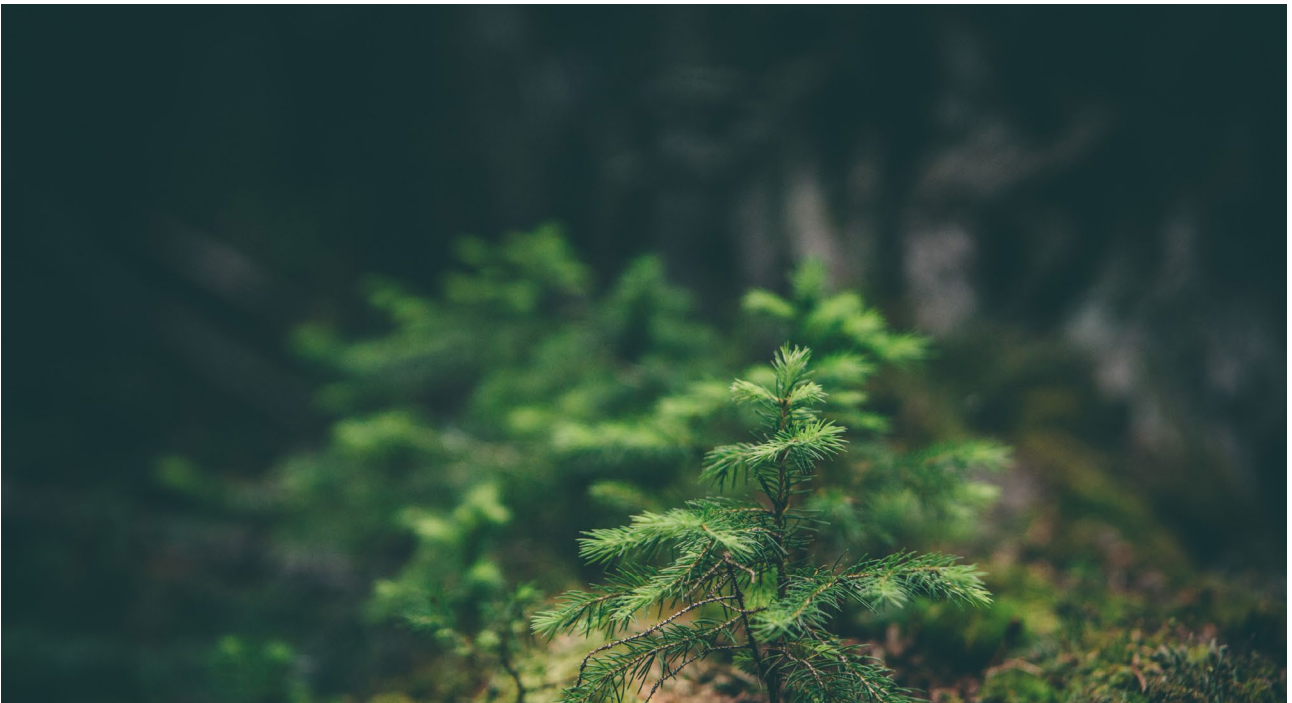
I learnt too late in life that by being alive, one signs up for death subconsciously. And that I am as certain of death as I am of taxes.

On the day we buried her, the heavens opened up and it poured massively. I gained a powerful ancestor.



Memories

By: Owuor Hellen
Country: Kenya



As I wandered in the forest nearby, I could feel the calmness that surrounded the place. It was almost magical. But then, magic is only possible when one is a child. I followed the common trail through the trees, and they stirred as if they knew that they had company. They ruffled their leaves lazily as they watched me walk beneath them. There was a stream nearby. When I was growing up, it had been a river. A river that served as the swimming point

for us herd boys whenever we took our cattle out to get some water. I remember this particular day when my two friends and I decided to cool down after a long morning in the fields. It was already midday and the sun was shining strongly on us. We did what we normally did; took the cattle to the river and as they drank to their fill, we splashed and swam joyfully. Our skimpy, old, and tattered clothes were on the bank and one of the cows must have caught the



scent of soap in them and rushed to lick them, only that it did not have much sense to only do that. We were happily swimming until Zuri suddenly stopped moving and looked horrified.

“Our clothes!” he shouted while pointing towards the cattle, once he was out of the spell.

Swimming immediately became unimportant to the three of us as we scrambled to get out of the water. This would go on record as the shortest swimming time we ever had. When the cows saw us approaching their direction (for now, the first cow had invited the others into this chewing spree such that everyone was now a victim), they mistook it for time to go home. They led the way, with us naked, shouting expletives at an audience who took them as complements. A group of women were on their way to the river to do laundry and since we were young, we were not bashed. They gave us some of their children’s clothes to cover our bodies. My friends are now in the city and I bet that if they would visit this place, that one memory, out of numerous ones we made, would still stand out for them.

I went past the stream and beyond that, a road that would lead me right home. The walk leading home was quiet. It gave me time to take it all in. I had not been home in nearly ten years and a lot had changed. The forest had thinned, ‘our’ river had grown small, electricity poles had been

erected everywhere, there were numerous bodabodas, a car here and there. The list is endless. As I headed towards my mother’s kitchen, a round, mud-walled hut with now rusted iron sheet roofs that let in water whenever it rained, I could see smoke coming up. Even the smoke had thinned! The aromatic waft of her delicious sun-dried fish, commonly known as aliya took me back many years. This kitchen had served as the formal dining room for us children. We would have this special food on Sundays after it was ‘ready’ as my mother would say. Before that day, she would sun-dry it on the roof for some days and then we would have it on Sundays. On one particular Saturday, she had set out her pieces of aliya on the roof and had gone to the shamba to weed. I had remained at home because there wasn’t much to do there and it was my sisters’ turn to herd. Mother specifically told me to watch the ‘meal’ because she had spotted hawks in the area of late. I went and perched myself on top of a guava tree close by, to keep watch. A hawk flew by once or twice, but I was able to pelt it with the pebbles I had in my pockets. It went away and I kept watching.

Out of nowhere, I could not tell whether it was the same hawk or not. I saw it swoon down swiftly and grabbed two of the three pieces of my mother’s aliya. I was quick to throw a stone at it. I must have hurt one of its wings because it came down, nearly crashing on the ground before making another attempt at flying. I had come down



from my watch tower and decided I was going to struggle with this bird for our meal. It had dropped one on the grass and I decided that it was safer there. It was the other one that I desperately wanted. Before it could launch and fly, I grabbed one end of the fish, and it would not let go. I was so feeble that I felt it dragging me but I could not let go. The bird pulled as I pulled and it only ended with me tumbling backward and landing on my bottoms when I heard my mother screaming. The bird had won when I became distracted. I felt bad, but my mother assured me that everything would be alright. In any case, what we had was more than enough.

Everything there reminded me of what used to be. A past so simple yet very exciting. One which was cheap, yet fulfilling. I was back home for a week. I could not wait to unlock other memories this place had held for me for the past ten years. I

went into the kitchen to have dinner with mother; it is where we always had our dinner, except when my father was home. We would have it in the formal house. As I sat on the three-legged wooden stool, I suddenly remembered that time when I almost rendered my sister bald.

“I see you smiling son, what is it?”

“Ma, this place brings a lot of memories, the best ones.”

“That is how it should be. This is home and it always will be. Now let us dig in,” she said nodding lovingly.

“We forgot to pray ma,” I said and prayed.

We ate our dinner in complete silence, not that there was nothing to say, but, it felt right at the moment. I needed to process all my thoughts and my mother needed to process hers. It was good to be home.



The Maid of the House

By: Dwamena-Asare Elizabeth
Country: Ghana

29th November, 2009

Dear Diary, a burial service was held for Mr. Dumpson yesterday. I stood defiantly in the splattering rain. I stood there long enough to catch a cold as I watched his lifeless body being lowered into the grave, encased in an exquisite casket. The autopsy revealed he died of natural causes as there was no shred of evidence of suicide or murder. It was simply a motionless body on an antique mahogany table surrounded by a few books, which lay idle in various directions.

My spirit welled up with wrath as I stared at the open grave. A stinging knot formed in my throat, making it impossible for me to swallow. I blinked away a tear and let out a deep sigh. Mr. Dumpson deserved to

be buried without a coffin or a grave. He deserved to be abandoned in the bitter, cold air, where scavengers would feast on his remains.

Blissful day,

Liz

4th May, 2009

Dear Diary, I turn eighteen today. It is my first day at Mr. Dumpson's house. I spot his wife, Miss Dumpson, standing akimbo in the parlour. She looks irritated, evident as she glares at Nathan, the housekeeper, with gargoyle-like dismay at the puddle he is dripping onto the marble floor.

In the unexpected scene, I feel conflicted, with butterflies rumbling in my stomach. Will I survive in this mansion that smells



like sandalwood and is adorned with nineteenth-century artefacts? The walls are covered in brilliant wall patterns, and the place smells like luxury. There are satin curtains on either side of the hall, flanked by gold-framed photographs of the mistress neatly arranged on the wall and an old, isolated picture of her spouse in one corner. Miss Dumpson is a slender, six-foot-tall lady. She rocks a peplum top with baggy pants. She has three piercings in each earlobe and a modest nose ring. Her left ankle is elegantly laced with a dazzling gold chain; her kinky, black hair and flawless skin give her an aura that makes the entire room gleam like heaven. At the end of the day, she employs me as the maid of the house. I come from a family of eight, and with little to feed, I have no choice but to work as a maid for a monthly wage.

With love,

Liz

At Dawn – 28th June, 2009

Dear Diary, the house is jolted awake by a loud commotion coming from the mistress' room, causing Nathan and me to dash upstairs. We hear glasses shatter and objects smack against hard surfaces.

Nathan orders me to call 911. Unfortunately, a male voice roars from the room, warning me not to do anything silly. The unfamiliar voice prompts me to stop in my tracks. I can only guess that it is Mr. Dump-

son's. He is back home from a business trip. I have never seen the man of the house, but my initial impression of him is that he is a jerk who doesn't deserve such a lovely mistress.

In deep thoughts,

Liz

Morning – 28th June, 2009

Dear Diary, I sit still in the kitchen, with my eyes locked on the ceiling in deep thoughts. Nathan tells me that I'll get used to it. It implies that it is the man's habit. My big brown eyes instantly fill with pity for my mistress, who has embraced me with nothing but kindness.

Nathan says Mr. Dumpson is a spoiled brat who catered for the mistress while she was in school, and she had to repay his kindness by marriage.

Our conversation ceases as Miss Dumpson enters the kitchen in her morning coat. Her eyes are puffy and inflamed. Her right wrist is bandaged, and she limps to the cabinet with unsteady hands to retrieve a drinking glass. The glass shatters on the floor, and she slowly bends, blinded by tears, to pick up the fragmented pieces with her bare fingers. We move swiftly to her side but stay silent as Mr. Dumpson descends the stairs and heads out the front door with a bang.

Sad,

Liz



Afternoon – 28th June, 2009

Dear Diary, the heat is unbearable. The sun glints off the roofs of new and used cars. They are parked in colour-coded rows. Nathan and I make our way through the cramped wooden homes and muddy streets to the noisy marketplace for grocery shopping, where the vendors stand waiting. Miss Dumpson usually goes grocery shopping, but today she prefers to stay indoors to nurse her wounds, which cannot be concealed with makeup.

We return home from shopping to find an unexpected sight. Intoxicated with drugs, Miss Dumpson lies motionless in front of her bedroom. I called an ambulance. It arrives in no time and carries her away in the company of Nathan. The hospital later informs us that Miss Dumpson had fallen into a coma.

Frightened,

Liz

Evening – 28th June, 2009

Dear Diary, I dash inside the study room and rummage among the stacks of books on the shelves for Mr. Dumpson's contact details. I need to inform him about his wife's condition. After minutes of a fruitless search, I settle into his favourite chair in the study room in deep thought.

I reminisce about the first day I met Miss Dumpson. Why is a married woman still referred to as 'Miss' instead of 'Mrs.'?

She doesn't have any children. Her husband is barely home, but it is a nightmare whenever he shows up. She is usually sad and sits in the hall for hours in the dark, with only the television's screen light illuminating the space. She cries when no one is watching, and she pretends to have itchy eyes when someone steps into the emotional scene unawares.

Good afternoon,

Liz

30th September, 2009

Dear Diary, Miss Dumpson has been in a coma for weeks. I finally contact Mr. Dumpson, but he is reluctant to come home. Once he does, he shows up enraged because I fabricated a lie saying that Miss Dumpson is having an affair with Nathan.

Mr. Dumpson beats Nathan to a pulp on the day of his arrival and sends him packing.

And for the first time, Mr. Dumpson decides to stay for a longer time. How I hate the thought of that! I have to pick up his mail, assist him in the study room, and attend to his numerous guests who come by regularly.

Sincerely,

Liz

2nd November, 2009

Dear Diary, the morning air is flavoured with the aroma of pancakes, omelets, and



steaming coffee from the kitchen. I serve Mr. Dumpson like a king. And it appears to stick with him as he makes sexual advances towards me. He is an old man with fondness for younger women, looking at seventeen, an age difference between him and Miss Dumpson. Unfortunately, I decline his offer. He roars angrily at that, and it lances the air in the kitchen.

Worried,

Liz

8th November, 2009

Dear Diary, I send Mr. Dumpson's letters to him in the study, where he is comfortably seated, smoking a cigar. I stay quiet as he reads and stamps the letters.

He orders an envelope. I hand it over to him and step away, patiently waiting to drop it in the mailbox. He pushes it towards me after licking its flap and sealing the content.

The unexpected happens when I return to the study room. Mr. Dumpson's face is buried in the books on his desk. The room feels too cold all of a sudden, and then it slowly turns warm. Perhaps his ruthless soul is journeying to hell.

Hopeful,

Liz

18th November, 2009

Dear Diary, Miss Dumpson has been dis-

charged from the hospital. News about her husband's demise has reached her, but she barely mourns her loss. I hear that Mr. Dumpson's properties will be transferred to her as his legally wedded wife according to the law. She flashes a smile and lets out a sigh of relief upon hearing this news. Miss Dumpson is going to be a millionaire!

Hopeful,

Liz

28th November, 2009

Dear Diary, today is Mr. Dumpson's burial. I am standing in the rain without an umbrella, watching as the casket is being lowered into the grave. When no one is looking, I drop the remainder of the thallium poison to the ground and trample it under my right foot. I spread poison on the flap of the envelope that Mr. Dumpson licked in the process of sealing its content. Tiny drops travelled down his throat and killed him instantly, leaving no evidence. I sigh satisfactorily, for a job well done.

Then I turn to Miss Dumpson and smile broadly. She returns the smile with a nod. Slowly, we all turn and head back home to continue with our daily tasks as if there was no funeral.

All's well, that ends well,

Liz



THE STORYTELLING OF GRIOTS

Introduction

For years African storytelling has been developed as a way for us to understand reality in its entirety. It is also used as a way for us to figure out the best methods to resolve natural and physical situations. While at the same time, we have often used storytelling to teach children morals and other good manners, look after or preserve our cultural values and traditions, provide more than one idea to make our lives easier or suggest other survival techniques; and lastly to praise God in many religions. As evident in the information above, there are many ways we have taken advantage of our

storytelling for positive reinforcement in our society.

As a result, Griots are African storytellers that are typically found in West Africa and used as a way to pass down stories to the next generation. Interestingly enough, they are also known in some cultures as Jeliw. A Lot of people also know them as oral traditions. As mentioned earlier, the name Jeliw comes from the Mande griots of West Africa. This means these are members of a class of artisans and they are traditionally dedicated to preserving and transmitting Mande oral or a collection of musical traditions. Griots are often used in their lifestyle



Mimi Machakaire
Zimbabwe



as storytellers and can be traced back to at least the origins of the Mande Empire during the 13th century. The Mande people are located on the savanna plateau of Western Sudan.

However, it's not just anyone who can simply be called a Griot, learn the skills or uphold the responsibilities. This means that one actually has to be born into their position, meaning they have to come from a family already highly respected in this field, passed on by a former Griot in the same family. As well as being storytellers, they have many other duties such as being poets, historians, genealogists, and more. Griots were more than storytellers; they were entertainers in Ancient Africa. They would bring whole villages together shouting their words of wisdom, song and praise.

According to an article published by Hakimah Abdul-Fattah titled How Griots Tell Legendary Epics through Stories and Songs in West Africa, in the Western African culture of the Mande people, most villages were given their own griot who was usually a man, some were also women but it wasn't very common, the women were known for mostly singing. Having one Griot for each village was for no particular reason other than to preserve the history of that specific village.

Griots were also known as an important part of the culture and more so the so-

cial life of each village. While the Griot had many jobs, the main expectation among the villagers was entertainment. The villagers were often calling for stories as much as possible. At times, they would even include mythical stories of the gods, or spirits of the region, which may or may not be true. If not stories of the gods, the Griots would include those of kings and famous heroes from past battles in their repertoire.

Some of their stories had moral messages with the agenda of teaching the children how to be good citizens or at times even the adults who were listening would learn a thing or two, about good and bad behaviour and how people should behave in order to make their village stronger. The Griots in their actions while performing, would often repeat words, phrases, gestures and verses or stanzas.

Defining African storytelling and the important roles of Griots as storytellers

Unlike European and Western storytelling, African storytelling has an inclusive awareness, as it is often used to teach important truths and remind people of their community or what their ancestors once went through. In Africa, we have our own unique way of storytelling, typically often found through the use of a Griot. The Griots are keepers of his-



tory throughout their villages and you can hear that with their creative use of words and phrases, song and dance, etc. They would do so by adding details of their lives in their stories, while also including details from the lives of the audience. That's how they continued to stay relevant in their storytelling.

Therefore, if we were to describe the presence of a Griot, the best way would be as a shared communal experience through storytelling. This means that the Griot would bring people together, and the villagers would gather and listen, and even at times join the Griot themselves and participate in stories while performing. Griots had a way of also passing down their stories to the next generation through word of mouth. For example The story of Atlantis found in Plato's Timaeus-Critias (c. 355 BCE) is classified as an oral tradition. Solon secured it in Egypt and later adapted it into an epic poem, but unfortunately, he somehow left it unfinished. Despite his many setbacks, Solon told the story to the next of kin in his family, who would later pass it orally to his son (Critias the elder), who in turn told it to his grandson (Critias the younger). This means that the story would continue through generations and thus this method would ultimately preserve the content. History has taken many forms and the art of a good story lies within the heart itself. The griot and their audience build a unique partner-

ship in dialogue. This is done through communication and active participation.

Their interaction with each other develops as they participate in the creation of living art. I think that this manner of storytelling is similar to various other recordings of history, in the sense that the Griot had a habit of dating back to different points in history. This was dependent on the culture and what was expected of them. However, it's next to impossible to state the very first instance a storyteller gathered an audience as a Griot. Thus, the oral tradition development throughout cultures, has one common denominator and that is to assist people in educating the young and teaching important lessons about the past and about life.

Griots have been observed for years in different generations but there are many modern-day Griots in Africa. However, most Griots in the modern world are seen travelling around with no particular destination. They travel many times from town to town performing at special occasions like weddings, funerals and more. Some African musicians today still consider themselves Griots and are even found using traditional compositions or instruments in their music. For example, Dembo Konte & Kausu Kuyateh are known as master kora players from West Africa.

Some other examples of modern-day Griots are also present among the Man-



de peoples (Mandinka or Malinké, Bambara, etc.), Fulɓe (Fula), Hausa, Songhai, Tukulóor, Wolof, Serer, Mossi, Dagomba, Mauritanian Arabs, and many other smaller groups. In an article published by Patricia Tang called *The Rapper as Modern Griot* in April 2013, she describes that in 1352 another main purpose of a griot's job was to assist the king and nobility and transmit genealogies and histories through music and verbal arts. They could also praise or critique individuals which made them either respected or feared by others. Often some Griots would ask for money or gifts in exchange for praise. Griots were known to speak for hours or even days and were usually very reliable. This in the sense that they kept information dating back to centuries as they were trusted advisors. They may still sing but this time not for money or any other expectations. The difference during the 21st-century era was found in that they are given money or other gifts for their service willingly by the audience and it is not so much expected as it once was in the past. Today, griots not only sing but they also communicate many commentaries on social issues. At times, they have even evolved into finding themselves in politics or figures in the media.

Conclusion

African storytellers have been evolving over the years but as we grow, we fig-

ure out different ways to make sure that those after us not only learn from our stories but appreciate the work which has been cemented in our society. Therefore as Africans, we are more than unique in our storytelling. We have conquered so much in our past and still, we are facing more than what meets the eye. Thus, I say let's use our storytelling as a way to not only preserve our history but let it be a reminder of how far we've come, although we still have a long way to go.

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[WSA MAGAZINE REVIEW] SEPTEMBER 2022 EDITION



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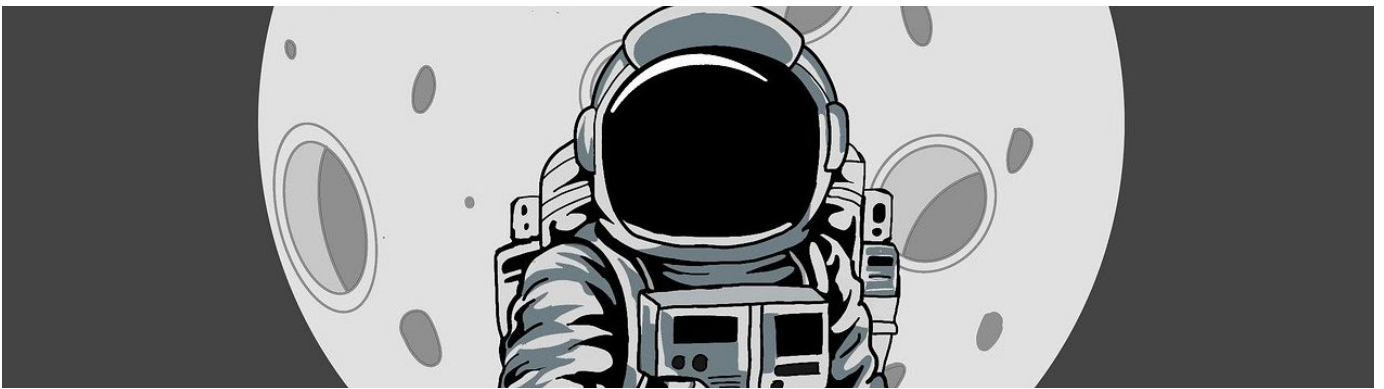
Our Dying Home

Writer:

Moses Tololo, Zambia

Reviewer:

Elizabeth Nafula, Kenya



The title 'Our Dying Home' piques the reader's interest. For most children, home is the safest place for them. The title, therefore, makes them want to know why the home is dying.

I like how the writer introduced the story in class when the teacher said, 'our home is dying' and added, 'our earthly home is dying'.

Tebuho is curious to know what the teacher means, like every child who comes across a new thing.

Many children like Sepo will be happy after the teacher defines a new term. However, when the teacher tells the class there will be floods, severe drought and wildfires, it doesn't sound well to them, and their happiness fades away.

Every child is always eager to learn more about something they aren't familiar with

like Sepo feels that they should go to Mars after the teacher asks them to find out how to save home.

In Tebuho's dream, she is excited to visit Mars, but when the astronaut tells her that it will take two years to get there, the excitement fades away. She feels planet Earth is better than Mars as it is a desert with no oxygen. Tebuho disagrees with the astronaut and insists that the only home is Earth.

The story teaches children not to be too excited about something they're unfamiliar with like Tebuho was excited to get to Mars but found out Earth was better.

Children also learn that home is safe and there is no better place than home.

Our Dying Home is an exciting read for children.



Africa is Home

Writer:

Sinoxolo Odidi Mahlatshana,
South Africa

Reviewer:

Chidiebere Udeokechukwu,
Nigeria

To begin, one should understand that Sinoxolo Mahlatshana's "Africa is Home" outlays the general perception about Africa, which unfortunately attracts profoundly negative affiliations: petulance of poverty, conflicts, systemic violence, ravaged economies and corruption. On the flip side, she remains home to multiple resources, amazing people, youth potential, brilliant writers and social activists. In putting this reality in a more attractive context, it's easy to see that "Africa is the Mother of mankind".

Perhaps, Sinoxolo paints a perfect picture of Africa, having described her as being both brilliantly promising and profoundly impoverished. In explaining clearly, Africa seems much like a queen who never was.

Consider Rhaenys Targaryen, a character in the ongoing hit TV series, House of the Dragon. The first episode's opening scene (Heirs of the Dragon) shows King Jaeherys presiding over a Great Council to declare his successor to the Iron Throne. In the absence of a royal son, two candidates vie for the coveted throne of the Ruler of the Sev-

en Kingdoms: Princess Rhaenys Velaryon, the king's oldest living granddaughter, and Prince Viserys Targaryen, her cousin and Jaeherys oldest male heir. Rhaenys' claim to the throne is weakened by the fact that no woman has ever sat on the Iron Throne, and the lords of Westeros aren't about to let her be the first. And so, Viserys comes out of the meeting victorious, and Rhaenys is dubbed The Queen Who Never Was by her supporters - (<https://tinyurl.com/4c5w3jyr>).

The instance above portrays a near-flawless image of Africa today: promising and yet poor, and seemingly fated never to attain the heights promised by the potentials she holds. But as Sinoxolo would opine in this piece; despite the depressing and negative narratives about Africa, she remains home to positives beyond quantification.

Accordingly, Sinoxolo's work ends on a promising positive note; "Africa connotes more than just a home. It is who we are, and the place for which we feel the deepest affection".



Night Raid

Writer:

Olabode Oluwabukola, Nigeria

Reviewer:

Alice Kasonkomona, Zambia



Night Raid is a story about two rats who end up in trouble.

The first one seems more clever than the other since it was able to judge the right time to go for the adventurous but risky journey out of their 'secure home'. The second rat is more conformed to following the dictates of the clever one. Thus the 'burly dimwit' as he is called in the first paragraph, portrays a picture of not-so-good a companion for such a dangerous night-out. Burly dimwit carelessly made noise, thus alerting the owners of the house. Whatever the case, it looked as though the 'Night Raiders' were lucky as they managed to evade the patrol of their 'landlords'. Hence after the hideout, the feast continued, enjoying the variety of food scattered around the kitchen. It was

a whole banquet of sumptuous kinds from bread crumbs and dinner leftovers that every well-meaning rat craves for.

However, the unfriendly weather of the morning and the open pit accommodating them there-in revealed that the abundance of food they lavished that night was poisoned hence aimed at eliminating the mother mouse and its companions.

I enjoyed reading this story. It helped me understand the life of other creatures, such as rats and thus was made aware of just how risky it is for them to live within houses inhabited by human beings whom it seems are their worst enemies.

Thank you, Olabode for writing a concise but exciting piece.



The Mantra



Writer:

Mathew Daniel, Nigeria

Reviewer:

Fatima Ajida, Zimbabwe

The mantra evokes a pure light emotion when one begins to read it. Matthew Daniel successfully showcases his art through stylistic devices such as personification, metaphors, similes, irony and most importantly, satire. The poet's choice of diction portrays the easy and explicable life of a child. He begins the poem on a casual note by introducing the mantra as jeering children but concludes it by being a lovely home.

Symbolism was significantly reinforced to bring out the message of family and everything connected to it. The poet elegantly inscribes the mantra by displaying it as children who teasingly break into laughter when they look at the protagonist's house filled with flaws. One can imagine this as a house displeasing to the eye. The reader feels pity when the poet describes the child's positive reaction to the jeering.

Maternal love is also appreciated when the mother is conveyed as a helpful adviser. The poet uses similes to explain how strong and lively the family is despite the wrecking house, clearly pointing out a theme of defying odds. Matthew Daniel continuously depicts love, rules and laughter as pillars that keep a home together.

This is evidenced by the symbolism of the house's flaws compared to the father's care. He also highlights the simile by metaphorically liking the father's fixing of the child's manners to that of the fixing of the falling house. The use of stylistic devices was greatly employed.

The poet concludes the poem in a touching style. He skillfully changes the meaning of the mantra by replacing the jeers with a home that the child has sworn to love.



Short Story

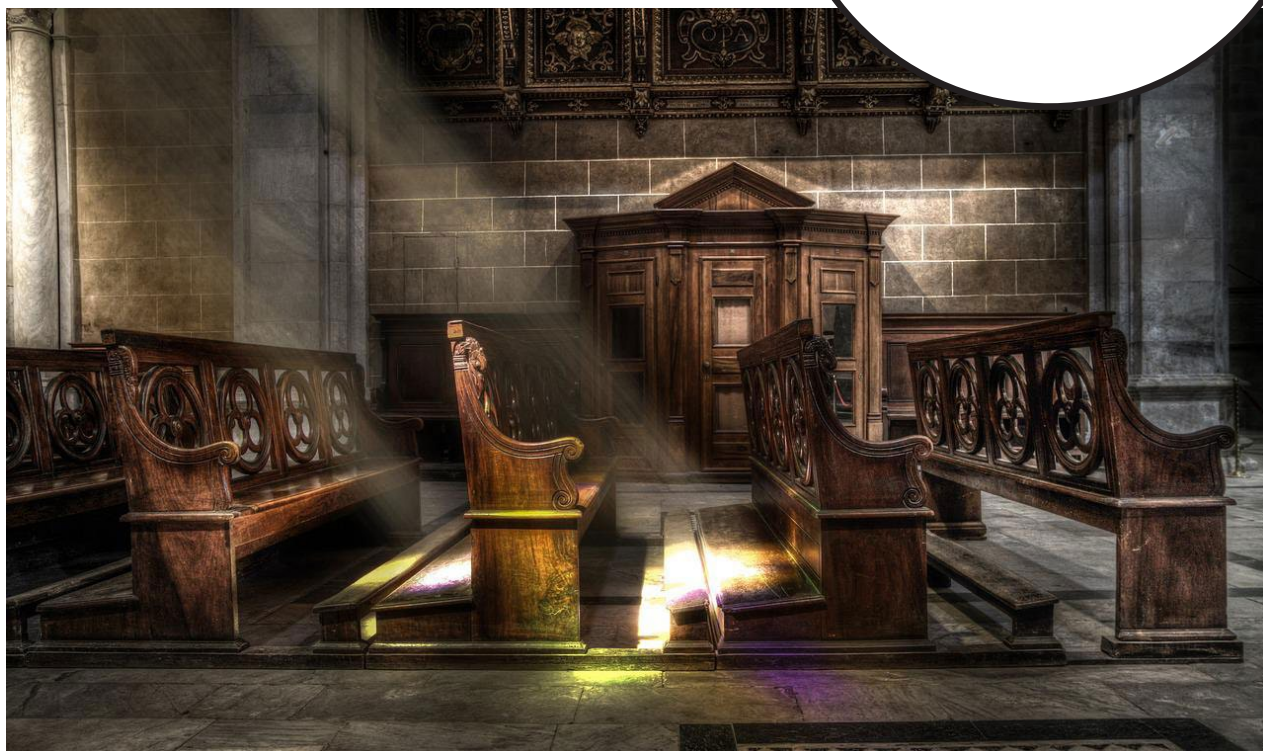
A Prayerful Woman

Writer:

Isiaka A. Kromah, Liberia

Reviewer:

Wadzanai Tadhuvana, Zimbabwe



The story's title was interesting to me, a prayerful woman. What was she praying for? Was it a literal prayerful woman or a figurative one?

I liked what the couple had, and I was shocked that the infidelity happened at a church retreat, the shock, horror and irony. One ought to be retreating from sin, but in this case, he was retreating into sin.

However, I could not shrug off the symbolism of the young woman in the story. Was it a contrast of Oma's previous self with her current desperate and defeated self?

I will sum it up as a pleasant shock!





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