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EDITION

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Growing up, we had that most treasured one toy. It was outside. This toy outside had many thrills and adventures than any video game ever invented.

We would sweat out our little brows climbing trees, skipping rope, racing, football, swimming and all those outdoor games you enjoyed.

Fast-forward to today, just look around you. What's there to smile about?

Dry riverbeds, dusty fields and dry air under the scorching sun. By the human hand, forest paths paved way to streets.

Massive logging, where day in day out, trucks drive out of forests loaded with fresh cut trees. I don't hear of re-planting.

Nobel laureate Prof. Wangari Mathaai once said "If you destroy nature, nature will destroy you!"

Nature and human beings should play the 'rub my back I rub yours'. It's our responsibility to conserve and protect the forests and wildlife and use natural resources responsibly.

We must mind the welfare of the next generation and set a good example from the word go.

Global warming is our punishment for destructive logging, improper disposal of chemicals and plastics.

There is enough for everyone and everybody, if everyone took the responsibility of managing and conserving nature.

Let's celebrate our important dates in style. Plant a tree during your birthday, anniversaries and commemorations.

Imagine of clean flowing streams, green vast forests and plenty of healthy wildlife. Nirvana country it must be! Plant a tree, save a life!

**Wakini Kuria,
Chief Editor,
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THE PHYSIO-PSYCHO-NEURO- ENDOCRINOLOGY OF LOVE: GOOD CHEMISTRY

Edith Osiro Adhiambo, Kenya



Ever wonder why good chemistry is a component of courtship or dating? I mean, why not good mathematics, where good debt scorers date frugal spenders? (BassanioOneSide.) Or why not good social studies where gossip bloggers date paparazzi? (SnoopyNosesOneSide.)

The long of it is that we need CHEMISTRY to love, whether eros, philia, storge, philautia or mania. Love is partly pegged to chemistry; that checklist of “xxx things I love about you”. Those of the Christian faith [like me] assent to God’s authorship of love. In the same breath, we assent to the existence of science to deduce explanations from God’s amazing and powerful creations, like love.

Our bodies are more than cells and tissues that are anatomically linked; there are intricate communication systems between the hairs at the tip of the cranium to the nails at the tip of the toes. These systems consist of nerves and chemicals that physiologists call neurotransmitters. These chemicals produce a diverse chain of reactions which teach the brain to love.

What psychologists postulate in their science has been tried and tested experimentally to conclude that various love stages are linked to various chemicals. Lust, the first stage, is an estrogen-testosterone game, and largely the latter’s. Adolescents, when they have a surge in these hormones, experience human sexuality with an intercourse angle to it. Punishing or ignoring this sexual phase of teenagers’ growth will serve more trouble

than counseling or guiding would avert.

This infatuation or attraction stage is blamed on Dopamine, the body chemical implicated in addiction. Dopamine says “You’re my all/crazy in love/love is blind/if loving you is wrong.” The fight-or-flight adrenalin hormone literally activates the heart to produce testimony to the cliché lines of “can’t sleep/ tongue-tied/sweat at your sight/ belly butterflies/check me out/Bolt heartbeat/love is heaven”. Some quarters suggest that increasing Dopamine levels can boost romance. This, theoretically, can be achieved by eating foods rich in the dopamine-forming protein tyrosine. Pharmacologically speaking, drugs with dopamine-like activity tend to cause side effects like abnormal dreams, confusion, dry mouth and decreased blood pressure which might affect mental acuity or hallucinations. It is safe to say that some people are present with these symptoms when they fall in love.

Did you know that the reason morphine, heroine or codeine (collectively called opioids) work in the human body, is because the body naturally produces its own opioids complete with their own sites of action? This pharmacological fact supports the healing, loving and euphoric properties of endorphins, the human opioids. Dynorphin, enkephalin and leu-enkephalin are three endorphins that leave us elated after hearing, dreaming or being with our laazizi. In Kiswahili, a proverb advises about “that which the heart loves being a drug”. In the case of a broken heart, endorphins and oxytocin can cure that. Tears produce endorphins and relief; trust a woman to confirm that. Now you know why love is analgesic and how an aroma therapeutic bath of lavender spikes endorphins for a romantic feeling.

So what about non-sexual love? Science pins it on oxytocin and vasopressin. Produced on the brain’s pituitary, oxytocin acts on the uterus to expel fetus during labour and stimulates bonding between a lactating baby and mother. It is suggested that hugging, presence of an infant or eye contact boosts oxytocin which drives stage four of love, attachment. Now we see the science in spending time together with one’s beloved, as oxytocin does not cultivate the abandonment habits of reptiles to their young. Rather, oxytocin makes humans, eagles, wolves and prairie voles unique because they choose to stay-attachment, commitment- pinnacles of love.

Vasopressin, also used to adjust the body’s hydration status, is the territorial chemical that defends a loved one. It is higher in males which supports the provider-protector role of men while higher levels of oxytocin support the nurturing role of women.

We are only beginning to grasp the psycho-physio-neuro-endocrinology of love. Isn’t it amazing that emotion might have logic behind it? Therein lays the potential to pharmacologically decipher autism, postpartum depression, emotional impact of parenting or lack thereof, and interpersonal relationships. Have a chemically loving year.

MAMA, ME AND MY GIRL

Meaza AkliluHadera - Ethiopia



I am my mother's first child. I used to think that she barely loved me. She neither spoke to me nor told me how much she loved me. One flabbergasting fact was that she let me do anything without word from her mouth. And whenever I asked why she was stiff in her expression of love toward me, all she did was whimper. There were times I pondered how much pain I may have caused my mother during conception or delivery to warrant her supposed "lack of love" toward me. Only God knows!

All of these thoughts clamored in my head until now. Today I mother a beautiful baby girl. And I believe that I understand better, and have answers to the questions to which I sought answers. I may not know everything, but I definitely understand what motherhood is and how it feels.

My mother was a construction worker. She wanted the best for me, so she handed me over to my grandma while she got busy on site. She was simply protecting me from all the daily labours, hustles, bustles and jostles. She wanted me to grow up in a more familiar neighbourhood filled with love, care, and calmness.

As at the time I was grown and admitted into the university, she didn't show signs of sobriety. I could almost hear myself yell in my heart why the hell is mama not crying? Hell no! She doesn't miss me. Little did I know that she was only putting up a show of confidence in me. Oh, sweet mama.

Then I fell in love. He was my first boyfriend. Still my mom said nothing about him. Her reason: she didn't want to interfere with my decision, and as well, scared that if she said anything contrary, I might not share my ideas another time. And when she freely accommodated my boyfriend in our home during his visit, in spite of side talks, she was only making sure that she was next to me in case of anything bad, and ensuring that she watched every move of his.

Today I am pretty sure that she loves me a lot. I find myself being jealous and over protective of my baby girl; just like mama. I know I will do the same, even when I am not talking or speaking. And I know that someday, too, my girl will grow up to understand this and follow suit.

HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC: SHOULD IT BE A WORK PLACE ISSUE?

Itohan Osadiaye, Nigeria

HIV/AIDS is a dreadful illness that is presenting organizations or the workplace with challenges. According to the International labour organization, “HIV/AIDS is a major threat to the world of work. It is affecting the most productive segment of the labour force, reducing earnings, and imposing huge costs and loss of skills and experience. In addition, HIV/AIDS is affecting fundamental rights at work, particularly with respect to discrimination and stigmatization aimed at workers and people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS”.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a global issue and has eaten deep into the very fabric of every society. The rate at which people are infected with the virus is increasing daily. Aids kills people at the prime of their lives, which are most likely to be the work force of an organization. Due consideration has not been given to tackle this as a work-place issue. Most organizations do not give adequate attention to the issue of HIV/AIDS, particularly here in Nigeria. Should HIV/AIDS be a work-place issue? And if it is, how should it be handled?

Let's take a look at the history and the definition of HIV/AIDS. The first known case of HIV/AIDS was reported in 1981 in the United States of America. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, is a virus that breaks down the immune system of the infected person. The virus, once contracted by the human body, evades the immune system defenses and attacks it, rendering the body defenseless. Following the weakening of the immune system, the body becomes vulnerable to opportunistic infections such as diarrhea, tuberculosis and the

likes. HIV by itself is not an illness but a virus and does not instantly lead to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). It should be noted that HIV takes time before it becomes full blown AIDS. A HIV infected person can live a normal life for several years before he/she develops AIDS. There is usually an incubation period between HIV infection and the onset of AIDS. A drug was actually developed called the anti-retroviral drug, to reduce or suppress the rate at which the infected person is attacked by opportunistic infections.

The emergence and spread of this disease has had a dramatic impact on every facet of life, particularly the work-force. The International Labour Organization (ILO) recognizes HIV/AIDS has a threat to the world of work. The ILO has, therefore, developed a code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work. This includes prevention of the spread of the disease, management and mitigation of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the world of work, care of and support for workers infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, non-discrimination in the case of employment and continuing of work, confidentiality and a whole lot of others.

This code of practice formulated by the ILO was to help organizations tackle the issue of HIV/AIDS in the world of work, but most organizations are not aware neither have they taken cognisance of it.

The human resources are the most valuable assets of any organization. The persons that are most susceptible to the virus are those in the prime of their lives, which happens to be the work force of any organization. HIV/AIDS is already a work-place issue whether organizations recognize it or not. It would be a grave negligence with severe consequences if organizations do not regard HIV/AIDS as a work-place issue. The issue is that organizations do not want to be public about the disease because of fear of tarnishing their image. It should be noted that the improved management of employees will lead to improved performance for organizations. This goes to show that a sound performance of an employee will lead to greater output which of course, leads to an increase in organizational growth and stability. The productivity of an employee depends to a large extent on his/her health, and HIV/AIDS poses a great threat to the health of the employee.

The question that might arise then will be: should an employee be terminated based on his/her HIV status or based on his/her productivity? Agreed, every organization had a purpose in mind before its establishment which was [and still is] to make profit at the highest rate, and anything that seems to thwart on that purpose should be dealt with. An employee knowing his/her HIV status has nothing to do with the company's level of profit, as long as the employee is productive in his assignment. What if the possibility of having infected persons to non-infected persons in the organization is on a ratio of ten to three and the infected ones are the most productive and the best employees the organization has got, will they all be sacked?

As mentioned earlier, HIV infected persons are those in the prime of their lives and which

happens to be the work force. It is also evident that these persons spend most of their lives on their job, thus, it is the responsibility of an organization to take steps to recognize, prevent and tackle this issue alongside the ILO code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work. The fight against prevention, discrimination, stigmatization and a whole lot of others is not only the responsibility of the government, but a collective effort as the disease is also a threat to economic prosperity of a nation which definitely, starts from the organization. The organization should therefore not turn a blind eye to this issue.

Actions should be taken by every organization to combat the spread of the disease by putting in place preventive measures; providing information to employees and educating them about the disease; treatment, care and support should be given to the infected persons; equal rights to basic allowances and treatment with non-infected persons; and also put modalities in place in the area of non-stigmatization and non-discrimination of infected persons.

The need for the management of this disease is crucial because the 21st century organization is a knowledge based organization and the knowledge or skill needed might just reside only in HIV/AIDS infected persons. Infected persons should be allowed to provide their skills, knowledge and ability until when they are no longer able to discharge their duties due to complications arising from opportunistic infections associated with HIV/AIDS. The organization also has the responsibility to keep matters of health confidentially, and give cognisance to the ILO code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work, putting the necessary things in place.



THE STATE OF LOVE IN A MAN'S HEART

Kweku Sarkwa (The Romantic Writer), Ghana



What is love? This has being a big question on the minds of many people including great poets. Love is unconditional, love is not selfish, love is not jealous, love is not painful and sorrowful. So people say. But we forget one thing that always judges us of our guilt. Because we have been hurt once, twice or even countless number of times in relationships that we presumed to be full of everlasting happiness, which later turned out to be a disaster, we develop the mindset that we now want to be with someone who needs us rather than us needing them. Let us have a keen observation at this scenario, where there is a strong relationship between a drug peddler and a drug addict. The seller has in mind that since the buyer is in drastic need of what I'm selling, even if I increase the price of the product, he or she will buy, notwithstanding, and the addict has this thought of slavery to the drug. The seller, as well, is continuously manipulated with threats such as if I don't agree to the buyer's terms, he is going to find another customer.

True love is not selfish because when two people fall in love, there wouldn't be any bargain as to how responsibilities are shared and executed.

When in love, there is this issue that every relationship experiences. Some people call it the theory of two halves. One has his own half and the partner has her own as well. When we love each other, we would concentrate on our half by clearing all kinds of garbage in our lives in order to gain appreciation from the partner. The other half represents our parents, friends, neighbours, siblings, family, society as well as partners. If we truly love that person, we wouldn't interfere in each other's businesses. Love is respectful. It is best appreciable even if we say no, when our partner politely asks of our help in making decisions. When you love someone, you love everything about that person including his decisions. Let us consider a relationship between a dog and its owner. The dog barks and wiggles its tail to show happiness, when it sees its owner coming home, and loves to play with the owner.

The owner feeds it every day, baths it and makes sure it is attractive. They both do their duties because they love to do it not because it is obligatory. Love does not compel but rather accepts every decision that the partner makes. In times when the dog expresses happiness through the signs

it exhibits, the owner can choose to play with it or not without the dog getting disappointed because it knows that the owner doesn't get in the mood all of the time. The dog does not give up but continues to display those actions each and every day upon several rejections because of the strong love it has for its owner. If a person loves a dog but buys a cat, how can the cat become a dog, you can never train a cat to bark. If you want a cat, go for a cat likewise a dog. We can never change someone to suit our expectations as many people lie to themselves that I can change him or her when we get married. It is painful to let go but it is much more painful and unreasonable to hold onto someone who does not best fit our expectations. Love does not feel ashamed since every moment spent together privately or publicly with the partner feels fabulous.

Is love painful? This question remains unanswered. Love is the good impression we create emotionally towards a person internally and externally. Love does not hurt, love does not cause emotional injury, and love does not hate. How can one love and at the same time hate. When one sees something beautiful, he appreciates its beauty, before developing the desire and going for it. The same phenomenon goes on before love is completely established. A man or a woman sees the opposite sex, they appreciate their beauty, develop lust before later growing to form love. So when a relationship destroys, it is because there is no love but only lust. We are responsible for our own sufferings, since we have choices over every decision we take. There are two types of people in this world, those who are dreamers and those who are stalkers. Dreamers live in illusions and believe everything is permanent and can never be changed, but observed while stalkers take advantage of oppor-

tunities and take actions after decisions have been strongly made. A lot of people are in relationships because they believe situations will change, and that is the behaviour of a dreamer, but a stalker has his own choice as to stay and suffer or leave for good.

Since love is not expected to inflict pain, it is better to quit a relationship that can never flourish in any sense. When you love your partner, you would let go for him or her for someone with whom your partner shall find contentment. Imagine that a woman meets a guy for the first time, immediately her hormones are provoked and all she sees is a tall handsome guy who smiles at her. Her friends advise her on the social life of the guy having the possibility of being a drug addict, thief, disrespectful, and abusive but all she can think of is her desire to crave for him. Her parents also advise her not to engage herself much with him, but she ignores them saying it is my life and I choose whoever I please to be with not thinking of the risks since she thinks she sees stars whenever the guy is around her. A man meets a lady for the first time and all he can see is the sparkling eyes of the woman, the long stretching eyelashes and eyelids, slim pointed nose, long waving brown hair, red succulent kissable lips, well positioned and protruding nipples in her blouse, staggering curvy waist, shaking, popping and dropping butt and he thinks he is on top of the world. They both ignore the advice from friends, parents and loved ones because they really think that they are deeply in love. The relationship does not end well and they both regret but cannot go back.

Since true love does not regret, they deceive themselves again with this saying and remain

together. That is not love but lust. A person who is in love is like a person having in possession a magic cupboard, where there are all types of food. Many people come and eat from his house without paying a dime and he does not take anything in return so none of the guests tries to hurt him because there wouldn't be any food available for them even if they dare try. Someone comes and knocks on his door saying she has pizza, so, she will give it to him if and only if he does everything she asks of him. He laughs uncontrollably and tells her he has more than enough and that she can even come and eat from the magic cupboard. This explains how people behave when they are in love. One feels it is best to be nice and kind to the partner only because he loves to do it without expecting to get anything in return and loves to be with the partner since he finds comfort in her, and everything about her is desirable. The guests are like the partners who would never hurt you because they love you and would never let go. Even if they have thousand reasons to leave, they will find just one reason to stay because life is beautiful when we are with the right people.

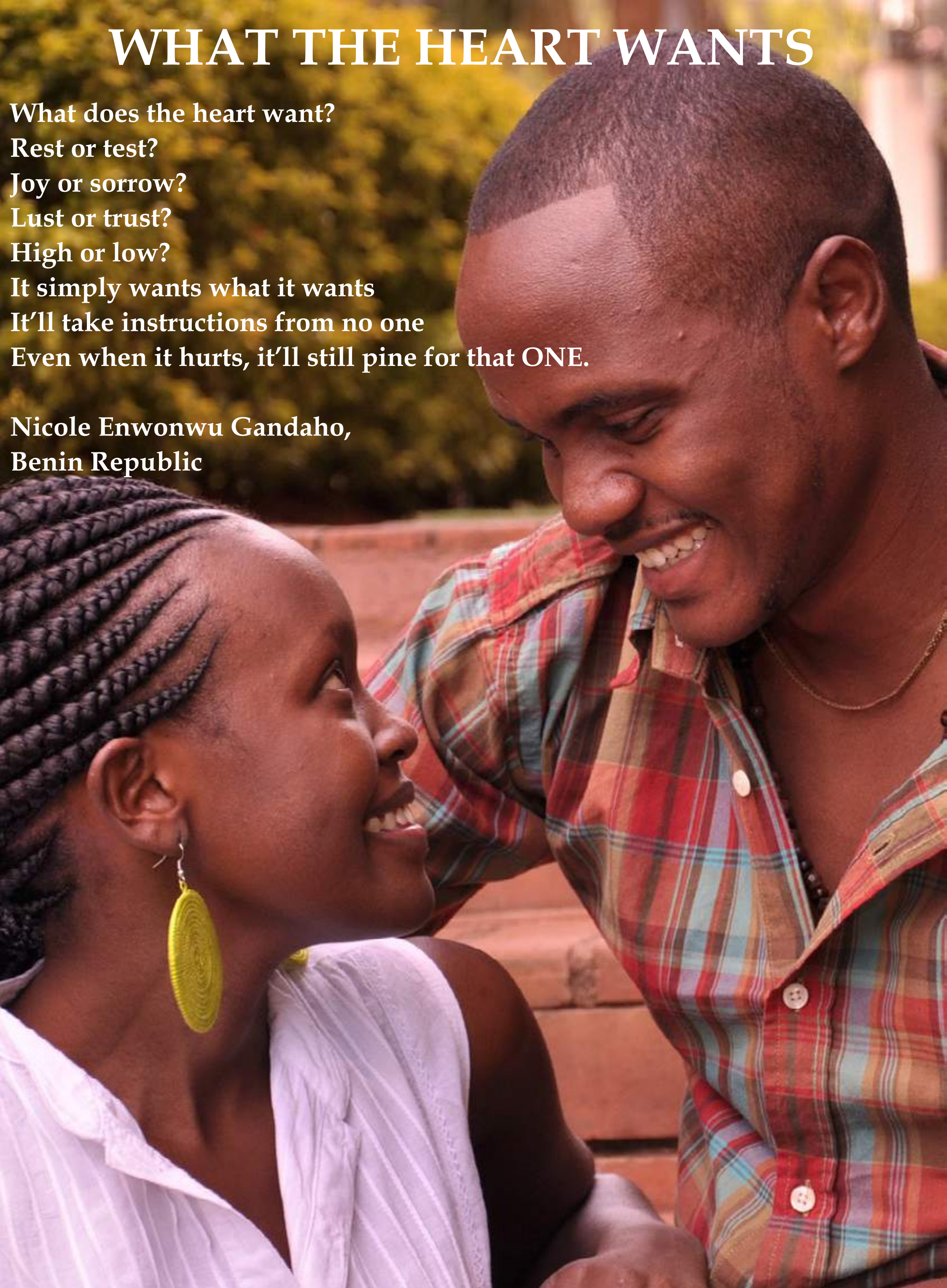
So be with someone who wants to be with you but not someone who has to be with you. That is love in its state of beauty without any misery and mystery.



WHAT THE HEART WANTS

What does the heart want?
Rest or test?
Joy or sorrow?
Lust or trust?
High or low?
It simply wants what it wants
It'll take instructions from no one
Even when it hurts, it'll still pine for that ONE.

Nicole Enwonwu Gandaho,
Benin Republic



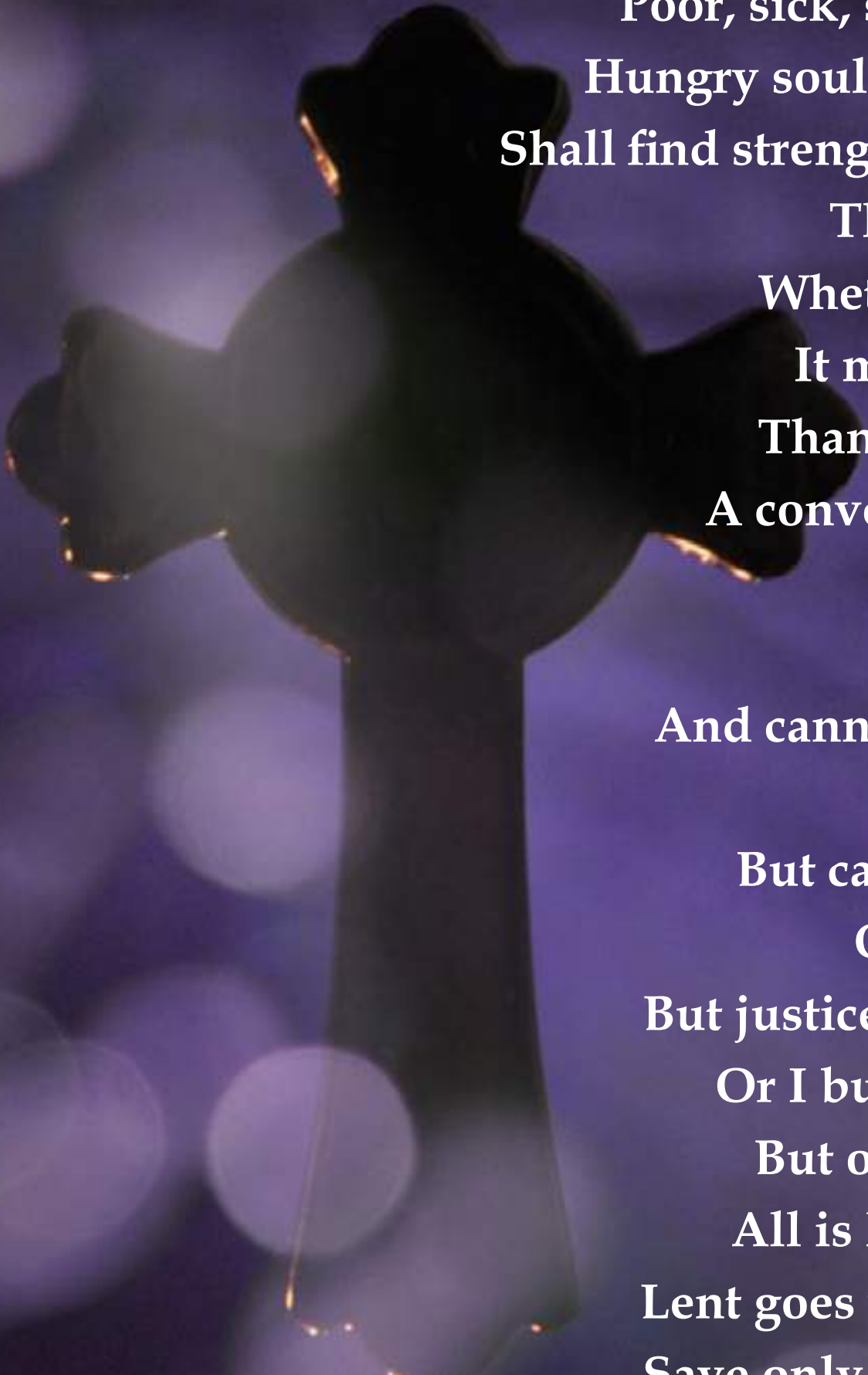
Poetry

To listen closely, not just hear,
To love deeply, not merely care,
To really look, not simply see,
To experience an epiphany,
To seek the truth, remove delusion,
To lift the veil of your illusion,
To resist the urge to conform,
To bend the rules, challenge the norm,
To stand apart from the crowd,
To unabashedly think out loud,
To break the shackles of society,
To be uniquely you, set yourself free,
Ideas and emotions in rhythm, with intensity,
To express thoughts in such a way, is the mark of poetry.

Oghenede Fidelis,
Nigeria



THIS LENT



Where love is wanting
There my heart is waiting
Where food is lacking
There I bed my fasting
Poor, sick, sad, defeated man
Hungry souls eaten by the sun
Shall find strength when I'm done
Thus I live my Lent
Whether little or much
It matters not as such
Than a change of heart
A conversion on my part.

If I fast a plate
And cannot uproot my hate
Or I pray all day
But cannot tame my say
Or I give out sums
But justice bid not welcome
Or I build God a Church
But oppress the wretch
All is loss, all is distress
Lent goes vain, all hopeless.
Save only a change of heart,
A conversion on my part.

Shimbo Pastory,
Tanzania

CRISIS!

Crisis! Crisis! Crisis!

In our homes, school, offices and country;

Drums of war rolled out everywhere;

Voices crying in awe of a quandary.

Crisis! Crisis! Crisis!

Daughters against mothers, sons against fathers;

Employees versus bosses, all eat at each other;

Institutions leave students to ponder;

Left or right, which way to go, they cannot tell.

Crisis! Crisis! Crisis!

The world's in rumble and tumble;

People gagged by the fear of what's next;

Trepid and foreboding, everyone's in a state of perplexity.

Crisis! Crisis! Crisis!

Tales of war, rumble or tumble, I'm at peace;

For in me dwells the Prince of Peace;

Who calls out 'I'll keep in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on me.'

Esho Oluwakemi,

Nigeria

BACHELOR'S PLIGHT

Alone alone, all alone in the dumb night
On the cold bed where the breeze lain still,
Where silence was loud beyond my hearing,
Where sleep blinded every eye of the earth,
Where the communication of dogs
And cocks echoed in a distance,
Where sleep abandoned me before my plights.
I was only in the company of my irritating thoughts
And the beautiful wishes in my heart.

As my mind wandered away, I felt anxiety
Because the man in me yearned for a woman.

A breast to suck, a lip to kiss,
A body to caress, a beauty to adore,
A pleasure to moan, a reason to unleash
My long detained feelings.

But the young night was not nigher to daylight
So that I can go on a search for the love of my own.

But tell me, now that the day is here with me
How can I go on a search when I am a prisoner of doubts and fears?

Wisdom Koffie Kpodo,
Ghana

MR HERDSMAN

Mr Herdsman,
Why are you such a hard-man?
You care no less for another's ground,
Invading farms with your long wand.

Mr Herdsman,
Why are you such a bad-man?
You turned your staff and rods into a gun,
and become a life-taking don.

Mr Herdsman,
Are you not a madman?
For your cows, you went on a killing spree,
You closed your ears to a fellow man's plea,
and caused innocent blood to flow like the red sea.
Juwon,
Nigeria





SAKA DBOSZ JUNIOR

THE PRIDE 3: LOVE, DEATH AND THE LOVER

Anne Stuart wrote in her *Dark Journey: Strangers in the Night*, 'I've always been fascinated with the relationship between love and death. One is the ultimate light, the other is the ultimate darkness and the joining of the two is deliciously terrifying extreme'.

Writing further she said: 'This is a beauty and the beast fantasy taken to the very limit. There is no pulling back from death, no settling down in an apartment with a car garage with the Grim Reaper. In order to love death, you have to be willing to give it all, with no future, no past, nothing but a deep, velvet now. That kind of complete surrender and triumph, can provide the ultimate satisfaction. Small things no longer matter, destiny is in force now and the real world slips away'. For a woman to accept Death as her lover, she must be very brave, selfless and loving. For Death to succumb to human weakness, to a female, he has to be willing to risk everything, as well.

Human emotions are foreign and dangerous. But Death and life are true. For love, life is willing to give everything for the happy ending even as such a union is doomed to be bitter-sweet. But the greatest victories are always so prepared to take a dark ride on life's most fascinating amusement park attraction. Death and its polar opposite, love. And the mesmerizing union the two create.

In *The Dark journey*, we see death always in his dark glasses that hides his bottomless eyes. He was in love with Laura who was sickly. The two met for the first time on a troubled night that he was to take Laura into the other world of darkness.

Death was an agent of the dark world but in love he asked his Lord to give him a short while. His plan was to have the chance to love Laura

They finally met and after the façade Death was identified for what he is. Still Laura was not afraid. She cannot imagine life without Alex her loving Death. She was ready to go with him even to the unknown.

Our conclusion is a strong tie between love and death. Little wonder then that lovers are ever ready to die for their love. And death has a promise for Laura, a healthy life in the next world.

Well, just maybe, Death is a better Lover than life.



Unboxing a Literary Diva

The Untold Story of SBONELO MGILANE

by Sandra Oma Etubiebi

*“Never stop writing. You only get better by practice. Write about everything. Write about everyone. Write well. Write.”
- Sbonelo Mgilane*

She is the crazy type that won't stop studying. Aspiring for the point where she would no longer have to introduce herself because her professional reputation precedes her; she longs for fame.

Her name is Sbonelo Mgilane, a lover of life, wine, and the arts.

Life, wine, and the arts. Those three elements quickly unwrap the many layered intricacies in the personality of Sbonelo, as she takes us into her world of fine wine and the creative academic.

Her love for wine is legendary. With glowing fondness and a naughty smirk she said, “I love my wine. I love discovering new kinds of wine. I enjoy wine while read-

ing, writing, and socializing. I'm not much of a connoisseur, but in five more years, hopefully, that would have changed."

Regardless of her wine loving nature, Sbonelo isn't much of an extrovert. While she enjoys good food and great company, she would rather avoid large crowds. They overwhelm her.

On the professional front, there's a matching glow.

Sbonelo Mgilane is a lecturer of Performing Arts & Production at Creative Arts College, Durban, South Africa. And, as an emerging frontline diva, Sbonelo in collaboration with her partner founded the Durban Women Playwrights DWP focused on developing female playwrights around the city of Durban to make up for the glaring shortage of women in the industry.

She has done a lot of work on the more technical side of theatre; stage management, community theatre work and writing. At the moment of her interview, Sbonelo was preparing for a production piece where she was the stage manager.

She tells us, that she is focused on amassing experience in her field and producing



*"Let us continue to tell our stories
in the most honest ways possible,
regardless of the different forms we use."*

- Sbonelo Mgilane, South Africa



work that matters. This diva regards a true writer's life as one that worries only about delivering works of quality.

When asked how this studious scholastic mentality began, we unboxed another layer from her history:

Sbonelo grew up with strict parents who held high regard for education, and that quickly distilled into a literary culture for young Sbonelo.

She wanted more books than toys. They gave her exactly that. It was in those moments that she discovered the joys of reading, and developed an unquenchable thirst for learning about the richness of diverse subjects.

"I have never been cool or popular. One would call me a bit of a nerd because when you read a lot, you tend to know quite a bit."

Her family enjoyed her scholastic personality, and Sbonelo was encouraged never to give it up.

Sbonelo Mgilane has grown to become a creative academic who applies her robust knowledge and skills to solve real life problems.

"I would like to inspire others to follow this path as well; a lot of people have so much to share with the world and it is through writing that such stories can reach audiences."

Surely, being a lecturer has its perks for our fine diva. In her own words, "It's a great feeling knowing, that I always have an audience for the work I produce. Whether it's material I author for my students, or readings we host with other playwrights at the Durban Women Playwrights, it is a great feeling."

In 2017, Sbonelo Mgilane authored plays selected for reading at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, as well as during Durban Women Playwrights' events, and also published in the Writers Space Africa Magazine.

When we dug deeper to unbox some of the sparks to her creative edge;

We found something dark...

Sbonelo confessed.

She struggles with depression.

There are times it would, like major chronic illnesses, seemingly cripple her.

Surprisingly, she is often most creative at these times. “I can’t understand why?” She admitted.

“Writing is something that’s very important to me because, like for some people, it has saved me at the darkest times in my life. It’s something I do to escape, I do when I’m inspired, and also when I need to document and archive certain information.”

“I get most of my ideas at 3am. So, I write because I have something to get off my chest. As a person who journals a lot, creative writing is like me journaling on someone else’s behalf. Those who have met me will tell you how animated I get when recalling even the most mundane events, from doing impersonations to weaving a story in a way that makes you feel like you were present. I try to do the same with my writing.”

Her parting words for other writers: “Never stop writing. You only get better by practice. Write about everything. Write about everyone. Write well. Write.”

This study-crazy, fine wine loving, depression overcoming, and unstoppable creative isn’t really sure how she gets things done –even though she does a lot! She finds the push every day to go through her many to-do lists consciously clutching on her stress-inhaler. But, she never stops. She doesn’t intend to –until she gets to that point where she no longer needs an introduction.

Her name is
Sbonelo Mgilane.





It Might Have Been

Joyce Nawiri, Kenya

I suddenly wake up to their voices, an argument in full swing. Mama is speaking in a crescendo and not even the thick solid beige walls can mask their ugly fight. It's been eleven months now and I know I should have gotten used to it, but I'm doing such a poor job at adjusting. I sit at the right corner of my bed with my knees to my chest and my hands tightly covering my ears.

A few minutes after, silence reigns, before it is suddenly rent by the sound of shattering glass. It only gets at this point when Mama is at the end of her rope. I can tell what is about to follow next. Papa will furiously storm out of the house to seek solace in a brothel while Mama will find sanctuary in puffs of weed and glasses of whiskey. Then she will break down in bitter sobs. This has become the anthem of my childhood days in this cold mansion. When Mama begins to breakdown uncontrollably, I get out of bed and sit on the cold tiled floor under my bedroom window with my rugged doll in my arms. Her name is Helena and she's my only companion during such dark moments.

The sound of the rain; now falling in thick, dark and opaque sheets drowns Mama's cries. It's quite a relief because my heart is filled with rich agony to hear her cry all alone. I cannot go and comfort her no matter how badly I want to, because she'll just scold me or chase me

away or hit me. Of late, this is who she's left of; an irascible woman, but I understand her. For many months now, their marriage candle has burnt out and what is left of it is a lonely woman and a man that feels trapped in his marriage.

The rains almost immediately stop after Mama stops crying. Meanwhile I pass out on the floor. The following morning I am woken up by the amber rays slanting through my window. Outside the sun is glowing like a shy virgin. I slowly sneak into their bedroom which is countable steps away from mine. Inside the silky lurid red duvet is Mama deep in slumber. How peaceful she looks in her sleep! The only messy thing on her beautiful pawpaw-toned face is her mascara which has fallen below her eyes. I wipe it off with the end of my sweater before kissing her lightly on the forehead. I want to wake her up and remind her it's her birthday but during these extraordinary months, this is the most peaceful she's been. Birthday can wait.

But that's not the only thing that has brought me here. I have a throbbing headache. I'm looking for the bottle of her turquoise pills that she keeps on her dressing table. She takes them for her headaches. So I scramble around the glamorous surface, among the designer make up collection and jewelry until I find it. Inside, there are a couple of them, six maybe seven. I tiptoe out of the room to get drinking water in the kitchen. When I take them, they're tasteless which makes them easier to swallow. I know an adult should be administering my medication but during these gnarly months they have forgotten that I exist. I cannot remember the last time I had a home cooked meal. Since mum stopped cooking, I order take outs and have lonely supper on the huge dining table. Daddy no longer drives me to or picks me up from school so I take the bus. Both of them even forgot my birthday. I turned eight this year on March the nineteenth. Not long after, I begin to feel drowsy so I go back to sleep. I'll have breakfast when I wake up. Maybe mum will wake up before me with a hangover and reach out for her drugs, only to find the bottle of her favorite pills; empty in the dustbin. She may remember that she wasn't the last person who took them and then her instincts will push her to check up on me.

Or maybe dad will come back home for mum's birthday and he'll come to wake me up so that, together, we can go sing for mum.

Whichever it is, they'll find me warmly tucked in my duvet only to discover that I went to sleep never to wake up again.

THE PROMISE

Kimberly Chirodzero, Zimbabwe



May 15, 2014

Tina settled into the chair the young waitress had shown her to. She was flustered because she was alone but this was what she had promised Simba. “Excuse me, is this seat taken?” a strange new voice asked. Tina looked up to find a fairly handsome Eastern European young man in a t-shirt and jeans smiling down at her with his dark grey eyes. She opened her mouth to tell him to leave then realized all other seats in the restaurant had been taken. Simba wasn’t coming anyway so she shrugged. “You may take the seat if you like,” she replied absently. “I’m Amir Hassan,” the stranger said as he sat. “Tinashe Masuwo,” Tina replied wishing he would just stop talking.

“Are you here to see the play too?” Amir asked, seemingly unaware of Tina’s disinterest. “I promised someone I would come for the play every year,” she said. Amir opened his mouth to say something else but Tina held up a hand. “Please, I really just want quiet,” she snapped. Amir frowned. “Why are you so sad?” he asked.

Tina turned to face him fully, unaware of the vision she made in her sweetheart red dress with her braids piled on top of her head into a neat bun. She did not notice how Amir looked appreciatively at her. “I am sad because you are sitting there, in his chair but you are not Simba and all I want is him to be here not you,” she told Amir, despair ringing in every syllable.

May 15, 2015

Tina was nursing her second drink when Amir walked up to her table. “Hello, Tina. How has your year been?” Amir asked as if they were old friends. Tina groaned and covered her face with her hands. “Amir, is it? There are other free chairs,” she said indicating several vacant seats although they were filling up quickly. “I like this one. I grew attached last time.” With that Amir sat down and smiled at her. Tina noticed grudgingly that he became more handsome when he smiled. He talked until the play started although Tina made it obvious she wanted him to keep quiet. She answered his probing questions with monosyllables. Tina was relieved when the play finally started because Amir seemed as enraptured with the play as much as she was.

May 15, 2016

“I got you a drink, Tina,” Amir announced happily as he sat down at Tina’s table. “For God’s sake Amir, can’t you just skip the play at least once?” Tina grumbled, but her hostility was considerably less this year. Amir seemed to pick up on this and beamed. “Well, if you let me see you any other day besides May 15, I might finally give you one year at this table alone,” he replied. Tina rolled her eyes at him but said nothing. Amir kept up the conversation. “So Simba still not showing up?” he asked. Tina frowned, Amir had never asked about Simba before. “We don’t talk about him,” she said quietly. Amir must have seen something dangerous in her eyes because he didn’t push the matter.

May 15, 2017

“Hello, Amir,” Tina said dejectedly as Amir took the seat across from her. “This is progress, you greeted me first today.” Amir was overjoyed. “It doesn’t mean anything,” Tina said but she felt oddly excited to see him. To her surprise, Amir looked hurt. He sat down and said nothing. Tina stole a look at him and realised he was just staring at his drink. “You are quiet today,” she said. “Maybe I’m finally obeying your wishes,” he replied. After a palpable silence Tina blurted, “Simba was my fiancé. He died in September 2013. We used to come here every May 15. In the hospital before he died, he made me promise I would continue our tradition.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know,” Amir said, understanding lighting his eyes. “I think he knew that I would shut myself off from the world and he hoped May 15 would help me stay social or something. To be honest that’s exactly what I did but then I came here that first year and there you were. I hadn’t really talked to anyone in months,” Tina confessed. “Maybe this is the wrong time to ask, but will you go out with me on a day that isn’t May 15?” Amir asked. Tina laughed nervously. “I think I’m ready now, thank you for not giving up on me.” She smiled at Amir for the first time.





We are now accepting submissions from African writers for the April edition of Writers Space Africa.

Published every month, Writers Space Africa is an international literary magazine, which features rich diversity of writings from African writers to a global audience. The theme for April edition is EASTER.

Please submit either of the following

Articles/Essays - 1,000 words

Drama - 1,000 words

Flash Fiction - 50 words

Poetry - 1 poem, maximum of 14 lines

Short Stories - 500 words

Please note the following

1. Due to the number of entries we receive only selected authors will be published.
2. Your work must be neatly typed and uploaded in MS Word format only. Remember to edit your work. We are allergic to unedited works although we will edit all selected entries.
3. Your work must not have been published anywhere and please submit in one genre only.
4. Author retains copyright.
5. Some selected published works will be featured on our website.
6. Deadline is March 12, 2018.
7. Please visit www.writersspace.net to submit your entry or mail to publish@writersspace.net

