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WWSWA



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# EDITORIAL

Ghosts are alive in Africa. Between the hue on our dark bodies and this Dark Continent, ghosts must really love it here. If you don't believe me, ask Jacobs who have begun to see shadows without bodies. Or is Masetlane the only one who hears voices when alone?

This edition brings a dark serving with dazzling twists – if you miss them, you'll bite yourself! From epic battles between ghost and host, undercover ghost-worker miracles, to the ghost wearing your blue kimono; this ghosting phenomenon is a rich African tales' heredity. And to know if you're truly brave, check your pulse while reading Herbstein's incredible Last Stop. OMG!

I take solace in Nabilah Usman's interview – phew! Someone turned on the lights! And yes, whether you missed WSA last edition or not, check the WSA reviews – they are a priceless literary education.

So, let me know how fast your pulse raced through this edition, and which of all our amazing writers' entries made your skin crawl the most.

Enjoy.

*Sandra Oma Etubiebi,*  
*Chief Editor,*  
WSA

# FLASH FICTION



# HAUNTED

Bildad Makori – Kenya



“Kamau listen. Promise me that you’ll protect Achieng at all cost.” Kamau assured the old mzee that he would do exactly that and with this, Martin put on a smile. At that moment, Achieng walked in and joined them. After talking and laughing for hours, it was time for visitors to leave hence the two bid him goodbye. Little did they know that that would be the last goodbye!

Later in the night, Kamau received a phone call from the hospital that Martin was dead! He remained silent till morning when he eventually informed Achieng. There and then, Achieng collapsed!

Achieng was rushed to a hospital, tested and taken to a delivery ward! “Sir, your wife needs to deliver the baby right now in order to save both lives. We will perform a Caesarean Section immediately! Please wait here,” instructed one of the nurses that took Achieng in.

3 hours since, Kamau was just waiting. Moving not an inch. Shortly after, the nurse returned asking him to follow her. Kamau was lead to a window pane where he saw Achieng. A doctor then came. “Kamau,” he said. “Your wife is in a critical condition. We are only able to save one life. Whom do you choose? Wife or child?” Oh my! Kamau was confused more than ever!

“Save the child!” he said. The doctor returned and immediately, it dawned on Kamau that he should have chosen Achieng since he vowed to protect her at all cost! But, it was too late! Kamau has never been in peace ever since. He cries and wails remembering the vow he made. The choice he made torments him. It’s as if Achieng’s dad, Martin, is haunting him as he failed to fulfil his vow! Poor Kamau.



# HUNTING THE GHOST I CREATED

**Mbah Kingsley Tekum – Cameroon**

Like a knife knifed into one's stomach, conspicuous in the oozing of blood, so the thought had gotten its way through me and oozed out my courage for living, when his finger pointed plump at me, with an austere yet encouraging look on his face, he firmly uttered; "king, put up a sketch for the program". Dumbstruck by those words, as the task was a prime experience to me; I could only affix myself to the thought of impossibility. So I endorsed the task unto a third party commendable in such a field.

Getting to the heel of the program, seeking attention for a sketch to be written by this laudable figure but countered by excuses, my expectation was cut-off; I was left bemused as one up the creek without a paddle. In aloneness and incapacitated with no one to turn to except from within, was the necessity to give vivacity to my ghost-courage to take on the self-judged irksome and daunting task. The knockback on my expectation helped empower me to hunt the thought that I'd allowed to so pierce me.

In isolation remembered I; the affixing of my heart unto my creator, my hands on-the-go to put in black and white contents worthy of a sketch. Like a fountain so came forth ideas springing from mind unto paper, coining an eye-catching and ready to act sketch. Beheld by many, applauded in acting and edifying for living it came to be. Impossibility was only a ghost I'd feared and created. I can only look rearward to see how far I have gone hunting the ghost that haunted my abilities; and I can only say there is more in black and white to be seen on the horizon.





# TO TELL A DREAM FROM REALITY

Tochukwu Eze - Nigeria

It just stood there, annoyingly still. I was all the way at the other end of my old bed. My knees rounded by shivering arms; movement restricted by overflowing abada. I was alone in the hut that night; papa had gone to sell in the next village. He had to go or he wouldn't afford my herbs which I needed now more than ever. My illness was taking a new turn.

I was born weak, to a dying woman, and a man who was about to lose everyone he cared about. My mother, as I was told, only held on till she heard my first cry - she gave up a few seconds after. Papa called me 'Omandi' which translates 'He won't be'. And here I was, nine years later with a question on my mind.

It took about five minutes of staring but we both finally understood that there was nothing to be afraid of, so I came forward. I was curious and didn't really have much to lose. Every step brought me closer and really closer till I stretched forth my hand and it did the same. When the tips of our fingers made contact, behold, it was mama.

Sometime in the past, I had tried to pinch myself to check if I was dreaming. It felt normal, till I whipped out my pintle and began to pee only to wake up; I was bedwetting again. I couldn't remember if I had felt the pinch or not but nothing happened that was abnormal in that realm. So as I lay with the urge to fall asleep, knowing I would wake up unsure if mama was a dream or a ghost; I wished I knew how to tell a dream from reality.



# LAST STOP

## Manu Herbstein - Ghana

I took the last seat in a battered overloaded minibus. Exhausted, I dozed. It was dark when the driver's call woke me. "Next stop Asamankurom." "Ghost town," I thought. "Still 25 km to go."

I turned to the woman beside me to ask a question. She had taken her head off and put it on her lap. So had all the other passengers.

I called out, "Driver!"

His head swivelled to face me. "Yes?" the head asked.

Alarmed, I called, "Take care. Watch the road or we'll have an accident."

"Too late," he replied. "We had the accident yesterday."

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*Manu Herbstein is 83. He has dual South African and Ghanaian citizenship and lives in Ghana. His story Rosie was a Dawdler won the 2018 African Writers Award for Children's Literature.*

*Find out more about him and his writing at [www.manuherbstein.com](http://www.manuherbstein.com).*

**“Man is the only creature that has been formed with a body, soul and spirit. Though, man searches for a resting place for his soul, taking solace in things that now serve as his gods, yet he lives as a ghost in the flesh until he takes the route that leads to his source: the immortal God.”**

- Oluwagbenga Ayomide Ruth, Nigeria



**POETRY**

# GHOST

I  
Am scared  
Terrified of my shadow  
For it flickers and waves  
I am terror stricken at any sound  
Movement spooks the hell out of me  
Why do I hear voices while I'm alone?  
I am sweating yet feeling a cold sensation, chills  
Goosebumps erect like chicken pox on my face, palms  
Can it be daylight already, before mine eyes develop tapetum lucidum  
a chronic headache bangs like a penal beating side to side  
I am in a small boxed room that feels like a desert, nowhere  
Why does it seem like everything is alive yet rejecting me  
I see shadows mocking and reaching out to me  
Feeding from my nerves like vultures  
Glutting my eyeballs out, I can't shut them  
I stink like a rotten rat  
And then from behind  
A deep voice laughs  
A tall dark disfigured thing  
Every tear I shed he grins  
Feeding from my terror  
Haunted by my own fears

Neo Masetlane (Space-Poet)  
Botswana



# IN QUEST FOR ANSWERS

In the empty rooms,  
corridor and stairways  
Of what was once a home  
Her spirit looms around;  
In search for some answers  
and maybe rest in peace at last  
Why her? Why?  
And light, wasn't bright enough  
to unveil the evil  
Of them who claimed her life  
Light robbed her existence  
As she was left to die  
in her living room  
that October afternoon  
Now, in darkness  
she has found hope  
Because the living  
are afraid of the darkness  
And she was too,  
but maybe darkness  
is now better than the light  
So in the dark corners,  
she watches and waits  
Like a howling wind,  
she hums as she waits  
for her next visitor  
Someone has to answer her  
or she will not rest in peace

Wanangwa Mwale  
Zambia

# THE BLOOD ON HAUNTED BEDS

Didn't she leave?  
Didn't they bury her?  
Did he see her again?

Every night she slithered into his room  
Leaving behind a trail of crimson  
He always became a statue; motionless

On Friday he longed for his lost liberty  
He dashed out of his single rented shanty  
Even the crickets were silent on that night  
On the street, a bulb sighed weak light  
As if in perfect harmony with his haunted self

His trembling legs took him to the clergywoman  
She performed a ritual and offered petitions  
And her ghost left him, to rest where it belonged

Suddenly he wakes up, feeling numb  
Beddings wet with blood.  
Was it his or hers, that painted her coffin?

Benny Wanjohi,  
Kenya



# GHOST

All eyes on me  
I am a queen!  
But the registered shock  
Fear has seized them  
Am I that toxic?  
Or is it that I am dangerous?

I never knew I was special  
Till I discovered the hidden power in me still unexplored  
I move through objects  
My sight is perfect but my speech is silent  
My sense of touch seems paralyzed  
Am I a curse?

I see them mourning day and night  
With my picture in their hearts, engraved  
And the white grave like structure outside our house  
That says in peace should my name, or is it body?, rest  
Is it true that my empty vessel is already buried?  
And that am the walking nothing?

Am I like the smoke, only seen?  
Or like the wind, felt but intangible?  
Am I the fierce fire, that requires a respectable distance?  
Or am I the rumor that move from mouth to ear,  
without the assurance of the truth?  
Am I that spirit that knows not  
the acceptance of the truth, and knows not rest?  
Is it true that I am now a ghost?

©Daisesta  
Esther Andaye  
Kenya



# REVISITATION

Ever since my father's spirit crawled out of him into the woods where my eyes cannot reach, I have begun to see shadows without bodies moving around the walls of my darkest room, and light has become the snippet of a deep dirge.

I don't know how to describe my father's death, but I know it wore rain, thunder and lightning while the sun drowned in a Westerner's land.

My father still comes to wear his body and visit me at night. He paints different shades of fright on my fragile face and pours libation of silence on the soil I run through. He litters the house with the flowers used to adorn his grave. He scatters the rooms and searches for what he will never find.

My love for dreams is being defeated by my nightmares because that's where I get to touch my father's ghost, prostrate before him like I used to do when he was here, and tell him to let his soul retire and let his body rest. But my father who once told me home is not home but a market place meant for skins and bones now opens his mouth to tell me there is no place like home.

My father's ghost made promises of settlement. I framed them and hang them on the wall on windy days. But every night, I still find a rose flower planted by my window side with no fingerprints there.

Temidayo Opeyemi Jacob  
Nigeria

# SCREAMING SILENCE

Woke to a familiar dread  
Unknown particulars on my head  
I would decipher if the coding construed

Each paused moment,  
Floods with unending torment  
Is it bad luck or my endowment?

Battle between ghost and host  
Confusion all that I can boast  
From memories like charred roast

My salvage attempts thwarted  
For my mind's flooded by thoughts  
and my soul preyed by warts.

This soul-search is daunting  
I'm I just but ghoulish hunting?  
Or fading into self-ghost haunting?

If only my inner spoke,  
Or out of my trance I was poke,  
Maybe to paralysis I will not be spook.

My prayer as I age  
To face my fears with rage  
And take each day as a new page.

Oumo Bathsheba Kemunto  
Kenya

# BREAK THROUGH THE NIGHT ON THE STAGE

My sister says, to be happy  
you definitely need to be joyful -  
but she was naked  
and scarred  
with poetry -  
when she says those words  
I tell her  
this is poetry, not nightmares.  
she says  
I didn't feel her  
where I was standing.  
She haunts the stage and chants my words.

Nosakhare Collins  
Nigeria

# GHOST WEARING YOUR BLUE KIMONO

(for Tendai Rinos Mwanaka)

I find you downstream floating on your back.

I touch your arm but you don't move. You don't stay afloat for long for some reason. I tinkered with the stars like I was God. Until everything was the horrible, awful knowledge of a tremor. We're old now. You don't love me anymore. You said that I was obsessed with you. I woke up with a starling in my mouth.

I saw a woman, her throat was blue, her soul a creature. I found her in a cave in the darkness, a wavelength on a mission, her neck a sagging-mournful-ragged-winding-down of an ohm. I cry for soothing help from behind the mountain.

You're a bleak executive. Your veins are a parliament in which I hide my smile. We're normal people searching for this sense of loss. I think of photographs from childhood. You bore me now with your stories. Your perfect legs, the spell in your eyes. You're winter in museums and galleries. Warm hand in my own.

And here are my hands with their warm tingling fingers and filled with the joie de vivre of youth. People get tired, get lost, get loved or not.

People leave or get left. People move on.

Abigail George  
South Africa

# A HAUNTING OF LIFE

A child cries from the depths of a latrine,  
Chokes on blood in the excreta ravine.

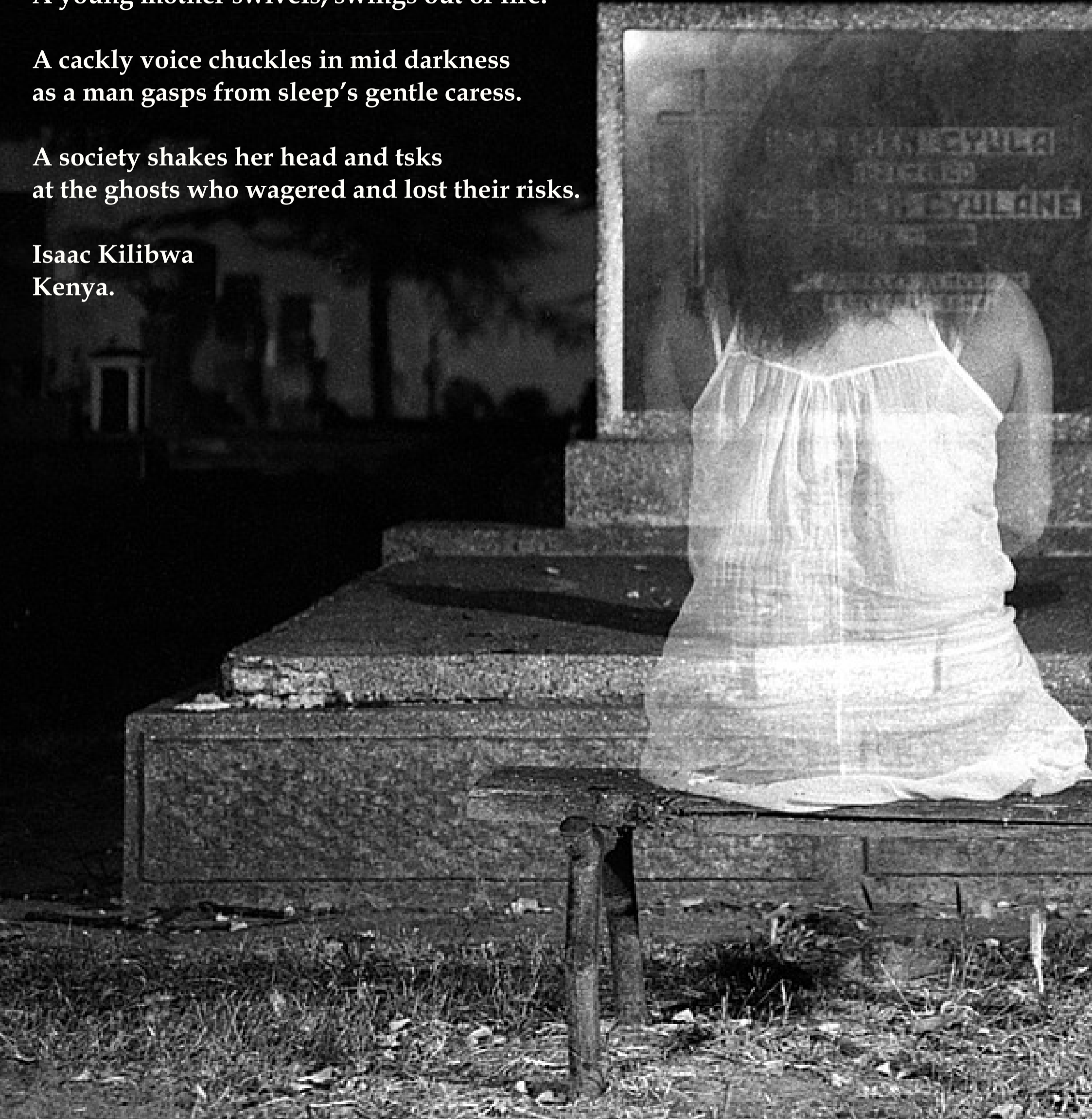
Selfish, she devours her mother's goals,  
Blunt gums gnawing on her uterine walls.

A black rope avails an end to the strife,  
A young mother swivels, swings out of life.

A cackly voice chuckles in mid darkness  
as a man gasps from sleep's gentle caress.

A society shakes her head and tsks  
at the ghosts who wagered and lost their risks.

Isaac Kilibwa  
Kenya.



# THE DEAD'S PLEA

Tell me I plead! Tell me!!  
How loud,  
Can the ghosts of our slain heroes scream?  
How hard,  
Can this immortal company nudge the survivors of war?  
Exactly what measure of pain would be sufficient?  
To be noticed.

Tell me I plead! Tell me!!  
Scream out loud  
See 20: 20 across the land of the living  
Hear at the highest spectra of sound  
Cry if you please  
The earth is too numb  
To be alive.

Akinmayowa Adedoyin Shobo  
Nigeria

# THE WANDERING DEAD

At some point in our lives  
we all become ghosts;  
We wake up one day,  
stare into the mirror  
and realize we no longer  
recognize our reflection.

We sit in a room  
filled with lots of people  
yet somehow feel all alone;  
invisible, unnoticed.

We spend our days  
walking the earth  
like a wandering dead,  
Alive yet soulless;  
Broken, lifeless.

Indeed, there are ghosts  
walking amongst us.  
Living and dinning with us.  
It may be your best friend,  
It may be you.

Praise Uyioghosa Osawaru  
(Wordsmithpraise)  
Nigeria

A woman with her hair styled up, wearing a long, flowing blue dress with intricate patterns, stands on a wooden bridge. The bridge has a curved railing and is set in a forest with tall, thin trees. The lighting is soft and ethereal, with a slight glow around the woman. The overall mood is serene and somewhat mysterious.

# BEAUTIFUL

I've never been as beautiful as tomorrow.  
When time stops to breath,  
And there is no longer a day to cease

When my body grows beautifully cold,  
And no air leaves my lungs.  
When my hands can no longer hold,  
and today withholds its pangs.

When my ears hear neither peace nor war,  
Nor any sound heard before.  
When eyes can no longer view,  
And eyeballs turned away from you.

When hope is a still born child,  
No longer gasping for breath in the wild.  
My skin in perfect crisp.  
Not present. just like this.

But fret not in all these things,  
You will be surprised to see me shine brightest deceased.

Rehema kasanga  
Zambia



# A DARK WAY TO FIND HEAVEN

A man walked  
Into his room, met his wife  
Hands down, waist high.

Another man behind,  
Thrusting, moaning as loud  
As their voices could go.

He grabbed a stool  
& threw it at them, the moan  
Only grew louder.

He screamed but couldn't hear himself.

He reached for them, his hands went past.  
Like tiny lights through  
A dark tunnel.

Then he turned towards the mirror  
& saw his body, crushed  
& broken on a highway, into  
Flesh, blood & bones.

Michael Ace  
Nigeria

# WITHOUT YOU

I'd try to forge some courage  
Sharpen some blunt words  
To calmly ease my sorrowful soul  
Slay the excruciating pain creeping in  
Find peace of mind to sleep through the night  
But the thoughts of you keep me awake  
Haunted by the sweet memories of us two  
Memories I won't share with you no more  
Now, only docile laughter emanates from me  
For fear that I might forever lose you  
In the memory amidst trying to let go  
Of the unforeseen past I choose not to tame  
I'd gladly accept any dreadful challenge  
To preserve the fire, you lit inside of me  
I'd go through hell just to prove to the world  
Prove how cold the world is without you  
That it lacks meaning without your presence  
I'd bring you back if I had a chance  
Cause I still feel you breaking the silence  
In the shadows of the light trying to reach out  
To me as you constantly call out my name  
For our bond is an unbreakable one  
Yet all I get is ultimate heartache  
When I realize that am all alone, without you.

Fantone Mdala  
Malawi

# MY LAST LETTER [GONE]

I hear your voice;  
Chatting.

I hear your footsteps;  
Coming.

I feel your touch;  
Engaging.

I feel your pain;  
Writhing.

I hear your cries;  
Disturbing.

Your pleas;  
In vain.

Blood stained;  
Choked up.

Your soul;  
Leaving.

Your spirit;  
Looming.

GONE.

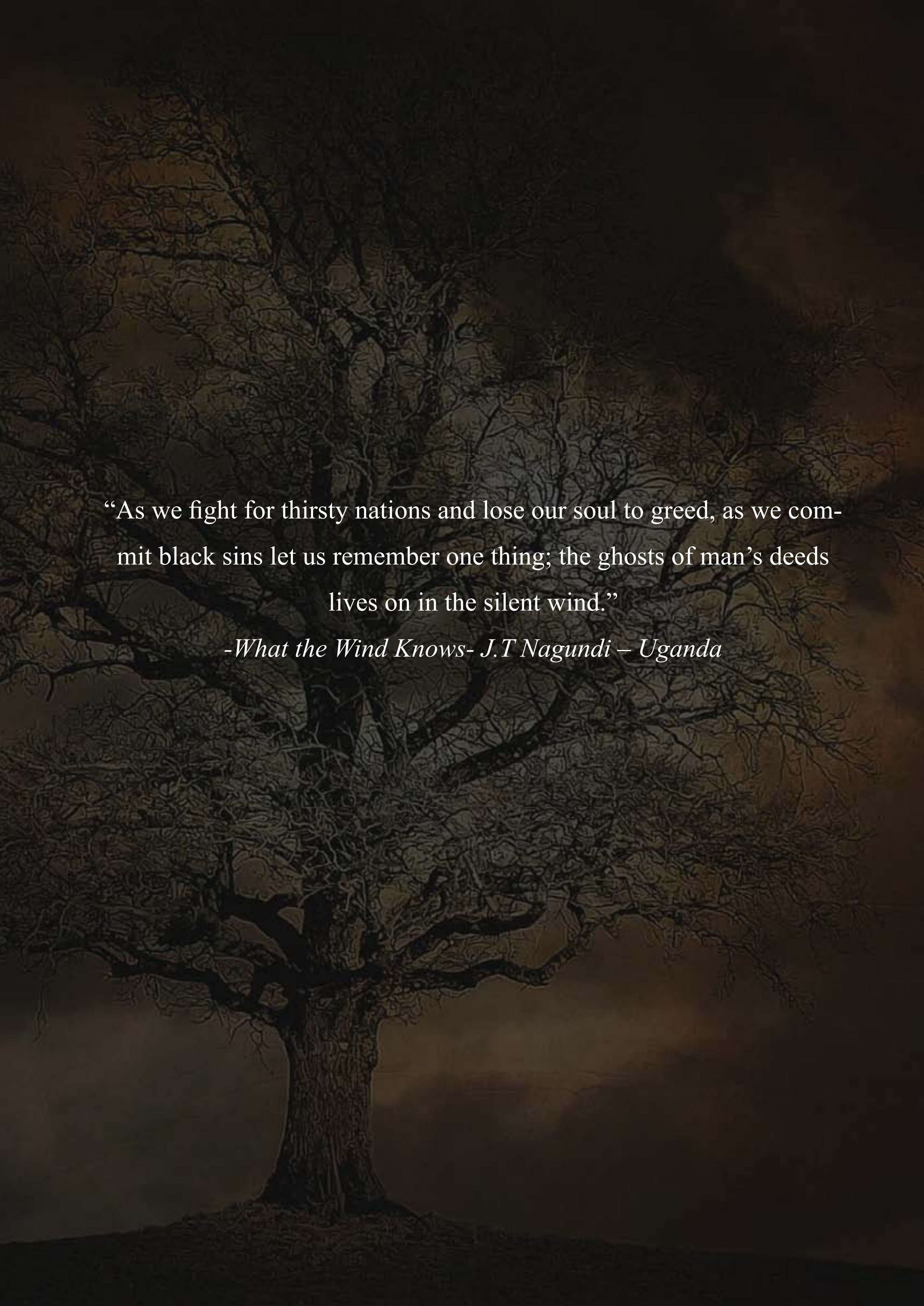
Charlotte Akello  
Uganda

# WHO DID IT

My unfinished works are done  
Neatly behind my back  
Who came and did it?  
Swiftly I left my room scattered  
Now it lies here well dressed  
Who came and did it?  
My bank account was blank, empty  
I just figured it's stuffed with money, plenty  
Who came and did it?  
Rapidly dramas unfold with abundant love  
Like am draped with excess favour from above  
Things magically manifest themselves  
Leaving my mouth filled with surprise  
At my tireless worker in disguise  
A ghost helper herein hides  
Playing all roles short and wide  
Just now I heard footsteps  
Doing a cat walk down the main steps  
It seems a guardian angel was deployed  
Giving strength to what has been destroyed  
With covert responses of first AID  
Which shows I shouldn't be afraid  
Of job done by an assigned ghost worker  
Playing all these games under cover

Yusuf GazBee Kamara (Paper Poet)  
Sierra Leone





“As we fight for thirsty nations and lose our soul to greed, as we commit black sins let us remember one thing; the ghosts of man’s deeds lives on in the silent wind.”

*-What the Wind Knows- J.T Nagundi – Uganda*

# An Interview with Nabilah Usman

by

Sandra Oma Etubiebi



*If only you could hear the singsong of her voice from the stump of fingers on keypads; if truly the mismatch of alphabets from her words could translate into rhythm and sound; and if pages could sing, we would all swoon like lovers to the pull of love songs because Nabilah Usman has a voice as lovely as her loveable personality.*

*Well, it was my pleasure to chitchat with an easy going youthful brand that's full of life and love – learning about the simple things she loves. By the time you read to the end of the page and catch a glance at Nabilah Usman, you may be swooned as I was.*

# Nabilah Usman

## *Of Living and Loving Life*



### **Introducing her loving self:**

I'm the child first in my family, a daddy's girl who loves her mum too. Although I'm from Katsina state, I've never been there. I've lived in Kaduna all my life; my mum and dad were both born here, so were my paternal grandparents. So, for most intents and purposes, I'm from Kaduna. I love swimming and I'm crazy about music. I'm fascinated by God. Reading is a part of my life. I love my friends like crazy. I can be a bit forgetful. I love ice-cream and garri and roast corn -not all together oh! I believe in second chances, please and thank you. I believe in doing things that make a positive impact. I believe in giving your all to the things you do and doing them excellently. I believe in learning, unlearning and relearning.

I honestly think life is a long journey and it's full of opportunities to discover myself. This is what I've unearthed so far. I think I am doing my best to become the best version of myself professionally and personally. It's the journey of a lifetime, so I will only know if I have finally become the person I am aiming for at the very end. But in a nutshell, I'm a regular girl who wears her heart on her sleeve.

### **Introducing her love for writing:**

My love for writing was an accidental one, to be honest. I needed a way to express overwhelming emotions and writing fits perfectly. I never set out to be a writer or anything of the sort. My friends were the ones who identified that part of me - something I'm grateful for. I write to make myself and others feel things. The drive to write is always birthed by one emotion while reading my work makes me consider other emotions; it's like donning a new pair of glasses.

Writing can be such a major love-hate relationship; I write short stories once in a blue

moon, I have dabbled in scriptwriting (for radio, film and stage), but poetry is what has my heart. I am yet to publish anything outside my Instagram account, but I intend to do an anthology someday soon.

### **Of her love for teaching:**

Nigerian Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was my doorway into teaching. I should add that I've always believed that I would teach at some point, but I didn't expect it to come this soon. At the moment, more than anything else, I teach the English language (and anything else that pops up) to children in JS1 and JS2. It has been an interesting experience because I've had the chance to learn new things on the job (whether it's from research or from my students or my colleagues). I think the most interesting part for me is how my students and I come for English class but more often than not end up learning other non-English related things. The greatest lesson I've learnt is that to teach children, you have to be open to both the good and the bad.

### **Of her love for many interests:**

I'm interested in literature, teaching, media, good governance and policymaking, and drawing. I just might find other interests along the way. There is this general belief that if you don't have one specific thing you want to do, then you're not serious and won't go far. It makes people with multiple talents and interests need to confine themselves within a specific box or a particular definition. The one thing I want is to help people, whether that means teaching, writing, and policymaking, being a media practitioner or administrator. As long as I have breath in me and the strength to, I want to do everything I can do in each of these areas.

### **Of her love for music:**

As for my love for music, I'm always listening to music – any and all sorts as long as the content is inspiring. Country music is one of my favourite genres. I listen to songs from as far back as the 60s. I love the guitar, violin and cello. I think Hans Zimmer is a genius, and I don't travel without my earpiece.

### **Of her love for family and friends:**

Well, my family-centred part has a lot to do with my mum. She made sure that I was responsible for my siblings from an early age. She is also the reason we grow up interacting with my cousins a lot. My four brothers made sure that I didn't grow up as a typical girl. As much as I don't believe I fit into the tomboy category, I'm also not your average girly-girl; I'm not a huge fan of the colour pink, I don't like high heels or frills, make-up



is an accessory on necessary occasions only, trousers are the way forward, hoodies are comfort wear, and sneakers and flats are an absolute!

My biggest and earliest influence was my dad. My dad is probably the greatest legend in my life. My father was an inspiring media man; his work ethic and love for the job were things I witnessed while growing up. In the end, he played a big role in influencing my course of study – Mass Communication. He gave me my love for books, music, excellence, and taught me to speak properly.

Growing up was fun. There was a healthy balance of family and friends who made my experiences worthwhile.

### **Of a lovely memory:**

In my second year of senior secondary school, we were reading *The Importance of Being Earnest* as our main literary text for that term. My Literature teacher at the time decided I would tell the story to my entire year group at our weekly assembly. You'd expect that it would turn out to be a mediocre experience, but my classmates – science and social science students alike – were completely into it. I ended up using up more than my allotted time. It was a really nice experience and I honestly feel like it was one of the platforms that led to my being elected as a prefect, which contributed immensely to my self-confidence, my ability to carry people along and much more. As a whole, it's interesting that a book led me through a certain path.

The story might be different for the other people involved, but this is what it looks like from my perspective and it makes that when people say “books can change your life”, it's not just words for me, it's a tangible experience.

### **Of her love for WSA:**

Writers Space Africa (WSA) is a very interesting place! There are different shades of people and sometimes it's hard to keep track of them all, but I don't mind at all. WSA feels like a melting pot; the different dynamics we bring to the group have made the reality of inclusion a very exciting journey.

One would say that Nigeria is just as diverse as WSA – which is true – but Nigeria is home and its many shades don't surprise me as much; WSA offers a true African experience.



# CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Poetica Magazine, published by the African Writers Development Trust (AWDT), is calling for submission from Poets of African descent for the 4th quarter edition to be released October 15, 2019.

**Poets are to send in their submission, not more than 30 lines on any theme, with name and country, to [poetica@poeticamagazine.net](mailto:poetica@poeticamagazine.net)  
Deadline is August 30, 2019**

The magazine will be available for free download from October 15, 2019 from our website - [www.poeticamagazine.net](http://www.poeticamagazine.net)

# ESSAYS





# WHY DO PEOPLE BELIEVE IN GHOSTS?

by

Paschaline Onwuka - Nigeria

In April 2019, a frantic persistent knock on my hostel room door woke me up around 2am in the morning. My room was occupied by three other classmates of mine whose sleep were also dis-rupted. I grudgingly got up and opened the door and was taken aback by the terrified look on Kemi's face. I let her in immediately and my room mates and I waited for her to calm down before asking her what the matter was. It turned out that she claimed to have seen a ghost and therefore ran out of her room in fear. I was totally nonplused by this incident and couldn't forget at all.

Normally, a paranormal story wouldn't catch my attention but it dawned on me that a lot of people believe in ghosts. African folklore is enriched with ghost tales. My mum once told me that these stories were meant to serve as moral lessons to the younger ones but now I have started to suspect that the stories told by our ancestors had more to it that met the eye. Recent

surveys have shown that a significant portion of the population believes in ghosts, leading some scholars to conclude that we are witnessing a revival of paranormal beliefs in Western society.

While the terms “spirit” and “ghost” are related and even interchangeable in some languages, the word “ghost” in English tends to refer to the soul or spirit of a deceased person that can appear to the living. Ghosts could also be said to be remnants of the bodies of people that have died and are commonly discussed in folklore. Apparitions can range from a simple strange presence to the aura of a living being. This sounds absurd but it turns out that a lot of people believe in the existence of ghost. Most Ghosts are considered extraordinary because the idea of them is unable to be authenticated by science. There is no replicable experiment known that can validate a ghost’s presence; people coming back after death as spirits defies all scientific laws of nature especially Africans. The reason people believe in ghosts is not clear to me but I would gladly share my thoughts on the subject matter.

Most people who believe in ghosts do so because of some personal experience; they grew up in a home where the existence of (friendly) spirits was taken for granted, for example, or they had some unnerving experience on a ghost tour or local haunt. However, many people believe that support for the existence of ghosts can be found in no less a hard science than modern physics. People believe that Albert Einstein’s law of Thermodynamics (energy can neither be created nor destroyed but can be transformed from one form to another) depicts the existence of ghost. The logic is that if a person dies, the person’s innate energy could manifest as a ghost since you cannot destroy nor create energy. This is but the tip of the iceberg. Of course, another reason people believe in ghosts is the same reason that people like to watch scary movies or play Bloody Mary in girls’ bathrooms: for the thrill of it. There’s a word for buying into these scary stories: legend-tripping. Basically, people do this because they know they’re not in any real danger. And if we look hard enough, there will be evidence to prove that 100 per cent of our paranormal experiences have disappointingly normal explanations. It’s certainly easier than ever to fake a ghost sighting on film, with a nifty bit of editing. Light bouncing off reflective surfaces can cause visual abnormalities too. As might electrical appliances emitting a low-frequency hum, which can sometimes be enough to actually vibrate the eyeballs of someone standing close enough, causing them to see things that just aren’t there.

Our brains are predisposed to make meaning of random images. A flicker of light quickly becomes a figure dressed in white. Shadows on a wall become a face. Often, those people who report ghostly sightings have been made suggestible by something as simple as watching too many freaky films or seeing too many teenagers in *Scream* masks. Sometimes, the

thought that the dead might still walk among us can be a comfort. Which of us wouldn't like to think that our de-parted loved ones might still be around in some way to help us in times of sadness or need? For as many times as people tell ghost stories to make your hair stand on end, there are stories in which ghosts appear to save the day. These and many more have strengthened people's belief in ghosts.

While some supernatural phenomena might stem from natural brain processes, others could be a sign that something's wrong. Disorders affecting the parts of your brain that process vision could make you see "poltergeists" moving objects. Problems with areas of the brain involved in self-awareness could make you sense a presence close by. And, of course, anything else that messes with your perception – drugs, alcohol, and sleep deprivation – could also have an effect.

The reason why people believe in ghosts could also be due to a combination of several factors. Belief in God and an afterlife often goes along with a belief in ghosts. But when surveyed, a lot of people associate belief in God with trust in a religious institution or a traditional religion. Many like the mysterious as it creates some drama and excitement to their lives. Then, we have fear of death and the emotional reasons for believing that life really does not end. Ironically though, most ghost stories are supposed to be frightening more than comforting. Still, I think the reason many people want to believe in ghosts is related to their fear of dying. They just don't like the fact that their lives and all the things they have achieved will ultimately fade away when they die. They don't like the fact that they will lose all the loved ones in their lives and the thought that life does not really end when we die is without doubt appealing to many, mainly for emotional reasons.

Some people also believe in ghosts simply because they may have a childish view of life – because as we know, children are mainly who have intense imagination and believe in anything that is being showed or told to them. For these kinds of people it feels more real and possible than to other rational people. Of course, a creative mind may be used for much better purposes like writing novels, painting and music making.

All in all, the notion of ghosts is one that has originated and survived over a long period of time. A large percentage of the world's population believes in ghosts in one form or another, whether it's life after death or the eternal existence of human energy. Many of these believers claim to have personal experiences with ghosts, while others only believe because of their religion or hope. There is conflicting evidence to whether ghosts exist, as the premises backing them is controversial and up for debate. Perhaps advances in technology over time will give us a final answer or ghosts will make contact with the public themselves.

# RELATABLE

by

Dennis Hannah Omokafe,  
Nigeria



A ghost is defined as a spirit; the soul of man. It is also a faint shadowy semblance; an unsubstantial image; a phantom; a glimmering.

As a child, my definition of a ghost was defined by my imaginations filled with fear of the unknown. I remember all the times when there was power outage and how I would cry when sent by my parents with the smoky lantern to get something from the room. I remember all the rolling on the floor and how my brothers teased me. I tried explaining to them about how the pots in the kitchen had turned to "ojuju" with four heads ready to eat me and everyone in the house because we put them on fire every day and never tell them "sorry". I also tried to tell them about how the curtains move at night with such force that creeps me and hooks me to my bed with every ability of movement taken away from me which I was very sure was the giant being doings but I wasn't believed because yes, they went through that stage too and in their head, I was only being normal.

I remember a specific time when I woke up from sleep at sunset, I stepped out of my room and it was unusually silent, ahhhhh, my heart was already in chaos beating like a runner who had just run track. I had called for mum and I didn't get a reply neither did my brothers when I had called them. I ran out of the house faster than I thought I could. I got hungry after a while but I couldn't go in, all I could do was cry and then all of sudden the door opened and I saw a leg, "Ewo" I had shouted with my hands on my head as I stood up with fear ready to run out of the gate this time not until my father called my name twice and I looked back with all the courage

I could muster to be sure the “ojuju” did not mimic my dad. I was a comedy source for the house that day. Even I laugh at myself whenever I remember.

I thought I had gotten over my fear of the unknown after my childhood phase until I was in grade seven. First, my food flask was stolen with not trace left when I went to ring the bell fulfilling my duty as the junior timekeeper. I was a little bit scared not until I started getting notes from one strange “Mr. nobody” whom I didn’t find up till today. My fear was heightened. Imag-es were everywhere. I felt like the Mr. nobody was watching my every move. In fact, he was. Considering how my every move was noted down in the notes sent to me and sometimes even my future actions. I never got to know the person till I was done with secondary school. Maybe, the ghost got another job and stopped scaring me with physical representation of creepy notes and scruffy handwriting. My teacher did describe it as “chicken poo poo”. The rest of my grade classes passed without much historical scares or ghostly imaginations and creepy notes and to me “I don grow oo, ojuju don leave me”. I was feeling myself.

Coming to the university as a young adult of eighteen, I was bold enough to say “I am not scared bro; I can stay on my own. I don’t know why mum and dad don’t want to let me stay off cam-pus like you guys”. They laughed back in response and scattered my neatly curled hair which they knew I hated. I didn’t know what was in stall for me till my roommates didn’t resume the same day as I did. I had to sleep ALONE all by myself. I said all the man-tra I knew despite me bragging to my brothers, I was scared, very scared. I slept the first day with one eye opened and the other closed, nothing happened. I was like” this ojuju has really forgotten me”. Nothing hap-pened for a week and my roommates were yet to come and then I got a visitation. It got windy later on a Monday and my door was being knocked repeatedly. The curtains went haywire; pa-pers in the room were flying, the bulb was switching on and off by itself. God, I nearly died. I had to call my brothers that night to come pick me up from my hostel screaming “ojuju has come back oo”. They laughed at me, God, they did. It was worse than my childhood. I didn’t mind, I just wanted to get out of there. In my mind, I was haunted by my childhood and grade ghost. I kept thinking about what I had done to invincible creatures. Maybe my village people are follow-ing me considering the area I am from in Nigeria, everything is possible.

I do hope that I won’t be running from the dark or cry when there is power outage or when the wind blows and thunder strikes with my kids when I decide to have them. I wonder what their dad would say when that happens. Imagine him coming home to meet his wife and children un-der the bed, oh mine! I do hope I am grown enough tomorrow and that my mind becomes an adult one.





# MERCHANDIZING YOUR TALENT

by

Akaa Elijah Aondotakume - Nigeria

The world, right from inception has produced people who performed credibly well in their various careers or occupations. These set of people has often enjoyed a phenomenal applause from the ordinary persons who oftentimes considered the aforementioned class of individuals as 'gods'. These people who performed greatly always had an influence over others as regards their distinct fields of endeavor, many reasons abound to their influential impact but chiefly amongst them is the ability to discover hidden potentials embedded in each one's life. Suffice it to say that most people have died without discovering their talents let alone utilizing it as someone had rightly said "the grave yard is the wealthiest place on earth".

That is why this piece has come at no better time than now when youths engage in frivolities and search aimlessly for ways to better their lives without paying heed to the God-given talents in them.

It is necessary we take a closer look at the words captioned in the title. What then is the meaning of merchandizing? Merchandizing is the present continuous form of Merchandize. According to the 8th edition of The Advanced Learners dictionary, the word merchandize means to sell something using advertisement. Merchandizing then means the activity of selling goods, or trying to sell them, by advertising or displaying them. On the other hand, Talent according to the same dictionary means a natural ability to do something well. From the foregoing, Merchan-

dizing Your Talent contextually refers to the appropriate, judicious and extensive utilization of our natural abilities in such a way that will make us have an influence and at the same time make us a worthwhile living.

Many Youths however, having discovered their talents end up showcasing it in ways that glorify the devil and gratify the flesh. This is so appalling because these talents are God-given to bring glory to His name and enable us live comfortably. However, this issue cannot be addressed without thrashing the main issue which is the discovery of these talents. Many youths idly while away their time, which in summation is their life without really knowing what they could do to change the narrative. Nothing can be utilized effectively if it has not been discovered. You cannot talk about purifying Gold if it has not been extracted. It has to be extracted first before other things would follow. How then can one discover one's talent?

One of the easiest pointers to a person's talent is what he or she does so well whereas, others strive or find it hard to do. There are certain things that one did not really learn how to do or rather learnt it so much but such an one just discovered himself doing it in an appreciable good manner. It could be singing, you never browsed about it, you never learnt how to improve your voice, but somehow, when you sing, it sounds so well that even you can feel it. For others still, it could be writing. Though complex in a way, amongst your peers, you discovered your essays were simply the best. It is a great pointer to where your talents lay.

Some other times, one may discover his or her talent by evaluating the activities he or she enjoys a lot. A critical evaluation of such activities makes one to realize the great joy derived when such activities are done. Such activities never bring boredom to the individual as he or she looks forward to when next the activities would be done. An honest individual must realize however that such activity are positive and not acts that are morally wrong or the society frowns at them.

One might have also realized that there are certain activities he or she never learnt. Although when performing such activities, they might had been tough for the very first time, but then the stress others passed through before doing it, it was not so for them. The point is, it might even be the first time you had done it, but it did not stress you much, as compared to how others found it difficult at first attempt or as to how you had initially thought it would be.

Man in various ways tries to comprehend what potentials he has in him, however, God is the giver of those talents and a willing heart devoid of sin can call unto God to reveal such talents to him. Since He is the giver of all talents, with prayers and faith, He will guide you to discover your talents.

A very disheartening fact is that many youths upon discovery of their talents, sit down and enjoy it. They feel they are already good at it and therefore see no reason whatsoever to develop themselves. Every youth has to go beyond his comfort zone to excel in his or her God-given talent. We all have to understand that there are many others with similar talents, so only those who stand out or perform exceptionally well will be recognized, and get re-

warded for their talent. As a youth who has discovered his or her talent, work towards improving it. In that way you would have an edge over others in merchandizing your talents. Attend seminars relating to your talent, this would enable you to learn from those better than you. Never feel you have done your best. That is the driving force that will propel you to do more and you will stand out more clearly.

It is one thing to discover a talent, and another to utilize it. Football, Music, Acting, Writing, Racing and other various numerous activities are areas one's talents could lay. However, we have all seen that some have excelled greatly in those areas and have their names become a household stock meanwhile others have strived all through their lives in the same careers only to end up unheard of even in their locality. What then made the difference? It's based on how each group utilized their talents.

Nevertheless, it is also quite disheartening to discover that many youths having discovered their talents ended up utilizing it in ways that displeased the giver of those talents. In utilizing one's talent, one has to feel happy whenever he or she is called upon to perform and he or she have to strive to do it in the best way possible, so as to leave a good impression on the minds of the listeners or audience who could reward him or her or easily beckon on such a person when other opportunities come for such talents to be displayed. In utilizing talents still, never feel shy or discour-aged even if you did not perform as you had expected. Work harder and try to do it better next time. And in case you performed greatly, sure, be happy for yourself but never feel proud or look down on anyone.

A musician whose songs have no positive meaning to impact people's life is definitely misusing his talents no matter how popular and rich he or she may become. A writer who writes to defame another person's character or to incite trouble is definitely misusing his or her talents. A footballer who has been successful and never uses the money he has to embark on projects that others will benefit from is definitely a wasted talent. Such footballers could also use their influence to champion a worthy agenda. We all have to be careful in the way we use our talents and the way we make use of the benefits accrued from our talents.

One could readily make use of the platforms the 21st century has availed for us. The social media serves as an avenue for various talents to be exhibited. As a writer specifically, one could write to enlighten and educate others and also express his views on certain issues. There are many platforms available for these talents to be showcased. It is so sad that these platforms have been used otherwise and in no way as to showcase our talents. Many talents could be appropriately displayed for the world to benefit from on the social media.

The purpose of talents is not for the fun of it, it is to be used to glorify God, make an impact in life and get highly paid for it.

As a way conclusion, the world is looking for the best, if you could train yourself in your talent, you will excel and be paid highly for your talent and you will also make a meaningful impact in your generation to the glory of God.

# Children's Literature





# WANDERER AND QUEEN

by

Eneye Lawal – Nigeria

There once was a wanderer  
Who came by a bird  
His eyes had fallen on none fairer.  
He caught it and christened it  
For days, nothing except this wonder ran the length of his mind.  
The next day he brought home an iron cage  
Whistling, he entrusted QUEEN in the arms of her new home.  
Often, it sang aloud in a sorrowful pitch  
At such times the wanderer would be aflame  
And deal QUEEN mighty blows.  
It angered him to find QUEEN peering into the wild,  
If one day QUEEN wakes up to meet her cage open  
What do you think would happen?



# HOW WE GOT OUR INNER VOICES

by  
Elaoje – Nigeria

Ede couldn't just stop saying mean things to his sister Edebi. In fact, they had never agreed on a thing since the day they were born. A long time ago Oheoluhie the god of the Igede tribe had a daughter whose name was Elilehi .She was a beautiful goddess. She felt irrelevant just sitting around and being pretty. So she asked her father to let her come down to earth and live with man. He agreed on one condition. He would send one of his servants to be in constant watch of her. Oheoluhie knew how innocent his daughter was. She had never told a lie, she never bent the rules and she always did the right thing. He needed someone who was strong and street smart to guide her. So he chose Imonu. He was an exact opposite of Elilehi.

It was time for the two to make their entry into earth. Where better than Andibilla, the village of the nobles, set on the hills, would be fit for a goddess to be born? So Oheoluhie sent them as twins to the arms of a loving mother who had waited a long time for children. Edebi and Ede as she called them were inseparable. Ede was fond of getting into trouble while Edebi was the adorable little girl every mother was pleased with. To keep her boy child in check, Akuma instructed Edebi never to leave his side.

By the time the twins had celebrated their seventh birthday, the whole village had learnt

of the extraordinary wisdom Edebi had and how successful everyone who took to her words has been. Even though she didn't talk much, she had become very valuable to the Igede people of Andibil-la. The same could not be said of her brother Ede. All he caused was trouble and pain for every-one he came across. Ede wasn't all bad though, he had a wonderful charisma, that even though people knew they may get into trouble just being around him, still he had so many friends. He was obnoxious, but fun to be with.

One day Akuma went down the hills for business and reminded Edebi not to let her brother out of her sight. While she was away, Ede got himself in big trouble again and Edebi was there to witness it. He made all the children that dared to listen to him go swim in the forbidden lake. Edebi tried to warn them against it, but they wouldn't pay attention to her. Thirteen children lost their lives that day in the river. The whole village was furious. They had had enough of Ede and his mischief so they sentenced him to death.

Akuma was devastated and pleaded for mercy. Saying the boy only acts like a child. She sighted that Edebi had brought as much good to the village as Ede had brought mis-haps. She reminded them that life is a blend of good and evil. And so they shouldn't separate her twins. The village heads agreed not to kill Ede but instead banish the twins from the village.

Ede and Edebi found themselves in the deep Ipinu forest. It was the thickest and scariest forest in the land. It was referred to as the home of the living dead. The voice of the forest was like the voice of a thousand men choir singing a sad symphony. Ede and Edebi were terrified. They called on Oheoluhie to come to their rescue. Oheoluhie was quite displeased with them. He was concerned that Ede had prevented Edebi from executing all the good she intended, but still he was glad she had prevented Ede from all the evil he could have concocted.

Men needed the wisdom of his daughter every time they need to make a decision. Also the twins were inseparable. What was he going to do? Oheoluhie took their bodies from them, so they became invisible and caused them to remain with men. Now everybody would hear her wis-dom when they needed it. Ede would also be present to play his mischief. But anyone who ig-nored his voice and paid close attention to Edebi would receive good counsel.

# Short Stories





# GHOST OF WATIPA

By Hannah H Tarindwa – Namibia



It was dark. The accident had changed Wandipa in ways he was uncomfortable with but struggling to recalibrate himself. A month had passed, he still could not drive, he could not be in small spaces, his nerves were continuously on edge and he would find himself sweating buckets as if he had walked out of a shower. He had lost weight and it was not only because of the new five-kilometer walk to and from his place of work; he was not eating well, he slept for a few hours, always waking up in buckets of sweat and a shake-filled fright. His mind was shaken and his body was not handling it well. The weight loss was heavy and his hair was falling: he was just at his tethers end.

The early darkness of the winter was not making him feel better.

It was only 6:30 in the evening and he couldn't help wonder why this darkness felt extra. An owl cooed, startling him unknowingly. Wandipa found himself picking up his already fast pace. As he did so, he didn't notice a raised stone tile in the footpath which he tripped on. Another accident, again. As his body descended face down to hit the earth someone with soft flesh caught him with both hands.

At that moment, the street lights came on and he looked at the oval face of the woman who had clearly dropped her shopping bag with fruits that now rolled almost joyfully from it as if to deco-rate the footpath, to save him from a fantastic fall in the now suddenly disappeared darkness. In that instant, the darkness would have been appreciated, but like everything in his life, that too had left him!

“You, you... you s-s-saved me,” he stammered, not knowing what else to say.

The lady, light caramel brown skinned smelt like apple crumble pie. She was stout and short, with a full bosom and an average looking face, laden with big round blue framed spectacles. She re-minded him of something or was it somewhere? He didn't know but he was confident he liked that which at that moment felt found after being lost. After both of them found their feet, they picked up the lady's fruit and gave each other an awkward smile.

“Can I at least invite you for a coffee for saving me from further embarrassment in this my wretched life,” Wandipa could feel that he was blabbing on and on. He stopped and looked at her unreadable facial expression. Was it a smile or a frown? It became a full smile.

“Well, I don't have a fantastic life to rush to either,” she said in a raspy voice, before clearing her voice. Shivers of excitement ran through his limp body like a new breath was being breathed into him.

As they walked to his flat, he had more of an internal conversation with himself than with her. She told him her name was Bridget. He had not asked her for it and was relieved that she had offered the information. He had mumbled that his name was Wandipa, and was even more re-lieved that she heard him. He felt at ease around this woman, which was comforting and alarm-ing. Upon arrival, he unlocked the door and let her in first.

He was relieved at how smart the house was, he hadn't cleaned it in a while, but then again he hadn't done much in it anyway. He offered her coffee, she declined, in favor of tea, if he had. He was not sure so he went to the small hidden corner, which had the semblance of a kitchen: there was a stove, some light brown wooden cupboards, a small basic microwave and a kettle. He was relieved at the sight of the kettle. Why was he relieved? It had always been there, or had it? He laughed at himself for being so silly! The weird thoughts that were going through his mind. He had been out of the game for a while... well there was no need to be in it. He had had his wife, Bridget.

Just like that, his mind was flooded with all the memories, her voice sounded like a distant echo, getting closer and closer asking him if everything is okay. He snapped back to reality, he had dropped a teacup and its shattered pieces somehow reminded him of the fruits on the pavement. When she peeped at the door, she confirmed what had caused the weakness in

all his joints: It was Bridget... but it can't have been... Bridget was... she had been... she was... it was... impossi-ble!

She was dead, the doctors had not been able to save her, one of them had come to his hospital bed and put a hand of comfort on his shoulder when delivering the sad news. He said there was nothing they could do.

She was dead!

He had been wheeled to her side for the last time before they covered her with the baby blue coloured sheets... she had breathed her last and it had been his fault for not being attentive. He had loved her laugh too much, her demeanor and her presence. He had just wanted to have a good look of her ordinarily not so pretty face which transformed and glowed when she laughed. He had not imagined that that's how she would be taken from him: on a well planned weekend away road trip to the mountains of Chimanimani... that was not the idea he had. They had not grown old together. Yet there she stood by the entrance of their tiny corner kitchen.

She went to the broom cupboard, took out the dustpan and small broom and swept the floor so comfortably before going to the bin and emptying the shattered pieces. He watched her and felt a knot gathering in his stomach and getting tighter and tighter. She smiled at him with her eyes and not her lips. The knots began to detangle.

She stretched out her arm to offer her hand to him, he hesitated but found himself following her lead, going to the lounge.

“Oh Wandipa,” she started, “Please sit down, my love.”

His eye twitched as it often did whenever he was confused about events around him. He was beginning to feel light-headed as he sat on the now not-so-familiar couch in the darkened lounge. He wanted to speak but it was as though cobwebs blocked his voice pipes. He was shivering but not cold and needed more oxygen than before.

“You do not need oxygen Wandipa! Stop it!” Bridget's firm voice snapped and brought him back to reality and the room suddenly seemed lighter again, dissipating the darkness that was gather-ing. He wondered how she kept doing that, kept bringing light to him. Even now when her voice had a higher dose of anger than sympathy. He needed to understand.

After what seemed like a long imposed moment of calm and silence, Bridget sat across him on the seat she liked to sit on when she was knitting, a strange pastime for a thirty-five-year-old in 2019 when the rest of her agemates were busying themselves with the latest yoga, fashion or in-ternet news trends. She leaned forward, held his trembling hands which instan-taneously stopped and spoke as if she had rehearsed the following words.

“This does not often happen, but of course in your case, it may have been expected,” her stern

look gave way to a gentle smile, which he remembered fondly. “You must stop running from the reality my dear or else you will cause havoc and our little girl will not have a place to call home. It’s time to say goodbye and move on Watipa, it’s time you accept and move on.”

As she spoke about their little girl, a beeping sound like the hospital machine kept getting louder and louder and everything, the house, the furniture, the photo frames, the cutlery started spinning upwards and disappearing one by one. He felt the weight of his body fall away and new energy took over him and with it, a new sense of enlightenment.

“Oh Bridge, oh Bridget,” he held her bright face with both hands, “why had I become a ghost?”

She smiled and embraced him, she did not need to answer now, because he would find the answers now that he had crossed over. Their family, friends, his work colleagues and the city of Mutare could now rest easy after a week, which to Watipa had been a month, of uncertainty, fear, and terror. It was always hard for the young spirits to progress and the spirit mediums had done well to consult with the wife just before she too had crossed over to the spirit world beyond, where no human voice would be heard. Watipa Munowonepi had found rest, at last, joining the wife he had thought had left him for eternity.



# GHOST SNACK

By Marycynthia Chinwe Okafor – Nigeria



I stopped believing and started believing when I was twelve. I don't know what exactly - or I don't remember really - what it was I stopped believing in but I still remember what I started believing in, Ghosts. Yes, it had always sounded foolish when I thought it or said it in my head. Perhaps because it was something we never discussed at home, something Dad saw to that we never believed existed because they were unreal. Yet every morning, during our daily prayers, we would pray for the souls of our dearly departed ones. When Grandma spun her tales; she would tell of the kind ghost of a mother who came every night to feed her starving children neglected by their stepmother; she would tell of the spirit of her late husband who she never stopped seeing until she gave birth to Dad who she was pregnant with when Grandpa died; she would tell of the spirit of her best friend who she once saw in Lagos - five years after she had died - selling sachet water, she would tell of a man who died in a car accident and twenty years after his death, a wife and three children he didn't have before he died came to visit his hometown; she would tell of a time she went to the market and her stylist was braiding her hair but when she looked in the mirror, she noticed there were two pairs of hands braiding so efficiently.

I believed it all to be tales as Dad wanted, I believed the costumed hilarious ghosts I saw on the television as a child were just a figment of a bored mind's imagination. After Ebube, my best friend died and I continued seeing him, Mum told Dad about it and he concluded it was my way

of coping with grief, by assuming I saw Ebube, I believed it too. My social studies teacher thought ghosts were unreal and she preached it so much that I came to think it too. And I didn't believe in ghosts until I was twelve.

We had a house boy, Agangwu, and he lived with us until I was eight. Agangwu did everything, from doing all the house chores to running errands but what I enjoyed most about everything Agangwu did was that he always brought me back from school. He would give me a ride on his shoulders to the corner store and he would buy me a snack of my choice - something Mum never allowed at home - then we would trek home slowly while I nibbled on my snack. He would not buy anything for himself but he would tell me stories to keep his mouth busy. He read a lot of books and after he left, I started reading furiously, maybe because I was angry at him for leaving or because I felt closer to him flipping through his books.

That fateful day, Mum picked me from school, when I saw her, my face fell and my chin dropped. I didn't ask her about Agangwu but I sulked all the way while she drove us home. I ran inside the moment the car stopped, Mum followed closely. I didn't wonder why she had not said more than two sentences. "Agangwu," I called. I was excited to tell him about the homework he had helped me do. My anger that he didn't come to pick me forgotten. "Agangwu."

"Sweetie," I turned at the name. Mum never called me "sweetie" except for when she wanted to appease me. I stared at her. "Ifunnanya. Sweetie, Listen. Agangwu has left us. He has gone home to his people"

"Hmm?"

She repeated what she said and knelt down before me. She reached out to touch my braids but I stepped back. I ran further into the house and checked every room including Dad's study, the sanctuary I was forbidden to enter, I didn't find Agangwu, I didn't find him the next day or the day after. I didn't see Agangwu again until that day when I was twelve.

I had grown, just a few months away from being a teenager and I was in secondary school. It was Friday and the school had just dismissed. I looked up and my heart skipped, I saw him standing at my school gate beaming, all white teeth and big eyes. He was waving frantically as if he was afraid that if he didn't, I wouldn't see him.

"Agangwu," I called.

His smile widened and he chuckled, a belly and throaty laugh he usually gave me when I was younger.

"Agangwu," I hugged him. He lifted me off my feet and spun me around, I giggled.

"You're all grown now."

"Yes," I was proud. "I've learned to wear my socks in the proper way." I sobered up. "You have-n't changed at all."

He hadn't, he still looked the same. His dark lanky frame, his midnight black eyes which were always smiling, his long nose and the dimples on his cheeks. I dipped my forefinger into the dimple on his left cheek and he laughed louder.

"You left," I accused. "You're back now?"

"Yes," his response was brisk. "Come, let's go. You're too old now I can't give you a ride on my shoulders anymore."

We walked to the corner store and he bought me a sausage roll and a bottle of coke, he didn't buy anything for himself. He walked me home but refused to come inside.

"I will come in the evening," he said and left.

When Mum came back and I told her Agangwu was back, her eyes widened and she chocked on her water.

"Agangwu is dead, Ifunnanya. He died on that day you came home from school and couldn't find him. We didn't tell you because you were too young."

Mum had gone crazy, I thought. "I saw him today." To prove I was telling the truth, I added, "He bought me a sausage roll and coke."

Mum flew into full-blown hysteria, "You are not joking?"

"No, he's coming back in the evening."

She was crying now. "Come, we are going to church." She dragged me to the priest who prayed and said nothing would happen to me and that Agangwu probably came to see me for the last time. I thought the priest was crazy too but deep down, I knew, I knew Mum was telling the truth but still, I looked for Agangwu. I searched for his face in every stranger's, I listened for his voice in every crowd but I never saw his ever-smiling face again, I never heard his melodic voice again.



# SHADOWS AT NIGHT

By Haruna Dahiru Alhassan – Nigeria



Nessa stood at the peak at of the staircase with her gaze fixed at the fog of darkness in front of her. She was certain she heard a sound coming from the kitchen downstairs but her guts told her not to make a move down the stairs. She gradually made for the kitchen, chills running through her body awakened goosebumps and she suddenly felt cold. The layers of the staircase felt slip-pery underneath her wet feet as she struggled to maintain silence. She caressed the wall searching for the bulb switch to bring the sitting room to light but her hands kept slipping down the wall. Her heartbeat was now beating out of rhythm when she found herself standing in the middle of the living room. She felt the soft furry skin of the rug under her bare feet and she knew the switch was left of her. She bent barely seeing a thing before her but her hands touching the couch led her.

Nessa felt like she was being watched and someone behind was going to butt her. She hurriedly made for the switch and pressed the button hoping for the light to come but nothing!. She kept pressing it vigorously turning her head back into the darkness waiting for the surprise hit. She could feel the emptiness closing up from behind her. Her sweat trailed its way to her mouth and she felt the salty fluid between her lips as the thought of dying clouded her mind. But one thing was for sure; she was not dying tonight!

“Please come on!” she yelled hitting the switch with a hard punch and it obediently yielded to her command bringing the whole house to life. She immediately turned to put her back against the wall to face whatever figure was behind her but, she saw nothing!. Perspiration had soaked her scarf and her pink pajamas were now drenched with sweat. She could hardly



control her breath as she kept pumping in the air into her body system.

She was still looking around the house to be sure she wasn't wrong when a sound came from the kitchen. Nessa knew something was not right about the night and there was definitely something in the house. She gently walked towards the kitchen stretching her neck before her whole body moved and waited to see if anyone might move.

"Who's there?" she asked the unlit darkness in the kitchen.

"Laura is that you?"

Silence. She picked up the iron flower vase standing by the doorway to the kitchen and gently removed the artificial flower inside it. Slowly, she stretched her hand and turned on the lights in the kitchen. The kitchen was still the same as she had left it before going to bed. The utensils were all in place except the sink where there was water dripping from the cap of the tap. She made for the sink and turned it off to stop the dripping. She was making for the door when the lights starting twitching. The whole lights in the house were twitching and it made her feel dizzy and the lights kept dancing to her eyes. And suddenly, darkness. She tried to move but her body felt stiff. The sweating started all over again and this time, her hair was wet too. The sink tap turned on again and was now running with full pressure.

Nessa was now at the climax of her fear. She immediately bent and hide at the side of the cup-board, hyperventilating out of control. She held the iron vase hardly against her chest and she sobbed gently. As she sobbed quietly, she felt the mixture of catarrh and sweat coating her shak-ing lips.

Nessa could hear footsteps approaching the kitchen refrigerator. It felt like death was in the house with her.

"God, please not today, please! I don't want to die!" she said quietly to herself as the footsteps came closer.

She had raised her hand to hit whoever it was when the lights immediately came on and she found Laura, her daughter, standing in front of her.

"Jesus! Mom! What are you doing?" Laura shouted at the sight of her tired looking mother.

"Oh, Laura! It's just you." Nessa said dropping the vase to the ground and giving her a hug.

"Mom, you were sleepwalking again!" Laura said, feeling her mom's sweat penetrating her own pyjamas. She could also feel her mother's body shaking.

"There is something in the house with us," Nessa said, looking around at the kitchen and stopped when she realized the sink had stopped running and the lights were back on. There was no evi-dence of any previous paranormal activity.

"I swear to you that something is wrong. Even the living room, the lights were twitching and..." she said holding Laura by the hand and bringing her to the living room but stopped when she saw the lights were back on. Wait, I don't understand. I..I would have sworn that someone was behind me and..."

"Mum enough of this!" Laura yelled, breaking free from her mum's shivering grip. "you've been doing this since dad died. You barely sleep at night and you've been skipping your anxiety pills." She looked at her mother's dreadful-looking eye bags. Nessa had grown pale and lost weight since she lost her husband. She was never getting enough sleep and wasn't

sure what she was doing lately. Nessa would always get lost in her thoughts and her actions would lead to a series of unfortunate events. She would always have nightmares that made her scream at night and she believed she was always seeing shadows and moving figures at night. Laura had bought her some pills to help her with the trauma she was going through.

"I take my pills regularly and I am not lying about any..."

"Mum I found the spot where you always stack the pills after I've given them to you at night." Laura was almost in tears as her voice was starting to break.

"I have no idea what am doing Laura."

"Obviously, you don't. I found you by the pool the other day screaming my name at night and telling me to come back."

"Yes, am sure I saw you leaving the house that night."

"Mum, I was upstairs sleeping in my room! I can't take this anymore. You keep saying that you see things and people at night."

"I know. Please, Laura, help me" Nessa was now crying as the tears were rolling down her cheeks.

"Let's go," Laura said holding her by the hand and taking her to her room. She laid her mother to bed and watched as she slowly snored like a baby. Laura knew she needed to help her mother out or else she might lose her too. So she went to her room and dialed a number on her phone.

"Hello Doctor Harry it's me, Laura, I need your help"

The next morning, Nessa woke up and found a team of men in white standing above her. She jerked out of bed and found Laura standing by the door with her hands folded and supporting her breast.

"Laura, what is this? Who are these men?"

"Mum relax, they are only here to help you. Just do as they say and you will be fine" Laura said moving close to her mother.

"What are they going to do to me?"

"They are only going to help you out."

"You didn't tell me about it. How could you do this to me?" she tried moving closer to Laura but the men in white stopped her. "Move away, I want to see my daughter!"

"Mum stop fighting it and go with them. Please do this for me."

Nessa felt the sadness in her daughter's voice and she decided to yield.

"But just so you know, am not crazy," she said and made her way out with the man.

"No, you are not," Doctor Harry said walking in with a document in his hands.

"Who are you?" Nessa asked.

"I am Doctor Harry and I will be your doctor for the next few weeks."

"But am not crazy or anything..."

"Of course not, but the shock of losing your husband has affected you mentally and you've lost your mental balance which is making you imagine things and people the way you do," Doctor Harry explained.

"I always saw the shadows at night when no one else did and I am not crazy," Nessa insisted.

"You will be fine Vanessa, we believe you," Doctor Harry said as they drove to the hospital.

# CLAIMED

By Nyonyi Nyange - Uganda



I could sense something was amiss the moment I entered my hostel room. My laptop was exactly where I had left it, on my bed right next to my pillow. I checked the closet, everything seemed to be in place, the money I kept under my mattress hadn't been touched. But I still felt like some-body had been in my room. It was an unsettling feeling. "Well if someone has, in fact, been here, I am glad they did not take anything," I thought. I dismissed it as mere wariness since I'd had a gruesome test that morning. I slumped on my bed and dosed off.

I woke up to the sound of my phone ringing. It was Joy my girlfriend calling. "Hello," I yawned.

"Hey baby, have you been sleeping?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, anyway I'm on my way to your place, I was wondering if you need anything."

"Ah, I don't know, I'm hungry though."

"Let me get you some food, see you in a few."

"Alright. Thanks, hun." I ended the call and dropped the phone on my side, then stood up and stretched. That is when I saw it. And I was sure it was not there before, a blue plastic cup on my reading table. I was confused and un-nerved. I owned no plastic cups and when I'd come in earlier except for my books, nothing else was on the reading table. The cup contained what seemed to be tea, steam was coming out of it and when I touched it, it was hot.

“What the fuck!” I ex-claimed. I scanned the room, the windows were closed, I nudged the door and it was closed too. I knelt down and looked under the bed, nothing was there either. I was infuriated. I was con-vinced someone was playing a prank on me, pranks were a norm among the boys in my hostel.

A knock at the door roused me and I jumped up. “Jude, babe, are you there!” Someone called from outside my door. I opened the door to find Joy leaning against the corridor wall, in her hands a huge brown KFC paper bag.

“Hey,” I sighed.

“I’ve been knocking for thirty minutes now.” She stomped in and placed the paper bag on the reading table.

“What! C’mon, I opened as soon as I heard you knock.”

“No, you didn’t.” In her eyes I could see an argument brewing, she was mad.

“Okay, I am sorry.” I pulled her to me and kissed her. “I’ve missed you.” I moaned into her mouth.

“I’ve missed you too,” she replied, reaching into my pants. I carried her to the bed, my tongue travelled the length of her neck, to her chest, and circled her nipple. She moaned and pulled my face back to her. I looked into her eyes, she smiled and I smiled too. I licked her ear as I found my way into her. “I love you,” she breathed. “I’ll always love,” she shouted as I thrust harder into her. “You are mine, even in death,” she bellowed as we climaxed.

As Joy dosed off next to me, my eyes drifted over to the reading table and I remembered the weird occurrences in my room. The blue plastic cup of tea had disappeared and so had the brown KFC paper bag. My heart thumped wildly at the realization, I went over and searched the table but there was clearly nothing there. Suddenly, my phone rang. I picked it up.

“Hello,” an unfa-miliar female voice sounded from the other end.

“Hello,” I replied.

“Is this Jude?”

“Yes.”

“This is Flo, Joy’s sister. I wanted to let you know that Joy is dead. She drank poisoned tea.”

“What! No way, she’s here with me.”

“She’s dead Jude.”

“Whoever this is...” The phone went off.

“Joy someone’s playing a stupid prank on me,” I jeered. “Joy.”

I pulled the blanket off her, and gapped. The phone slid through my hands and crushed on the white tile. My bed was empty! I sprinted out of the room.



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# COLUMNS

# AT A COST

What happens when tradition decides the fate of Zarah? A pretty damsel living somewhere in northern Nigeria, Zarah loses her place as princess of her father's heart to traditional principles, sojourning and scavenging until she finds her identity, but at a cost....

by  
AMAMI YUSUF



## EPISODE 5

She had had a fever for two days straight, and Mama was worried sick. She had practically moved into the little space occupied by the girl, ensuring that she got intensive care and attention. Zarah had been near unconscious for those two days, due to the fever. Even Sadiya had been worried. Mama and Sadiya hoped and prayed that she'd pull through. The times Zarah opened her eyes, they felt too heavy and she involuntarily and immediately shut them again. Mama went out and came back in, always holding the same frayed towel to massage her body, just as Sadiya came in most times, carrying a tray of different herbs in her hands. Most of the herbs had awful smells, while the others smelled neutral, but all of them had to be shoved down Zarah's throat.

Kamal had come to see her the first week of her being married, and made an obvious effort with his appearance. His hair well combed, his shadda well ironed, and his sandals well buckled. He walked into the compound, swinging his arms carelessly despite being nervous. He was confused on what door to knock at, as there were different huts in the compound before him. He was confused as well, if it were actually proper for him to knock on just any door, or if he was actually allowed to see the new bride. If there were traditions and customs governing that, he knew nothing about it.

Mama came out just then, and saw Kamal from a back view. She didn't waste time before realizing who he was. She could read his confusion and uncertainties from the way he stood. With his arms akimbo, she could tell that he had developed cold feet. He stood looking from door to door before him.

"Kamal", she called raising her voice at the end, and making it sound like a question or like she wasn't so sure. He jumped at the sound of her calm, low voice and turned around quickly. The compound was so quiet, he didn't think anyone was standing there, nor did he expect to hear his name out of the blues. He curtsied slightly, bowing his head in front of him, with his gaze on the ground beneath his feet. He rose his head briefly, and then lowered his gaze again.

"barka da yamma, mama". He released his words slowly, and as if, carefully too. He had intended to come since morning that Sunday, but had stalled and kept stalling till evening. Mama looked at him again, and flashed a little sweet smile, revealing not so even, not so white teeth. She looked older than her actual age, though most people could only guess her age. And it was also rumored that she was older than her husband, Mohammed. However, one could tell that beneath the very dark, and seemingly worn out skin, she was a beautiful woman with a warm heart. Kamal tried to smile as well, but his nervousness got the better of him. He looked intensely nervous, like he was going to cry, like he was going to laugh. And



this, his futile attempts to hide his nervousness, Mama understood well. She knew why he had come. She gave a knowing smile, of how such family members, how such brothers, and sisters alike, would want to see their sibling just days after the nikah. Everyone usually had a hard time adjusting to the new reality; especially if the bride was as young as Zarah. She felt a physical hurt just remembering Zarah. The child is so young, and naïve, and innocent. She thought to herself and let out a sigh. Within split seconds, she thought of many things; of Zarah and life she was now subjected to, of Zarah's scarred future, of Mohammed her husband, their husband. She shook her head a little too vigorously, as if shaking the thoughts out of her head, and thus, bringing herself back to reality.

“Ka zo ka gan kanwar sa ko?” She asked the obvious of his coming to visit his younger sister. He gave a shy nod, and put his eyes back to the ground.

“Ba za ka iya ganin ta ba.”

Kamal's puzzled expression made her explain further why he couldn't be allowed to see his sister. She told him of how the bride wasn't to be seen just yet. Of how tradition demanded the bride to be indoors and unseen for the first seven days of her being married. Of how especially the family she left behind were not to be as involved in her new life anymore. Of how she would have let him see his sister, even for a few minutes, but it was against custom and she didn't want to be an offender to the laws of culture. All the while as she explained, her smile was there, planted across her lips, brightening her eyes. She watched within seconds how his nervousness gave way to disappointment. He was too disappointed for words, and immediately, his eyes filled with tears. Before he could blink them away, the tears had dropped. His chest heaved a little as he sniffed. He turned slowly and began to leave quietly; his shadda echoing his movements and steps.

Mama looked on after him. She felt sorry for Kamal, and a feeling of guilt enveloped her. She had just lied to the boy and dashed his excited hopes of seeing his sister. As much as she hated what Mohammed had done to Zarah, she had to protect her home. She had to cover for her husband. She wouldn't dare let the whole community know just how much of a beast the man she was married to is; beating his new wife on her wedding night, when he should have understood she was young and scared and sad. She muttered under her breath and sighed.

Twenty-one days were more than enough for Zarah to decide she hated being married, especially to Mohammed. They were more than enough days for to begin to despise her father, and hate her brother. She wondered how quickly they had forgotten about her, and how none of them had come visiting, not even once. Mama was good to her always, taking care of her like one would for one's own child, talking to her often and consoling her whenever she cried, yet she hated being here and sought to leave. Sadiya, as well as the other younger children in the house barely spoke to her nor acknowledged her existence, except for Abdul who tried to engage her in conversation sometimes. Abdulateef, Mama's last child of four

children, whom everyone regarded simply as Abdul, was the same one for whom Zarah had had a pregnancy scare only a few months back. She barely came out of her room, but whenever she did and Abdul saw her, he always came to sit by her and talk to her, though she never as much as smiled nor responded. Things had gotten awkward so quickly, and she couldn't bring herself to move past that. She had not only become very quiet in the house, but she had lost her charming smile and cheerful spirit.

That evening, just like many others before it, clouds gathered like it was about to rain. Everyone speculated the rains were bound to start early that year, and everyone was pleased about it. The nomads couldn't wait for the land to be all green again, so they could take their cows to pasture. Zarah stood behind the huts, watching the sky, yet so absent minded. She remembered always watching the rain fall on the trees to the ground in her father's compound. She remembered loving the smell of the atmosphere just after the rain fell, or sometimes, when the rain wouldn't fall yet the atmosphere would carry the same fragrance. Kamal had told her a story once, of the big elephant who sat up above the clouds, and whenever it cried the humans knew it as rainfall. She remembered staring keenly up into the sky, hoping to see the big elephant which no one ever saw. She thought of Kamal then, and she felt sad all over again. She was determined not to cry, though her eyes were as clouded as the sky above. Just then, with a slight turn of her head, she saw Abdul coming towards her. He wore his favorite T-shirt and red trousers. She tagged it his favorite outfit because he wore it all too often. His unkempt appearance suggested he needed a haircut and probably an evening bath. He had just returned from playing football at the community field. His feet were red with dust, his trousers and shirt had brown-red patches, and his elbows had signs of scratches. He smiled as he got closer but she didn't smile back.

“Zarah...”

He began and then stopped, unsure of what he wanted to say. He knew she was sad and unhappy; he had even seen the tears in her eyes before she turned away, and hoped he could cheer her up even for a while. She stood, her back to him and not saying a word. He shifted close to her, and she shifted away from him. She suddenly didn't want to be standing there anymore, and so she turned to leave. It was almost time for the women to prepare dinner anyway- being the youngest, she was attached to both Mama and Sadiya in kitchen duties. Whenever it was one's turn to cook for the husband, Zarah had to tag along and assist. Mama had suggested this, saying Zarah was still too young to handle extreme kitchen duties and coking. Just as she was about to leave, Abdul told her that Kamal had asked after her. At the mention of her brother's name, the tears she had long been fighting came flooding and rolled down her cheeks in quick strides.

That evening, she was quiet as usual. It was Sadiya's week to cook and as much as she hadn't liked Zarah at first, she felt sorry for her. She decided that since she couldn't do anything to

make her situation better, she shouldn't at least make it worse. She had often seen her battling tears, but that evening she was especially drawn to her.

“ki na so ki gan Baban ki da iyale naki.” Sadiya asked, without the ring of a question. Zarah looked up at her and nodded. It was true that she missed her father and the other family members, and indeed wanted to see them. The mention of Kamal's name had further destabilized her, and then at that point, she cried again like the child she truly was.

“Na gane.” She said and genuinely seemed to understand, just as she said. They said nothing more to each other till they finished cooking, and Sadiya served Mohammed's meal. While they cooked, Zarah contemplated running away. She missed her father and brother more than ever, and she suddenly couldn't stand being in the house anymore. I'd hide in Kamal's room. She answered her question when she thought of where she'd go to.

The clock had just struck fifteen minutes past eight when she snuck out of the compound and began to run. She was afraid of the dark, but she was more determined to escape. She wore an elbow-length, black colored hijab and ran. She ran nonstop till she reached the road which led to her father's compound. She smiled a triumphant smile then and kept moving. She tiptoed as she got into the compound and headed for the back, where Kamal's room was. She was almost getting to the door when she bumped into a large pot. Aunty Halima always soaked her cooking pots after cooking, till the following morning, so they'd be easier to wash. Zarah froze and tried to quickly get a place to hide. Unfortunately for her though, someone came out just before she could hide. Hearing her name only made her more rooted to the spot she stood. She couldn't miss the agitation, irritation and annoyance in Aunty Halima's voice. Zarah turned slowly to face her, and she looked furious enough.

“Me ya kawo ki?” Zarah could hear Aunty Halima's raised voice above her fear. She opened her mouth but couldn't utter out any words, and soon shut it again. Shortly, the other family members began coming out one after the other. On seeing her father, her heart leaped. Her first instinct was to run into his arms, but after taking a step forward, she stopped.

“Gimbiya...” she heard her father's voice trail off. She had missed being called princess, but more so, she had missed her father. Though she missed him, she couldn't bring herself to run into his arms. She had concluded in her mind that he didn't love her, else he wouldn't consent to her being married out. She had pleaded and begged, made promises and swears, and yet none changed his mind. She was still drowning in her thoughts when she heard Aunty Halima's voice filling the quiet atmosphere.

“She has to go back. She cannot stay here.”

Imran said nothing at first, he was wondering what to say- if he should indeed say anything

at all. Just then Kamal came out, and in an instant, brother and sister were in an embrace, shedding tears against each other. Kamal was the first to break out of the embrace and turned to face his father.

“Baba, Zarah is not going back.” His question sounded rather like a statement and was extremely hopeful.

“Ai dole ne ta koma” Mama interjected sharply, turning to face Imran immediately.

“Baba...” Kamal began and stopped. All eyes were suddenly on Imran, waiting to hear his own verdict. Zarah prayed silently as she hoped that her father would allow her stay.

“She has to go back this night. She is a married woman now, she can no longer be allowed to stay here. Imran you know this...” Mama was still speaking when Imran’s loud commanding voice silenced her. All the while he had been silent.

“Halima, keep quiet.” It was obvious that he was angry and frustrated. He always avoided scolding his wife in front of the children, but his words had rolled out before he could have any control over them. He looked away from her and turned back to face Zarah- his expression softer, and so was his voice when he spoke. The only word that escaped his lips was “Gimbiya”. Zarah rushed towards him and got on her knees. Again she begged not to be taken away, and began to cry all over again. She knew how much her father hated to see her cry, and in fact always used it against him and in her favor. He felt heavy all over again. He knew what the right thing was, and intended doing just that.

“Let Gimbiya stay in her old room... We’d take her back in the morning.” Only Aunty Halima remained smiling by the time Imran completed his statement. He walked away shortly afterwards and walked back into his little hut. He couldn’t once again, bare to see his daughter’s hurt and disappointment- caused by his seemingly bad decisions. He so desperately wanted to make things right and amend his relationship with her, but somehow, he only seemed to make them worse. Zarah blinked and blinked, and with every blink came a drop of tear followed by another.

The following morning, as the first light of dawn appeared, Aunty Halima was at Zarah’s door- banging, just like old times. But this time, it was for Zarah to return to her husband’s house, rather than for chores. Zarah wasn’t sure which procession she would hate more- either her first procession as a newly wedded bride, or the second as the bride who ran away. She couldn’t understand why her father was so keen on having her go back; her tears had not even moved him at all. Imran had to be at work that morning, and Kamal had to go to school. Besides Imran’s excuse of having to be at work, he knew he couldn’t just bring himself to face Mohammed. They still met at work, yet no one talked to the other. Aunty Halima therefore volunteered to take her all the way back to Mohammed’s compound. His compound was a

thirty-minute walk from theirs. Zarah still prayed for a miracle to happen, for Aunty Halima to finally listen to her pleading and acknowledge her tears. When they got to the entrance of Mohammed's compound at few minutes past seven, Zarah knew then that no miracle was going to happen.

Mohammed was about leaving the house when they arrived. He didn't even notice she had left the house the previous night, nor did he know she was not in that morning. He looked on from Aunty Halima to Zarah as they approached, and said not a word. Aunty Halima greeted him, a wide smile evident on her face. He responded without a smile, and Zarah stood there just staring. Aunty Halima could easily cover for her if she wanted to, but she went on and on- of how Zarah had run away the previous night. Of how she had found her sneaking into Imran's compound. Of how, but for insistence that the right thing be done, Zarah wouldn't be there that morning. Aunty Halima was obviously adding fuel to already burning fire, and even Zarah had noticed that. Mohammed's frown relaxed into a half smile then, and he thanked Aunty Halima profusely. He realized Zarah didn't get to tell them anything about beating her the night she came into his house, and even if she did, he knew then that he'd have Halima's support at anything and everything. He also said he understood Zarah was still trying to adjust, and she was but a child after all.

"Zarahu, shiga ciki ki huta" he called her the endearing name again, and told her to go in and rest. She averted his eyes as she went into her room. Aunty Halima feigned a smile and left afterwards. Mohammed was already running late, and he too left without a word to anyone.

To be Continued...

#### **AUTHOR'S BIO:**

*In the beautiful city of Zaria, Kaduna State, Amami Yusuf, a writer, student, hairdresser and makeup artist, writes prose-fiction and poetry when she's not busy with school work or attending to clients' hair and faces.*

*Her love for Literature influenced her decision in undertaking a course at the department of English and Literary Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, for a Bachelors Degree.*

*As an upcoming young writer, she believes strongly in the power of the pen, addressing issues eating deep into the society and truths left untold through prose-fiction and sometimes, poetry.*

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# LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

With Ugbede Ataboh, Nigeria

## GHOST



The wise always emphasize the importance of avoiding strangers and strange looking people because they just might end up being your worst nightmare, and in exceptional cases, angels or demons. My own unfortunate encounter had nothing to do with the celestial atmosphere or anything unnatural, it happened as a result of greed and foolishness.

December last year was abuzz with festivities and late night gatherings. I threw myself into as many as I could to take my mind off the fact that I didn't have a boyfriend. I remember one of those parties at Wuse 2 on a night when the sound of contemporary Nigerian club bangers controlled our body movements and sizzling barbeque assailed our senses...

The lounge sit-out is crowded with flashy but mostly bogus people trying to establish social validation with their sophisticated gadgets and trendy outfits. Those of you who know me well know I cannot afford some high-end gadgets and outfits so I keep things simple but classy and always try my best to live within my means. As I chill with my girl Chichi who is always gracious enough to keep me company as she types and surfs away on her smart phone, I cannot help but eavesdrop on a conversation between two slay-queens behind me.

"My dear I can't still believe you and Kola are getting hitched, considering the circumstances surrounding your meeting." Slay-Queen 1 croons.

"Hmmm, who would have thought a guy I met at a club would end up being my man? As

in look at me now...Kola literally foots all my bills and takes care of my folks. I took a risk and followed him home on the first day we met and my dear I have no regrets” Slay-Queen 2 brags.

“I am so done with broke guys I swear, upon the good girl I dey form wetin I come gain ehn? It is even more painful when broke guys cheat and break hearts my dear. From today I am only gunning for a Jagaban...as in I want a Jagaban and God knows I need one” Slay Queen 1 wails.

“All this time I’ve been watching you invest your time and life in all those small boys when you should have been dating able and full blooded men. My dear you need a man, a jagaban! Ehen! I didn’t even give you gist...”

“Ugbede! Ha! This your antenna ehn...tapping gist without even batting an eyelash. I salute you, infact I am loyal to your amebo government” Chichi laughs as she pulls me out of the ongoing conversation behind me.

“My dear...I want a jagaban... I must include it in my prayer point. They are the way forward now oh, who hustlers help?” I declare rather dramatically.

“My dear na now day don break for you abi? Me I can’t shout. All these aimless boys out to suck our blood; if I am in a relationship, I need to gain on all levels. Not that I will cook for you, pamper you and let you nak me join. Abeg I jump and pass biko.”

“But Chichi, can I really date a guy I don’t love?”

“My dear who love help? Shine your eyes...speaking of which, I hope you don’t mind if I leave you here? I need to head home...I am very tired. Stay and mingle, you can book a cab when you are ready to leave”.

“Haba na! you want to leave me here?”

“Baby oya come and suck breast. Better stay and mingle or you think you will meet your Jagaban in your bedroom? Don’t see me off, stay here and socialize. Bye boo.” Chichi admonishes as we part with a warm hug.

I have no idea where to start from with this kind of crowd but let me go and sit beside that quiet looking guy in the corner. As I approach, I notice the two expensive phones placed beside his drink. Is it me or does he have scary looking eyes? Abeg I need to stop looking out for flaws in people. Our eyes lock for a second before he looks away feigning disinterest but not before I catch the look in eyes which confirm otherwise. I grab the seat beside him and wonder how it’s even vacant as I spot the key to a Mercedes Benz in his loose grip. Could this be an instant answer to my silent prayer? Father Lord you are awesome. A young Jagaban! I can’t believe my luck.

“Hi”

“Wuzzup” He responds in a deep voice laced with Yoruba phonetic interference.

Ah God! This guy sounds razz oh and his eyes... but can a woman really have it all? I need

to stop being picky abeg.

“Is your friend coming back or has she gone home?”

Oh so he has actually been watching me? Nice.

“She has gone home, so you were watching us?” I respond rather sexily. I didn’t even know I could sound this sexy.

“So it means you can hang out with me for the rest of the holiday. I am a straight forward person so I won’t drag this. I like you and you look and sound responsible which is what I am looking for in my woman.”

“You haven’t even told me your name and you are asking me to go home with you. You are forward and rude but surprisingly, I am not offended.” I respond as I bat my lashes.

“I am not rude; I am just a man who knows what he wants. I like you and I will have you because I have all it takes to make you comfortable and healthy as long as you keep me happy. Just don’t play the “I am not a *sheap* girl card” just tell me straight if you will go home with me or not”

Did he just say sheap instead of cheap? Abeg who English help? I have never followed a stranger home before and I never thought I ever would but what the heck? What is life without taking risks? Look at Slay-Queen 2 looking so peng and happy in her relationship just because she took a risk.

“Well, I am not cheap and I will not follow you home Mr...”

“Moses...call me Mo. I like you and I want you. So please don’t let us go back and forth with this”

He gets up and pulls me along with him. Am I really doing this? As we step out of the dimly lit lounge, the street lights lend me better illumination as I explore his physical features. A head full of rich black hair with well carved edges and beards accentuated by an aristocratic nose and full lips. My observation is cut short as he stares straight into my eyes, my heart skips a beat in fright and I feel unsettled. Why should such an attractive man invoke such a weird feeling from me? As attractive as his lips look, I can’t imagine kissing him passionately...whatever!

He stops in front of a black Mercedes Benz G wagon. Whoop! whoop! My God is able.

He hands me his car key. “Drive. You can drive right?”

“I can but I don’t want to”

“See babe, I am a very simple guy. As far as I am concerned, you are my woman regardless of the fact that I just shatted you up so relax”

Did he just say “shatted” instead of “chatted”? It is well oh! Abeg who queens English help? Na money be fine bobo las las.

“Come on, let’s go. I’ll drive us since you have refused to drive”

As we drive off I feel reckless, alive and a bit unsettled but what the heck! Wait, why are we



driving into a hotel?

“Erm... Why are we at a hotel? Are you married?”

“Nope, my mum is in town and I like to stay away sometimes to avoid her drama. Are you scared? You are an Abuja babe so don't act timid” He teases.

I force a giggle out of my vocal cords to calm my nerves. This is the first time I have ever pulled such a crazy and reckless stunt but at this point there is no turning back. My mind continues to race as we step out of his luxurious car and head toward a row of private apartments separate from the hotel building. We stop in front of Chalet 07 and he swipes an electronic key in front of the lock which opens immediately. I almost turn around to flee but I pull myself together and step into the dark apartment with Mo.

As crazy as this might sound, everything happens so fast, except the mad head this nigger blesses me with. He might not make my head spin or make my heart skip but he makes my clit sing, halleluiah!

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I am roused from slumber by rays of sunlight as they caress my eyelids and I sit up almost immediately when I suddenly notice a difference in the ambience of my surrounding. I look around the tastefully furnished hotel room and hear the shower running in the bathroom. I sink back into the pillow as my thoughts travel back to last night's events. Now I am convinced that the act of giving head is not just a talent but an art! This guy blew my mind. To think the first and last time I received head was 5 years ago from an ex. I pick up my phone grinning from ear to ear as I anticipate another visit “down south” and surf through social media pages to catch up on yesterday's news. The last time I was online was yesterday morning and I am sure a lot has happened since then. My thumb freezes over a sophisticated picture of a guy who looks exactly like Moses and the news headline beneath it makes my stomach sink and my heart stop – LAGOS BIG BOY FOUND DEAD IN LEKKI WITH TWO EMPTY BOTTLES OF SNIPER BESIDE HIS CORPSE. I jump out of bed and stand transfixed staring at the bathroom door with my phone frozen in my hand. Is it me or is the world around me spinning? I dash toward the bathroom like a mad person and push the door open. Oh my God! It is empty. I dash for the wardrobe and find it empty as well...the only personal belongings in this room belong to me! Oh my God! I can't breathe. Who can I call? Who will understand? Who will sympathize with me? No one.

My father once told me in a casual conversation that there are some things too heavy for the ears, some things one must carry to the grave. Mine is that I received spectacular head from a Ghost.

# THE OBSERVER

With Leo Muzivoreva, Zimbabwe



## GHOSTING: A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

When it is time to call it quits, couples have now resorted to changing their relationship statuses by disappearing entirely. It is the coward's way of breaking up, but technology that connects us can disconnect us in a digital split second. One day you are talking about the future lying naked in bed, the next day you are blocked on social media. Your texts are getting ignored, your phone is blocking their calls and it appears like they have moved to another country.

As technology affects all aspects of relationships, the ghosting or ghosted heartbroken singles are left wondering what they did wrong to push someone away without really breaking up or getting the closure they so desperately need.

With over 80% of millennials admitting to have been ghosted, or being the ghoster, the trend is rising daily among all demographics. Here are reasons why singles are ghosting big time and what to do instead, in my humble opinion...

1. You're a Coward. Gone are the days of post-it breakups and even email breakups. You know it's not cool to play Casper when it's not Halloween, but you don't have the guts to tell him or her it's over. Pull up your big boy or big girl pants and do the deed in person if geography allows. You might get a slap on the face or a confrontation you would prefer not to have, but have the conversation. You might even be able to salvage your relationship through healthy communication.

2. You have Met Someone Else. If your relationship has been on a downhill slide, you are probably open to meeting someone else. Often you are double-dipping and there is an overlap that your new squeeze and old squeeze don't know about. Rather than coming clean (which means yes, did you sleep with someone else?), you ease into a new relationship and ease out of the one you were in by going MIA. If you think your relationship is over, don't

stay in it for the sex. Make a clean break in person, via phone, anything except disappearing into the arms of another, as your soon-to-be ex will see new photos on Instagram and Facebook and expect some nasty texts to appear on your Smartphone.

3. You're not Feeling It. You have gone through the motions, have met each other's friends, talked about being exclusive, and then commit to monogamous sex. Maybe he or she was a great kisser and your texts bordered on sexting, but once you had sex together, it was plain bad. There is more to the relationship than sex only, but if you cannot imagine seeing them again after oh so boring sex, you ghost. Not nice. People get nervous the first time they have sex. Don't make it about bad sex when the next time it could be better.

4. You want to play the Field. Beginnings are exciting. The first text, the first kiss, the first weekend away, yes, butterflies still exist and everyone is on good behavior. You are having so much fun with your steady squeeze until you realize that you are attached when you really prefer to be single. Your significant other didn't do anything wrong. You truly like them, but the shiny new feeling wore off and there's another cute smile flirting with you right now. What do you do? You get out of the digital handcuffs, disappear and don't explain that you are not interested in spending the holidays with his or her family.

What should you do if your significant other ghosts you?

1. Do not Send Repeated Texts that Get Ignored. If the person you were involved with does not have the balls to end a relationship with a conversation, do not stalk them online or offline to get closure. It will push them away and they will confirm their feelings that you were crazy after all. Go no contact ASAP and text a friend instead of your lost lover.

2. Give the Ghoster Space. Sometimes a person just needs a break. When someone tells you they want a break, the initial reaction is that it's a breakup. After all, break is the first part of the word, right? Sometimes a person needs a few days to sort out their feelings, have some space to think about life without you and they return. They don't even consider it ghosting, but it hurts. The best thing you can do for yourself is stay busy with your friends while your ghosting lover is thinking it over.

3. Let him/her go. People who ghost know it's not the right thing to do, but everyone else is doing it and it's so easy. If someone you were involved with finds you to be that disposable, give them a one-way ticket out of your life. Ghosters have a habit of not ending it formally, because if their other options don't work out, they want to have the opportunity to return. It's not a love hiatus when it's not mutual and it's fine to call a ghoster out on their behavior. If he/she ghosts you once, you will get ghosted again.

4. Don't take it Out on The Next Person. Just because you have been ghosted, it does not mean it's acceptable and you should ghost the next person you meet. Treat others the way you want to be treated and let's stop all of this ghosting once and for all.

Have you been ghosted before?

# EPISODE 1: TALKING LOVE

With HRL Prince Saka Dbosz Junior



## MUSING ON THE L-WORD

The book of Corinthians tells us; “Love is patient, kind, it does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always perseveres.” This is still true today.

Love means different things to different people depending on the interpreter and modification; but love is still love. In a child’s world; love could simply be parental hug, while for a mature person, it may describe the concept as a commitment from a spouse or lover. A priest’s definition of love may mean compassion and don’t forget the familiar love thy neighbor dictum. For a banker, love may probably mean a passion for comfort and an unending love affair with money while a writer may go for the success of his artistic endeavors.

However, love is misunderstood as only being an attachment to the opposite sex, amorous feelings to be precise. But, what is love really about? Well, I ask the question and you figure it out.

For me; I am just musing on the L-Word.

Feedbacks to [sakajunior2018@gmail.com](mailto:sakajunior2018@gmail.com)

# **WSA REVIEWS**

**A Review of the June Edition of WSA**

## **Reviewers:**

**Samuel Otokpa**  
**(Nigeria)**

**Akinrinade Funminiyi**  
**(Nigeria)**

**Benny Wanjohi**  
**(Kenya)**

**Nehemiah Mukonya**  
**(Kenya)**

**Nnane Ntube**  
**(Cameroon)**

**Lateefah Kareem**  
**(Nigeria)**

**Ngalim Jusline Veeyeenyuy**  
**(Cameroon)**

**Namse Peter Udosen**  
**(Nigeria)**

**Esther Musembi**  
**(Kenya)**

**Aniyom Dien**  
**(Nigeria)**



# WSA JUNE EDITION REVIEW

Review of the poem *Imaginings* by Benny Wanjohi  
The verse 'Imaginings' takes us around the world through the mind of the poet, Maria Gandaho from Benin Republic. It is a beautiful piece portraying artistically the power of imagination.

The verse starts with a question that sets its pace, Where will I be in ten years or five years? The second line is an answer of a wish to travel the world. And the journey begins in the following verses where the poet touches on different topographies. With vivid description, he mentions Africa and Europe more precisely.

The verse ends with the three last lines that seem to tell us what enhances the poet's muse--a place she can use her pen and paper from the effect of her imaginative mind. It is a message every writer can resonate with since each has a place or thing that ignites their muse.



## Review of poem 'These Places, I call home' by Benny Wanjohi

The poem 'These Places, I call home' is written by Linda Mensah from Ghana. It is a four stanza poem with four lines in each, giving us a implication of an organized poet. She uses 'I' as the persona of her poem.

The poem has a widely relatable theme of 'home' that can play to its advantage of a larger audience out there. It talks of places and reasons that the poet qualifies enough for these places to feel home. In stanza one, she cites faces that love, in stanza two she cites the welcoming of tears and blossoming of smiles. In stanza three, she highlights the common strengths they used to fight those who condemned her. In stanza four, she looks into the finding of her peace.

The poet uses the first line of each stanza repetitively and very strategically to communicate why she finds these places to be home. These places were points of deliverance from her fear and shame. They rendered her peace and can call them her own. And that's what a home should be. It calls the readers to evaluate places where they feel at home and reasons that

makes them do so.

The poem title could have still been okay as short as 'These Places'.

## **RIVERS ARE NOT JUST WATERS BY OKAFOR MARYCYNTHIA CHINWE FROM NIGERIA**

Have you ever thought of rivers as Places?

Have you always viewed rivers as just waters flowing pass?

Have you ever thought of the mysteries of rivers?

Did it ever cross your mind that so many places are directly or indirectly named after rivers?

Chinwe's dazzling essay answers and says it all.

Rivers Are not Just Waters is a historical philosophical essay, published in the June edition of the Writers' Space Africa magazine, written by a Nigerian essayist, Okafor Marycynthia Chinwe. In this historical philosophical narrative essay, she succeeds to unravel the symbolic meaning of rivers. Chinwe presents rivers as not just waters, she highlights that there is a lot to rivers than just the water that flows. The masterpiece essay therefore appears in this order: the writers experiences to discovering the in depth of rivers, the enchanting mysteries of rivers (which reveals the philosophical part of the essay), and above all rivers as directly and indirectly names of places which justifies the title of the essay (which denotes the historical aspect of the essay).

Chinwe, starts by presenting her aged long innocence and one dimensional conception of rivers as just the flowing water visible to all. She states that, she grew up, knowing rivers as water and enjoyed looking at them, being in them and being on them. She equally knew rivers as sources of energy, sources of lives and as a habitat.

If you had already known that rivers are places, how was your experience? Chinwe presents her own experiences; she got to know rivers are places first by it naming a state in Nigeria (Cross River State), a town in Manitoba, Canada.

She further pinpoints the mysteries of rivers that not even science can expatiate. Such mysteries as why the chief source of water in her village had never drowned any native but would rather throw natives that attempted to drown into the banks or carry them to its shallow path, two popular rivers in Imo state (Nigeria), - Onummiri; which means clear and bright like morning and Nwoye; which means muddy and blurry like a rainy day never mix despite that they have a meeting point. There is also another river that goes up by dawn and down by twilight, two other rivers in Ogun state (Nigeria), one boiling hot and the other extremely cold and are regarded as myths of the two quarrelling wives of a king, yet, have a convergence point where the water that incessantly flows in and out is gratifyingly warm.

All these mysterious acts by rivers reveal the qualities of rivers as caring, loving, motherly, quarrelsome, compromising, reconciling e.t.c.

As concerns places named after rivers, they are either done so directly or indirectly. Directly, Mississippi, which originates from the Ojibwa word meaning – Great River is the longest river in the world and also a state situated in the South Eastern region of the United States of America. So many other places in the world are named from rivers like, Chippewa county in Minnesota after the Clearwater river and Clearwater lake, Democratic Republic of Congo formerly Zaire named from the Congo river formerly Zaire river, Benue state in Nigeria derived from the Benue river, and the river state bounded in the south by the Atlantic ocean and named after the many rivers that surround it.

Some places are named indirectly after rivers like, the Aroostook County, Maine, named after a Native American word meaning “beautiful river”, Moscow, Russia’s capital literally means the City of Moskva River just to name these.

I’ll crown it all by saying that Chinwe’s historical and philosophical narrative essay is gilded and worth qualifying as an emblematic representation of wisdom, which no doubt reveals that the writer carried out and intellectual research. Hence, the essay teaches us to look at things beyond the physical and deduce all the beautiful and symbolic meanings ascribed to them. Indeed if you still looked at rivers just as waters, then it is time you saw more than that and I strongly recommend Chinwe’s essay as a readable piece to all. It is an essay endowed with wisdom. To that effect, I personally score Chinwe a committed scholar.

Reviewed by Ngalim Jusline Veeyeenyuy- Cameroon

## **CALABAR: THE ANCIENT CITY COMES ALIVE! WRITTEN BY NAMSE PETER UDOSEN FROM NIGERIA**

Calabar: The Ancient City Comes Alive!, Is a socio-historical descriptive essay written by a famous Nigerian essayist Namse Peter Udosen, published in June issue of the Writers’ Space Africa magazine. This alluring essay starts as a historical narrative which presents a historical background of the great city of Calabar, then the sociocultural life in Calabar in a descriptive style. It is an eclectic essay as it dribbles the narrative and descriptive distinctively all through the essay to clearly unveil the historical and social capabilities of the great city of Calabar.

First we begin with the historical which presents the etymology and development of Calabar. Calabar is a coastal city in the south region of Nigeria and at the same time the capital of Cross River state. It is a city with rich and bountiful sociocultural and political antecedents. Calabar means: “come and live and be at rest.” Calabar was originally named “Akwa Akpa”



with a captivating commercial life as early as the 15th century; it has an international seaport known to the world since the 16th century. It was a major trade center during the slave trade as millions of slaves were transported via the Calabar seaport. AKwa Akpa was named Calabar by the Portuguese explorer Diogo Cao.

In the social domain, Namse presents Calabar as the first to boast a social club in Nigeria—the Africa club; it also hosted the first competitive football, cricket and field hockey games. Namse adds that, the glory of Calabar has been restored by Mr. Donald Duke with his tourism revival in the year 2000.

Calabar always boom and breed life in December through the Calabar festival which is described as the longest and subtly distinct amusement feast in all of West Africa that congregates people the world over extolling cultural dances, music and theater.

This festival which usually lasts the whole of December always commences on the eve of the first of December with lighting of the Christmas tree by the state governor. Activities that mark the festive season include; HIV/AIDS walk, musical concerts featuring top ranking national and international artistes, colourful cultural parade, traditional boat regatta, Christmas village and a Christmas camp for children and fashion fairs. These make Calabar an excellent tourism brand in Nigeria.

The essayist proceeds by presenting a vivid description of his own experience in the Calabar festival. His first stop is at First Point of Call bar where he presents the delicious Calabar delicacy of fish pepper soup, prepared with mud fish, giant catfish, well spiced and steamed with herbs like Ntong and Utazi.

He then proceeds to the Christmas village which he presents as a dual life village: first life is during the day where one meets the gifts, crafts, electronic, business life of all calibers which all die by twilight giving way to the second life. This time the environment is filled with the excellent aroma from grilling fish and assorted meats, girls sexily dressed, live music, and live artistes both international and national.

The essayist also visits the Marina resort and enjoys the boat trip which he signals is not meant for the chicken hearted though a breathtaking experience.

Our wonderful essayist drills us to the pinnacle of the festival which is the carnival, qualified as Africa's largest street party which involves gorgeous ladies, macho guys all in excellent costumes belonging to different band groups. The band groups include; Masta Blasta band, Passion 4, Bayside, freedom band, and seagull band. Initially Passion 4 and Bayside band had been leading but this edition and last two which we all attend with our essayist, is topped by the Masta Blasta band. After performance, follows party, party with the carnival together with celebrities as well as live musicians and music in attendance.

The writer notes that he had equally attended a practice session and it's usually energy consuming. Preparations he states usually begin in June, so I guess preparations are currently ongoing against December 2019. He insists that, the carnival remains the zenith of the festival and every other event and anticlimax.

In fact as the title suggests, Calabar the great city always comes back to live every December. December thus marks a period of rebirth in this wonderful city.

I personally adore the essayist's use of vivid description to present the activities at the festival live. In fact, reading through these details, I could see, touch, feel, hear, smell and why not tastes every event and food in the festival. Also, Namse succeeds to journey along with the reader throughout the festival, I found myself in Calabar at some point though I have never visited Nigeria. I attended the festival for a month as I read especially the dual faced Christmas village, which I so much love especially the face at twilight. I guess every other reader should.

Namse to me remains a distinct and insightful descriptive essayist. It is a most read. I look forward to visiting Calabar live come December 2019 to enjoy fish pepper soup and as the meaning of Calabr implies come and live life to the full and have rest.

Reviewed by Ngalim Jusline Veeyeenyuy- Cameroon

## **THE REVIEW OF "JUST ANOTHER PLACE", BY EGWUATU OGECHUKWU PEACE, FROM NIGERIA.**

The flash fiction "Just Another Place" written by Ogechukwu Ewguatu is an interesting story and quite a familiar drama.

The writer had just arrived Nairobi- Kenya, yet in the taxi, she looked through the window in admiration of the city. The writer in this story is represented as a tourist or one whose work requires traveling round the world {if that is the case, I think I want to be employed too! I really would love to see what the outer world looks like, if I could, and by outer world, I mean the whole world.

### **Interview Review**

By Namse Udosen (Nigeria)

Sandra brings a refreshing new style to interviewing in this chat with Nnane Ntube.

The interview is written in prose form and is divided into 12 chapters. The chapters are well woven into a story the xrays the life and literary exponents of Nnane Ntube.

"Of Many Beginings" gives a historical insight to her journey into writing and poetry.

The next chapter takes off with her exodus from paper to board. It tells us how teaching has

influenced teaching has influenced her poetry.

Her activism and advocacy works as means of her giving back to the society is the theme of chapter three. In Chapter four and five Nnane talks about her Pan-Africanism. She presents a new ideal for writing about Africa. She passionately talks about her vision for a new Africa. Chapter six presents her works in numbers and much more.

A panoramic perspective on poetry and its potential for shaping the world is the focus in chapter seven and eight.

In chapter nine, the need to fan the wanning embers of poetry is established and she provides hearty advice for African poets; “read more”!

In chapter eleven she bares her mind on the forth coming African Writers Conference where she will be a panelist.

The interview concludes with the learning curve the Writers Space Africa group has provided for African writers.

It was an interesting read devoid of the boring monologues of regular interviews.

#### **THE REVIEW OF SOMEWHERE NEW BY JOSEPHINE O. ATTAFAUH, FROM GHANA.**

Somewhere New by Josephine, has a beginning quite similar to Just Another Place written by Ogechukwu, but Josephine was more descriptive and specific.

The persona had just moved into a new city which appears to have beautiful tall edifices and neat, unlike where he's from. He participated in a scholarship test of English and Science which he won, that led him out of his home town to this new city.

After the persona had implied how beautiful this city was. And how neat it always seems because there were no trees in that area, he gave a succinct description of the effect of fallen leaves on the soil, I quote: “where trees filled every where and their leaves caused a beautiful commotion with the soil.”

More than just moving into ‘somewhere new’? I think this flash fiction is used to make certain contrast to a certain kind of societies. Perhaps like Piano and drums, and/or Hamlet and the Hammer.

Trees played the role of shade for people where he's from, he narrates how their fathers and grand-fathers would seat under the tree while they wait patiently for food to be served. But this new place was different from his home town, no one ate under any trees, rather they had beautifully designed furnitures which made him contrast again if even the best carpenter from his home town could make any of the furnitures.

The part of the story that caught my attention the most was when he saw a boy 'plant a kiss' on the lip of a girl and no body cared. That is typically non-African, I mean, who does that!?! In Africa? Hehehe. He truly must have been to Somewhere New

It's a good read, I could relate to the story line, easily. Good diction, straight to the point, interesting story.

## Short Stories

REVEIWER – Lateefah Kareem

Stories are fables, fiction, non-fiction works which allow our creative genius to be put to work, we see, imagine and create a whole movies inside our head when we read a story. This June issue has two short stories titled 'DRAMA AT THE VILLAGE KOLANUT FOREST' and 'THE HEART IS A PLACE TOO'

STORY 1: DRAMA AT THE VILLAGE KOLANUT FOREST BY Fomutar Stanislaus – Cameroon

This story has a title that gives it away so before you start reading you know a little of what to expect. I believe that is one very important part of writing a captivating tittle that encompasses your content.

This short story highlights the ordeal of two boys in the village kolanut forest. Although it is not considered a taboo to take from the trees if it belongs to your lineage, this boys whose father considers it stealing regardless go ahead to still pluck kolanuts from the trees, having become climbing experts and having a code of conduct for their operations they are more less professionals in the act without ever getting cut especially by someone they dread the most "lanjo" whom according to the boys is the worst person to catch them in the act for he will take them to their father immediately and if there is one thing they dreaded more than ladjo catching them and beating them it was their father finding out.

This short story was a very interesting read as it highlighted boys and there mischiefs and exactly how the most trusted of friends could still abandon you in trouble just as lemfon had abandoned the narrator in the forest when lanjo had caught them

But I think the picture used for the story in the magazine was not well suited, now I do not know how the pictures get chosen but I believe the picture should illustrate the write up within which it does not.

Also throughout the story the name of the narrator was not mentioned, the story was short and explicit yet I cannot attach an identity to the narrator as he had no name. A name gives a character an identity and that was missing

It was in summary a lovely read. Well done.

## **STORY 2: THE HEART IS A PLACE TOO By Kimberly Chirodzero – Zimbabwe**

Reviewer: Lateefah Kareem

The heart, every time I see titles like this I expect to read a love story but this was different, it was love but it was not romance. I was sort of disappointed to not be reading romance but then the story was emotional and passed for its title regardless.

The story revolves around few days in the lives of a father and his daughter. The father whom had abandoned his children (twin) for greener pastures had to return to bury his son who died of leukemia and decided to take his daughter who hated him on his son's bucket list trip. She takes the trip and realizes it was not just a journey to fulfill her dead twin's wishes but also a journey to heal her and give her father another chance.

This story revolves around forgiveness, grudges, second chance and family. But I believe it could have been presented better, it is a short story yes, but there is a methodology of narrating short stories so it does not end abruptly, hence the story was a little too abrupt, the characters were not well introduced and it talked more of the dead character than the characters alive that we needed to really know

But in summary it was a good read.

Well done!

### **A Review of "The Book" by Wakini Kuria**

Reviewed by Aniyom Dien (Karuiki Karis)

This is a story about an avid reader who forgot herself in the grasp of the book she was reading.

It reflects how humans can easily be distracted from the physical world until there's a loud bang that wakes us from our slumber. Sometimes, we wake up or realize our 'carelessness' when the pendulum swings too far.

The piece also reflects the immortal nature of writings and books. For as long as this world exists, books will always be opened and always will be read.

Wakini Kuria is a brilliant Writer; this literary work fulfills all elements of Flash Fiction.

### **REVIEW OF "THE VILLAGE" BY AKINRINADE FUNMINIYI ISAAC**

"The Village" is a poem written by an ardent Cameroonian poetess – Ngalim Justine Veeyeenyuy. The poem is structured into three stanzas. The first stanza has six (6) lines, the

following stanza has fifteen (15) lines, and the last stanza has three (3) lines.

In 24 lines, the persona is able to depict the true nature of a village. Isn't the Village just perceived as a rural habitation? Reading this poem will make you think beyond what you know and see beyond the villages you've been to.

In stanza one, the persona writes about the two sides of a coin that can be found in a village. The positive/good and the negative/bad sides of a village. The persona isn't bias in depicting what the Village is all about. Isn't life itself in twos? Up and down, right and left, male and female, positive and negative, good and evil, love and hatred, life and death, head and tail, white and black, rich and poor...

Line one to four shows the tail end in a village. The dilapidated structures, leaking roofs that part ways for rainfall and scorching sun, discoloration of materials and items like metal, zinc, alloy, and dresses decorated with round and zigzag holes on shirts and blouses, skirt, gowns and trousers of the dwellers. This shows most villagers aren't well-to-do. The last two lines show how the Village has food and fruits in abundance to the extent that they're overflowing.

Food indeed plays a major role in the existence of human beings. As no one will want to stay in the Village if not for the benefits enjoyed by the habitats. The persona drives home her point with the use of vivid visual imageries.

In stanza two, the persona greatly employs the use of onomatopoeia coupled with alliteration in presenting to the ears of the readers a rhythmic audio imagery of what makes a village, a village.

The persona speaks of sound produced by domestic animals and insects that can be seen here and there in the Village. The likes of birds, chickens, Guinea pigs, goats, sheep, rats, cats, bees, cricket, pigs... Also, the thick buses with endless ends, the rivers and streams with no definite beginning and end. All these can only be seen in a village.

In the last stanza, the persona gives a concluding statement laced with metaphor of how she feels the Village is nature itself (based on the existence of abundant natural items). Isn't the Village a place to be? The whole server of life to towns and cities. Indeed, there won't be a town without a village.

In all, the persona makes one to know beyond what's known, and see beyond what's seen. Have you ever been to the village? If no, you've got to be there. You've got to wine and dine with nature in its entirety.

The Village is a beautifully baked poem that makes one to long and have a taste of what the Village has to offer. Both to the dwellers and those outside the Village.

## **REVIEW OF “NO OTHER KENDU BAY” BY AKINRINADE FUNMINIYI ISAAC**

“No Other Kendu Bay” is a poem written by an amazing Kenyan Writer – Nickson O. Magak. As the name implies, the poem is like no other in its uniqueness, structure, and diction. The poem has in total 22 lines. It’s structured into five (5) stanzas. The first stanza has six (6) lines, the second stanza has four (4) lines, the third stanza has three (3) lines, the following stanza has four (4) lines, and the last stanza has five (5) lines. The persona employs the usage of hyperbole, personification, alliteration, simile, imagery, rhymes, among others.

In verse one, the persona speaks highly of a place that’s bigger than its name. A place that’s greatly described with vivid imageries. He starts by writing about the history of Kendu Bay. Are you wondering of where Kendu Bay is and what it’s all about? According to research, Kendu Bay traces its origins to 1912 when Arab traders pitched camp in the area. Kendu is roughly translated to Dholuo, the English word “kind” which means “between”. Locals pronounced the word “Kindu” and it became the name of the town. This means a place found in the middle (for it’s situated in the semi-arid plain of Karachuonyo).

Kendu Bay is a bay and town in Kenya. It’s located on the shore of Lake Victoria along Katito-Homa-Bay road. It’s the headquarters of the district Kisumu, the largest urban centre in Kenya’s western region. It’s the part of Rachuonyo North District in Homa Bay County. Kendu Bay is also popularly known as the birthplace of Barack Obama Sr. The father of U.S erstwhile president, Barack Obama.

He also writes of how Kendu Bay is his origin, this shows the poem is quite personal to the persona.

In verse two, the persona continues with the description of Kendu Bay. He speaks of an environment that’s devoid of mud. An atmosphere full of trees that spread and wave their wide and giant leaves to the west and east. A serene and peaceful place that shows the wellness of the inhabitants.

In verse three, the persona writes about the religious beliefs of Kendu Bay’s dwellers. Of how Christians and Muslims raise their voices up high in the sky without disturbing each other. Of how they live in harmony without stepping on each other’s toes and without proving that one religion is better than the other. Isn’t Kendu Bay simply heaven on earth?

In verse four, the persona speaks of Kendu Bay’s market place that’s filled with laughter, people walking about with no disturbances, the pretty women that can never been seen elsewhere, the joyful children, and the peace-filled atmosphere whose depth has no end.

In last verse, the persona talks about the bookworm spirit that's found there. The natural and artificial amenities like the road, water, air, large expanse of lands, and land of uncommon people. All these bring the thought of Kendu Bay to the persona's memory.

There's truly no other Kendu Bay because of its distinctive features and attributes. The descriptions present the place as a paradise. A place anyone on earth will love to live there and die there, if death exists there.

It's a brilliant piece of art that brings to life a place like no other – Kendu Bay.

### **THE REVIEW OF SOMEWHERE NEW BY JOSEPHINE O. ATTAFAUH, FROM GHANA.**

Somewhere New by Josephine, has a beginning quite similar to Just Another Place written by Ogechukwu, but Josephine was more descriptive and specific.

The persona had just moved into a new city which appears to have beautiful tall edifices and neat, unlike where he's from. He participated in a scholarship test of English and Science which he won, that led him out of his hometown to this new city.

After the persona had implied how beautiful this city was. And how neat it always seems because there were no trees in that area, he gave a succinct description of the effect of fallen leaves on the soil, I quote: "where trees filled every where and their leaves caused a beautiful commotion with the soil."

More than just moving into 'somewhere new'? I think this flash fiction is used to make certain contrast to a certain kind of societies. Perhaps like Piano and drums, and/or Hamlet and the Hammer.

Trees played the role of shade for people where he's from, he narrates how their fathers and grand-fathers would sit under the tree while they wait patiently for food to be served. But this new place was different from his hometown, no one ate under any trees, rather they had beautifully designed furniture which made him contrast again if even the best carpenter from his hometown could make any of the furniture.

The part of the story that caught my attention the most was when he saw a boy 'plant a kiss' on the lip of a girl and no body cared. That is typically non-African, I mean, who does that!?! In Africa? Not at all. He truly must have been to Somewhere New

It's a good read, I could relate to the story line, easily. Good diction, straight to the point, interesting story.



## **A REVIEW OF “PLACES” BY WANANGWA MWALE FROM ZAMBIA.**

**CATEGORY: POETRY**

**REVIEWER: Nnane Ntube.**

Wanangwa’s “Places” is a very rich piece, well structured.

It is a five stanza poem. Stanzas 1,2,3, 4 have 3 lines each, stanza 5 has 5 lines.

The Poet makes use of enjambment by making the meaning of each poetic line flow as the lines progress. This suggests the poet’s orderliness, her discipline and sense of organization. Though the reading of the poem gives a sensation of urgency as suggested by the running lines.

The poem is a free verse. It embraces the rhythm of natural speech. A well disciplined free verse with exact choice of words to express the thematic concerns.

The poem “Places” makes use of a caesura in line 2; stanza 1, line 2; stanza 2, line 1; stanza 5, line 4; stanza 5, line 5; stanza 5.

From a general look at the poem, one can note that the persona looks at each stage of life to be a place. These stages are chronologically classified:

Stanza one opens with an affirmative response “I have been there before”. This response suggests a second person in the poem who is invisible, just a listener. With the above response, the persona dives into a retrospective mood where she views her childhood and makes us know of her dreams and hopes in a beautiful place that harbours feelings of “a bright future”.

Stanza two expresses growth, the ordeal of a teenager that leads to the “crushing” of dreams she had in childhood. Here the place no longer has its sparkling beauty as the light starts dying out gradually in the face of life’s challenges.

If life loses its luminosity, depression easily creeps in. Stanza 3 expresses the next place where the persona finds herself, a place of depression where only pain and fear dominate. Here, we see the persona in a complete darkness of mind that suggests her place at that point in time.

Stanza four unveils the actual cause of the persona’s depressed state. She relates it without hesitation “I have been to a place of limitation...”, highlighting that society has limitations with regards to women. This suggests the notion of gender discrimination that frustrates many women in the society.

Stanza 5 is very expressive and rich in thoughts. The first line underlines the persona’s strug-

gle, her belief to make, her trust in her abilities, her determination to keep pushing, and her win, the great achievement.

Line 2 (stanza 5) is a revival, a regain of belief, dream, a deep breath of release from depression.

Line 3 (5) opens with a coordinating conjunction “And” that expresses a sense of continuity, the persona tells us that the challenge to achieve her dreams will be tackled orderly.

In line 4 (stanza 5), she tells us the process in which the dreams are realised.

Line 5 (stanza 5) gives a firm reassurance that the persona has regained her home, the bright future she had envisaged. This concluding line leaves the persona happy and full of dreams in a new bright home.

Home to the persona is a state of being, both psychological and physical.

Manangwa’s poem “places” makes a good read. Its fast running lines take the reader in a fast paced journey.

I think line 3, stanza 3 can be As pain and fear takes charge

A well penned poem.

### **A REVIEW OF THE POEM “WICKED SHE”.**

**AUTHOR: WAKINI KURIA**

**COUNTRY : KENYA**

**REVIEWER : Nnane Ntube.**

“Wicked She” was first published in July 2017 by Writers Space Africa.

It is a strict structured poem with very disciplined diction and line arrangement that suggest the poet’s skillful knowledge in the art.

The poem is made up of 4 stanzas of equal lines; 7, making a total of 28 lines. The last lines of each stanza are marked with end-stop (!) contrary to the rest of the lines that are heavily enjambed. By creating an equal balance of lines per stanza, the poet seems to pass across a beautiful message – everyone has equal chance to life. This message will be discovered as the poem unravels.

Firstly, the title “Wicked She” is telling. It presents us to a girl, a “she”, and her quality –

wicked. Thus, the reader is inquisitive to know what makes her wicked.

Secondly, the poet makes use of repetition at the first two opening lines of each stanza and the last line of each stanza. This puts forth two parallel states; a state of ignorance highlighted by the words “Nobody suspects”, and a state of knowledge presupposed by the word “confess” – we confess what we know or has witnessed.

It is these two parallel states that take us in a ride with the poet. To successfully do that, the poet adopts two points of view: the third person omniscient point of view (“she”, “the bird”) and the first person point of view (I).

Thirdly, each stanza presents the flow of thoughts and action of the person the persona is talking about.

Stanza 1 unveils with a bird singing and the hypocritical nature of the person the poet is talking about in the poem, the “she”. The poet takes us into her mind to uncover her evil thoughts which are contrary to her action. This explains the duality of human nature, its hypocritical stand.

The stanza ends with the poet’s promise to confess the evil thoughts of the girl.

Stanza two opens with the bird singing and the girl’s rising anger that makes her resolve to destroy the bird’s happiness. The persona tells us that the girl’s evil plan is empowered by congealed feelings of competition, jealousy and hatred – all traits found in human beings that make them sow seeds of discord.

The persona reaffirms that she will confess the evil deeds.

The third stanza emphasizes that the bird did not stop singing. It brings into lamplight the cunning nature of the girl as she struggles to get hold of the bird. The words “smile, coax, bribe,…” create an image in the mind of the readers and expresses the struggle and techniques used in luring the bird. Line 4 depicts the death of the bird. Line 5 & 6 lament the act of the girl which seems to be a depiction of the true nature of humans who hate and kill for no good reason. The poet’s admiration for the bird is seen as she gives to the bird a place of authority through the appellation “sire”.

The stanza closes with the persona’s desire to confess later on.

The last stanza amplifies the ignorance of the world. The verb “sang” makes us understand that the bird is dead, painfully killed by the girl who embodies mixed feelings towards the bird. The stanza closes with the desire of the person to confess afterwards.

Wakini Kuria’s poem “Wicked She” can be categorized as an ecopoetry, poetry that is engaged in the protection of the rights of nature and in the condemnation of violent acts against

nature.

In her poem she puts on guard human acts and questions rash decisions to destroy nature.

Through the first, second and third stanzas, the poet gives an impression that she will confess later. At the end of the last stanza, she still gives the same impression. One may think that her confession will come in after the horrible deed has been done. Each observation in each stanza is her confession.

The talented Kenyan poetess projects a place which is not safe for birds. She uses the verb “sings” to portray the bird’s calm, peaceful and happy state of mind which is disrupted by man’s wicked intentions. It’s paradoxical to know that the “she” as highlighted by the persona, is not friendly, gently, motherly, protective as her nature suggests.

Reading through this poem, I saw reasons to auto evaluate myself and to vow not to harm birds or nature in general.

Wakini’s poem makes an enticing read.

## **REVIEW OF CAUGHT ON THE RUNWAY BY ESTHER MUSEMBI AND BENNY WANJOHI**

This a poem by Kenyan, Joy Rita. In the first stanza the persona talks of the breaking of the day. She is in a bank stealing from the night safes--probably where the money is kept at night. Folks come in signified by the shoes: pointed heels and loafers. These are the owners of the money--the bank workers and customers. They send in glances here and there and she thinks she might be caught. However, she miraculously escapes.□

In the second stanza, she escapes into the city. Into the slums to be more specific; demolished iron sheets, the arena of heaped litter... She is loaded with money and is always drunk since the robbery which is some kind of camouflage, freakishly faking the free me, gingerly hidden in slum bars. This is dangerous since it might tip her away. Folks in slums are poor and can’t afford to drink daily. As she continues to enjoy her money a new lover lures her to himself.

In the third stanza, she travels to the beach with her lover and she has a lot of fun there. But as the poem ends it turns out that this lover of hers called Victor is a bobby(policeman) who hushes her crime. He was an undercover police.

The poet explores three places and their happenings; the bank in the city, the slums, the beach at the coast and uses a crime story to do this. Joy gives me English poetry kind of vibes by the way she arranges her stanzas and lines. For example, the 1st line, the morn charm... and also the use of British slang, Bobby which means police.

## REVIEW OF A MIGHTY BLACK NATION BY ESTHER MUSEMBI

A Tale of a Mighty Black Nation is a satirical poem by Joy Abraham from Nigeria. It's a 3 stanza poem; the first stanza has 4 lines, second 5 lines and the last one has 12 lines. Loaded with euphemism and downright hilarious, it addresses the never-ending problem of corruption, in particular, bribery of law enforcement. I love the way she starts off and ends the 1st stanza, here, which draws us into particular circumstances and place(our roads). She's emphasizing that in this place(here) it would not do any good for the audience(citizens) to read a corporal their rights. From experience, this only serves to aggravate the problem.

As much as it's a poem, it is also a creative narration depicting the true face of corruption on our roads by using very vivid visual imagery and euphemism. Behind is just a powdered way of saying buttocks. It has become a widely accepted stereotype that people with better features especially ladies usually have it easy in life. In our poem, big buttocks will buy us freedom anytime. It's a euphemism that connotes connections as we fondly call them in Africa. When you get into trouble, which famous/influential person do you call? Or is your behind big enough to buy you freedom? She brings this out wonderfully in stanza 2 in the case of her friend who uses her great grandfather's name as her big, generous behind to bail herself out of trouble.

It might seem like a rude joke but it's awfully rare to sight a poor person who's fat, so to say, let alone having a big behind. That's the message being communicated in stanza 3 line 1. The persona has humorously put themselves in this category. He/she doesn't have a big behind like Cindy who waves hers like a magic wand to gain all kinds of favours. 'We borrow a famous behind sometimes, but can't wear it beyond two sunsets.' This heavily worded line brings it to our attention that favours are very short lived. A big behind will bail you out today but come tomorrow, you are on your own unless you grow a big behind overnight. The persona goes on to narrate an awfully exaggerated incident where a policeman peeps into his bicycle and starts to ask pointless questions. He's cornered, and of course, he won't read him his rights. And because he's a peasant with no big behind, he buys his freedom in pain and shame and hopes for a future when he'll be an upright behind and render all other behinds useless. Ironic yes?

It's a poem that is truly relevant. Anyone who's ever had a run in with the police especially in Africa will relate very well with the message. At least for me, it came a day after I was stopped by a police officer because my driver was dreadlocked and could possibly have been hiding drugs. Nonetheless, in pain and shame, like the persona, I had to buy my freedom. Well, well-done Joy!

## Two Orange Hills

This is a 4-stanza poem written by Tydale Abigail from Nigeria. It tells of a road used by villagers over a long period of time - "And bicycles and feet have built it's years." The poet relies on the use of imagery throughout the poem.

It is a tale of an ancient village - thatched fence... papa's central hut. The persona can be said to be a young child - tells us of how s/he would dangle in the wind and then together with friends climb to the closest peak of the Orange Hills.

Villagers here live harmoniously, and they are industrious. The road is walked by hunters heading away from home... The persona and friends would watch the villagers hurry past. The Two Orange Hills looks like a very fascinating place.

Review by Mukonya Mukonya

## He Said

This is a 6-stanza poem written by Joy Wanjiku Ng'ethe from Kenya. It is a tale of love between two lovebirds, one of whom isn't aware of what love is. Each of the stanzas is made of four lines, except the sixth that has five. Imagery and exaggeration is what the poet uses to convey her message.

The first stanza makes us understand that the two lovebirds have been visiting different places for some time now. The persona makes us realize that this love makes her 'feel crazy' - made me feel like a wayward child... a pet that needed to be kept in check.

In the second stanza, the persona makes us know that they visited Lagos and her lover could not risk leaving her. That he wanted to be with her every time everywhere. The poem tells us of how they visited Nairobi, Paris, Italy, Morocco, and Egypt.

At some point, the persona feels fed up, and wants to go back home where she'll feel 'sane' again.

The last two stanzas make us understand that there is no perfect relationship. There are always struggles which people have to go through.

Great poem.

Review by Mukonya Mukonya

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