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WWSA



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Host, 2019 African Writers Conference

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EDITORIAL

It would probably take you more than 5 minutes to fully digest the richness of this month's WSA edition, but even if you choose to speed read, in 5 minutes you'd be mesmerized by how time flies, how time is captured, and how time is man's most precious commodity.

And yes, you will be dazzled by some sights and colours of Nairobi Kenya, where we hosted the prestigious African Writers Conference 2019.

Yay, we did it!

Don't forget to drop us a line or two. We love to read from you, too.

Sandra Oma Etubiebi,
Chief Editor,
WSA





Breaking stereotypes in Nairobi ***African Writers Conference in Perspective***

The second edition of the African Writers Conference (AWC) held in Nairobi, Kenya, came to a successful end on the 28th of September 2019. The AWC, held in collaboration with Writers Guild Kenya (WGK), was slated in the list of activities scheduled for the 22nd Nairobi International Book Fair, an event organised by the Kenya Publishers Association (KPA).

The theme of this year's conference was tagged "Cultural stereotypes in African Literature: Rewriting the narratives for the 21st Century Reader." The conference saw an attendance by literary enthusiasts from fourteen different countries (Tanzania, Uganda, Comoros Islands, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Nigeria, Mauritius, South Sudan, Kenya, Egypt,

Zimbabwe, Mayotte, Canada, and the USA).

The conference began with an address by Gabriel Dinda, founder of WGK. He expressed his delight at having Kenya host the conference this year and spoke on the need for greater collaboration in Africa's literary scene.

After this, the Chairman of the Kenya Publishers Association (KPA), Lawrence Njagi



Chairman of the KPA, Lawrence Njagi

gi, commended the AWC on the effort in bringing together nationals from different countries in Africa. He spoke on the need for literature to extend its reach to the percentage of Africans who are not avid readers/lovers of literature. The Chairman also shared his desire to see more students of tertiary institutions involved in endeavours such as the AWC. In his own word, "we need to change the way we spend our time. Read that book and reduce your frus-

tration levels. Acquire information to become better thinkers."

After the formalities surrounding the opening of the conference were observed, the AWC had the honour of hosting a sit-down session with AMKA Literary Forum whose mandate is to improve women's participation in literature in Kenya. AMKA with the full support of Goethe Institute, gave the chance for questions on publishing, the AWC, men's involvement in literature, the African Writers Residency, as well as the origin story of the AWC. These questions were adequately answered by the duo of Gabriel Dinda and Anthony Onugba.

When these activities had come to an end, lead speaker, Sabah Carrim from Mauritius, led the conference in an intellectually stirring speech which stressed the importance of stereotypes in literature as well as our daily lives. Carrim pointed out that the demand for writers to create seemingly perfect stereotypes is simply "boring." The Mauritian writer noted that it is the inconsistencies in characters that make for a story worth telling.

In making her points and advocacy for the use of stereotypes, Carrim noted that "stereotypes do to a certain extent depict our reality." She mentioned having perused a Kenyan Daily and finding stereotyped stories found in literature splayed all over the pages of the Daily. A very interesting point made by Carrim was that "if critics and scholars are calling for the cultural ste-

reotypes in African literature to be rewritten for the 21st-century reader, I ask of them to consider that in doing so, we writers will merely be replacing old stereotypes with new ones." Carrim daringly stated that the creation of stereotypes is for the intellectually lazy and "it is dangerous to reproduce stereotypes in our writing unless we are breaking stereotypes." In explaining how stereotypes are formed, she had this to say, "our brain creates shortcuts to deal with information it cannot process."

Interestingly, other speakers on the panel discussion, Alex Nderitu of Kenya, Nnane Ntube of Cameroon and Nabilah Usman of Nigeria, all agreed with the direction set by the lead speaker. The panel discussion amongst all four speakers was led by the oversight of Dr Tom Odhiambo, a senior lecturer in literature in the Department of Literature at the University of Nairobi. Dr Odhiambo steered the conversation in the direction of the authenticity of African literature.



The Panellists

The four panellists left the audience with much food for thought, with Ntube saying "stereotypes should be used as a means of advocacy. If you want to write and be authentic, say what is real in the context of where you are from. What are you/people go-

ing through in your society? Let it reflect, from the characters to the plot. Your lens communicates.”

Mr Nderitu from Kenya began by agreeing with the lead speaker on the subject of those who create stereotypes. He said,



Dr Tom Odhiambo

“Stereotypes are for the intellectually lazy. As African writers, we can choose to push for positive stereotypes; let them override the negative.” He advocated for the use of vernacular in passing on messages in African literature. He pointed out the diluted potency of translated texts. In speaking on the nature of the African creative, he said, “real artists don't try to look like artists.

The artistry is all inside.”

Miss Usman had these words to say on the larger subject matter, “both the society and the writer shape the threshold of the story. It is impossible to completely exclude yourself from stereotypes. However, some stereotypes have already served their purpose; you need to create new things for the evolving generations.” On the topic of authenticity, she added, “an authentic story is the one you have experienced. You have no business telling what you have not been part of.”

Carrim who sat in on the panel contributed to the conversation. She had this advice to give, “Refine your skills; perhaps your storytelling is what lacks and leads you not to be chosen among the crème de la crème of the top. Writing is a process that takes time. We are the ones setting standards of the future.”

With these contributions coming out of different countries across Africa, it is obvious that literary conversations have sparked fires in contemporary African writers. It is clear to see that the concerns and the agreements all seem to take regardless of whether you're a writer in Mauritius, Cameroon, Kenya or Nigeria.

After an engaging questions and answers session between the audience and the panellists, the 2019 AWC ended with the tradition of announcing the winners of the African Writers Award (AWA) sponsored by the African Writers Development Trust

(AWDT). The honour of announcing the winners of this year's four categories was granted to none other than Anthony Onugba, founder of the AWDT. The winners of each category were:

Children's Literature – Judged by Nahida Esmail (Tanzania)

The Zappinator by Eme Ogbu (Nigeria)

Flash Fiction – Judged by Adah Bitiah Chembo (Zambia)

Breaking the Norm; Ungrateful Girl by Temani Nkalolang (Botswana)

Poetry – Judged by Kolabomi Adeko (Nigeria)

Pongwe's Life by Andrea B Matambo (Zambia)

Short Stories – Judged by Sabah Carrim (Mauritius)

Hiding by Priscillar Matara (Botswana)

The AWDT was pleased to honour these diverse writers of diverse backgrounds united by their love for Africa and their drive to tell its stories. In the same vein, the AWDT present the first-ever recipient of the Wakini Kuria Award for African Literature (Children's Literature). The award was created in honour of Charity Wakini Kuria who was an avid lover of literature, a writer and supporter of literary endeavours, a strong believer in the possibilities of life, and until her death the Chief Editor of Writers Space Africa (WSA) Magazine. The privilege of being the first recipient of this premiere award was bestowed on Marjorie Moono Simuyuni of Zambia.

A few others from Kenya were awarded for their contributions to the growth and development of the African Literary Space. These are, the AMKA – Space for Women's Creativity, Dr Tom Odhiambo, Jackson Biko (Blogger), and Khainga O'Okwemba (Literary enthusiast and broadcast journalist).

Before the guests left, they were entertained by moving poetry from some of Kenya's finest,

As the conversation moves forward, preparations have begun in anticipation of the 2020 African Writers Conference.

The country where the 2020 AWC will hold will be announced in January 2020.

More Pictures



FLASH FICTION





FIVE MINUTES

Ekemini Udo Pius - Nigeria

Deji waves his gun in the air and all the members of the church scurry and take cover behind plastic chairs, screeching and praying in hushed tones. Deji is the leader of the gang. He does not tell them who we are because they already know. Everyone in Calabar knows Five Minutes. We are so feared that people whisper our name for fear of being attacked. We are the most feared robbery gang in Calabar because we spend exactly five minutes wherever we go to rob. The police never catch us, they always arrive after we have carted away money, phones, and jewelry.

We have robbed all kinds of people and buildings except banks, because breaching the security system of a bank and making sure everyone in the banking hall lies on ground can take up to twenty minutes, and this would give the police time to catch us. Deji barks at the praise and worship leader to sing a song for everyone to trudge to the offering basket and drop their money. The rest of us - Saviour, Akportuzor, and I - stare at Deji with eyes widened in shock because this is not our style. What Deji is doing is going to waste our time and break our rule of staying for five minutes, but we let him continue because we do not want the members of Christ Life Church to think we are divided.

The giving of offerings takes fifteen minutes, and just as we are about to stash the money into bags, the police burst in. We escape through the side door and clamber over the short fence. Except Deji. Just as he is about to leap for the door, a bullet to his groin interrupts him and sends him crashing to the ground.



A FRACTION OFF OUR FOREVER

Christina H L Wendo - Tanzania

5:55 am. Sitting on one of the benches, I made eye contact, but then her eyes averted. Shifting my focus to the front tyres of the bus she boarded, instead of the window seat she was on, my vision grew blurrier. My face dropped, hiding the wet eyes and quivering lips. I could hear my heart beats louder than all the traffic noise.

An old blue duffle bag dropped by my feet. "I can't part with the rest of my life." She said.

6:00 am, the bus left, but she stayed. I hugged her tighter.



I FELL IN LOVE ONCE

Egwuatu Ogechukwu - Nigeria

I never thought it possible but yes, I felt all. The assault of emotions, the rush of feelings. My skin tingled at his touch and my heart raced when he was near. Was this really happening? I was certain I had died and gone to heaven or lost my mind. Too bad it lasted for only five minutes.

TIME KILLS!

Marjorie Moono Simuyuni (Zambia)



Mfwiii! I sniffed, slicing onion into my daughter's lunch bowl. The sting of the onion had tingled my eyes so much everything was a blur. A remnant slice of bread from several days ago, looking like a soldier returning from war, formed the floor in the bowl. I covered the onion with another survivor from the same war. Is there such a thing as onion sandwich? But that's what she usually carried to school from the time her father abandoned us.

Twalumba stood at the edge of the dining table, ready when I am ready. Every time she told me her friends laughed at her food, I sliced onions.

'Onion is good for your memory,' I would tell her. 'You are brilliant and your memory is photographic. Your friends remember lessons for only five minutes.' What could have been my excuse if she hadn't been the most brilliant learner in class?

I stood at the door to watch her leave. Thank God her school is only five minutes from home, and that I had just sliced onion. I could mask my pain in peace.

I disappeared into the house; 6.55 AM was the time. Lying down on the bed to rest, I heard the door burst open and a drunk voice drift in. Even from the depth of my slumber I could tell Twalumba's father's presence. The audacity!

I flew out and found him in the dining room, eating bread crumbs and laughing. The knife still lay on the table, its gleaming blade giving me ideas. I stabbed him in the gut before he could say anything.

Today I stand in court for his murder, awaiting the verdict. It's 7.00 AM just like it was when I looked on the watch after assassinating him.

POETRY



Where to Buy Time

If time's sold, truth
be told, the central market
would be Rio de
Janeiro! Where you don't know
what you're going to do in
the next
fi(V)e
minutes.

But bother not going to
the UK to purchase time, you won't
even get a millisecond. Everything has been
programmed like a software carrying
out instructions. The kingdom where
even time itself complains of
having no
time!

Abdulrahman M. Abu-Yaman
Nigeria

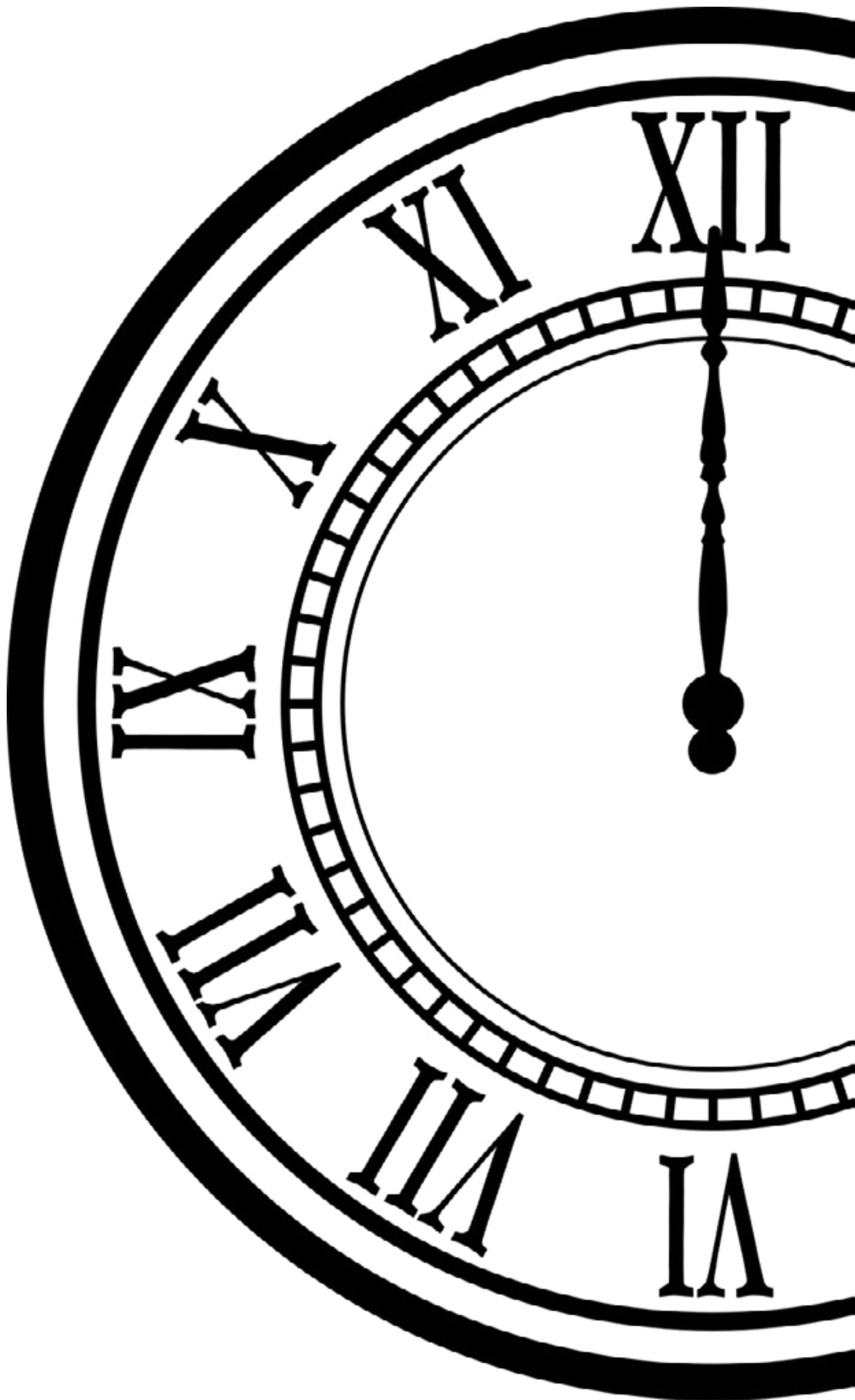
Single Tick

All it takes –
To live or to die
To heal or to hurt
To love or to betray
Is a single tick
Not its sound
Not 5 minutes
Not an hour
Or a life time.

All it takes –
Is a single tick.

Before its sound

Gerry Sikazwe
Zambia



TIMER

At first, timer was lenient,
My speech ran for long.
"Still time," I muttered
Timer took time for me.

Time flew so fast,
And her wings closed.
One, Two, Three..., Time
Don't slip by was my song.

Four, Five minutes...,
The clock's tick continued.
Trying to make my point,
T'was strictly for five minutes.

There was no added time,
The audience called me off.
My nonsense made no sense
In the high profile meeting.

Omadang Yowasi
Uganda

Extra Five

Timepiece ticked to blow whistle
Menacing a scoreless wrestle.
Silence chocked the spectator,
Adding five minutes was the reporter.

The pitch soaked to its pinnacle
In lethargy, players held a canticle
As drenched legs sought a miracle
For a skillful kick to curb obstacle.

Behind nets lay the ball
Thrills invaded the soccer mall
Climate turned cheery
As triumphant scent smelt merry.

The potent claimed victory,
As the impotent railed awry.
A mysterious end parted terraces
Amidst extra five minutes.

Fifth minute stood gloriously
Predictors oozed joyously
For elation steered the space
As emotions poured champ's face.

Comfort Nyati,
Zimbabwe



Wind Games

The wind taps,
taps its foot impatiently.
One minute of peace, four more of mishaps.
It jabs your braids about, then murmurs gently
against your ears.
Trying to stabilize a bit,
check the time, make sure your smile fits.
You figure all is still because the breeze sits,
the clock ticks
your pulse kicks
Looks like you won't be late after all
They'd see you like a boss, more like admiral.

It chuckles but you don't hear;
your mind being elsewhere.
The cab stops, you pay the fare
now the wind is well aware.
The moment your heels drop
it can't stop.
She shuffles your papers in the air
Unbalanced balance, you fell prey
to the wind's five minute play.

Tabitha Maikudi
Nigeria

THE WAIT

Standing in the line
Waiting, for my turn
To sip , the portion
My saving charm.

Waiting for my turn
He said it's not long,
My saving charm
It's only five minutes

He said it's not long,
But I am getting weary
It's only five minutes,
But it's taking too long.

I am getting wary
My eyes really hurt
And it's taking too long
I am fading away.

Faith Chepchumba
Kenya

FIVE TO COUNT

The toil of the arms-men
Over spoils of the townsmen
Make this short versed tale
Of loss, of bliss, of hell

The bells of the churchmen
And insights of the farms-men
Saw the wail of those in veil
Heard the joys of those not frail

Now done, the hands of laws-men
Dawned at the run of the raids-men
The sun has seen their toil, oh frail
Five to count in minutes, now jail

Shimbo Pastory,
Tanzania, E.A.

TICK TOCK

ONE

I saw him
Eyes as clear as crystal
Teeth as white as snow
Hair as black as charcoal
And hands of a mason

TWO

I saw him
A smile so warm like the morning sun
Cheeks flushing with excitement
Twin dimples signing his beauty
And vim running through his veins

THREE

I saw him
Hugging the little ones
As they giggled with excitement
Stretching their hands for candy
He felt like one of them

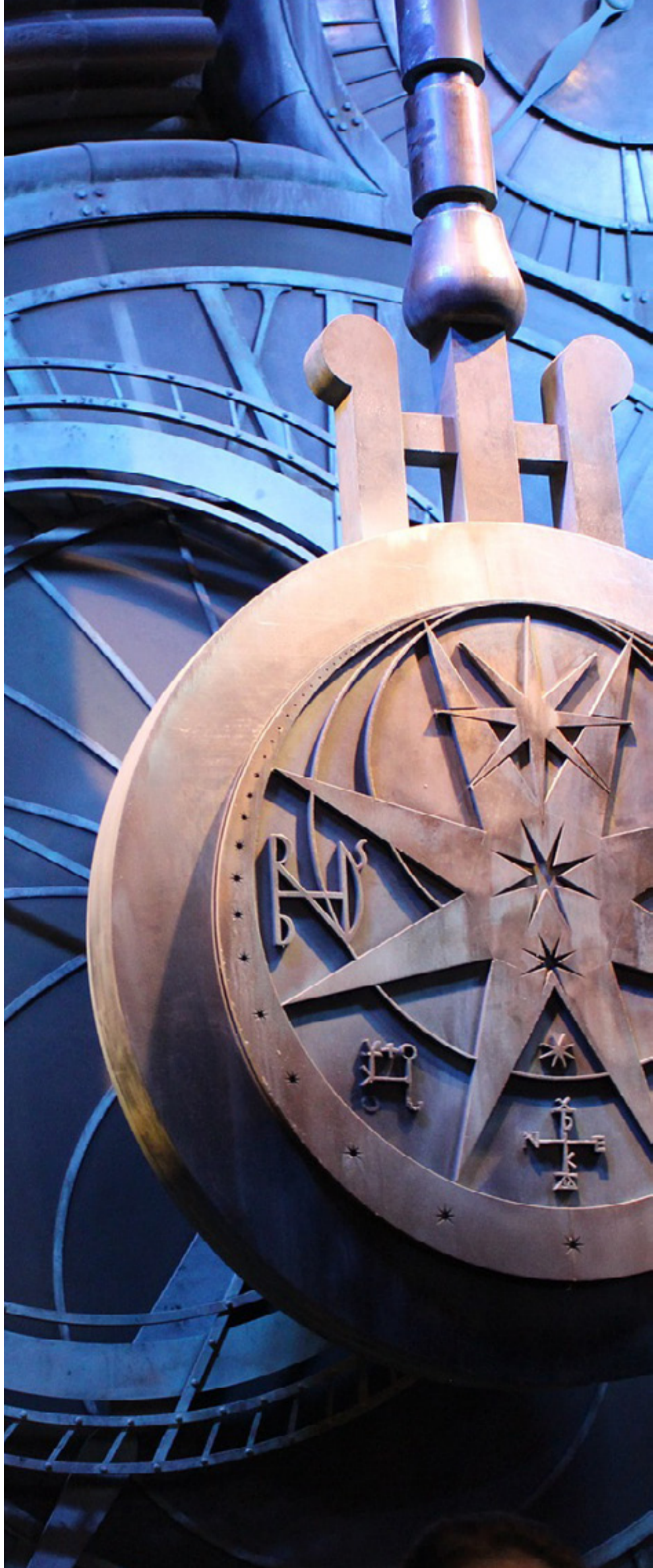
FOUR

He saw me
I looked away
He moved closer
I walked away
Too late!

FIVE

A hand grabbed mine
Spasms of joy...
I turned around
Those imploring eyes...
I fell in love

Susan Syondie (Sue poetry)
Kenya



FINAL THOUGHTS

In five minutes,
I need my name to start trending.
I need my fears to not dare stand in front of me.
I need my ears to enjoy an awesome crowd
as it will be feeling the air.

In five minutes,
My dream will turn to reality.
all I craved for will be put in my hands,
my skin will be covered in goosebumps
as tears of happiness will be rolling down my cheeks.

In five minutes,
I need to become a winner.
from my very young age
I've been searching, reading, practicing,
reminding myself that its all about me.
working hard, smart and trying
will be my key to success.

In five minutes,
my heart will be beating faster.
I know this isn't my first time in this
and sometimes the judgment is not fair,
but I'll be thankful
simply thankful
to be here.

Tom patrick Nzabonimpa
Rwanda



FIVE MINUTES WILL NOT DO

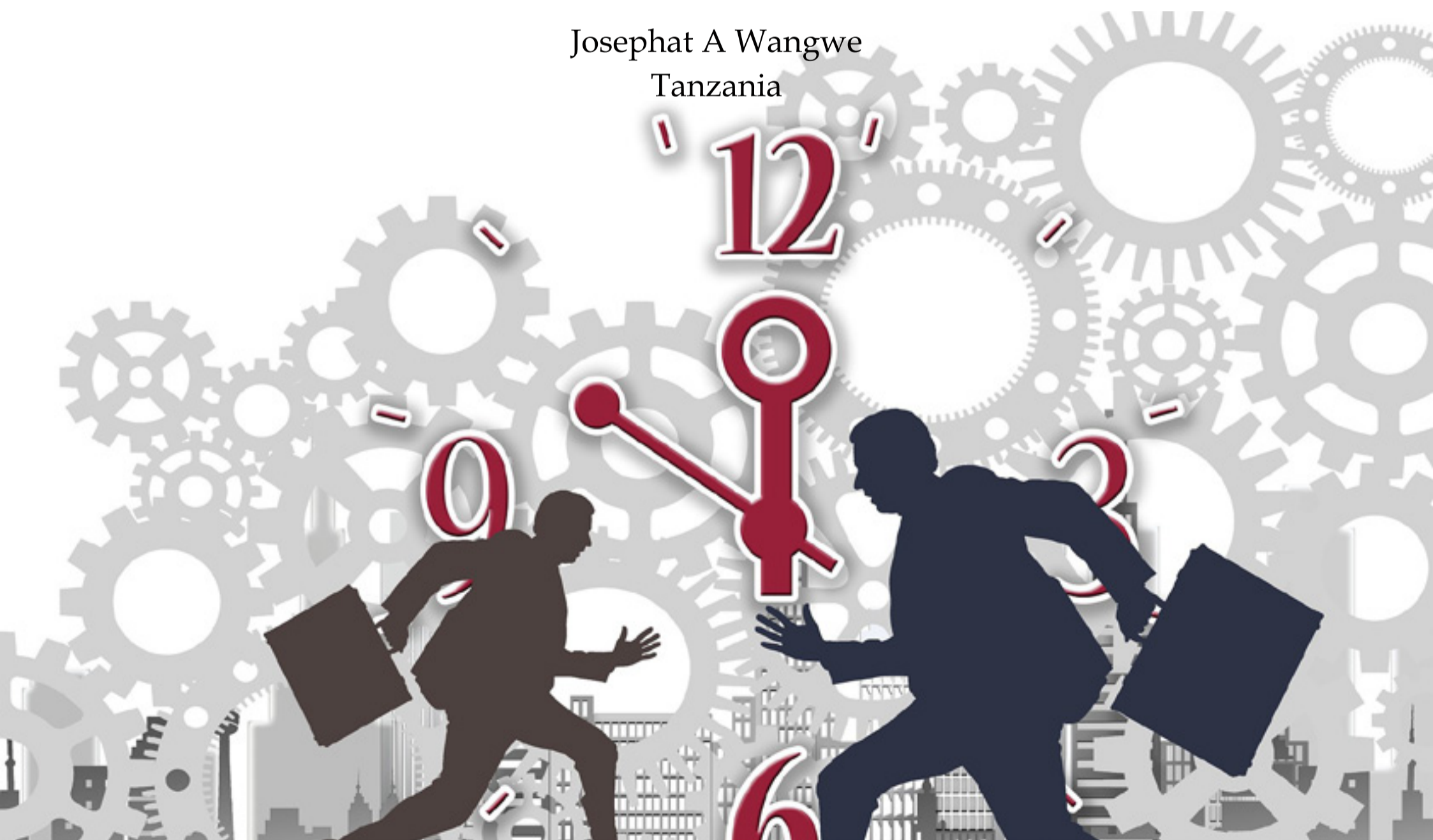
If we are not to grow old but to die young,
Then let us not beg for our lives like dogs,
If our death was meant to be like street dogs,
Then at least not in the soil so called home.

Five minutes will not do, nor are they enough,
In them I can't weep enough for the black land,
Long is the buried history of this cracked dark soil,
In five minutes I cannot tell it all to be understood.


Humanity has been failing us from time to time,
Back before the Histories of the 'I have a dream'
To Hustles of the United States of the third world,
Then screams of tears' market in the land of Pharaoh,
All got drown and buried by waves of selfishness,
Can I remind these to young blood in five minutes?

Confused will surely be the generations to come,
As one page of history will tell them of old unity,
Of how the sun was drawn all over the dark land,
By the offerings which were paid by selfless Icons,
Next page'll tell of how we killed our own blood,
The era of shame of kinsman against kinsman.

Josephat A Wangwe
Tanzania



Minutes Are a Mystery



Within a second a child is born
In another a human is gone
Yesterday looks like today
Night comes so fast as the day.
Minutes give way successively
One, two, three, four, five and minutes give way to minutes
Minutes are precious like money, sweet like honey
Oh sweet when one knows they wait for none
Minutes are a curse as dreadful as a cemetery
Oh a malediction when one ignores
Man's time is not God's which is the best
Man's time is time to use to procure God's time
Minutes are God sent.

You neglect one another reminds you

Oh minutes! , what a mystery you are!
You wait for nobody ,everybody waits for you
When you knock at the door many things happen;
We cry, we laugh, we eat ,we drink,we pray
You are a regular visitor ,
not like a thief in the night you come
Minutes entail change ;
good at times bad at intervals
Like Christ minutes are omnipresent ,omnipotent
Like God minutes are tolerant, patient and forgiving
When you miss one he gives another
Minutes indeed are a mystery
God is time and minutes are His disciples.

Tatah Allen Laika
Cameroon

5 Minute Flight!

She breathed!
Her chest quivered,
A lot!

The walls trembled,
Astonished by the news of her flight
To America.

Poor country girl!

She breathed, her chest quivered,
And the walls trembled.
She wasn't dreaming.

Eyes bulged out of their globes,
Her flight was set,
She was frightened,
She wasn't dreaming.

Fateful morning, Jan 1971, the news broke,
Amin was president!
Like a broken bridge, her chest sunk.

Her bulbs in her hands,
Down on the papyrus mat,
Aine flew to America.

Her tears, for about five minutes,
Had flown her a river
To America.

Twinomugisha Racheal
Uganda



FIVE MINUTES STILL RELEVANT

Only a night away from the day
The day I had been looking forward to
Had spent weeks preparing for
Comes this announcement
One that almost breaks my heart
And shatters my life-long dreams

A change in conference venue
And worse of all this one -
That due to circumstances
Beyond the control of management
I could now only have five minutes
For my twenty minute presentation

A well- researched,
well-rehearsed twenty-minute presentation
Reduced to only five minutes
Is this a sabotage, a test or trial
What if I also send a note to the management so-called
To cancel my participation
Many thoughts run through my mind in my confusion

I spend a sleepless night to work and pray
Find my way there and give of my best
Is it for me, this standing ovation
Calls, messages innumerable expressing their gratitude
Indeed five minutes is still relevant
Makes a lot of difference in my life, in many lives.

Josephine Ama Konadu Koduah,
Ghana



**“IS 300
SECONDS
WITH YOU
WORTH
ANYTHING?”**

- Akaa Elijah Aondotakume - Nigeria

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WRITERS SPACE AFRICA



GABRIEL DINDA

“Let’s keep trying”

“Let’s keep trying” pretty much summarizes who Gabriel Dinda is. A sworn optimist beneath an everlasting smile is an ambitious young man who believes that God entrusted him to build a home for Writers – Writers Guild Kenya for which he’s the Founder and CEO. Writers Guild Kenya is an incubation centre for writers in Kenya and a Publisher.

Through the challenges that come with setting up such a platform, Gabriel has held the organisation in the palm of his hand and built it in his heart. That is possibly the reason for his positivity, passion and the inspiration most people who have met and spoken with him about Writers Guild Kenya get.

A fifth - born child in a family of six from Homa-Bay County, he desires to be of help to his community, largely marred by poverty and lack of education. He studied Economics and Finance at Kenyatta University for his undergraduate and had a short stint at as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) student at Strathmore University. It is at Kenyatta University that he tried his hand at various fields and hobbies, including photography. In trying out different things, he discovered his passion in a little thought of area – writing.

He wrote articles on topical issues affecting students but didn’t have an outlet channel for them so he wrote to the Careers Office to be allowed to post his articles on the University notice boards. The administrator liked the articles and he offered Gabriel a chance to be an editor for the University’s publication, Career Focus Magazine. He was also appointed a Students’ Career advisor under Career and Mentoring Office. While there, he founded Career Ambassadors Program, which enables students to volunteer their time in service while learning key skills required for holistic growth.

He soon got other responsibilities within and outside the university. He founded Campanile and All Senses Magazines.

It was in that line that he met other ‘stranded’ writers who didn’t have an outlet channel for their works. They asked for his opinion about their writing, which he didn’t trust himself to fully offer as his background was in Economics and Finance and not writing-related. At the same time, he had submitted a manuscript to a local publisher but got no feedback. When he submitted short articles to media houses, they would be published under someone else’s by-line. Frustrated, coupled with those of other writers, he decided to start a platform where upcoming writers would at least get feedback for their work through peer reviews, help each other navigate the writing field and tell their stories. This is what grew into what is now known as Writers Guild Kenya.

Gabriel was a recipient of the Top 25 Under 25 Entrepreneurship Award, 2015 (Business Leadership Category) in recognition of the entrepreneurial spirit he had created in Writers Guild Kenya, which in just a year, had created 33 jobs for writers to provide content. He was also a notable Exemplary Leader by Student Leadership of Kenyatta University in 2015 and Africa's Most Promising Entrepreneur in Africa's Liberty & Entrepreneurship Camp in Uganda, 2014. He was also a Runners Up in Writing and Research Category, Utumishi Bora Awards in 2018.

Under the Leadership of Gabriel, Writers have grown to the membership of 313 affiliate members, 1725 student members and 88 mentors across Africa. Writers Guild Kenya is now present in Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Kakamega and Chuka with Partnerships in Nigeria, Uganda and United Kingdom.

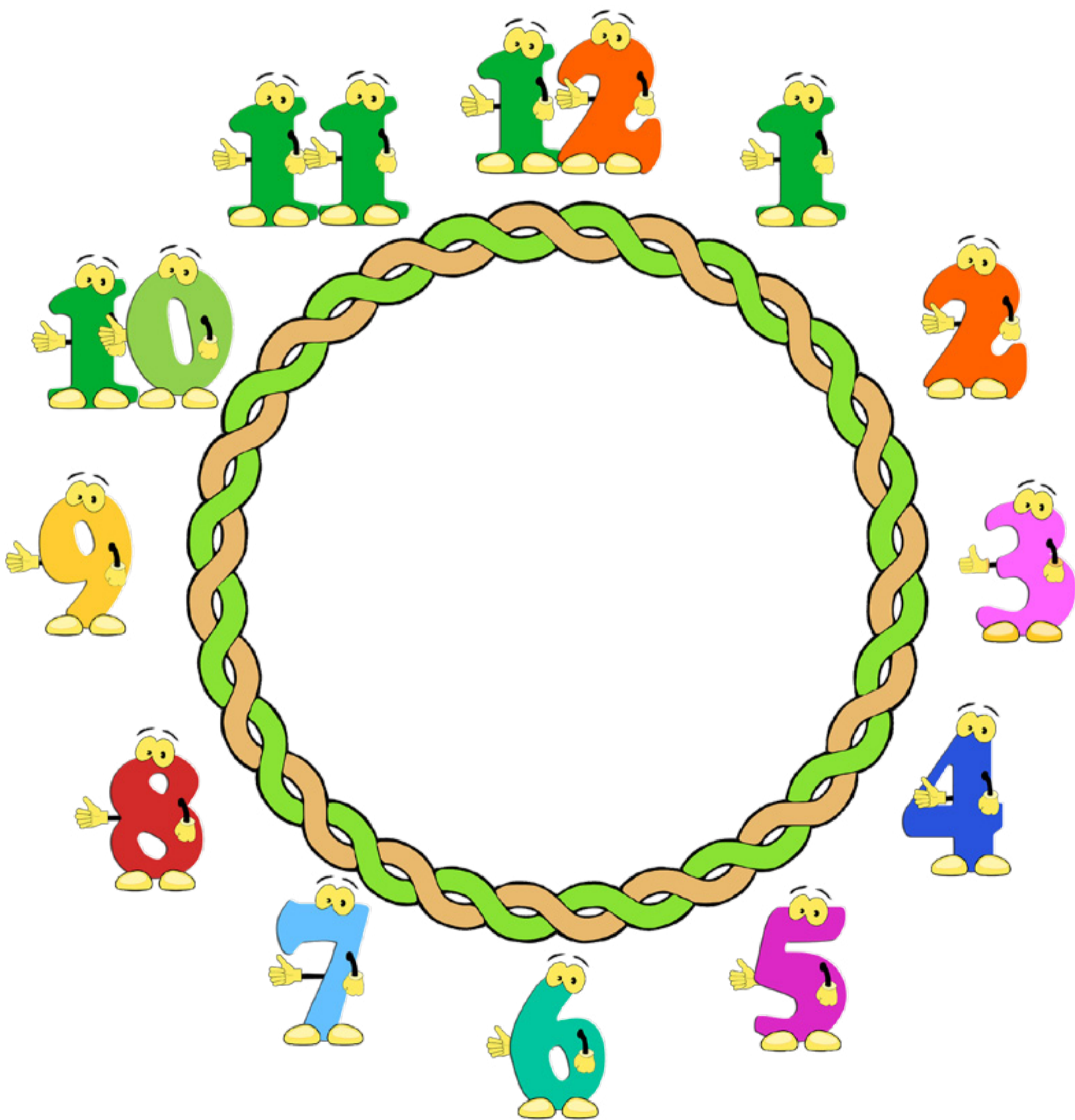
One notable partnership is between the Writers Guild Kenya and the African Writers Development Trust founded by Anthony Onugba. This partnership has led to the hosting of the 2019 African Writers Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, and there are plans for an African Writers Residency to hold in November 2019 in Nigeria, and another to hold in March 2020 in Kenya. This partnership would not have been possible without the foresight of Gabriel Dinda.

As at 2019 August, Writers Guild Kenya has published 23 first time authors whose books keep inspiring humanity. The goal is to empower, support and guide writers through the traditionally tortuous journey of writing, publishing, marketing their works as well as earning from their literary endeavours.

Gabriel Dinda has a deep interest in reading. When he is not reading, he is encouraging people to do so, especially reading as a family. He has co-authored: Youth Unemployment in Kenya, a ticking time Bomb (Longhorn Publishers, 2016), written one book; Practical Guide to Self-Publishing in Kenya (Writers Guild Kenya, 2018), and written three other books awaiting publication. Through his numerous articles in the Dailies and on Social Media platforms, Gabriel hopes to inspire a generation that thinks and that makes the best use of themselves.

Gabriel is currently a Masters of Applied Philosophy and Ethics (MAPE) Student at Strathmore University and a lover of lifelong learning, having done numerous online courses and taken part in numerous Workshops, Conferences and Seminars. He is married to Verah Omwocha, a writer and book editor, and together they hope to inspire a family of Writers under Writers Guild Kenya.

Children's Literature



Mr. Clock

by
Ngalim Jusline Veeyeenyuy - Cameroon

The clock talks too
The clock talks in seconds
Tik, tak, tik, tak, tik, tak..
The clock talks, talks, talks
How did I know?

My teacher said:
Sixty seconds is one minute
Sixty minutes is one hour
Then I asked Mr. Clock

How many seconds make five minutes?
Then, Mr. Clock said to me:
Tik, tak , tik, tak, tik, tak, tik, tak...
And I counted three hundred seconds
The clock talks too, tik, tak , tik,tak,tik,tak..

Mr. Clock said again: tik, tak, tik, tak,tik, tak...
Twenty four hours is one day
The clock talks In seconds: Tik, tak, tik, tak, tiK, tak...
The clock talks too
Like you and I.



ESSAYS



A five-minute tour of the Universe



It might take you more than five minutes to read and digest the article in which Wikipedia sets out current scientific understanding of the Universe, so let me attempt a summary in simple terms, ignoring the complications of the Higgs boson, gluons, photons, quarks, hadrons, leptons and the like.

The speed of light is approximately 300,000 kilometres per second. The earth's circumference is a little over 40,000 kilometres. So, if light could circle the earth (which it can't) it would do so nearly 8 times in one second.

The light-year is the distance light travels in one year. Multiply its speed, 300,000 kilometres per second, by the number of seconds in a year to work out the length of a light year in kilometres, thus: $300,000 \times 60 \times 60 \times 24 \times 365$ that is, about 9,460,000,000,000 kilometres.

The universe can be visualized as a three-dimensional sphere 93 billion light years in diameter in a four-dimensional space.

The sun is one of hundreds of billions of stars in our galaxy, the Milky Way. The Milky Way, a mere 100,000 light years in diameter is just one of hundreds of billions of galaxies in the Universe. The nearest galaxy is approximately 2,500,000 light years away.

Only about 5% of the Universe is composed ordinary matter (atoms, stars, galaxies). Scientists describe the rest as dark energy and dark matter, about which there is little they can tell us.

The Universe is about 14 billion years old. It began when space and time emerged together in what is known as the Big Bang. What was there before the Big Bang? Scientists speculate but it's

unlikely that they will discover evidence against which to test their theories.

The earth is some 4.5 billion years old. The oceans formed 4.4 billion years ago. The earliest elementary forms of life might date back as far as 4.28 billion years.

Our species, *Homo sapiens*, originated in Africa a mere 315,000 years ago. The earliest fossils of anatomically modern man date from 200,000 years ago. Until 10,000 years ago all our ancestors were hunter-gatherers. It was not until a little over 5,000 years ago that the first forms of writing emerged. Modern science stretches back a mere two centuries.

Scientists have to date discovered no evidence that life exists anywhere else in the Universe, but, given the countless possibilities, it seems unlikely that our planet is the only place where life has developed.

Go outside on a cloudless, moonless night, far from manmade lights, lie on your back and contemplate the enormity of the visible universe above. How do we humans fit into it? If you believe in and worship some supernatural Deity, ask yourself how the One you worship fits into the scientific view of the Universe? Where in that Universe does that Holy One reside, together with angels and devils and all our dead ancestors? Was it the Holy One who set off that Big Bang 14 billion years ago?

In ancient times, long before the era of science, our ancestors looked up at sky above and told one another stories to account for what they saw; Stories; great imaginative stories. (We are, after all, a story-telling species.) But stories, nevertheless: imaginative fiction. Some of these have survived as Holy Books; Great literature.

In their attempt to explain the physical world revealed by their investigations, scientists propose theories. If their theories don't fit the evidence of experiment or observation, if they don't meet strict criteria of proof, they admit their ignorance, discard their theories and try again.

Most of those who believe in a Deity have unquestioning faith. They are certain that their beliefs are correct. Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, and many others, all insist that their beliefs, and their beliefs only, are true.

Where do you stand?

Our five-minute tour of the Universe ends with that question.

Manu Herbstein
Ghana



Short Stories

FIVE MINUTES

by

Vanessa Hounsell,

South Africa



It is 10.00 a.m. precisely. Not a second more, as we swing down under the old wooden stile. Arms wrapped around our shoulders, we roll swiftly into hostile enemy territory.

A steely cold finger of fear creeps up my back and into my neck. My compatriot's eyes are glazed, covert: scanning. Rifles butting our shoulders, we begin to stalk forward.

We crouch cautiously to the sudden click-clack of a ladybug grooming herself to our left. The horn of a Rhino beetle just visible above the crackling dry grass – ochre, viridian, olive, sage, pear.

We are armed, stalking in the undergrowth, Jonathan and me. A small opening in the grass emerges, and Jonathan beckons left. Guns at the ready, our shoulders ablaze, we head cautiously.

The horn of the Rhino beetle remains just visible. The ladybug is still bathing. Then the pungent stench of dung as we nudge our way past a resident dung beetle; its arms and legs forever busy as it conducts its ever-expanding orchestra. Around and around and

around...

A shriek, and an enormous bird swoops down suddenly, its immense curved beak snaps a strand of hair from my head as I duck down into the whispering grasses. Jonathan looks up. "it's a type of Raptor," he says. There are a lot of them around here.' I push my body deeper into the grass, enjoying its calming welcome.

Jonathon is ahead of me now, elbowing his way, cricket-like, at pace through the hissing reeds that line the path. Razor-edged. He is staring fixatedly ahead, braced for attack. The groan of a motorbike somewhere in the distance tears across the territory. A heavy smog hovers just a few metres above our heads, and the acrid smell of smoke laces our arching nostrils. 'How far off are we, d'you think?' I whisper.

'I don't know Jade, we need more time is the answer.' 'Which we don't have, I reply.'

'Shhh. I hear something,' Jonathan belly crawls forward, pushing his gun aside for a moment. He turns his ear to touch the ground. 'Possibly...,' he murmurs. 'Shhhh'.

I feel a small trickle of sweat leave my hair and travel steadily down my neck. It meets my t-shirt collar and settles; a small, damp spot against my skin. Jonathan is staring fixedly ahead again, corpse-like.

'What can you see?' I whisper theatrically, or he may not hear.

'Shhh!' he replies but then springs into action. Grabbing his gun, he begins leopard crawling ahead, his feet leaving prints in the dry dust as he propels himself forward. I follow without thinking, not wanting to lose sight of him.

He stops again, body quivering as a flash of brown crashes at lightening speed across the path. Now I see him. A huge dark liquid eye facing us, immovable. I move my gun swiftly back to my shoulder and take aim. Out of the corner of my eye, I see Jonathan has tensed into the same position.

'Take fire!' he screams and, hardly knowing what we are doing, the bullets blast off in rapid suc-cession. 'Jade, we missed, he got away!' A tense silence as we stand up grudgingly, the flash of brown fur and long tail disappearing rapidly into the distance.

Shoulders drooping and deflated we turn back the way we had come. Up the path silently and back to the old wooden stile. It is 10.05 a.m. precisely, not a second more, as we swing back un-derneath.

The exact time that granny takes her cupcakes from the oven.

THE PERKS OF BEING A SENIOR

Maame Akua Akyaa Koduah – Ghana



“Ten minutes more to morning assembly!” Dede shouted in the Akosua Anka house. She walked slowly and with what she assumed was grace.

How she loved being a senior on duty! There was so much freedom to do just about anything she wanted. She could punish any girl who dared flout the school rules or any of her own rules.

Today was Tuesday which meant she had a Mathematics class immediately after morning assembly. Her head immediately started aching. Who in the world had thought it right to formulate a subject such as Mathematics? She would surely need a snack from her chopbox before the class to enable her endure it. She conjured images in her mind of the snacks awaiting her in her chopbox. Yesterday, she had consumed a whole box of Digestive biscuits. Today, she would munch on some Famous Amos biscuits and drink a bottle of Cranberry juice.

She was just turning the corner when a small figure rushed past her. Mind alert, Dede watched the girl.

“Hey you!” she shouted after the retreating figure, causing her to stop and turn.

“Do you know you have just five minutes left to be in your line for morning assembly?” she asked, after checking the time on her watch.

“If you’re late, I’ll punish you,” she ended with a flourish. Turning on her heel, she walked away

looking left and right for other potential latecomers to threaten with punishment.

Adjeley stared after Dede in dismay for a few seconds.

Was it her fault that her working partner had fallen sick and was now in the sickbay coughing her lungs out? Was it her fault that her housemistress had come to inspect her working place very late? Surely not! And yet, she must hurry up.

She had heard horrid stories about Sister Dede and the punishments she meted out; she vowed not to be the latter's latest conquest. She had said there were five minutes left, Adjeley reflected. She would show that mean sister what she could do in five minutes.

Stepping into her dormitory, she applied the necessary cosmetics and pulled on her uniform quickly. After wearing her sandals and brushing her closely cropped hair, she rushed back outside to hang her towel. She checked her watch – two minutes to go.

Now she began the mad rush for her line for morning assembly, alternating between walking quickly and running.

A minute to time... fifteen seconds more.

She made it to her line five seconds before the siren chimed.

Thank God! The wonders of five minutes, she thought with a smile.

Dede spotted Adjeley after morning assembly.

"See me during breakfast for your punishment," she said.

"I wasn't late for morning assembly Sister Dede," Adjeley responded.

"Are you very sure? I will confirm from the prefect in charge and if I find out you lied to me, you'll be in very big trouble."

Dede was puzzled. Could that wisp of a girl really have finished within five minutes? That was impossible! She would question Adjoa, the prefect in charge, to verify.

As she ascended the stairs on the way to the pantry, she met Adjoa.

"Adjoa, was any Form 1 student late for morning assembly today?"

"No," Adjoa responded curtly while eyeing Dede whom she had little affection for. The girl was lazy and selfish. She hadn't changed in the two and a half years Adjoa had known her.

"Are you sure?" Dede queried.

"I am," Adjoa replied in a don't-annoy-me-this-early-morning tone.

"Alright."

"Don't be late for class. You're fond of coming to class late which annoys Madame Sika."

Dede did not care for the tone of voice Adjoa used on her. However, she was scared and a bit intimidated by Adjoa and thus said nothing.

How dare her own mate talk to her like that? Who did she think she was? she thought in her head as she entered the pantry.

The sight of her chopbox made her happy and took away the unhappy thoughts she had been thinking.

So that Form 1 girl had told the truth, Dede thought as she ate her biscuits.

She needed to get someone to punish quickly for the coming week.

Someone to do her bidding. Someone to wash her clothes, fill her three heavy buckets and large barrel and carry her filled bucket to and from the bathroom. Oh, and someone to buy those to die for cakes and pies after siesta each day.

Suddenly, she remembered that a new Form 1 girl had reported to the house two days ago.

What was her name? Ewurakua? Ewurama?

Aha! Her name was Ewuresi.

She would keep a close eye on that girl and see what she could do in five minutes. Better still, she would summon the girl to buy her pie from the shop and be back in five minutes or risk punishment. Dede knew she could not make it back on time. The shop was about fifteen minutes away, close to the school gates. Looks like she had actually found herself a new slave for the next week.

She smiled smugly and tossed the finished snacks in the bin.

During breakfast, Dede was very happy. She took two extra helpings of koko and an extra piece of koose.

Just as she lifted her head from stirring her koko, she saw the new girl. Dede beamed from her seat but not for long.

The new girl was disappearing to sit at the Ama Darko house side of the dining hall.

What was happening? Could there have been a mix up somewhere?

Adjoa was two tables away. Dede got up to speak to her.

“I just saw the new girl, Ewuresi, going to sit elsewhere. Is she no longer in our house?”

“She’s been moved to a new house,” was the reply.

Dede sank back down in her seat. Her five minute scheming concerning the new girl had suddenly gone down the drain! No more scheming for her. What was she to do now?

She bit into her koose listlessly and looked around the dining hall. Her eyes met Adjeley’s eyes.

Dede beckoned to her to come to her table.

“How did you manage to finish everything in five minutes?” she asked Adjeley

“I am very time conscious. Each minute counts. I didn’t waste time in dressing up and rushing to join my line. Five minutes was more than enough to finish everything for me.”

Back in the classroom, Dede was amazed. Dressing up alone could take her twenty to thirty minutes.

What was it the girl had said?

Each minute counts... Five minutes was more than enough to finish everything for me.

For the life of her, Dede could not imagine finishing dressing up and joining her line for morning assembly in five minutes. However, she would try it.

She felt the onset of another headache just thinking about trying.

THAT'S ALL IT TOOK

Hannah H. Tarindwa – Zimbabwe



The clock was ticking and Runyararo knew that the longer it took for them to get out of the house which they could no longer call a home, the more dangerous this idea became.

She was so thankful that today, well it was night, tonight, her usually active, enthusiastic and inquisitive little boy was deep in sleep comfortably on her back, the older one had been cooperative. For a brief moment she had looked intensely into his wondering, teary light brown eyes and they had shown unexpected understanding of the current situation and the urgency of it². In those 10 seconds, she had seen how her hanging on to the monster (once upon a time he had been a prince charming), who now lay drugged on the Egyptian carpet of their dining floor, had taken something from her oldest son, as a child and given him an experience no child should have had to endure. For the first time she was deeply sorry and it was like through his big five year old eyes, he had understood and forgiven her. That is maybe why for the first time in a long while he had listened to her instructions without a barrage of unnecessary questions as he so often did at other inappropriate times. Tonight he cooperated.

Her younger sister, Tandarai, from another father, was standing by the open boot of her new SUV and looking around for possible intruders. Lucky for them, it had not been an activity

filled night. No neighbours to intrude and ask questions which no one could answer, no one wanted to answer. Deep down she wanted to turn and have one last look at the house she had been happy to move in to, just two years ago, but she remembered the story of Lot's wife who turned to have one last look at the burning Sodom and Gomorrah. She shook her head, admonishing herself for even letting the thought cross her mind.

Tandarai received the big brown suitcase which now held the important things from this life her older sister was finally escaping. Birth certificates, school report cards, photo albums and drawings done by the children and necessary clothes and one extra pair of reasonable shoes plus two duvets. The rest they had left behind, this was a total escape and material comforts did not matter. Runyararo had left her treasured shoe collection, the boys could only take their single favourite toys, not sets.

As soon as all of them, the two half-sisters and the somewhat confused but complaint two boys had got into the car, Tandarai gave out a huge sigh as she switched on the ignition. It had taken four difficult interventions for this night to come to be. Tandarai had seen the bruising on her sister and her nephews, though Runyararo had done all she could do to hide them. She had also become uncharacteristically quiet and always the "on-point" wife attending to the ever demanding husband regardless of who was around to witness it. He had no shame or respect. She never said a single evil word against Arthur, never complained. The quieter she became, the deeper her eyes sank and the more pronounced her bones became; jutting out of her skin as if to escape her body. She was withering faster than a rudely plucked flower left in the scorching Namibian sun in the middle of December. When Tandarai confronted Arthur at first, he had asked her what Runyararo had said, and when the two ladies met the next day on an overcast January day, Runyararo had dark sunglasses on, begging Tandarai to mind her own business.

Tandarai had run to tell their mother and the wise old lady had invited her oldest daughter to her home. Of course, the first intervention did not go well, Arthur had decided to linger as the family had the meeting inside. Runyararo's fear was as evident as the shivering of a palm tree on a windy August day. They had not stayed long, Arthur was hungry and he did not like the food that was being served. The second and third interventions were also not successful.

The fourth and final push, occurred when he was out of town. Tandarai came to Runyararo's house with Sophia's five year old daughter who looked as though she had been weeping and was tired.

“Where is Sophia?” Runyararo asked of her cousin.

“Let’s go see her,” Tandarai replied, turning to the direction of the house which was about ten houses from Runyararo.

The walk was longer than it would usual take, and as soon as the house was in their view, Runyararo noticed there was a police car stopping in front of Sophia’s house and she began to shiver. Tandarai increased her pace and Runyararo followed suit. They went into the house using the kitchen door. Runyararo’s heart almost stopped and her supposed scream didn’t escape as she spun quickly to stop her boys from getting into the house and seeing the bloody mess that was once their aunt.

As she pushed her sons out of the kitchen, Tandarai grabbed and squeezed her by her arm, know-ing full well that it would have recent scars that would hurt and icily said, “You’re next.” This time, Runyararo’s heart really did stop, the world began to spin in triple time and her lungs could not take in oxygen.

She woke up disoriented and it took a moment for her to realize what had happened as her fami-ly (her mother, her sons and her mute brother) surrounded her.

“We know he said that he will be coming back on Thursday and of course he will come sooner than he said to catch you off guard. You will have to drug him with sleeping tablets and be out in 5 minutes.”

5 years she had given to that man who now slept snoring his wretched snore that she relieved to finally leave. 5 hospital visits she had made: internal bleeding, a miscarriage, two broken wrists and a broken nose, 5 police reports, which she withdrew, each and every single time!

Runyararo had actually checked the time from when she started moving the boys out of the house after their father had fallen asleep across the bed as if it belonged to him alone (which it would from then on). It really had actually taken them 5 minutes to freedom.

“Five minutes,” Runyararo could feel the weight of the world leaving her shoulders. She looked at her baby boys who had just fallen asleep and for the first time in a long time, she smiled. “Five minutes, that’s all it took!”

THE LOVE LETTERS

By Kimberly Chirodzero, Zimbabwe



Camara found the love letters by mistake. She was in the basement sorting through what was salvageable and what she had to give away. She had made two messy piles. One she moved out of the basement to put outside on the porch. When she came back into the basement that was when she saw it. A small wooden box by the corner, beckoning to her ever curious mind. She knew she hadn't seen it before because as dusty as it was, it was exquisite. The leafy carvings on the sides and the lid were beautifully done. She took it carefully and rubbed and blew some of the dust away. Taking it upstairs to the kitchen, Camara cleaned the box with a damp rag then tried opening it. The dark mahogany was several shades darker than her own skin and made of sturdy wood. There was no locking mechanism she could see but the box was sealed shut.

Dusty and frustrated, because she suddenly had to get into that box, Camara didn't hear the first knock at her front door. She hated things she couldn't figure out and would have no peace till she solved it. This was the first time she had been excited in months. She had spent the last half of the last year in exile from her country. Upon arriving in the UK, her father had fallen sick. Between visiting him in the hospital and settling in into her new job, she hadn't had time to turn the house into a home or make new friends. The only person she would be meeting was the guy from the construction company who was helping restore the old farm house. Camara found a blunted knife and used it to pry open the box and her breath caught as she saw what was inside. In her excitement she failed to hear the knock that was now coming from the kitchen back door.

There inside the box on red velvet fabric lay a bundle of letters tied with a red ribbon and surrounded by dried flowers. "Love letters!" she squealed to herself, because obviously they could only be love letters. She reached inside and carefully untied the ribbon then just as gently took the first letter. It was dated the fifth of October nineteen thirty-nine. "My beloved Natasza, how cruel is fate that just as I found you, my bright star the darkness should come for us all," Camara read the letter and brushed her finger across the words and suddenly the words glittered as if coming alive. The world swirled, her kitchen fading in and out. She reached for something to anchor her but only managed to grab the tablecloth. All went dark and Camara could only give herself over to the darkness.

When Camara opened her eyes again she was lying in a soft bed and above her a young girl with dark honey locks and sad eyes shook her. "Your letter has arrived," the little girl's voice was excited. "I hope you didn't open it, Maja," Camara found herself saying in a voice that was not hers at all. Throwing the soft blanket off, she rushed to the mirror then paused wondering how she knew its exact location. Camara took a deep breath then slowly raised her head and looked at the girl in the mirror. Clear slate grey eyes looked back at her, framed in a snowy white face with long waves of untamed blonde hair. The little girl named Maja was rolling her eyes. "Read the letter before Mama finds out," she slapped an envelope against Camara's thigh.

Confused and yet unable to stop herself participating in this bizarre drama, Camara took the letter, smiled and hurriedly ushered Maja out of the bedroom. "Oh, Nikolai," she sighed falling back on to the bed and carefully opening the letter. "My beloved Natasza, how cruel is fate that just as I found you, my bright star the darkness should come for us all. Recall you a time when our biggest trouble was finding a solitary place to gaze upon each other? It seems like yesterday. It seems like eons ago. I'm afraid the war is catching up with us, my bright star. Poland calls for her men to defend her. I do not know when I can see you again so let us meet under the huge tree you love in the park. Hurry my love while it is still early and none wander there. Forever your Nikolai," Camara sighed and rolled out of bed.

The panic she should have been experiencing was not there but Camara had watched enough fantasy movies to realise she was either in the past, viewing life as the beloved Natasza and unable to affect anything or she had lost her marbles and would need psychiatric help. Camara dressed hurriedly and snuck out of the house easily. Clearly, Natasza had experience doing this. In less than fifteen minutes she walked into a quiet park and slowed down as if she were only out for a stroll. Soon she came upon a huge tree with overhanging branches. A man sat underneath it, practically invisible. Camara ran to him. They embraced, hot lips on eager hot lips. "More of the Germans are coming in to patrol the city. I don't know if I can risk seeing you again. Surely one look at you and they would steal you away," Nikolai spoke in a rich brogue.

Camara started to cry. "Papa says we shall have to flee Poland. I cannot do this without you, Ni-kolai," she glanced up at the man. Perhaps Natasza was used to such beauty but Camara wanted to sigh. Nikolai was one of those rare men who could only be described as incomprehensively beautiful. Handsome was too shallow a word and yet everything about him was decidedly male. He was all classic angles and golden hair. There was nothing yielding or soft, besides the curve of his lips about the man and yet he would have moved a Greek god to tears of jealousy. "I have to fight, my sweet. I cannot leave yet but I promise that I will find you no matter where you go. I will write to you faithfully," there was a ring of such honesty in his voice that Camara felt envious of Natasza's good fortune in being loved so truly.

"And I to you, my love," Natasza vowed in return. Nikolai looked around the deserted park one more time before gathering her close and devouring her with his mouth. Suddenly the world was tilting again and Camara saw the park flicker out in the corner of her eye to be replaced by her kitchen. One thing remained the same though. Soft as petal lips were glued to her own. Dazed she flapped a hand against a solid chest. The man pulled away. "Nikolai?" Camara asked, prying her eyes open. "Alec," the man said. He was no Nikolai, for where the other had been golden delight, this man was midnight temptation. No one would ever call him beautiful for he was too rugged for that but when he walked into the room, Camara would bet real good money that he rendered all other men invisible, swallowed by the shade of his dark looks.

Shaking off the uncharacteristic thoughts, Camara realized she was on the floor of her kitchen. The table cloth was on the floor and so was the box of letters and its contents. Alec was kneeling above her in ripped blue jeans a white t-shirt and a blue flannel shirt. He had a tool belt around his waist and looked oddly concerned. "What happened?" Camara asked. "I was knocking at your back door when I heard you fall. I had to bust your door to get in, sorry about that," Alec said and Camara decided she liked his voice. It was not Nikolai's deep brogue but it was grounded and made you want to trust him. "I'm with the construction company. I'm restoring your house," Alec further explained when she remained seated and gazing up at him in confusion.

Camara wanted to laugh, to cry, to tell this stranger that something unbelievable was happening but instead she took the hand he offered and they stood up together. To her embarrassment Camara couldn't seem to bring herself to let him go. He was her anchor to reality. "I'm sorry," she mumbled, eyeing her vice like grip on his hand. "It's okay. Sit down and just breathe. You were out for five minutes," as he spoke, Alec eased her into a kitchen chair. He didn't try to take his hand back. "Only five minutes?" Camara asked and he nodded. "Let me help gather this," Alec said when she finally let him go. Before Camara could react she saw that Alec had gone on one knee to pick up the box and love letters. "No. Don't touch them," she cried but it was already too late. Alec's hand had already closed on a love letter.



GOLDEN MOMENTS

LeBron Bulelani Ngovi - South Africa

A torchlight in hand, Lebo maneuvered his way through the misty St. Jansen Cemetery, searching for his daughter's grave. Although the Cape Town temperatures were frigidly low, his forehead was dotted with beads of sweat. He couldn't tell whether they were a result of the eerie environment or the nerves of meeting Owam in person for the first time since her death.

A bit of both, he mused.

He found her grave at the far end of the cemetery. He knelt and said a short prayer. More than anything else he prayed for Owam. He prayed for her peaceful rest among the land of the dead. He prayed that she held nothing against him after he had failed her the day she died. In less than an hour she would resurrect for five minutes: a stint that was christened Golden Moments, where the living would touch base with their beloved dead.

Legend traces the moments back to the 1950's. It is said that in 1914 the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to a shepherd boy named Jansen in the Cape Peninsula fields, calling herself 'Lady of the Rosary'.

During the apparition, the Mother of God asked the bewildered boy to convert and sacrifice himself to serve God for the greater good of humanity ahead of the gloom that would befall South Africa, prophesying the advent of Apartheid. She asked him for prayer, especially the daily recitation of the Rosary, to save the souls of the sinners. She also revealed that the lad would die saving poor victims of the oppressive system against his people, the Afrikaners.

Indeed, the day he died, in 1956, he was transporting a group of anti-Apartheid activists to a place of refuge. They were all gunned down mercilessly between Claremont and Wynberg.

It is said he would later appear as an apparition at midnight for five minutes every year on the very same grounds on which they were killed. And then years later, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, picked the land for a cemetery site named after the slain saint, and a gigantic statue of him holding high a torch was erected. Little did the servant of God know that all those laid on the grounds would, once a year, resurrect for five minutes until this day.

While kneeling by his daughter's grave, Lebo suddenly felt that somebody was watching him. He fleetingly cast glances all around him.

"You're early, son," said a raspy voice from the shadows.

Lebo stood up, turned round and trained both his eyes and torchlight on the profile of a lone, motionless figure that stood amid the swirling mist. Before he could make out who it was, it briskly stepped forward with a slight limp.

"Tata Tshawe," Lebo said, now recognizing the gaunt, silvery-haired intruder.

The caretaker nodded faintly and stretched out a hand greeting him.

"For your own information, my dear old man, I've always been early. Some say I was born ahead of my time," Lebo said, shaking the other's hand effusively.

The caretaker flashed a grin, relishing the young man's banter despite his sombre mood.

The light drizzle that had been falling sporadically throughout the evening started again, and Tshawe invited Lebo to take refuge in the guardhouse and get some coffee.

While preparing the hot beverage, Tshawe kept casting furtive glances at Lebo, noticing that he was growing pensive by the minute.

"There's no need to melancholic, son. These are the moments you've been longing for the entire year," he said, putting two cups of coffee on the table.

"I know, tata Tshawe, you're right. But I'm thinking whether five minutes will be enough. I have a lot to say to her."

Tshawe lay a hand on Lebo's shoulder.

"She'll understand, son."

They sipped their coffee in silence until Tshawe broke it.

"You've never fully told me the details of her death, apart from saying that she died a horrible death which you reproachfully say was your fault. What really happened the day she passed on, son?" The old man asked, his gaze fixed on Lebo unflinchingly.

Lebo heaved an irrepressible sigh, his head tilted to the roof and began relating the grotesque incident.

"Tomorrow will mark a year since we lost Owam," he said. "As tormenting as it is, the incident is still vivid in my memory like debris after a destructive hailstorm."

He lowered his head, eyes fraught with mizzle of tears and accepted a tissue which the old man held in his outstretched hand.

“My ex-wife had commitments out of town and had entrusted Owam to my care.

“It was one of those rare times that I would let my hair down after toiling for months, and listen to my Afro-soul jams. That morning, Owam had been riding her new bicycle on the driveway, in my sight, as I was sitting on the porch recliner, headphones deep in my ears.

“I inadvertently slipped into slumber, and when I awoke she was nowhere to be seen, but only her deserted bicycle.

“Alarmed, I went out to the street and cast a sweeping look- up and down. There was no sign of her.

“I came back and searched the house to no avail, and then set out to search the entire neighborhood.

“To cut the long story short, we later found her at the bottom of our backyard swimming pool.

“Having seen me in slumber, she had clearly sneaked to the backyard.

“After viewing our CCTV footage, we found that our poor girl had fought drowning for a good 30 minutes calling my name, before she ran out of energy and succumbed to her death...and all the while I...I was in deep slumber!!”

Gripped by shame and guilt, Lebo buried his face between his knees, sobbing and shuddering profusely.

Tshawe placed his hands on the young man’s shoulders and reassured him that it wasn’t his really his fault, only an unfortunate event that had long been lying in wait.

It took Tshawe almost fifteen minutes to calm the young man down.

They sat in silence until the cemetery bells struck midnight, signalling resurrection time.

Red eyed, Lebo stood up tentatively and went out.

Tshawe silently watched him exit, a guilt-ridden man with a burning soul.

The drizzle was still falling. Feeling it lashing lightly against his skin, Lebo squinted up at the ghostly outline of St. Jansen’s statue that peered out through the mist. He wished he could implore it to prolong the time he would spend with his daughter.

Weaving his way through the veil made by both the rain and the mist, he advanced to Owam’s grave.

he stood motionless by her tombstone, dressed in white, her eyes downcast.

Upon reaching her, Lebo collapsed and embraced her.

Her skin was as cold as ice.

She didn’t return his embrace. Her arms dangled at her sides like a puppet with no strings.

The drizzle suddenly stopped and the mist cleared.

Lebo swallowed hard and slowly untangled himself from her, meeting her steely gaze.

“You failed me, father,” she said.

Lebo felt his blood freezing.

“I cried out for you, father, but you never heard me!”

Her words were like daggers cutting his inside.

Her face contorted in utter resentment, Owam turned her back on him, and moved a few steps away.

Lebo could only stare, stupefied. He remained like that for a full minute.

At last he managed.

“My baby girl... my sweet baby girl, I wish I could turn back the hands of time...” he felt a lump rising in his throat.

The mist suddenly returned, more thicker than before.

Lebo strained his eyes, focusing on his daughter’s now hazy outline. He saw her vanishing slowly in the mist.

He stood up abruptly and staggered towards her. His hands outstretched, he groped for her, but only hit the air.

“Owam! Sweetie!” He hollered, still groping.

He illuminated his torch and circled her grave. No sign of Owam.

He realized that she was gone. Gone early. As before.

The five minutes he had been waiting for the entire year were cut short, before he could say all the things he wanted to say to her. Before he made peace with her soul.

He decided that there was only one way to get enough time with her. The way he came to the cemetery prepared to take. Which would provide him all the time he needed with her.

Death.

Only the dead have enough time for each other, he thought. As do the living.

He produced a sharp object from his jacket pocket. Sharp enough to get him to his daughter.

He held it with both his hands, pointing to his chest.

With all his might he struck it deeply, feeling it percolating. First, his skin, then his ribs, and his heart.

The good, old caretaker later found him lying in cold blood by his daughter’s grave, his eyes opened. He closed them, saying a short prayer under his breath.

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 8

Time seemed to be in Mohammed's favor, because he sped, unhindered to where Zarah and her lover were, and just like Dogo, he caught them right in the act. He was furious and he didn't try to hide it. There she was, there she lay beneath a man who was not her husband. She scampered in fear, trying to gather her things, as well as cover herself from the many pairs of eyes which had gathered at the scene. Mohammed was holding a machete- one with which he swore to chop off her head, as well as her lover's. In the whole confusion, she didn't know where Usman was, or if he was still there at all. The people present already began to hurl words at her- "Karuwa" "Kwartanci" "Zina". Prostitute. Adultery. Those who didn't know she was married kept calling her a fornicator as well. Zarah could not make out any face or voice amidst the crowd, all she knew was there were a whole lot of people around. People who shoved and pushed her. Those who pulled, dragged and kicked her back to the ground. Those who hit her and shouted right in her face, pointing fingers, and looking disgusted. No one cared nor considered that she was just a child. If she was old enough to commit such an act, then she was old enough to face her punishment.

In the rush and confusion, all she was able to put on were her under wears and her long coffee brown hijab. She didn't know where the rest of her clothing were. They had definitely been trampled and pushed under the very numerous feet. She cried, and tried appealing, but no one gave her audience. The crowd was already progressing to the community Sharia court- the Katsina State Judiciary, Sharia court of appeal, Head Quarters. Zarah was put in their midst and was constantly shoved by the people behind. As they moved, a larger crowd gathered, while others stood, looking. Zarah pulled her hijab forward to cover her face as she wept. It was only when she looked up briefly that she saw Usman walking ahead between two men. He was shirtless, and the men were holding on firmly to his trousers. He had sand on his hair, and at the side of his face. There was also a little blood streaking down his left temple, down to his neck. His appearance showed obvious signs of struggle. Apparently, he had tried to escape and was pinned down and caught by the men who held him tightly and proudly, as if showcasing a trophy. He in turn kept an almost expressionless face. He seemed calm and unfazed. Zarah couldn't control her tears, and she was a storm within as well.

Imran ran, with all his strength to confirm the truth in the rumors which had reached him. He had been at home that Saturday. He woke with a fever that morning and decided to rest it out in the comfort of his compound. He sat, almost all day under the pawpaw trees in his compound. He had done a lot of sleeping that day in the soothing weather, on his mat under the trees. Halima had prepared nyiri and haako for him earlier in the day. He requested that she served him outside, but even after she did, he left it covered and untouched for a long time. He didn't have any appetite, and though he really wanted to have his meal, he didn't go beyond the aroma. He was lying on his right side, his right arm serving as a pillow, and with his eyes closed, drifting slowly into sleep all over again. He was forcefully brought back to reality by hurrying feet in his compound. At first, he thought it was only Kamal play-

ing around with his friends like they usually did. He was already about to shout out to him to leave the compound, when he heard his own name from a very frantic voice. He sat up quickly, just about the same time that Ibrahim, his neighbor and friend, came running in.

As Imran stormed out of the house in great speed, he pulled his caftan over his head. He had run in to grab the keys to his bike, yet he ran, leaving the bike behind. But the moment he remembered, he had to run back to pick his motorcycle- it was quite a distance from his house to the community court house, yet in his confusion, he contemplated running all the way. His thoughts ran wild. His heart raced. He just couldn't imagine Zarah being involved in such an act. He couldn't and wouldn't believe it till his eyes saw for sure. He exclaimed and he prayed as he rode, that there was some mix-up. A grave mistake against his Gimbiya. The court was at the center of the community, and far from his compound, and the longer he rode, the more anxious he became. He met the crowd just a stone's throw from the Sharia, and by then he was drenched in his own sweat. Just like Zarah was drenched in her tears. He couldn't get access to her, as there were people on all sides. There were little boys there as well, who threw stones at her and sang "mace maizina" - An adulterous woman. They had followed her from where the crowd had caught her and gathered till that point. Imran was more heartbroken than he had ever been. He couldn't even keep his head up, but all the while he thought about Zarah, over and again.

The crowd got angrier and impatient as they approached the court and realized it was locked. None of them even remembered that it was a Saturday and the court didn't open weekends. Moreover, it was way past five, and the court only remained open till 4pm. Some men volunteered running to go call the Qadi, so he could come and administer judgement on Zarah and her lover. While the crowd waited for the men to return, most of them got impatient, and some left. The crowd had greatly reduced by the time the men returned. They looked disappointed like deflated balloons. They brought word from the Qadi, he had said the case would be addressed at the beginning of the new week, which was Monday. Shortly after, the crowd's burning heat had begun to go down gradually, and more people kept leaving one after the other.

The people left didn't know what to do with Zarah nor with Usman. They didn't know where to keep her till Monday morning when she would see the judge, as she was still too young to be locked up in a cell. Mohammed vowed that if she was allowed to return to his house that day, he would kill her himself before the Qadi got the chance to even pronounce judgment. Imran stood in a corner and cried. He remained there for a while before finally coming out and headed to where Zarah was crouched by a wall. She couldn't keep her head up for longer than 10 seconds. She was greatly ashamed of herself, and couldn't bear to look at her father- she had caused him much pain in the past year, refusing to visit and refusing to acknowledge whenever he came visiting. Yet here he was, not giving up on her, sticking around when everyone else deserted her, and not minding sharing in her shame. For the first time in three years, she allowed herself be embraced by him, as she cried openly.

“I’m sorry, Baba.” Her sobs choked her and hindered her from saying anymore. Her chest heaved, and her eyes watered. Her face was buried in his caftan as she cried and apologized. For a moment, only a brief moment, she forgot the world. She forgot all about the shame and everything- even about Usman. She only pulled away when she couldn’t breathe as her nose got clogged. It was only then that she was faced once again with the reality before her. Imran didn’t say a word. He didn’t even know what to say, and even if he did, he knew she had to have her moment of release, and so he didn’t interrupt. He stroked her hair gently, as she remained in his embrace. He remained silent, he held her close, but his mind was miles away.

The news of Zarah’s affair with Usman, like wild fire, had spread round the community of Dutsin-Ma. Sadiya was in the open space, behind the huts in Mohammed’s compound when Mama came frantically with the news. She on instinct dropped the kwarya- calabash which she was holding. She was mixing fura and nono in the calabash, preparing it for consumption. The entire contents in the calabash spilled on the floor, but none of the women cared about it- not even for a brief second. Sadiya just got enough information to know where Zarah was, before equally storming out of the house. In a hurry, she pulled a veil off the clothes rope and ran non-stop. She thought of ways she could save Zarah from the fate which was just lurking by the corner. She took the shorter road which led to the Sharia road- the dusty road which was also a possible path leading to Imran’s compound. Lucky for her though, she didn’t have to run so far before bumping into Imran riding his motorcycle with Zarah seated behind him, and holding on as he sped. Sadiya was glad she had caught up with them, and was glad to see Zarah safe at least. She was already instantly sick with worry. Imran stopped the bike, and both he and Zarah alighted. Zarah ran into Sadiya’s arms and once again she cried. Sadiya quickly, but gently brushed Zarah aside and walked up to Imran.

There was an obvious urgency in her gestures as she spoke with Imran a little distance away. It was barely two minutes they had been talking, but to Zarah it seemed like forever. She wished she could at least know what they were saying, though it was obvious that it was about her. Sadiya’s eyes were desperate and sad, while Imran’s were simply sad. According to Mama’s information to Sadiya, Mohammed had gone to the Qadi’s house to appeal himself that judgment be passed that same day. The Qadi, being an old friend of his, was sure to oblige. Both Sadiya and Imran contemplated where to hide Zarah, at least for the night, and away from society or especially Mohammed. Sadiya suggested the primary school just down the road. She could hide in one of the classrooms till they figured the next step of action, or if Mohammed surprisingly decided to let it go, though that possibility was like a one out of hundred. Zarah was frightened, extremely so. She handed the extra veil she had mistakenly dragged off the line to Zarah, as she held on to hers. They both used the veils as disguise and walked down the road to the primary school. Though no one was out or around, they couldn’t take any chances.

That night, as most the men, especially the young men were out looking for Zarah, Sadiya stayed in her room- praying and weeping. Mohammed had successfully gotten the Qadi’s

approval for their punishment to commence that day. Usman had been found, and dragged to the community market. There was an open field there and that was where he was dragged to. He had bruises and cuts, but no one cared. His shirt was forcefully torn off his back with his hands tied behind his back, and soon his punishment commenced. He was to be whipped hundred lashes of the cane, as the crowd watched. After the first five lashes landed on his back, he began to scream, sprawl on the ground and plead. He begged- using God and man, but no one listened. At twenty lashes, his back was already beginning to swell, but he still had eighty more to receive, and those hundred strokes he received in full.

After Usman's flogging, some of the men were suddenly blood-thirsty and thus searched for Zarah with all vigor. Imran's compound was rudely searched, and so were the other rooms in Mohammed's compound. The men took it upon themselves to vigil in hunt of Zarah that night. They searched every street and hidden corner in Dutsin-Ma, but all to no avail. At about 11:30pm, most of them retired to their houses, while some men were placed on different streets in the community, especially the streets leading to Imran's house. They speculated that she would come out of hiding and go home- most likely to Imran's compound. However, they didn't know that the Zarah they so desperately sought was well hidden in the school's field behind some tall bushes. She had been crouched quietly like a mouse in one of the classrooms, when she heard sounds like footsteps, and also saw flashes of light in the distance. She knew it was the men who sought her, and hurriedly escaped through the large open window and ran to the field. She was frightened beyond words, but she knew like Sadiya had told her, she couldn't afford to get caught.

Sadiya lay awake, her head facing the ceiling- the thatched ceiling, which she had for a roof. There was a little opening in the thatch, which afforded her to look at the bright moon-illuminated sky. Her tears flowed to her temples as she thought, not just of Zarah, but of her dear friend, Jamila. It was about six years when Jamila died through the most brutal means, but it still felt as fresh as the morning dew. It happened just shortly before she got married out to Mohammed. Jamila had been married a year by then. Though she claimed she had grown to love him, she also grew to love another more than she loved him. Jamila was so pretty, she naturally had all the men and young men trooping after her. She had exceptionally tiny teeth and long blackish-brown hair. People teased that she ate a lot of onions, as she had bright white eyes, which were big and well rounded. She was very petite and had a care-free nature to everything. She never let anything bother her for too long, as she always found ways to adapt to situations or bring the best out of horrible happenings. It was this same principle she adopted in her marriage to Kashim. He was such a gentleman who dearly loved her, but she was not ready to be bagged to one man, as she would say. She started an affair two years after her marriage to Kashim, despite Sadiya's warnings. She always said she was too smart to get caught, but unfortunately being smart failed her and she did get caught. Kashim had wanted to let things go, but the crowd which had gathered, took the case into their own hands. That very day, the Sharia decided her fate and it was implemented as the crowd stood watching.

Most of the women who were present were solemn and in tears, while the men looked hardened, except of course for Kashim. Young boys of different ages had sung her song, calling her a mace maizina and threw stones at her. Sadiya stood in the distance, watching the men as they dug a deep hole, just the size to accommodate a person standing in it. She had to hold on to a little tree branch for support as she watched her friend being put into the hole-like-grave. She was put into the hole standing on both feet, with only her head visible. Jamila was in tears as well-begging for mercy, and promising never to commit such an act. She looked round frantically, looking for one person who could come to her aid. Hoping for some miracle. She had looked at Kashim, but knew that he couldn't help her, as much as may have wanted to. Sadiya cursed the person who threw the first stone, though she didn't know who did. The stone hit her jaw and it was instantly bruised. Sadiya clutched her chest and looked away as she wept bitterly for Jamila. When she looked back, five minutes later, Jamila's face was almost unrecognizable. She was bleeding all over- her cheeks, her nose, her head, and even the little part of her neck which was visible. Her friend, her dear friend was gradually meeting her death, in an extremely cold manner. Jamila, by then, had already accepted her fate and could only smile in her death. Kashim had moved also, and stood just beside Sadiya, unable to watch his wife's brutal death. She looked at them both and smiled in a single breath, her eyes sending individual messages to them both. To Sadiya, her eyes said a million thanks for being a true friend, and standing by her even in her wrong decisions, even till death. And to Kashim were a million apologies- for throwing his pure love right back at him, and saying even for the first time, "I love you!" That being said, she closed her eyes and died right there in the grave. Sadiya, on realizing that Jamila was finally dead, let out a loud wail and fell to the ground. Rolling unashamedly in the dust. That was it; that was the end of the very petite and pretty Jamila. Her head had been stoned to death, just as the law custom demanded, and Abdulsalam had gotten his own quota too- hundred lashes of the whip before everyone.

Sadiya wept, her body shivered, and her lips quaked. She wept not just for Jamila now, but for Zarah as well. She wept out of fear for Zarah, and blamed herself as well. She couldn't bear to see someone she dearly loved go through the same fate. Once was enough, and it had happened with Jamila already. At then, she was more determined than ever to save Zarah, even if it was going to come at a cost.

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



5 Minutes

If I had 5 minutes left on earth, I would have no time to call my friends and loved ones to tell them how much I love and will miss them; No time to visit my dream locations - Rome, Egypt and Paris; No time to call up my romantic interest to cuddle and snuggle with for the last time; No time to set up my canvas and create an abstract art in my usual slow but meticulous manner; No time to listen to my favorite sentimental but erratic musical playlist for the very last time; No time to settle old scores; No time to fall in love with a man for the very first time...forget about Dan, my #CandyCrush, He was just a crush and nothing more. Hahaha; No time bring my ancient fantasy of singing and performing on stage to reality; I can go on and on.

One thing I can do for five minutes is to tuck myself into bed and play the 'remember when' game with my creator until I drift into timeless space. This is how it will play out...

Dear Yeshua, remember when you guys saved me from kidnappers on those dark streets when I snuck out to buy fried plantain at age 4? I slipped out of their grasp, then ran and wailed as if hounds from hell were after me until neighbors came to my rescue. I am thankful that my parents did not find out because they would have slapped me to oblivion.

Thank you for showing me early how wicked and cold the outside world is and for being my guards. Everyone, except you Guys always seemed too busy to notice my presence or absence.

Dear Yeshua, do you remember when I was molested at age 5 by the cook and I vowed to hate men for the rest of my life?

Thank you for using my wonderful relationship with my dad, brother and friends like Demola and Anthony to show me that not all men are twisted and evil; and for using some women at church to show me that not all women are virtuous and warm.

Dear Yeshua, remember when I got pregnant in college and had to do a D&C? Looking back now, I can't help but thank you for staying with me throughout my mental recovery. Every time I passed by that hospital or remembered, I felt the evacuation pains all over again, I never thought I'd ever recover from that episode.

Thank you for teaching me the value of human life through my secret longing for true love and children few years down the line.

Dear Yeshua, remember when I used to watch those Disney classics as a young adult and brag to you about how I would fall in love once, get married and experience erotica in the arms of only one lover for the rest of my life?" Only trashy girls are capable of engaging more than one lover in a lifetime" - I thought.

Thank you for showing me that life is not perfect but filled many twists and turns a decade and twelve lovers after my self righteous declaration.

Dear Yeshua, remember when my parents got divorced soon after I graduated from college and I left home in anger to squat with my friend from school?

Thank you for showing me through her family that "perfect families" are families that do not bare their flaws to "outsiders" but showcase their individual strengths to the world.

Dear Yeshua, remember when I threw my standards out the window and slept with my married boss out of fear of losing my "precious" job? I never would have imagined doing such a thing in a million life times. I remember how I cursed those ladies who worked for my ex-fiancé for sleeping with him knowing full well that he was engaged to be married.

Thank you for teaching me how to be gracious to those who have wronged me by making me walk in their shoes.

Dear Yeshua, thank you for leading me through a life of adventure filled with moments when I had to learn by unlearning; moments when I truly understood the meaning of love and forgiveness by letting go; moments of pain, sorrow and new beginnings; moments of betrayal and fidelity; moments with family and friends.

I know you are waiting to receive me on the other side with Papi and the Spirit. Thank you and See you soon.

THE OBSERVER

With Leo Muzivoreva, Zimbabwe



The Power of Five Minutes

Five minutes is the window of time we often talk about. We leave a roast in the oven for five more minutes to ensure it is cooked completely. We text people to let them know we will be five minutes late. And when we are feeling overwhelmed, we'll take a five minute break to breathe and reset. Five minutes can seem like forever, and it can also seem like five seconds. If you have ever run at an aggressive pace for five minutes, you know that seems endless. Conversely, spend-ing five minutes with someone who is leaving – whether they are dying or just moving away – those minutes never seem long enough.

Oftentimes, we lament that there are not enough hours in the day. We'll say, "If I just had five more minutes ..."

Well, if you did have five more minutes, what would you do?

Would you do something for yourself? Would you do something for someone else?

Would you hand out praise? Would you complain about something or someone?

Would you gossip? Would you spend that time with another person?

Or, would you spend it with the memory of someone you can no longer spend five minutes with?

I wonder what goes through the mind of someone on their deathbed in those last five minutes. The cynic would think a person, incapacitated and void of movement and the ability to speak spends those five minutes doing nothing. But I am quite certain that there would be many thoughts, a reflection on life perhaps. Dreams realised, dreams missed.

In those final five minutes, I would like to think people do some things for themselves and may-be for someone else. If religious, they probably hand out praise. I am confident there would be no complaining or lament. Taking time to complain or worry about things that have already passed is just wasted time. And no one has time for that.

So for all those that say, "I just wish I had five more minutes in the day," I'm here to say you do.

Think about five minutes that you might be spending on things less than productive. How can you pivot to do something good and meaningful with that time?

Upon observation and reflection, I realised a different perspective on how we can positively spend our time with ourselves and each other.

When is the last time you took a moment for yourself at work?

Really give that some thought.

No matter the job, one thing I always feel the most entitled to, is asking for a moment. In my current position, I get asked a lot of questions, have tasks delegated to me, and I manage a lot of the daily logistics of my current organisation. This means, at any time of day, in addition to non-stop emails, someone is at my desk or calling me on the phone to talk. Sometimes it is to ask questions. Other times, it is just to confirm if an email was received, to expound on a particular task that has been given or to provide information the colleague feels I should know.

In nearly all cases, me looking, and being, busy does not seem to deter some co-workers. So I generally have to stop what I am doing, shift my attention and focus on them while trying to maintain my original train of thought. It is a lot. This is why I started being honest with not only my colleagues, but myself, and asking for time and space.

I am sure it makes me come across as a bit vain, but one of the best things I do for myself at work is ask for time or simply a moment. Whether it is because I'm at lunch, reading or writing an email, in the restroom, or doing any number of things I do daily, if needed, I freely will say, "Can you just give me five minutes?" or "Let me call you back at about 9:15," or "Can we move this meeting back 30 minutes?"

I don't do it often, only when necessary. I feel it is a disservice to my colleagues to pretend I am completely focused, or presently interested, when I am not. Let's be honest, typically people want to get things off of their desk or mind, so they shift the onus on you, which can create a sense of unnecessary urgency. It's just the work culture.

We are taught to always be available. Somehow, we have equated teamwork with never saying "no" or "not right now" or "I don't have the time". How many times have you sent your team an out-of-office notice letting them know they can access you by cell or email on your sick days? There is a reason when you go on vacation you emphasize that you won't have access to emails. In most cases, unless you're going to some remote island jungle, you can have access, you just want to vacation in peace – which is totally fair.

Would we not be a better and more productive workforce if people managed their time honestly?

It is hard to say no. It is even harder to turn people away. But how much better would your work production be if you were undisturbed? We get side-tracked all day long with emails, texts, phone calls and social media, making it hard to focus as is. There is an honest case for asking for space and time. You deserve it, and your work will improve.

Our jobs ask a lot of us these days, and most people spend a great deal of time at work, but we often don't feel we have the right to set our own boundaries and rules-practices that help us have peak work performance. When I ask to have a moment, sometimes I get a look of surprise from my colleagues, but most times people are respectful and completely understanding. It only takes one person to start a trend.

Let's get this one rolling. Take a FIVE MINUTE break when you need one and see what happens.

WSA

CALL FOR SUBMISSION



We are seeking for submissions for the November edition of WSA under the theme: FUTURE.

Please submit either of the following:
Articles | Essays | Flash Fiction | Poetry | Children's Literature
Short Stories | Jokes | Artworks | Personalised quotation.
Deadline: October 10, 2019

Please visit - www.writersspace.net/submissions
for submission guidelines and to upload your work.