

December
2019
Edition
Issue 36

WWSA



FANTONE MDALA
(HARRY POTTER)
Malawi

TOCHUKWU PRECIOUS EZE
Nigeria

THE TSAR STEVE MOÏSE
Cameroon

KALEKYE MISH
Kenya

MORWAMPHAKA SELLO HUMA
South Africa

OMADANG YOWASI
Uganda

NOBUKHOSI PRECIOUS NDLOVU
Zimbabwe

GLORIA D. GONSALVES
Tanzania/Germany

WANANGWA MWALE
Zambia

PETER BLESSING PEVER (PPBLESSING)
Nigeria

BENNY WANJOHI
Kenya

Special Feature

#PenPenAfrica

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EDITORIAL

What do you know?
It's December already.

The end of 2019 is upon us, with the promise of yet another dazzling start. So, take a time-out to reflect on the passing year but don't neglect to celebrate your successes, lessons learned, and most importantly, be thankful. You're still here.

And, in the spirit of Thanksgiving, our writers roll out the alphabets in festivals of colours, feasts, and fun!

Be happy for we have much to be thankful for.

See you in 2020.

Sandra Oma Etubiebi,
Chief Editor,
WSA



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Shobo, Akinmayowa Adedoyin - Nigeria

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Mukonya Mukonya - Kenya

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Chelsea Ilumba - Tanzania

Donniella Mwakamele - Tanzania

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Hellen Akeyoowuor - Kenya

Muyambo Mwenda - Zambia

Christina H Lwendo - Tanzania

Majory Moono Simuyuni - Zambia

Kimberly Chirodzero - Zimbabwe

Stephanie Cupido - South Africa

Marycynthia Chinwe Okafor - Nigeria





FLASH FICTION



MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

by Fantone Mdala (Harry Potter) – Malawi

Chewing on the thought of making my next move, I sat down the rocking chair which oscillated back and forth like the thoughts inside my head. Glamorous Christmas decorations hanged in the house like twinkling stars in the night sky, spicing up the festive climate consuming the whole household.

Engrossed in their festival mood, everyone was pumped as they waltzed around, groomed in their finest occasional threads.

“Hey, Biliyati, can you go help out your brother in carrying the crates of the soft drinks from the kitchen?” Mum called out from the lounge.

Agitated I stormed out of the room and shuffled into the kitchen. Moments later, I remerged from my short exile.

My eyes were still glued on the prize on the custom-made mahogany table. With my heart beating with an undying excitement of impatience, I returned to my earlier seat. I continued meditating over my failed attempts to attain the package on the table.

“I’ll definitely get my hands on you soon or later”, I muttered to myself.

Still cradling my impatience to rest, I waited for an open window of opportunity. When people were distracted with the inviting loud music from the jukebox, I finally jumped out my seat as fast as lightning onto the table.

“Yes, yes!! I got it now.” I wept with excitement.

I disappeared out the dining room with the tumbler cupped in my hands. My face lit up like a light bulb in the dark. Gently holding the tumbler, I swirled the cherry red liquid contents before gulping it down my throat. Am finally doing it, am finally having my first taste of wine. I savor the touch of the wine on my tongue. To my disappointment, I realize that I had just drunk cherry-plum, one of the soft drinks brought for the party.



BE ANYI, OUR HOME

by Tochukwu Precious Eze - Nigeria

Standing in the middle of it all, I stopped for a minute to observe.

It was a fast-spreading flame but you could tell where it started; the ogene team. They burned voraciously in passion and in strength. There was no time to wipe sweat off their faces as their hands worked by the second. Their legs weren't still either, they jumped and ran and drummed the ground in a contagious dance. And everything they did synchronized to produce the special harmony that consumed the city.

The soil danced around Nnenna's feet as she tangoed with the air around her body. Her shoulders shivered and her hands were swift. And when she went low, the whole town stopped to scream her name. "*Oo nna gi muru gi*. You're your father's daughter!"

The men laughed and talked over the music. Kegs of palm wine passed around like there wasn't enough to get the whole village drunk. The children chased each other around and made flips when the elders weren't watching.

There was a chorus as the women walked in with coolers and opened them to sweeten the atmosphere. And brethren, my observation ended here, for I quickly grabbed a seat and waited earnestly for my share of the pounded yam and bitter-leaf soup.



POETRY

ONCE A YEAR

Oh, you are finally here!
The days with coloured smile,
To the music we swayed
Check this beat,
Our funny style and deeds

Where do I begin
Which colour will you admire??
Blue, black, red, white!!
Oh, my favorite is blue, smart and cool.
Amazing song we sang
With you saturating my heart.

Nothing else was important
But the dancing and singing
The beauty of the day
The tour in the stands
Oh, merriness stole my heart
With you saturating my heart
What a joy in lungs !

If every moment was like this
Worries wouldn't exist
Festivity, once a year you come
The nostalgia
The healing of wounds.
Festivity, once a year you come.

The tsar
Steve Moïse,
Cameroon

NATURE-FEST

A long carnival leads into the city
A mood-less city
An ark for tired citizens

The entry is magnificent
Step by step
Colts dance in pairs

Behind the chariots are animal enthusiasts
Moving in the spirit of animals
From costume to animal sounds

A woman chirps
A bunch of friends kiss in giraffe masks
Pop! Goes rabbit balloons

Along the entryway are tulips
Whose artistic arrangement divert into streets
Woops! Cunning squirrel bumps into a scarecrow

A snoopy dog threatens a member of parliament
In a different street,
Roars the King of the jungle

The sun sets in the West
While hibernators emerge
The festival goes down till dawn

@Kalekye Mish
Kenya

KWANZAA



**It's a revival of the ancient celebrations of harvest
street parading, offerings and spiritual slaughtering's
we giving back to orphans and have-knots
festival of the first fruits, we never forget the roots
and the riches from the soil.
We break the rules for a new season**

**We are sharing Embe and kola nuts with reason,
traditional colours of dashikis, bright doeks
and all that jazz of togetherness.
The vibe is Coltrane blues
and a mix of Lucky Dube**

**Ubuntu is the game of the day
and love is the talk of the day
different rhythms of drums
and dance moves reawakening
the black dream, rhythm in sound, rhythm
in movement and rhythm in light
As different speakers, musicians, poets and pastors
communicate with the spirits to breastfeed our souls**

**The spirit of African renaissance
is far from being over down here in Yeoville
Spirit energy of Nyama and Modjadji
flowing through the feast
As we quench our pride with palm wine
and ripened crops of fruits and vegetables
thanking the gods for a great harvest and market.**

**Morwamphaka Sello Huma
South Africa**

FESTIVAL OF COLOURS

He was dancing; shirt off, hands to the stars,
Eyes as shut as a furious clenched fist,
Crying the words of a song defiant,
a song compliant,
A song complaining.

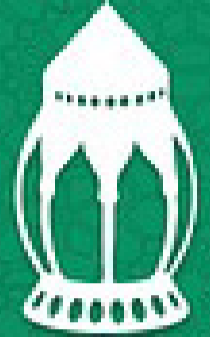
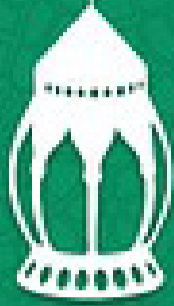
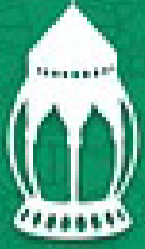
He was waltzing,
eyes lulled by heavy hum.
Now he sits or sleeps and dreams,
the mayhem goes on
Behind his ears.
He is slapped from all sides,
his head, half orange
His face purple,
his left shoulder, a hideous blue.

When the filth dries and peels off,
His sweat holds it back in place -
He is dancing again.
He is stuck in a perpetual carnival of colours;
His life a collage of past lovers,
The skin on his soul a canvas of prints.

Yitzhak Gate
Kenya



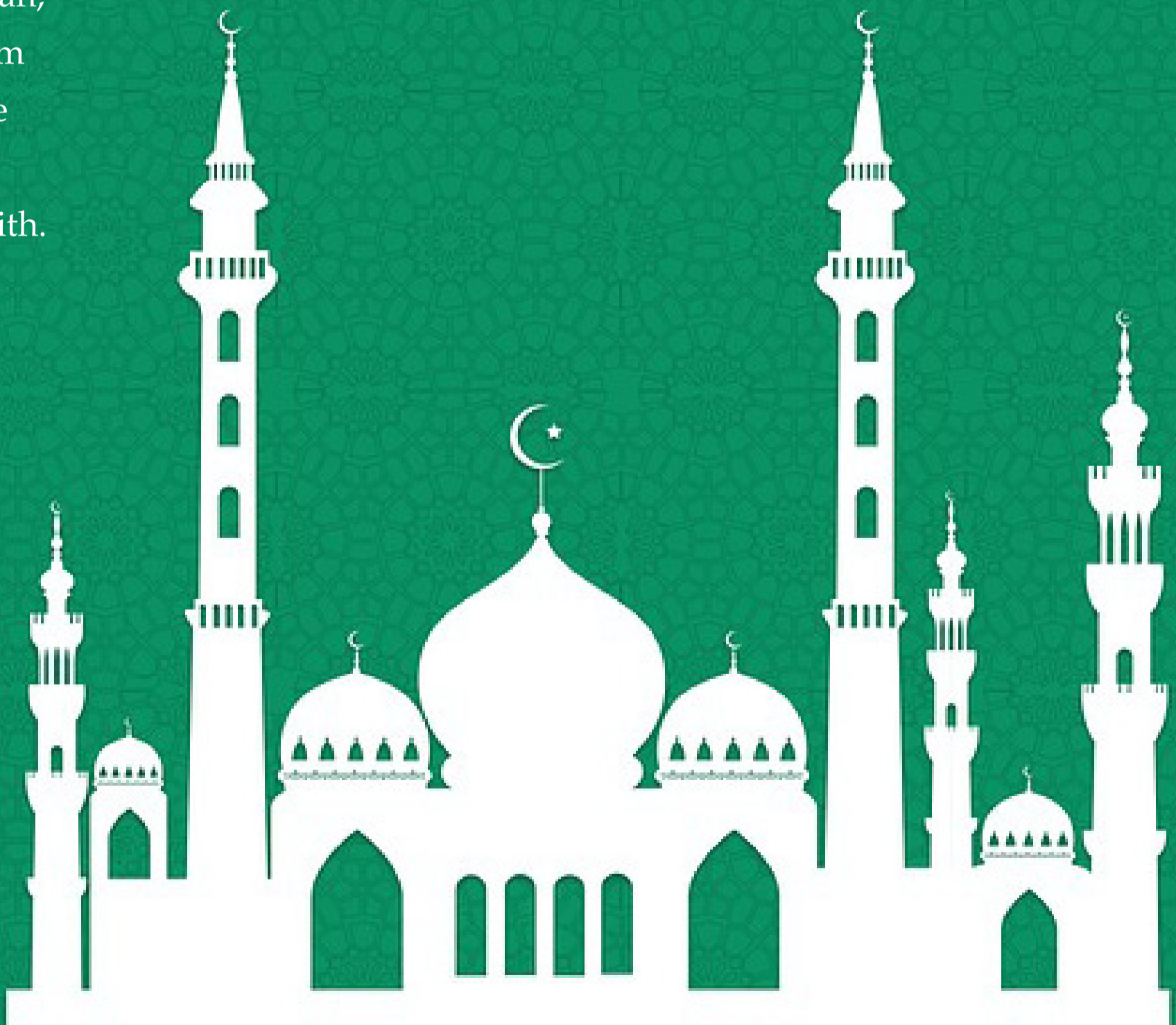
EID DAWN



Evening delayed unusually,
Dragging our hearts
Eclectic beyond words,
Never did we lose hope.

Eid Al-Fitr came at last,
Caressing the crescent
Sacred as Ramadhan.
There, in the mimbar
And reciting a khutbah,
Sat an esteemed Imam
In his splendour robe
Enjoining his flock
So as to keep their faith.

Omadang Yowasi
Uganda



DECEMBER HOLIDAYS

Traveling arrangements are being made,
as houses are being prepared,
for the celebrations to be made
when everyone is gathered in one place,
seeing each other after so long a time
That seems to be snail around
Until this season is seen once again


The atmosphere is filled with love,
As there is plenty to eat,
New outfits to wear,
Gifts and presents of appreciation
To show our loved ones
that they were greatly missed
During their period of absence.

Neighbours look over the walls,
Curious of the laughter that is about,
Wishing for an invitation to the joy,
As if a wedding feast is being held
When it is only family catching up
On time spent separated.

Sadly, it is just but a season
That comes to an end
As people return and things go back
To the period of "normalcy" leaving all to
Reminisce on the moments spent together as
A driving force to await the next season to come.

Nobukhosi Precious Ndlovu,
Zimbabwe

FEASTFUL TIME



Send news
To my girl
Beneath the almonds
I yearn for her sweet love
Her elegant touch
Like morning dew to the Sunflower
Tell her,
Tomorrow in the early sun
Our journey shall be
As man and wife -
The talk of the town among angels and men.

To my brothers
Send them news
That a stranger arrives
Like an emissary from glorious Heaven
Bearing answered prayers under its wings,
Tell them -
The rains that stole our joys are ended
Prepare the food baskets
Let hearty mirth ring through the lands
As the troupe flip in resplendent air
Let it be called our season -
A feast-ful time of plenty.

Shobo, Akinmayowa Adedoyin
Nigeria



MAMA'S HUSBAND

Mama moved swish swash
hips swinging this way that way
carefree as the wind.

A tuk tuk man came
to ride her to the market
for the daily buy.

The sellers shouted
a mango for one or two
to keep your husband.

Other sellers joked
a kanga to fit your hips
when a tuk tuk flies.

Some stopped to admire
with lateral clicks fyu fyu
you're blessed woman.

Mama's pace slowed down
at the stall curtained with pods
and rice next to it.

She filled the basket
and walked all the way home
straight like a giraffe.

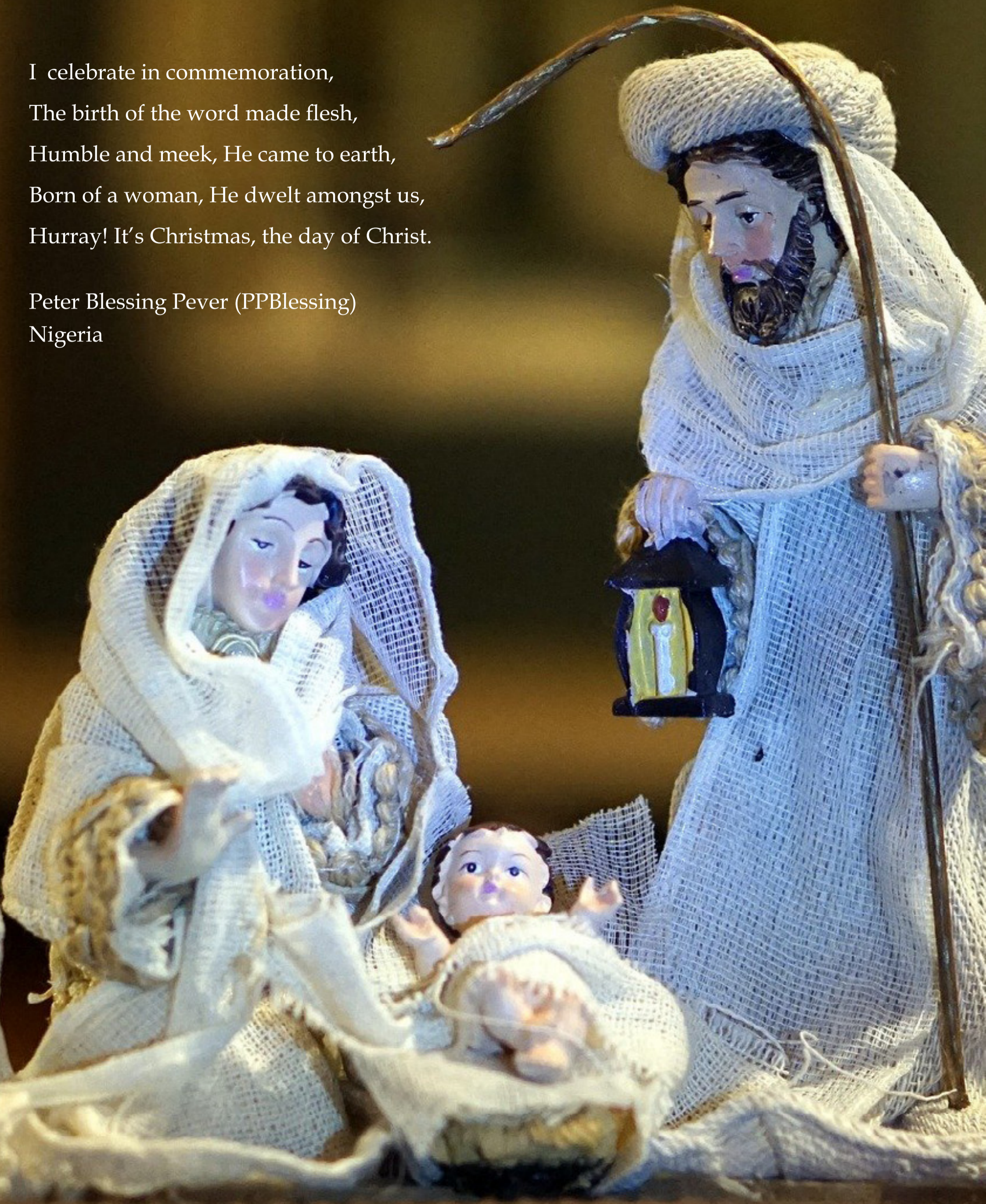
I sat to watch her
as she hummed while cooking,
"Husband is Jesus".

Gloria D. Gonsalves
Tanzania/Germany

CHRISTMAS

I celebrate in commemoration,
The birth of the word made flesh,
Humble and meek, He came to earth,
Born of a woman, He dwelt amongst us,
Hurray! It's Christmas, the day of Christ.

Peter Blessing Pever (PPBlessing)
Nigeria





ANOTHER SEASON

Another season,
Another reason;
Time for a new dress,
Time to relieve stress;
The year is closing shop,
The year soon will stop.

Red here, white there,
Twinkle here and there;
Meat here, rice there,
Delicacy here and there.

Pull the cart,
Push the trolley;
Fuel the car,
Start the journey;
Travel far,
Till the Ika valley;
Greet our mum,
Eat the plum,
Then salivate;
Beat the drum,
Songs we hum,
To celebrate;
Another season
With a reason!!

©Benny Wanjohi
Kenya

WHEN IT'S CHRISTMAS TIME

It's that time of year again
As the end draws near
And some of the year's memories fade
Hoping for the New year
Celebrating the last holiday of the year


It is that time again
When families meet to fest
A Christmas meal, hoping for unity
But usually ending up further apart

It's that time of the year again
When Christmas carols are loudly sung
Yet with no regard to the interpretation
of the message being communicated
But usually it's overwhelmed
with the violence that surrounds it

In anticipation of the year ahead
It's that time again, when the year is summarized
By eating and drowning in alcohol mostly
It's that time, it's Christmas time

Wanangwa Mwale
Zambia

CHRISTMASTIDE



Sparklers; children running everywhere
Streets packed, busy is the market square
Bought gifts, with others to share
Celebration, everyone's dressed with flair
From the candelabrum, the candles flare
Loud sound; fireworks, colours in the air
The exuberance, everyone screams for joy
No difference; woman, girl; man, boy
Broad smile, the individuals employ
Troubles forgotten, these moments to enjoy
Everyone's converged, to share tenderness
For it's Christmas, the season of happiness.

Mukonya Mukonya
Kenya



NEWS

2019 DAUGHTERS OF DESTINY FOR PURPOSE POETRY WORKSHOP IN HARARE, ZIMBABABWE



On November 23rd, 2019, activities commemorating the United Nations Campaign on 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence came to a head with the award ceremony of the Daughters Destined for Purpose (DD4P) Annual Poetry competition, which engaged teenagers in the expression of their thoughts, ideas, and mental pictures against gender based violence. The theme of this year's competition was "My Responsibility."

As part of activities leading up to this date, the DD4P organized a poetry workshop on August 3rd to expose, teach, and sensitize both students and teachers on the elements of effective poetry helping the participants to draw strong linkages between different themes and gender-based violence.

We therefore celebrate our award winners in the 13-15 year old and 16-19 year old categories for their expressions that won the hearts of the judges: Nadine Mutangara from Midlands Christian College in Gweru won the 13 - 15 age category, while Tanaka Katerere from Rose Academy in Harare won the 16-19 year old category.

The judges were stimulated by the display of strong emotions, which underscored the teenagers' understanding of gender based violence, their ability to give words to their emotions, and the display of promising talents.

Enjoy the award winning poems:

My Responsibility

Nadine Mutangara

If we survey the broken world we live in today,
Our hearts wail out to the sound of sorrow.
Our days are numbered, we're rapidly decaying.
The smiles have turned out the peace we borrow.
We're quickly crumbling and should shield our tomorrow.

Tomorrow promises a better light,
She sits and gawks and watches the clock tick.
The ones of now should make things right,
And not let time pass and the clock tock.
Bitter and ruthless the people become, living in world they heavily rock.

I watch and weep till the crack of dawn,
As I hear the sour sound of gunshot songs.
Lives are lost and every hour we mourn!
The callous attitude of a human being,
Like me and you, I destroying the world and every being!

We own this world and it deserves respect,
But it is being demolished by unworthy souls.
Once green and bright, now brown, no light.
How and when will we accomplish our goals,
If we just sit back, relax and watch the world fall?

The way forward is in this very day,
The young and old have a role to play.
I too have the zeal and passion to play,
So I will stay in this brutal world,
And add impact by being bold.

I will inspire, desire and aim for much higher.
I will rejoice, embrace and feel His holy grace.
I will not stand by and see a liar,
Laugh and smile and see bright days,
While she sheds tears because he abused her.

If it's not you, it's me who will save her.
If it's not you, it's me who will save us.
If it's not you, it's me who will build up,
If it's not you, it's me who will fight,
Fight for what's right and fight for our rights!

If we survey the connected world we live in today,
Our hearts just cheer to the sound of praise,
Our days are still numbered but we're gently healing,
The smiles are gleaming and the peace, our saving grace.
We're gradually building and have reached tomorrow.

My Responsibility

Tanaka Katerere

My responsibility is to protect you and keep you safe like a soldier
Yet I am the one who invades your safety and brings you danger
I taunt, shout and bring pain to you
Because of my insecurities and my own foolish anger

My responsibility is to make our bond as strong as steel
Yet I leave you broken and shattered
Like shards of a wine glass scattered
Because I unfairly blame you for our bad financial matters

My responsibility is to be loving and caring
Yet I become over-possessive and scary,
Leading me to do unthinkable acts
Like swinging a bat at you and swearing

My responsibility is to give you flowers
Yet I leave you unconscious on the ground for hours
Using all my strength and power
To knock you down and make you collapse like a tower

My responsibility is to not just to conclusions
Yet I leave you unable to stand on two feet
All because I think at time you are unfaithful
Even though you've never tried to cheat

With all that in mind my responsibility is clear
If you want to not fear me when I am here
Because you are the love of my life
My one, my only, my wife.

#PenPenAfrica



The PenPen Africa project is a writers' residency with the aim of bringing together select writers from different countries in Africa and hosting them for 3 weeks in an environment designed to aid their creative process and to encourage writing about the African culture. The residency is a two-part project with the first part which held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 1st to 21st November, hosting 6 writers from West and Central Africa. The writers were Modou Lamin Sowe (ML) from The Gambia representing Writers Association of The Gambia (WAG); Sakina Traoré from Cote D' Ivoire representing Self-ish; Tega Oghenechovwen from Nigeria representing The Custodians of African Literature (COAL NG); Ngang God'swill N from Cameroon representing Self-ish; Maryam Boyi from Nigeria representing Yasmin El-rufai Foundation (YELF); and Edem Azah from Ghana representing Writers Space Africa – Ghana (WSA-G)

The PenPen Africa project took on a different approach to the idea of a residency, as the 6 residents were exposed to the subjects of culture, creative writing, publishing & editing as well as writing for the 21st century reader. The residents also got to share experiences from their cultural communities through stories and food as well.

The second leg of the PenPen Africa project will take place next year in Nairobi, Kenya. This part of the project will focus on giving the same content to writers from East and Southern Africa. In its finality, the project hopes to encourage more writing that focuses on culture in the area of creative nonfiction. To apply for the second leg of the residency, please visit www.writerstrust.org/penpenafrica.

Children's Literature

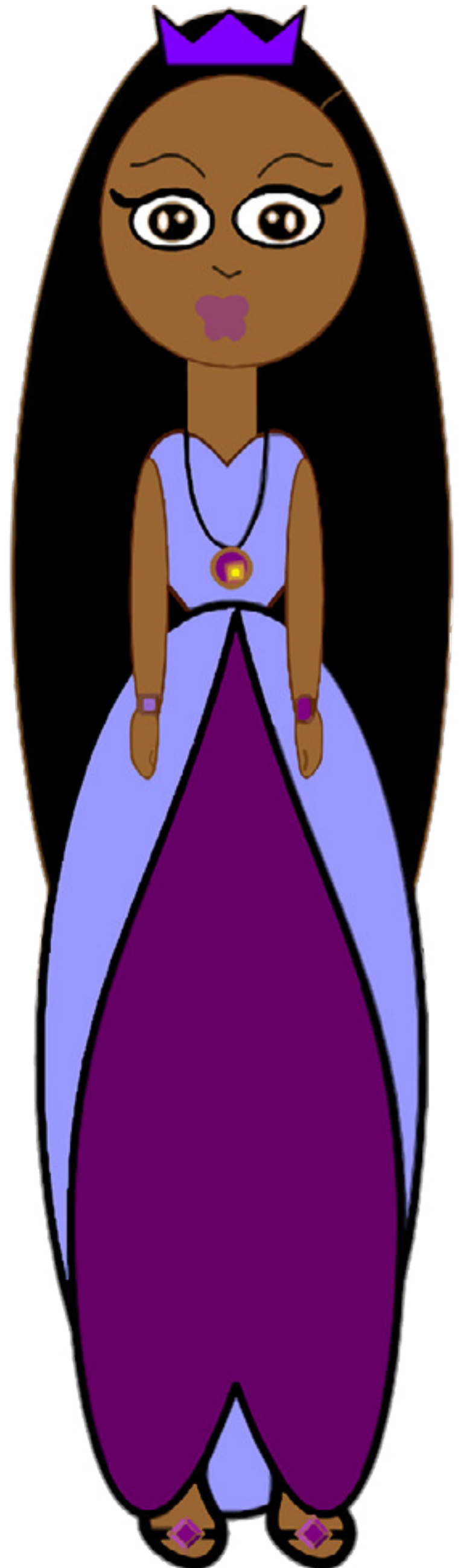


GIRLS

By

Princessia Mrema - Tanzania

A combination of
Sugar, spice and everything nice,
They are God's creation -
The mothers of tomorrow.
God is a great artist, and
Girls are the perfect masterpiece,
So why abuse them?
Why seduce them?
They are human like you,
And have the calmest emotions,
They have a voice
Yet not given a chance to shine.
All the torture they've been through
Makes them stronger
And they never give up,
So why should you?
If you're a girl,
Stand tall,
Never look back
And take over the world!



PRINCESSIA Mrema: She is 13 years old. Her hobbies are writing poems, singing, dancing and reading story books. Ambition: To become a Businesswoman and a Doctor - to nurse the sick back to good health.

LIFE AND DEATH

by
Chelsea Ilumba - Tanzania

What is life and death?

Is it like night and day

Or the start and end?

What is life and death?

Death is like a strike of lightning,

A strike that can't be reversed

Like ruins that can't be rebuilt,

What is life and death?

Life is like the ticks of the clock

A day, as it is, is like an hour

When the clock stops, we leave,

This is life and death.



CHELSEA Ilumba: She is 12 years old. Her hobbies are singing, dancing and reading novels.
Ambition: To become an Engineer – to help Tanzania have better infrastructure.

MOTHER'S LOVE

By Donniella Mwakamele - Tanzania

Mothers are the most valuable people in the world
No one else has a love that matches a mother's
Mothers strive, mothers work for all that's right.

Is there anyone in this world
who cannot describe a mother?
For mother is a gift given by God,
Mothers are like angels
in the day and in the night.

Mother, when I grow up,
I will follow your steps and leads,
There are so many things
that I have learnt from you
You are my teacher, mentor and guide.

Oh mother,
I, too, will become a mother
And I will teach my children
what you taught me
And I will teach my children
how you taught me.

Thank you, God, for this blessed gift,
that you have given me,

A mother is the most valuable thing anyone could ask for,
No one in the world can replace a mother.



DONNIELLA Mwakamele: She is 13 years old. Her hobbies are singing, dancing, cooking and designing. Ambition: To become a Businesswoman and a Social Scientist - To make the world a better place for children and the elderly.

IT'S CHRISTMAS

by
Ngalim Jusline Veeyeenyuy - Cameroon

December is around
Christmas bells are ringing
All the children singing
New dresses and new shoes
Good food and much juice

Children running round the towns
Singing songs of joyful sounds
Balloons, balloons everywhere
Of all colours and sizes
Flying and smiling everywhere

This is all I remember
Every year about December
All I dream of are the gifts
And in happiness I swim
Full of memories to remember.



CHRISTMAS ON THE 25TH FLOOR

by

Akinrinade Funminiyi Isaac,
Nigeria



Sound the alarm, ring the bell
Raise it high for all to hear
Tell your friends, but don't yell
That Christmas is almost here.



If your friends ask what's Christmas
It's a day to celebrate Christ's birth
Tell it to all in your class
He was born to save all from death.

If your friends ask you when
Tell them it's 25th December
And by then you will be ten
What a day to remember!

If your friends ask you where
Tell them it's on the 25th floor
That a lift will take all there
It's a day like never before



If your friends ask what they'll eat
Tell them rice and fat goat meat.



CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY

by Hellen AkeyoOwuor - Kenya

Atieno's favorite time of the year was fast approaching. She would get to spend time with her friends, play their favorite games and do everything together. Festivity hung thick in the air. She could not help but smile to herself as she hummed a little tune she had learnt when she was young. It was something that went like this.

"Jinglebells,jingle bells, jingle all the way..."

She could not however finish the words as she did not know what followed. It was Christmas time, every child's favorite holiday.

On the Christmas Eve, Atieno woke up and did her normal chores, fetching water and sweeping the compound, as she waited for breakfast to be ready. A joyous mood had engulfed the whole village. People visited each other and had meals together, strangers met and talked as if they had known each other their whole lives. Children ran up and down the village, playing and shouting at the top of their voices, normally, the elderly would hush them up but they did not. The old men would occasionally meet under a tree and have a drink or two, women and young girls were busy in the kitchen. Animals were not left behind, the chicken clucked as goats bleated.

The young girls had their day planned well. After breakfast, Atieno went to her friends, Tina and Achieng who lived nearby. They were to take the cattle out for pasture and for watering. That was what they enjoyed most during the holidays.

“Mother, I am off to take the cattle out,” Atieno said to her mother after breakfast.

“That is alright but be back before lunch time. Greet Tina and Achieng’ ”

With that, she was gone. Still humming her favorite tune. she passed by her friends’ house and they all drove the cattle to a green patch not very far from their homes. After safely tying the animals to little shrubs, they decided to play. they decided that hide and seek was not ideal since there were no hiding places. They settled on ‘kati’ , -a game in which two people, try to hit the third, who is normally at the center, with a small ball. They quickly made a small ball and started playing. They enjoyed the game so much that they did not notice how much time had passed by. They quickly untied the cattle and led them to the community watering hole and finally at home.

They all had lunch at their homes then later in the afternoon, they set off for the river to bathe and fetch water. Christmas day was the next day, they had to fetch a lot of water to avoid coming back to the river on the big day. They also collected firewood. The day was soon over.

Finally, the much-awaited day was here. Atieno was still tired from all the work she had done the previous day, but that did not keep her from waking up early. She was itching to put on the new dress and shoes that her mother had bought for her. She was really excited. She first went to have breakfast. She had tea and mandazi that her mother had prepared earlier. Then started on decorating the living room with balloons and colored ribbons, just as she did every Christmas. She swept and made the house clean.

Atieno quickly headed to the bathroom after everything. After a quick bath, she put on her new pink, flowery dress and white pumps. She then went straight to the kitchen where she found her mother preparing a scrumptious meal of chapati and chicken. There was also a huge bottle of soda. Atieno loved that meal so much, she decided to stick around the kitchen for a while. She was going to meet her friends later in the day. Lunch time soon came and they ate to their fill. They talked about everything and laughed about anything. In most households, that was the trend. The day ended on a high note, children singing, women cooking, men having beer and everyone merry.



ESSAYS





Thanksgiving in Africa

Western ethnocentric outlooks confine celebrations of festivals such as thanksgiving to the West, the epitome being the American holiday celebrated in November with the Turkey as an emblem. Thanksgiving is rarely attached to other parts of the world though cultural relativism reveals that thanksgiving is a global festival. The difference lies in when and how it is celebrated.

Africa in particular, which has over 2000 culturally and traditionally diverse ethnicities has a multiplicity of ways in which thanksgiving is celebrated. Accordingly, one particular African thanksgiving festival cannot generalise how thanksgiving is celebrated in Africa without risking a shallow analysis that will not only be context but also cultural specific. Drawing from wider range of thanksgiving festivals in Africa can broaden our perspective by offering a more general glimpse. Some popular thanksgiving festivals celebrated in Africa include Umkhosi Woselwa celebrated among the Zulu in South Africa; Incwala of the Swazi in Swaziland; Homowo of the Ga people in Ghana; Ayiza of the Ewe of Togo; Ncwala of the Ngoni and Kulamba of the Chewa people from Zambia.

Essentially, thanksgiving refers to harvest festivals. Harvest festivals are usually celebrated at the end of the rain season to appreciate the season's harvest. Consequently, there is no particular date when they are celebrated. Africa has various climates thus the rain season will not only take place at different times but the harvest produced will also depend on the region. The harvest plays a significant part in the festivities as it is usually the main food prepared. Delicacies prepared include steamed or fermented cornmeal eaten with fish and palm soup known as Kpokpoi or kpekple during Homowo to seemingly plain but symbolic meals such as beans during Ayiza and maize, pumpkin and sugarcane during Ncwala.

Harvest festivals in Africa range from one day festivals such as Kulamba, Ncwala and Ayiza

to festivities like Umkhosi Woselwa and Incwala that last close to a week and Homowo to almost a month. Most of the aforementioned take place in August (Kulamba, Homowo and Ayiza) while two in December: Umkhosi Woselwa during the full moon and Incwala in the last week of December, sometimes first week of January. The Ngoni celebrate Ncwala on the 24th of February annually.

Thanksgiving festivals in Africa elucidate the significance of African traditional political structures even in the modern era. They are a clear demonstration of the high esteem in which chiefs are held. Among the Zulu only the king is instilled with the power to observe the cultural rituals associated with Umkhosi Woselwa. Further the festival can only begin when he 'strikes the calabash.' Undi's entrance into the main arena marks the beginning of Kulamba where the Chewa in Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi come to 'Kulamba' or 'pay homage' to him. Similar power and respect for authority is displayed at Ncwala where Mpezeni's drinking blood from the slaughtered bull signifies the beginning of the feast. Like other festivals, thanksgiving in Africa illustrates African spiritual beliefs, superstitions, religious practices and rituals. Important rites of passage are also held. During Umkhosi Woselwa, the amabutho (young warriors) are required to kill the inkunzenyama (black fighting bull) with their bare hands. Subsequently, the royal family gather to burn impepho (incense) and perform another ritual involving the burning of bones. At Kulamba, the anamwali (young girls who have reached puberty) are released to demonstrate the skills and responsibilities they learnt whilst in seclusion.

Some of these rituals remain esoteric, confined to the particular ethnic group, such as the Eswatini culture dictates, and foreigners permitted to attend may not make any recordings. It is through the rituals that the ancestral spirits are thanked and the harvest is purified. Among the Chewa, a secret society of initiated people called the Nyau is believed to emanate from dead spirits. They are believed to not only represent the spirits but also communicate with them through the dances they perform. The Ewe believe that the beans prepared for the festival is always replenished and does not run out during the festivities.

Thanksgiving serves to celebrate collective histories through re-enactment of songs, dances, dramatization, speeches, food and clothes. They can invoke powerful experiences of what ancestors endured and significant moments that are forever celebrated like when the Ga finally had successful rains after a severe famine and they were able to 'Homowo' or 'jeer at hunger.' During Ncwala, the Ngoni are clad in Vitewe (leopard skin or warrior regalia) and carry spears. This invokes collective memories of their migration from South Africa to Zambia and the many battles they fought and won before they finally settled. The harvest unites and reunites people, both local and foreign and as with the Chewa and the African-Americans who travel to celebrate Homowo, demonstrates how the festivities transcend political boundaries; provide an opportunity for foreigners to expand their cultural knowledge and entrench and perpetuate cultural practices and traditions. They also present an opportunity for the people to mingle freely with their chiefs.

Celebrations are incomplete without traditional dances. During Homowo, the Ga people

perform a dance called Kpanlogo. At Ncwala, twelve local chiefs bring along their best dancers to perform a warrior dance for the chief from which he awards the best. Kulamba is famous for its colourful Nyau dancers also referred to locally as vilombo (animals). The Nyau display an array of dances and masks some of which can be as menacing as they are fun. Regardless, they always manage to capture the crowd's attention with their dances which include Wamukulu, Gologolo and Makanga. Most of the dances re-enact an important historical event and attempt to tell a story.

Some aspects of harvest festivals in Africa remain steeped in tradition, like the killing of the bull with bare hands and the symbolic drinking of the blood by chief Mpezeni during Ncwala. During Umkhosi Woselwa, women still take agricultural produce to the king for his blessing. However, some of these traditional practices have sparked controversy. For instance, the 'torture' that the bull is subjected to by the amabutho in order for them to kill it has been interpreted by some as animal cruelty. On the other hand, while some of these festivals are evidence of the existence persistent traditional practices, they also illustrate how dynamic culture can be. During Kulamba, homage is no longer paid to Undi with agricultural produce but modern goods such as mattresses, fridges, stoves.

Thanksgiving in Africa presents freedom of cultural expression, cultural heritage, tradition as well as a celebration of collective histories. The festivals symbolise rising above cultural repression and subjugation that came with colonial rule. Some of these festivals were banned during colonial rule such Kulamba and Umkhosi Woselwa as but have since been revived perpetuating African tradition and culture.

Thanksgiving festivals in Africa perpetuate and revive the rich traditions and culture of the continent under severe threat of western cultural domination in an increasingly globalised world. They are a means by which modern Africans can still connect with their culture and traditions. They also illustrate and entrench the notion of cultural diversity.

by
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Short Stories





BEFORE FOREVER BEGINS

by

Christina H Lwendo – Tanzania

Agitated, she went through the dresses aisle after aisle. Her hands picked anything that remotely looked like royal blue. With a day left to her send-off party, and her dress still unfinished, she had to improvise. Nusura hurried to one of the changing rooms as if running away from the jolly Christmas carols playing loudly in the store. There was nothing jolly about the day. She furiously slid the curtain open, almost ripping it from its railing as she went in. Throwing a dozen of blue dresses on the fluffy brown carpet, she reached for the top button of her blouse, ready to unbutton, then spun to close the curtain. She was standing in front of a mirror, examining how the short-sleeved sheath gown fitted her, and practising her mechanical smile that she would have to wear the day after when a woman entered. Their eyes met through the mirror, and the woman stared at Nusura for a while.

“You have the world’s most fake smile. It can almost hide how scared you are to face the uncertainties of married life.” The woman said while throwing a bunch of dresses on the floor.

“May I help you?” Nusura replied, with the same smile that desired to offer no help at all.

“Oh no darling, I’m here to help you,” She said, nodding while her hands were patting Nusura’s shoulders. “Do you remember what you prayed about last night? How you wished you’d know more about your marriage before you go all in? Well, here I am, your prayer has been answered.” Pointing to herself she added with a lopsided smile. “I am your marriage.”

The woman took one of the dresses she had come with and began to undress the one she had on. Nusura quickly averted her dilated eyes and began to gather her things on the floor, ready to leave the changing room.

“I am not a crazy person.”

Nusura rolled her eyes upon hearing this, folded her arms then turned to face the woman.

“How did you change so fast?” She asked, staring at her, now dressed in a strapless, tight, mini red dress. Her kinky hair tied up in a high puff. Nusura’s jaws dropped at such beauty.

The woman smiled, and it was the first time that Nusura noticed the perfect sized dimples on her cheeks. Nusura slowly sat on a stool, her eyes still admiring how beautifully the red dress fitted the woman’s perfect body. She nodded and raised her eyebrows as she eyed the silver and diamond six-inch heels that complimented the red dress.

“First lesson Nusura, marriage is sexy.”

“Alright crazy psychic woman, you have my attention...How did you know my name and my prayer?” She asked, bewildered.

“Are you up for a fashion show?” She ignored Nusura’s question with a question of her own as she began to change into an old weary t-shirt and an ankle long blue jeans skirt that was almost fading to white.

“I’m sure they don’t sell those here, but let me guess,” said Nusura pointing her index finger to the woman, “We are not going to be the most stylish young couple?”

The woman sighed and went close to Nusura. She held her head in both her hands, like how a mother does when comforting her child. Then in almost a whisper, she said to her.

“Darling, there are going to be tough times in your marriage. When such times arrive, remember to stay strong.” She paused, pretending to wipe a tear then stood up and added.

“You’ve got to see beyond the outfits to keep up with these lessons.” The serious tone in her voice made Nusura want to choke with laughter but she fabricated a cough instead.

In the next half hour, Nusura sat there watching the woman change outfit after outfit, accompanying all of them with pieces of information on how her marriage would be like. A part of her decided this was the perfect escape from her reality.

“Wait,” Nusura said trying to maintain a straight face, as the woman was struggling to wrap Christmas lights around her body.

“What! I’m done coaching, I’m just having a good time.” They both fell to the floor laughing at this. And when their laughter finally faded into silence, they were laying on the floor, side by side with their faces facing the ceiling. Nusura turned to face the woman.

“If you’re indeed who you say you are, then come to the reception tomorrow. Wear white if my marriage is going to be okay, wear black if you think otherwise.” With that, she took her things and left. Surprised by how she, a sane person could suggest such an insane thing.

The next day at the reception, Nusura searched for the woman among hundreds of faces that attended but she was without luck. As she was going around greeting guests, she came across a man wearing a white t-shirt and black jeans.

“You still have the world’s most fake smile.” He said to her, smiling.

Nusura’s face lit up at the realization of who that was.

“You are a man today!” Her smile slowly faded as she added, “and you have worn both colours.”

“I am just a figment of your imagination Nusura, everything I know, you already know. So you see, this is a matter only you can decide. Black or white, it’s completely your choice.”

FIESTA

Majory Moono Simuyuni – Zambia



Dear Jeremy,

What am I to address first? The agony? The pang of guilt? The shame? Revulsion? Elation? Apprehension? You see, I could write you an email, or even phone you. Better yet, I could meet up with you. But with what tongue would I speak? With what disposition would I grace my tongue? Anguish? Remorse? Discomfiture? Loathing? Ecstasy? Trepidation? It's been seven months of this fiesta. A siesta has known not the abode of my emotions!

When I learnt we would have a new CEO, never in a thousand years would I have guessed it was you! A whole decade, Jeremy. You had been gone a whole decade! I had sworn I had left the past where it belonged, at the depth of the ocean of the world past. I had sworn I had moved on. When I overheard the name of the new boss, my mind raced straight to you, not that I thought it might be you, Dr Moono. Maybe if I had known you had advanced in your studies, if I had heard the first name of this Moono, maybe, just maybe, I would have thought it could be you.

The day you got introduced to the company by your predecessor, you see, I didn't think to wear my best clothes or fashion my hair the best style. I was on one of those days of the month that we defy the Lord's instruction to fill the earth and subdue it. The moody days, those gloomy few days that are a solid century. I was sitting there at the desk, like everybody else on any other day, when you walked in with the outgoing boss, making me swear it was but a dream.

Clad in a navy blue suit and a burgundy shirt, you walked in tall, dwarfing Mr Thomas. But don't all men look short when they walk with you, son of the African soil? You, who's broad chest is

a haven. You, who's big brown arms are heaven; my darling you! The sweetness of your cologne engulfed the entire conference room, you've worn that perfume all your life. The smell of your spray sent my mind places, but first I had to figure out what place and time I was in. What a sweet dream, I cried in my heart, corners of my mouth tilting upwards. You see, Jeremy, euphoria was all that clutched my dreamy reality. Who hates the intrusion of a beautiful past in the doldrums of the present? My life broke free from all stagnation. There's a fire in me that only you could ignite, my darling you!

“At this point, I will ask you all to introduce yourselves to Dr Moono, “ Mr Thomas' voice broke into my dream. Its fangs rudely dragging me back to the actuality at the table, and you too were there! That was when anxiety struck. All the blood in my system cruised to converge in my head, throbbing like a looming volcanic eruption. Beads of sweat streamed down my armpits, my mouth rapidly running devoid of moisture.

Jeremy, I remembered your mother took her life as a result of a vengeance on you that I themed, 'A heart for an Eye'. When you hurt me, though, without intention, I decided you had gauged my eye from its socket. I wanted to teach you that an eye for an eye was a cliché. I angled for your heart in retaliation, dragging your father through humiliation, the fringes being your mother's suicide.

She wasn't the kindest woman I had known, but now I know; to a son, every mother is a wonderful woman. I heard you broke down at your mother's funeral, that you couldn't help it when your father replaced her with a woman as young as your little sister. I heard that put a strain on your once ever-green father-son relationship, that dunked in shame, you ducked all associations, fleeing from Mother Africa to a land beyond the borders. But I also heard you could have pardoned me, if like your mother had raised you to apologize, I had said the apologetic word. You see, Jeremy, terror had gripped the best of me! Having lain in bed with dirty politicians to mar the mileage of the very lone dignified politician, your father, I risked not just my life but my entire family's. At the mercy of the corrupt government that slew whoever confessed, I wondered every day whether I'd see tomorrow.

Your father is really your father! Without my coming clean, he washed his name clean, re-suming the love and respect he had once enjoyed in the land. But you, his only son, were gone forever. I wept myself to sleep at every sight of my reflection. What had I done? Back to the day of your introduction, at the table where I shook like a leaf on a windy day; my turn for self-introduction to the new boss approached fiercely and on wings. What would you do to me when you realized I was an employee of the company you now owned? My heart thundered, my knees buckled.

“I'm Luyando Katanga,” I told you what you already knew, my world stopping. You had not flinched a tad at the sight of me. Your gaze upon me was with the interest of a man gazing upon a rock. If I had changed so much that you couldn't recognize me, at least my name should have rung a bell. But you just nodded your acknowledgement like you had done with everybody before me and carried on. That was when it dawned, you were back

for vengeance!

I sat planted in my seat when you were accompanied out and everybody readied themselves for the rest of the day's work. All the ladies marvelled at the beauty of the in-coming boss, all of them said they wanted a portion of the handsome hunk. Son of the soil, I could have told them the truth: that I had once had you wrapped in my finger. That you were the man that had claimed my genital innocence back in the varsity days. I could have told them I knew you but who would have believed me? You had grown into a finer man and the gap between our leagues had yawned. When everybody had deserted the room, I remained glued in my seat, fighting the urge to cry, the urge to laugh and the urge to run insane. My seat blazed with fires from hell but my legs were too wobbly to transplant me. Uncertainty, seasoned with dread and a longing to peer into tomorrow wrenched me.

When you finally reported for work, you brought my world to a cold standstill. I wondered what you would do to me. My heart leapt out of my chest at every sight of you. Fear chilled my spine so much I wanted to die. But you would utter an indifferent 'hello' and carry on your business like you had never known me. With every one of your little deeds, you handed me more rope to hang myself but I've never had the audacity of your mother. I hide from you like a gazelle leaps for safety from a mighty lion. Once I fell and hurt myself but that wasn't the worst of all my nightmares.

Whenever you stop me to issue an instruction, you stand so close my body begins to respond to yours. The sweet fragrance of your perfume and how you look me straight in the eyes like you want a piece of me dampens me between my thighs so much I now carry extra underwear to work. Call me whatever, but I am not able to look at the floors, at the tables, at the couches, the walls or the sinks without reminiscing our escapades and the addict of you I had become. But you punish me with silence on things that matter! You are a cold stranger in the body of the man I once lived for. You look at me like I rank tenth on a list of two items. I hate you, Jeremy. I hate you!

I heard you are happily married and have kids as beautiful as you. How could you be so happy with another woman when I have turned the world upside down in my search for a man even just half your worth? I measured against you every man I met until I've become as old as a freedom fighter! How could you do this to me?! You are my first thought every morning and my last every night. I miss you every day and cry myself to sleep.

Jeremy, ever since you've been back, my life has been a festival of emotions. Now I love you, now I hate you, now I miss you, now I just want to die. My heart has been a buffet of conflicting emotions, a bouquet of sorts, a fiesta of emotion!

Yours,
Luyando!

QUEEN OF THE FESTIVAL

Kimberly Chirodzero - Zimbabwe



Every ten years we hold the festival of stars. All the villages across the kingdom join in the revelry but he only comes to one village. The last time he came he chose a girl from the village to our north. I was only ten then and too young to be chosen but old enough to understand the envy that rippled through our entire village. The girl he chooses becomes the queen of the festival. There is no greater honour. That fortunate girl will forever be held in high regard, even above the chief of the village. After the festival, the chosen girl is truly blessed, all she does seeming to be touched by magic. Perhaps it is for he is a creature of the deepest darkest magic, after all. How would a mere mortal girl not be submerged by such a one as he? That girl will never be me.

The elder women in my village advise all the girls to be docile, calmly and sweet. No one in their right mind would ever accuse me of being sweet, let alone docile. I itch in the bindings of the role I must play as a female. I am told I am pleasant enough to look at, but I scare away potential husbands with my sharp wit and even sharper tongue. There is madness rampant in my blood, clawing for all the things I am told I cannot crave. I crave to choose my own fate, to throw away duty and run towards the sea that borders the little village I call home. There is a winged creature in me and this life is too small for it to unfurl its wings. It has taken me ten years to perfect my calm mask though it slips occasionally. Tonight the mask must hold because everything about a festival that lasts all night, with no rules calls to me.

“Danikka, that material is very becoming on you, but are you sure it’s allowed to wear gold?” Layla, my sole friend asks me as we walk towards the festival. My dress appears as if made from the setting sun. My dark skin goes so well with bright resplendent colours but I can never wear them without reproach any other day. “It’s the festival of stars, Layla. Anything is allowed,” I laugh as my best friend’s frown deepens. “It’s a good thing you will never be chosen. You would likely fight death all the way into the darkness, rather than ask for a gift like a proper queen would,” Layla complains, then realising what she has just admitted she slaps a hand over her mouth. “It’s not exactly a secret,” I say quietly. I can almost hear Elder Abina’s voice in my head advising us girls to never agree to be queen for more than one night. Our mood more subdued, we walk into the festival. My breath rushes out of me in wonder. The festival invites you in, tempting you to give in to everything you held back for the past ten years. Someone strung lanterns all around the wooden beams circling the village square and deliciously bright materials of the deepest red, purple, sea green and blue. It creates the illusion of night rainbows. A man with black robes and a face painted white sits in the centre of the square playing a wooden instrument, coaxing a beautifully haunting tune out of the paper-thin strings. Nataya, a young mother of two dances with her husband, her face flawlessly painted so that she looks like an unwed maiden. A delicious scent rolls through the crowd and I turn my head towards it like a bloodhound. Mama Maori has a stand at the western end of the square and wafting from it is the fresh scent of bread and sizzling meat. Everything is loud and vibrant. The village is alive as I have never seen it. As if tonight death does not walk among us.

Layla grins at me, stretching her colourful face paint. Every unwed girl of appropriate age has markings on their face tonight. To make us easier to identify. Layla like most girls has painted one side of her face with flowers and rainbows. It is pretty and inviting, like the girls themselves. My face is painted in black and the darkest red I could find. Half moons and stars across my eyes almost like a mask. At my temples, I have painted tiny wings and talons. If I must wear a mask tonight, then let it be my true face. I grin at the secret that is out tonight masquerading as a mere fantasy. Layla takes my grin as an answer to hers. The last time the festival came we were too young to participate. “Can you imagine what it must be like to be chosen?” Layla asks. I frown at her. “Layla, you do know the queen of the festival courts death, don’t you?” I ask in a fervent whisper.

All too soon we find ourselves being herded into a line in the middle of the square. The painted musician even scurries off with his instrument, giving us centre stage. A hush falls over the festivities as if the whole village is holding its breath. Suddenly shadows gather, inhuman whispers are heard and there before us appears a man. Such violent beauty, such terrible yearning. I want to fall to my knees and weep for him. Blinking I glance away and

admonish myself. I am a blade, forged of the strongest material. I will not be doe-eyed for this creature who is obviously no man. I look back at him. Fearfully made with a shadow there and a talon here. Such decadent darkness, such beautiful longing. His midnight eyes are staring at me. Does he not see the rainbows and flowers around me? "What is your name?" his voice threatens to undo me, for its sheer hypnotism. "Danikka," I croak out.

"I choose Danikka to be my queen this night," with these words he dismisses the other girls. The festival picks up as if undisturbed by a creature from our darkest myths. "You're doing something to them. It's as if they cannot bear to look at us fully," I accuse him. Surely my reign as queen shall be the shortest in history. "Dani, beautiful star who wears the night sky without fear, you will find that it is only their minds who limit them, protects them," he says, with the voice of an angel. "Because should one look upon your glory, they will perish," I say sarcastically and proceed to snort. Yes, I have lost my sense of self-preservation. He is a predator and here I stand taunting him. What foolish prey I make. He laughs this creature whose eyes are not midnight at all but obsidian with only a pinprick of cold starlight.

"Why me? We are taught that Death...", finally I bite my tongue and continue more carefully. "We are taught that you prefer sweet sunshine girls." Something shifts at his back and my mouth falls open. Star-studded wings of the purest white so huge he could swallow me whole in them. A yearning so vicious starts to claw at the heart in my breast. "And yet I chose a night star. The darkness is so sweetly pressed into your skin, Dani that no one looking at you would ever desire sunshine ever again," there is no lie in him. He is telling me that there is nothing wrong with who I am. That there is no crime in being different and having different dreams. "The dawn comes, queen. You must choose. Any gift will I grant you but should you wish to see all that I am you will never return to this life again," Asmil says. I have decided to call him Asmil so I can humanize him in my head.

I could ask that death not visit my village for ten years. Elder Abina taught us this and yet I yearn. "If I go with you willingly, will I be a prisoner?" I ask. Again, Asmil laughs. "How I pity the creature that would dare try to imprison you," he says. "But you are death. No one escapes you," I regurgitate the words I've been taught. "I am but a messenger. Mine is the burden of keeping the balance between worlds. Come with me and entire worlds are open to you," he doesn't coax me for I am already half in love with the night. Layla was right. I make a terrible queen. I am selfish, undisciplined and all I do is yearn and yearn. "Will I have wings?" a staccato beat in my chest, an unfurling. "You must earn them," Asmil warns, "And the talons too." Wings, so that I may never be caged again and talons for the annihilation of any who would dare try. "The dawn comes. Strike a bargain with me, Dani of the stars," he holds out his hand. "I ask no gifts of you this night, messenger," I say, and then with a smile full of teeth I take his hand.

CAMILLE'S FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

By Stephanie Cupido – South Africa



“Mommy, can I go to the festival of lights?” Camille asked with an innocent 11-year-old smile on her face.

“I’m not sure about that, honey. It starts when it’s dark and I don’t think it would be very safe.” Her mom was worried because there had been crime in the area all year. But Camille was not giving up, she moved on to emotional blackmail. “But it’s the same time as my birthday week,” she debated.

“Yes, Camille, I’m aware of that, but... I don’t know, anything could happen,” her mother said, worried. “You always say that!” Camille said, throwing her hands in the air. “I’ll stay home then, bored out of my mind! Will that make you happy?” She said sarcastically. “Camille...,” her mother started in a bored and tired tone. But she Camille was leaving the kitchen. “It’s fine mom!” She shouted, giving up.

Her mother felt very bad for her because she was growing up and wanted an active social life for herself with friends and wanted to be with people sharing the same interests that she had. She sat down at the kitchen table and deliberated. Suddenly a bright idea hit her and she could not help but smile. Smiling to herself, nodding her head, her plan fell into place in her mind. When she looked on her left, Camille was staring at her as if she was a crazy person. “What are you doing?” Camille asked finally. “Nothing,” her mother said. “Old people!” Camille said rolling her eyes as she opened the fridge.

As the week went on her mother planned a surprise. She had to be extra careful because Camille was very perceptive, no secret could get past her. But her mother called all her friend's parents and told them about the surprise she was planning. They all thought it was a marvelous idea and agreed to lend a hand. With the important part out of the way, now came the execution.

All week Camille walked around grumpy, moaning and groaning. She was so mad because her mother was smiling and it made her angry, because she thought that her mom enjoyed her torment.

As the day of the Festival of lights came closer Camille started to give up on it completely, however, she thought one last try would not hurt. "MOM!" She called looking for her mother through the house on the day the festival would happen. She looked in the kitchen, in all the rooms, but could not find her. Finally, she went outside to the backyard and saw her mother hanging up clothes. "Mom!"

"Yes?" Her mom said turning around with a washing peg in her mouth. "Why can't I go tonight?" She said in an exhausted tone. "Oh Camille, not this again. I thought we decided!" Her mom sounded irritated. "Well, you decided, not me. What am I going to do with myself all weekend?" She moaned. "You could find a good book and...", her mom started. "Ugh! Not this again!" Camille interrupted. "You should read," her mother said with a warning look. "I do read! I read when you're not looking." Her mother could not help but laugh. "Really, Camille?" She questioned, still laughing. "Yes, really," Camille said, rolling her eyes. She wanted to smile but tried hard not to. "So it's a no on tonight?" She tried. "Yep! Still no," her mom said coolly.

Camille went to bed early and fell asleep just as it was getting dark. This gave her mother the perfect opportunity and enough time to set up the surprise. They had to be very quiet, but working together they could finish everything in record time. Camille woke up an hour later to a flashing light. She went to look and as she walked out of her room her mom called her and told her to get dressed. She was so confused, but did so and thought her mom had changed her mind and was letting her go. But it was not the case. "Camille, you have company, your friends came to visit, hurry up," her mom said while Camille was getting dressed.

As she went outside, she could not believe it! Lights draped around the trees and the bushes outside. Camille was stunned! What was happening? Her mother told her to go to the back and in amazement Camille exclaimed. "Wow! Who did this?" "We did," her friends said. "Well it was your mother's idea and we helped," someone added. "Wow, she planned this?" Camille was surprised. She walked to her mom and gave her a hug, she had no words. "Your welcome," her mom said laughing. "Welcome to Camille's festival of lights," she said and let Camille enjoy a night with her friends. Under supervision of course.

FESTIVAL OF DEATH

By Marycynthia Chinwe Okafor – Nigeria



The trip from Onuaro to Ndido was quite uneventful, between my cousin's dim-witted questions and my uncle's incessant chatter. My cousin Odibonna and I had walked behind our fathers, carrying both their stunt stools and walking quickly to keep up with their long strides. We arrived in Ndido just before our shadows grew long. Odogbu's compound was already packed. It was his funeral today and friends and family and mourners had come from far and wide to pay their respect. Odogbu was the wealthiest and oldest man in Ndido and he had died peacefully in his sleep, so his funeral was that of a celebration of life. His funeral was talked about in the eight market weeks that came before it and it was on one Oye market day in those weeks that the bearers of the masks of Akuebis and Ekwensi clashed in Onuaro's market place.

They had met on the chief market day of Onuaro. Almost everybody had seen them threaten each other and those who hadn't seen had heard. The bearer of Ekwensi, a wrinkled willowy man whose brown eyes sparkled with age and wisdom had told his counterpart to stay away from Ndido on the day of Odogbu's funeral.

"Two big masquerades do not run on the ogbo at the same time," he had warned.

The bearer of Akuebis was large as they come. He had been a warrior in his youth and now, he was one of the elders of Onuaro. "I will come and pay my last respect to a friend."

"You will not. But if you're so headstrong you decide to come, you will return to Onuaro a corpse."

"Ha," the bearer of Akuebis snorted. "When I come and you try to stop me, I will strike you down or my ancestors are not my ancestors."

"Let it be as we have spoken. Anyone of us who doesn't do as he had said, let how he had said happened to him."

"I see! So be it!"

With sands in their palms, they sealed their promises.

"Olaedo," Odibonna said startling me. "Do you think Akuebis will come?"

"Yes, he will come. He's too headstrong not to come and our people do not fear mere threat. I know he will come."

Father banished me to the hut where the women were gathered. The six wives of Odogbu sat on the floor crying while their daughters and friends tried to rock and shush them. I backed away before anybody saw me, slipped into the bevvvy of cooking women and then into the crowd. I found a suitable viewing place - where nobody will look at me and ask, "Bia, nwaa, don't you know a woman isn't supposed to gaze onto the masquerades?" - and watched. I felt Father's eyes and looked. He stared at me for a while and then looked away.

Ekwensi soon arrived and the other masks gave way. The ogbo cleared and Ekwensi and his companions entered. Ekwensi was terrifyingly big, nothing like its bearer. Its large wooden carved eyes looked impossibly dark and depthless. It had barely finished parading and running when the unmistakable call of Akuebis sounded nearby.

I watched Father as he stood, my uncle followed him and together with the other males from Onuaro, they matched regally out to go welcome Akuebis. Father looked at me again and then looked away when I nodded my consent. I knew not to look into Akuebis eyes, it was considered a challenge to look into the eyes of one of the most dreaded masks in Onuaro. When Akuebis came into view, I shivered. The sight of it was as chilly as I remembered. The last time I saw Akuebis had been two planting seasons ago when it appeared to drive an adulterous wife - after the nkponala shots - from her husband's

house.

Ekwensi was still running seemingly oblivious to Akuebis presence. When Akuebis meant to enter the open space where the smaller masks had ran freely, where Ekwensi now ran freely, Ekwensi blocked it. Akuebis tried to push at Ekwensi but the rope around its waist held it back. The painted person holding the end of the rope was as hideous as the mask he was holding in place. He wore only dark loin clothes whereas Akuebis was endowed in dried grasses and raffia and a variety of dead birds and blood. In its hand, it held a machete which glittered when the sun hit it. Ekwensi who had a large eye drawn with nzu on its forehead now stood at the entrance of the ogbo blocking Akuebis' path. Akuebis whirled and went back the way it came, it disappeared from view and moments later, it appeared again. Ekwensi blocked its way again.

The painted man praised Akuebis trying to appease, "Dike, jiri nwayo! Take it easy!." Akuebis swung around and cut the rope. It ran around, turned and embraced Ekwensi. People gasped, I did too because it wasn't what I was expecting. I had been expecting Akuebis to raise the sword and bring it down on Ekwensi. The commotion began the moment Akuebis released Ekwensi from the embrace and Ekwensi slumped. The crowd waited for a while and then, they scattered. The followers of Ekwensi scattered. Akuebis stepped over Ekwensi and into the ogbo. Father leapt from his stool his eyes darting to where I was but I was already rushing to him.

Akuebis was still running in the ogbo. A man in Father's age-grade begged it, "Let's go." "Akuebis, it's time."

All the while, while they begged, nobody went in front of him. Akuebis refused to listen to anybody and continued running in the ogbo. We started for Onuaro with Akuebis still running freely in the ogbo. We had barely entered the mouth of Onuaro when Echie-teka, Akuebis' gong beater, exclaimed.

"Chim oh!" He had been trudging up ahead very fast for a man his age.

I looked up and stopped dead. Up ahead was Akuebis entering the uno mmuo with his back first.

Echieteka exclaimed again, "Onuaro egbu mmuo! Onuaro has killed a spirit!" He turned the corner and headed for his home.

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 10

Lagos, Nigeria...

The Lagos rains welcomed Kajiru and his crew into town. Though the rain wasn't heavy, it was persistent and was accompanied by a fierce wind. The atmosphere wasn't dark or gloomy like any other rainy day, nor was it intensely sunny either. It was one of such days which could be referred to as a 'perfect day', and which could make one exclaim "life is beautiful!" Life however, was presently not beautiful from Zarah's standpoint. She had managed to sleep off during the bumpy ride and awoke to a rainy atmosphere. She had already begun having slight shivers. She rubbed her palms against her upper arms to dissolve the goose bumps which were already forming. Her bright eyes kept wandering; yet focusing on nothing till the words "Lagos State" on a sign post caught her attention. The post had read a lot of things, yet she remembered none save for the name of the state she suddenly realized she was in.

"Lagos" she repeated again in her mind and shivered at the thought. She wondered what life in Lagos was going to be like, without any family or friends. It was a totally new adventure- one she wasn't looking forward to, nor was she optimistic about it.

Kajiru had forgotten she was also in the car, or so it seemed. Reality finally dawned on him that there was no relative coming to get Zarah and he was stuck with a young child- a young child he could not just abandon on the streets of Lagos. The streets were never safe for anyone. Not even grown men were safe, and a little thirteen-year old girl would be no exception. He had been greatly moved by compassion when he saw Sadiya's tears and the condition which Zarah was in, that in his urgency to help he had forgotten crucial details like who the relative was and where that relative would pick Zarah up. He was in trouble and it severely bothered him. Though he hadn't believed half of Sadiya's story, he was moved anyway and eager to help. His mind was in turmoil as he contemplated within himself what to do. He decided to first drop off the cows at the abattoir before fully facing the issue before him. The seven men at the back of the lorry with the cows had all alighted at different points, and the other man, Adamu, who was in the front seat along with he and Zarah, had gone to the back for a proper nap. He complained severely of an aching neck, and thus went to sleep it out.

It was only a few minutes past 9pm, and that was when Kajiru drove into the Lagos

State Government Abattoir. Though the abattoir usually closed at 8pm, Kajiru was allowed entry because he was a known supplier of cattle, and not a buyer. Lagos State Government Abattoir was nothing like what Zarah was used to seeing back in Katsina. The abattoir back in Katsina, which was opposite the Katsina state central market was far from clean or hygienic. There was a constant stench of stale blood, dried blood and fresh blood as well. The animals were butchered on the bare floor, sharing the same space with filth littered about which was barely ever swept. Zarah could see the abattoir through the half-broken, half-cracked windscreen of Kajiru's lorry, and with the aid of the light bulbs which dominated the environment. She could tell, even at night that this place was different from where she was accustomed to. For one, she allowed herself to breathe freely as the air was fresh. Back home, whenever she had to go to the abattoir to get meat, she had to hold her breath or at least keep using a piece of cloth to cover her nose. The men who worked at the abattoir never seemed affected by the stench though, and Zarah always wondered about this. This place, however, was different- it was clean, smelled fresh and was obviously well maintained and hygienic. She unconsciously found herself comparing between the old home she left behind and the new one she was about to embrace. Thoughts of Katsina and everyone she left behind filled her mind and brought all the emotions she had not-so-successfully suppressed since the whole ordeal began. Being all alone in the lorry, she cried unhindered and unrestricted.

Zarah was lost in tears and didn't even realize when Kajiru opened the door and climbed into the lorry. He took one look at her and understood what must have been going through her mind. Immediately she realized he was there and staring, she began wiping her tears and tried to keep her sobs in check. For a little while, Kajiru did not utter a word nor did he ignite the engine. He tried to avoid looking at her in order not to make her uncomfortable.

"Ina zan kai ki?" he asked, knowing full well she as well had no idea where she wanted him to take her. She remained head-bent and silent- she wouldn't utter a word, nor would she look up at him. She knew nowhere in Lagos and feared he was going to drop her just anywhere. The thought was frightening and soon she began to cry again. He once again was confused on what actions to take or what action not to take, but one thing was certain- he couldn't leave her in such a large city, all by herself. He had taken on a responsibility he was not ready for, yet was determined to keep her somewhere safe. A lot of things crossed his mind; he even contemplated taking her back to Katsina, at least to rid himself of the responsibility and guilt, but he remembered it would be at

least a month before he went towards Katsina. He was always on the road, on one journey or the other, supplying cattle to different abattoirs in the country. He came to the conclusion of letting her stay with him for a few days before finally deciding what next to do. He needed to buy time, and this was his best bet.

“Stop crying. Sha’re hawayen ki” he said in a voice so gentle that made her remember her father. The more she tried to control her tears, the more she cried, and the more disturbed Kajiru was. He was running desperate, just like the day was getting darker.

“Dan Allah ki yi hankuri”

“Ki na so ki je gida ne?” he tried again, trying to get her to calm down and asked if she wanted to go home. She took a moment’s thought before shaking her head slowly from side to side, though back in Katsina was where she really wanted to be.

“Tohm, ki yi shiru”. He told her to stop crying, and this time she obliged, though not quickly and not immediately. He suggested to her the plan he had come up with and all she did was nod slowly when he was done. She didn’t have a choice anyway, and she was grateful to him for not leaving her somewhere. He was going to do everything he could to ensure she found a safe place she could stay. He told her that and she believed him.

The drive for the next 2 hours was a silent one. He drove down to Apapa where he and his fellow truck-driver colleagues parked their trucks on the road to avoid parking fees. They usually parked there at night and were where they passed the night, everyday. There were big trucks parked there, in different colors and shapes, but virtually the same sizes. Zarah was fascinated by the very many trucks on the road. At a point, she forgot how home sick she was and let herself get carried away by the beautiful lights on the streets of Lagos. She was also overwhelmed by the very many cars around, and by the number of people still moving about at that time of the night. Literally everything fascinated her as she stuck her head out the open window, amazed. Kajiru kept passing parked trucks as he moved. He was looking for a spot on the road to park his own vehicle. Finally he found one, and drove carefully and slowly till his lorry was perfectly parked. He sighed as he turned off his car engine. It had been such a long day and he was visibly tired. He only left the truck after assuring her that he would be back and was only going to find food for them to eat. Initially, Zarah tried to hide the fact that she was starving. She already felt so indebted to him and felt he had done so much for her already. She was embarrassed and lied that she wasn’t hungry. But just immediately after she said that, her stomach which seemed to have heard and was not in agreement,

decided to protest. It churned so loud she couldn't hide it nor pretend it hadn't come from her. Kajiru only laughed and repeated that he would be back with food. That being agreed upon, he climbed down from the front seat of the truck and walked towards the back to wake Adamu up.

He returned about 15 minutes later with two eating bowls in both hands. He handed one of the bowls to Zarah and on instinct she replied with a shy "Nagode baba" and a little smile. It was the first smile she offered since the whole journey began some twelve hours ago. She referred to him as father because at present he was playing a parental role in caring for her, and because he was a little elderly. He smiled, parting his dark lips and revealing a set of equally dark gums. He turned carefully and climbed down from the truck, still holding on to his own plate. Zarah was eager to start eating immediately he left, but soon paused to stare at the meal before her. She had never seen the black looking wrapped lump before her, nor the soup it was swimming in. She knew how to eat okra separately and stew separately, but never had she seen it served together as the same meal. She pondered for a while, staring at the food before her, and all the while her stomach churning louder and louder.

Thirty minutes down and the food was still before her, untouched. While she was pondering over the food, she got carried away and began listening to the sounds around- the loud chatters from the men, the honking of trucks, the distance noise, everything. Her auditory canals seemed heightened as she picked almost every sound around. Kajiru came around her window and opened the door. She was startled and almost fell out through the open door. He was quick to use his hand to support her and then apologized for startling her. He was concerned as to why she hadn't touched her food and asked her about it. He wasn't scolding, no, just merely concerned.

"Ban san abincin ba." She replied innocently that she didn't know the food and he laughed. His laugh was weird- husky and croaky and loud. He assured her that she would enjoy it, and then he shut the door and left. True to his words, she did enjoy the meal though she had no idea what it was she had just eaten. She focused more on how hungry she was, than on how it actually tasted.

Kajiru returned a long while later, took the plate she had used and took a small mat from underneath the seat. He said he was going to sleep out, just beside the truck with the other men, and she should try to make herself comfortable and warm inside. Before she

could once again say her shy 'thank you', he had already shut the door and disappeared what seemed to be under the truck. He returned again, shortly after with a long stained piece of white material and said she should use it as a cover. It had been hours since she last saw Adamu and only remembered he was still around as he came, dragged his own sleeping mat from beneath the chair and left without a word to neither she nor Kajiru.

While she was alone in the truck, in the deep of the night, her mind travelled back kilometers away. She wondered what Sadiya and the baby would be doing. She wondered what Mama would have cooked for the night. She wondered if her father already knew she was gone and if he would ever forgive her. She of thought of Usman too, of what fate had befallen him – if he got punished, or if like her, he had run away from the law. She also thought of Kamal- her best friend and brother. She wondered if he would miss her like she had missed him every day since they got apart. She even thought of Aunty Halima too, and despite all, she still missed her. She wondered if she would ever see any of them again. The possibility of never seeing them again hurt her more than anything ever had. That night, she cried herself to sleep, and she had dreams. In one of her dreams, as if being played on tape, the whole encounters of the happenings over the weekend were replayed before her eyes. She woke up severely, and drifted back in sleep almost immediately after each time. The last time however, after she had woken up after the dream, she could not sleep anymore. She willed and prayed sleep to come, but all to no avail. She was excessively terrified- scared of the night, and scared of the new adventures which will be unfolded by the morning. With the dawning of the new day was bound to come with it a new life in a new land.

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



FESTIVAL

As end year approaches, I have so much to be thankful for. Yes, it has been a crazy year with a lot of twists and turns; up's and downs; mistakes and victories...but God has been good to me and I must celebrate and be thankful. I am particularly grateful for a wrong decision I was able to fix...one major truth I was bold enough to confront.

As you all know, I started seeing Mr. Dapper and was having a jolly good time avoiding my mirror until I was forced to look at my reflection through formidable eyes...

"Hi sexy, are we seeing toady?" Came Mr. Dapper's confident drawl.

"Hello! Sure...you can pick me up after work so we can chill." I respond cheerfully.

"okay then...I have a surprise for you. I'm sure you will love it. Pick you up at 5 then?"

"Sure! See you then"

“Tada!”

I open my eyes and look around a candle lit sitting room with bouquets of flowers perched on every corner.

“Oh sweet Lord! This is so beauti”... My excited outburst comes to an abrupt end when my gaze falls on a pair of warm accusing eyes staring back at me from a regal frame on the marble coated wall.

“Sweetheart, what’s the problem? Why did you suddenly freeze?”

“Where the hell are we?” I yell violently. Feeling shocked at how rattled I feel.

“We are at my house. Why are you screaming like a Banshee?”

“How insensitive can you get? How dare you bring me to your matrimonial home?”

I yell, making a very deliberate effort to avoid looking at the portrait of his wife hanging on the wall. It seems so alive to the point that I can’t meet her gaze. Why the hell did this maniac bring me to his matrimonial home? Does he plan to also shag me in his “matrimonial” bed?

“Oh please get off your high horse and come to your senses. Do you know how many girls will jubilate if given access to my home? I just displayed my commitment to you by bringing you here. This is way more valuable than a cheap diamond ring any young man out there can offer you.” He responds proudly.

Is this man speaking Greek? What rubbish is coming out of his mouth?

“Wait...do you really think bringing me into your “matrimonial” home is supposed to make me jump for joy? What sort of nasty commitment are you talking about because I really don’t get it?”

“Look here babe, I’m done going back and forth with you on this matter. Face the truth...you are fucking a married man so deal with whatever comes with it” He yells back.

I cannot help but cringe inwardly at how crass he sounds. He immediately composes himself and approaches me.

“Babe come on, let’s move on from this...your unexpected outburst has made me very horny. Forget dinner, I want you here and now on this Persian rug.”

This idiot must be retarded. What have I done? How did I get to this point? I can still feel her intense gaze pulling at me, compelling me to look at her...and I do. People of God, I have never felt fear and disappointment in myself like I do now. Call me a ‘drama queen’ or a ‘pathetic case’ but I stare back at her portrait apologetically.

“Babe are you even listening to me? Babe...”

“Listen to me...” I pause, trying to catch my breath. I feel like I’m being choked.

“This whole thing is a big mistake”

“What the hell are you talking about? Okay fine, maybe I went too far bringing you

into my home. We can go somewhere else and chill. We will laugh it off like it never even happened. Come on let's get out of here."

"No! This farce ends here and now." I respond and reach for my purse. On my way out of the grand and tastefully furnished home, I bump into my reflection staring back at me from behind a Pristine Arab mirror with wide haunted eyes. How in the world did I let this happen?

"Oh God please have mercy on me". I flee out of the house as if the hounds of hell are after me. I get to the main gate about to yank at it but I'm suddenly pulled back by firm grip.

"Madam, where you dey go? Why you dey run like ashawo wey steal dollars?" The gateman sneers mockingly.

"Will you let go of me this minute?"

"Salami! Open the gate and let her go!" Mr. Dapper calls out from his balcony.

"Sorry sir! Yes sir!"

I flee from the premises without a backward glance at Mr. Dapper. A man who was my lover just a few minutes ago... such irony. I quickly book a ride with my taxi app and in no time, my ride arrives.

As I prepare my report in preparation for the End of Year Departmental Meeting, I cannot also help but feel thankful for the phase of awareness, emotional independence and gratitude my encounter with Mr. Dapper ushered me into. After series of heartbreaks from single guys, I felt cheated due to my false sense of entitlement and so I decided to lash out my own way. Deep down, I felt sleeping with a married man without any emotional attachments was my way of paying the universe back for hurling unfaithful and lying men my way. Now I realize that love and fidelity are not entitlements in romantic relationships but gifts that should be appreciated and nurtured by reciprocating with same. I have also realized that there is no one I can't live without...I used to think I couldn't live without certain people until the passage of time watered down my need and affection for them.

As I close the year, I have no romantic holiday planned out for myself and a significant other but God has blessed me with excellent health, a budding career and a bright future. I celebrate God; I celebrate me; I celebrate my true friends; and I celebrate my queer but dynamic family. It's a festival of Love, Life and endless opportunities. Opportunities to always make significant changes from bad lifestyle choices and decisions. I celebrate me, and I celebrate you. Happy Holidays!

THE OBSERVER

With Leo Muzivoreva, Zimbabwe



Of uniquely African festivals

The year is finally coming to an end, parties and festivities will soon become the order of the day. It is likely that the biggest parties will be related – however loosely – to the Christian holiday of Christmas. Christmas is celebrated across the world by many people, non-believers included, but it is only one of many similar holidays. The Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, you name it, all have festive annual celebrations and festivals. The observer takes you on a trip across the Africa giving you a pick of ten “festivals” celebrated across the continent’s culturally diverse plateaus and mountains.

1. Festival au Desert, Mali

One of the biggest and best festivals in Africa, the Festival in the Desert, was started in northern Mali 15 years ago. Celebrating Tuareg music and culture as well as featuring international artists, tens of thousands come from around Africa and the world descending upon the beautiful sand dunes of the Sahara just outside Timbuktu. Because the festival itself is currently suspended due to instability in the region,

a cultural caravan of peace featuring artists and musicians from the region will be travelling around Morocco and through southern Mali this year.

2. Klaapse Klopse, South Africa

Klaapse Klopse or Cape Town Minstrel Carnival has taken place every January 2nd since the 19th century. Traditionally slaves would get January 2 off and were allowed to celebrate the New Year in their own way. Now, Klaapse Klopse is a huge festival celebrated by tens of thousands, featuring minstrels performing throughout Cape Town in brightly colored garb.

3. Amazigh New Year, North Africa

Also known as Yennayer, the Amazighs (more commonly referred to as the Berber people) celebrate New Year's Day on the 12th or 14th of January. Making up a large percentage of the population of North Africa stretching from Morocco through Libya, the day is celebrated with special dishes or a feast usually focused on the slaughter of an animal. Singing and dancing can also be found in many cities, towns, and villages throughout the region.

4. Timkat Festival, Ethiopia

As one of Africa's most ancient nations and one of the first Christian ones as well, Ethiopia has plenty of interesting cultural and religious festivals. Celebrated each January, Timkat (Epiphany) is Ethiopia's most colorful and exciting celebration. In the ruins of Gondar Castle, Ethiopian Orthodox priests parade tabots (replicas of the Ark of the Covenant) which are taken to a specific area where they hold an all-night vigil. In the morning, the tabots are splashed with holy water (with some participants receiving full baptisms) before being taken back to their churches with much fanfare.

5. Festival on the Niger, Mali

Held in early February, Mali hosts one of the best cultural festivals in West Africa. Segou is situated on the banks of the mighty Niger River, where five days of concerts, theatre, dance performances, visual arts, and culinary competitions take place.

6. Swahili Music Festival, Zanzibar

From best in the west to Zanzibar in the east, which plays host to Sauti za Busara (Sounds of Wisdom) Swahili Music Festival which is the Swahili event in East Africa. Ditch all work in February for the sun, sand, music, and food on Zanzibar's

sparkling shores. Featuring dozens of artists and musicians from Africa and around the world, if there's a better way to spend four days in February, well The Observer is yet to observe it.

7. Maynardville Shakespeare Festival, South Africa

For a markedly toned-down event, head south to Cape Town, where summer is in full swing in February. The Maynardville Shakespeare Festival is held in Wynberg, a southern suburb of Cape Town and the green wooded area that the Maynardville Open Air Theatre is set in is one of the best in the area. The production changes every year and it is a festival worth witnessing.

8. Cavadee, Mauritius

In keeping with the sun-drenched theme, Mauritius is the place to be in late January and early February to catch a glimpse of the sometimes difficult to watch Thaipusam Cavadee, celebrated by the Indian Tamil community. Fire-walking, sword-climbing, and self-mutilation are all performed as those in the procession make their way to an altar (Cavadee) where food and other gifts are offered to the deity Murugan.

9. iNcwala Festival, Swaziland

The month-long iNcwala Festival is the most important in Swaziland and pays tribute to the king Mswati III. This Festival of the First Fruits is where ancestors long gone are venerated and the first harvest of the summer is also commemorated. The timing is dependent upon the king's astrologers, but it usually starts in late December or early January.

10. FESPACO, Burkina Faso

The Pan African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (try saying that three times fast) or FESPACO for short is the largest film festival in all of Africa and held biennially. Dozens of film viewings, conferences, and events are held in the last week of February. Awards are given and FESPACO also serves as a sort of cultural conference and trade show for leaders in the television and film industry.

A selection of some popular and a few lesser known festivals which showcase African culture. Which one would you want to witness? Be sure to take a camera along with you.

WSA Reviews

Reviewers:

1. Akinrinade Funminiyi Isaac (Nigeria)
2. Omadang Yowasi (Uganda)
3. Ngalm Jusline Veeyeenyuy (Cameroon)
4. Peter Blessing Pever (PPBlessing) (Nigeria)
5. Ogalo Oduor Bernard (Kenya)
6. Precious Adekola (Nigeria)
7. Kweku Sarkwa (Ghana)
8. Bildad Makori (Kenya)
9. Colin Stanley Karimi (Kenya)

Editor

Namse Udosen (Nigeria)



GENRE: FLASH FICTION

WRITER: MARYCHNTHIA CHINWE OKAFOR FROM NIGERIA

TITLE: TOMORROW IS PREGNANT

REVIEWER: AKINRINADE FUNMINIYI ISAAC FROM NIGERIA

Tomorrow is Pregnant is a metaphorical flash fiction written by Marychnthia Chinwe Okafor. It can be read on page 6 of WSA November 2019 edition. What comes to your mind at the mention of such poetic title? If tomorrow is pregnant? Of what or who will it be delivered of? The writer has more to say

In the flash fiction, the writer paints a picture of the former, present, and latter events that unfold when she receives her admission letter that has her name engraved in gold. The former occurs right at her birth. The moment her parents discovered that their tomorrow got delivered of a girl child when they were expecting a boy child. The writer presents a popular stereotype in African setting. A case where parents highly exalt or desire to have a male child than a female child because they believed her position is in the kitchen or at a sewing class near her husband's house. Such naïve thought needs to be eradicated, and this change begins with you and I. this reminds me of a related quatrain I wrote:

'Mom, I was the tears gathered in your eyes
When like a dog you were chased under the sun.
The tears gathered like the cloud in the skies
For the seed sown in you couldn't bear a son.'

Without leaving out the subject of discussion, let us move to the present. When the narrator was on her way to break the news of her admission into the university, she overheard her parents deliberating on her fate: to either be a trader in the market or an apprentice at a tailoring shop, where they eventually decided she would learn how to sew.

She went back to her room to personally decide her own tomorrow.

That leads to the latter. Her decision is to meet with Chief Ebeano who'd been more than a father to her since her parents have failed in their responsibilities. Even though there is a condition attached to Chief sponsoring her university education, she is ready for that. At least, it is better than being an apprentice at a tailoring shop. Are you wondering what the condition is? You can only know when you read it. After

reading, you can then answer If her tomorrow is pregnant, of what or who will it be delivered of?

It's indeed a flash fiction; in fact, I didn't see the end coming, it came like a flash!

GENRE: POETRY

POET: GRACE TENDO KATANA (UGANDA)

TITLE: FAR BEYOND

REVIEWER: PRECIOUS ADEKOLA (NIGERIA)

Far beyond is a poem of 21 lines divided into 4 stanzas.

The poem starts by depicting the future as something "...giving hope to life" (line 6) "A diminishing trait"

Very faint yet colourful" (lines 3-4) Here, the figurative element, Antithesis, can be identified to describe how the future holds hope in store despite not being clear.

The poet employs the use of anaphora in the first three stanza, by repeating the sentence " Far beyond" at the beginning of each stanza. This is done to emphasize the fact that all the persona's longings are for the future which is "far beyond."

The poet asserts that "the mysteries are gone...

in the future, and thus paves ...

way for the present

Where humanity isn't magical

But rather an obsession." (Line 10-12)

The mood of the poem is wistful and the poet employs an optimistic tone.

GENRE: POETRY

POET: MUHIZI YVES (RWANDA)

TITLE: I PRAY

REVIEWER: PRECIOUS ADEKOLA

Stanza 1 is replete with the use of pause in between lines, that is, Caesura. It is evidence of an act of supplication in the attitude of the poet persona. It also emphasizes the message of the title as it underscores the solemn nature of prayer.

The sibilant in line 6 emphasizes the similarity between the persona's "...scary life..." and "smoke", which causes him to suffocate.

The first two lines in stanza 2 personifies as well as employs internal rhyme in showing the relationship between day and night, as they precede each other, and how the "...nights darken the moonlights..."

The plosive in line 14, "I bleed blue through ink" depicts how the persona expresses

his feelings by writing about them.

The third stanza is optimistic, and the persona commits his future into God's hands. The mood of the poem is Sombre, and the tone shifts from one of acknowledgement to optimism.

GENRE: POETRY

POET: TATAH ALLEN LAIKA (CAMEROON)

TITLE: THE FUTURE IS OBSCURE

REVIEWER: PRECIOUS ADEKOLA (NIGERIA)

The poet employs the figurative element, Apostrophe, as the persona addresses the future throughout the poem.

"You are the reason all creatures live

The coffin of their future is nailed when they leave..." (Line 1-2)

The thought of the future gives hope to mankind, and the persona thus describes it as why humans live. Everyone is destined to die, and this is also portrayed in the second stanza.

The persona depicts the future as "...cunning as a fox..." and betrays "...soothsayers and pastors...". This is to emphasize that sometimes, the future turns out to be different from visions. The future wraps humans around its fingers because the "...zeal to know you sends people to pantheons and caves..." (Line 5).

The quest to discover what the future holds in store leave many humans more short-sighted and narrow minded, and "the future remains a mystery only known to God" (line 13).

Rhyme scheme is irregular, and furthers portrays how the future is.

The poet employs the use of rhetorical question in the first four lines of the second stanza to show that the persona doesn't understand the future.

The persona wants to know if he has to consult history to understand the future, and thus decides to "...surrender to the future and all its features..." (Line 18).

The persona ends the poem by making a resolution to "...find solace in nature..." (Line 19) and not allow the future "...blanket my clouded mind..."

He acknowledges the fact that humans are forever future's "...play thing..." and pleads with the future to treat humans fairly.

The diction is educating, with the poet using words such as "ignominy," "ecography."

Simile is evident in line 3 "...as cunning as a fox..." to portray the nature of the future.

The tone is one of defeat.

GENRE: POETRY

TITLE: LOVE IN FAITH

REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA

POET: SUSAN SYONDIE, KENYA

It is a three stanza poem written in quatrains (4) lines each stanza.

The persona using a simile compares her love for her partner with a star. It's bright and a source of light. She feels the strength of love has cooled in her partner, but she's hopeful that one time it'll be streamlined.

She wonders in the rhetorics she asks herself in stanza (2) whether love is stagnant, without any hope of growing.

What is love without hope?

In the last stanza she declares her unending love and she's ready to wait till the future of her love is restored.

The tone in the poem is candid, earnest and cautionary, the mood is optimistic about a future love.

It is a poem full of hyperboles, imagery, alliteration

GENRE: POETRY

TITLE: THE POEM MORROW

POET: LEBOGANG SAMSON FAITH, BOTSWANA

REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA

MORROW is a fourteen lined one verse poem written by a Mtswana writer Lebogang Samson Faith.

It starts with a persona happily taking a nap. She's happy that yesterday was very successful, maybe she got a deal that was fruitful.

Remembering she's in a primitive era, she's saddened. She hardly gets sleep but she's overpowered by the strength of the night.

On waking up she's still hopeless, asking herself questions about tomorrow, she sees no light ahead of her life journey.

The poem follows a regular rhyme scheme and ends like a sonnet, which makes it sweet to read.

Other devices in poem include, onomatopoeia for the plop sound of her head on the pillow, ellipsis, allusion, the persona alludes us to the Siamese twins by closely

referring to them, simile, she makes comparisons throughout. The title itself is also relevant and poetic.

The tone in the poem is ambivalent, pathetic and curious. The overall mood is gloomy.

GENRE: POETRY

TITLE: A STOLEN FUTURE

REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA

POET: KIMUTAI ALLAN, KENYA

A Stolen Future is a one stanza free verse poem of twenty two (22) lines by a Kenyan writer Kimutai Allan.

It is a poem about unfulfilled aspirations of politicians maybe in the colonial era in Kenya. Who promise their people heaven on earth. The masses have higher expectations upon achieving independence, but all their expectations fall on rocks. They don't seem to see what they were promised, they were in resentment, sad and frustrated. They believe the future they were promised is a dream which must be given time.

The poem suits the theme due to its uncertainty of the future.

The poem is a historical allusion. Alliteration and metonymy are employed in the poem

The tone is frustrated, incredulous, judgmental, nostalgic and critical.

The overall mood is pessimistic and melancholic.

GENRE: POETRY

TITLE: THE TIME IS NOW

REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA

AUTHOR: ARNOLD FURAHA, TANZANIA

THE TIME IS NOW is a poem written by a Tanzanian writer, Arnold Furaha. It consists of (17) lines all making one stanza.

In the poem, the author is persona cautioning and reminding us that the future is not ahead but rather it is at this material time.

He urges us to stop worrying about tomorrow but to utilize today to the fullest in the most productive ways. The persona calls upon whoever is alive to participate in making today a successful day so that it is remembered tomorrow.

Alliteration, consonance and repetition are some of the devices employed in the poem.

The tone in the poem is encouraging, imploring and inspirational.

It is a relevant poem in the way it discourages laziness and encourages us to work now not waiting for tomorrow.

GENRE: CHILDREN LITERATURE

POET: NGALIM JUSLINE VEEYEEYUY, CAMEROON

TITLE: THE FUTURE

REVIEWER: AKINRINADE FUNMINIYI ISAAC, NIGERIA

The Future is a children's literature (poetry) piece written by Ngalim Jusline Veey-
eeyuy. This can be found on page 26 of WSA November 2019 edition. A staunch
reader of the magazine will notice that this Cameroonian writer has been quite con-
sistent in the children literature section which in a way may show her zealous spirit
in promoting children literature. Since it is a poem for children, will it be simple
enough to be understood by the target audience.

The future is a 16 line poem with a quatrain per stanza, it is written with no specific
rhyming scheme, but the writer's simple choice of words makes it quite easy and
rhythmic for children to memorize.

In the first stanza, the writer uses metaphor (a figure of speech that shows a direct
similarity between the word used and the thing described, unlike simile that uses
like or as in its comparison) in showing what she feels THE FUTURE is. She sees the
future as a closed or locked door whereby the only person who keeps and knows its
whereabouts is God.

In the second stanza, the writer further stresses it out that you and I live in future
we don't even know it's the future. One will wonder the mystery behind this. How
can we live in a future we don't even know we are? But the writer clears our doubt
that we can only know that we are in the future when God opens the future's door.
In the third stanza, the writer tells of how you and I know our past and present,
even though they were once our future, but now we know them since their doors
have been opened. She further emphasizes on the fact that our future isn't known
yet, of course, not until God opens its door.

In the last stanza, the writer concludes her lines by saying today that is perceived
as a future will soon turn to past when tomorrow comes. When tomorrow comes,
it will also become past. The cycle keeps going that way, till when maybe one day
when God finally locks the future door and throws it away never to be opened

again. Just maybe.

The Future is a thought provoking children's literature. I will recommend it for children within the age group of 8-13 years.

GENRE: ESSAY

TITLE: WHAT IF TOMORROW WANTS TO BE LEFT ALONE?

WRITER: PHIL IBSEN FROM KENYA

REVIEWER: NGALIM JUSLINE VEEYEENYUY FROM CAMEROON

Have you ever considered how tomorrow feels when you worry a lot about her?

Has it ever crossed your mind the activities tomorrow could be carrying out at the time you are killing yourself every moment because of your love and obsessive desire for her?

Has it ever occurred to you that tomorrow may not be interested in you at all?

Have you ever reflected if your social class meets what tomorrow wants?

Have you for once thought of the fact that you might not even see tomorrow?

Have you ever bothered about today's feelings when you quickly dump her just to have tomorrow?

Do you know the impression tomorrow has about you based on the way you treat today?

Have you ever pondered on the fact that your desperation for tomorrow might rather be causing her depression?

These and a lot more are worth reflecting upon as one reads the philosophical and metaphorical essay by Phil Ibsen published in the November issue of WSA magazine titled: "What If Tomorrow Wants To Be Left Alone?"

This essay is a reflection on one's activities and seeks to prove that your way of life today has a huge impact on your tomorrow. Written with the use of rhetorical questions and personifications, this essay questions how certain you are about tomorrow that you break up with today so abruptly when you can't tell tomorrow's feelings for you.

It assures that tomorrow can fail all your expectations and seeks to know what you would and who you would blame if tomorrow fails you like you fail today. Or if tomorrow can't love you back, whose fault will it be?

This essay also reminds that you should avoid being obsessed about tomorrow and treat today with the same love and attention as you do to the unknown tomorrow. Your constant break ups with today, rather gives tomorrow a negative impression

about you as she feels you will equally break up with her when you are exposed to her own weaknesses.

He concludes by signaling that we should treat today as if it were the long awaited tomorrow despite its hazards because any other relationship has its weaknesses. Ibsen insists that while making love to today focus on her, forget about tomorrow and today will kindly deliver you to tomorrow in good fate for if you are a better man today you make a perfect husband tomorrow and not end in illusion.

Ibsen's essay is pregnant with moral lessons. It calls on everyone out there to be kind to the people with whom they are at the moment. It warns against building castles in the air and rather encourages that one constructs the present well for it is a determinant factor of the unknown or tomorrow. The people you ignore today might be the very ones who will lift you up to your desires tomorrow. It also teaches that if you don't treat the available well you still can't succeed in the dreamt hope. Value what you have at the moment before chasing dreamt possessions.

Ibsen's essay, I call it an allegorical piece as every line in it passes across a moral lesson to whoever has ears.

Let's learn to leave tomorrow alone and fall head over heels in love with today. Live like there is just today and no tomorrow. This essay remains a reflection, a must read, a must lived and a must emulated to anyone thinking prosperity, happiness and success at every turn. It's an essay I have enjoyed reading only from the stool of my conscience.

GENRE: ESSAY

TITLE: THE MASK COVERING YOUR FUTURE

WRITER: BLESSING CHIDINMA AMADI

REVIEWER: BILDAD MAKORI

This essay focuses on highlighting how one can overcome the struggles and challenges that are covering (by this she meant hindering) a person hence the title, The Mask Covering The Future.

In the essay, there is a good use of examples and illustrations and this can be seen by her using Michelle Obamas book titled BECOMING which relates with what the essay is talking about. Reason being, the book 'BECOMING' is about how Michelle was able to swim through challenges that tore off the mask that covered her future. The writer says that this mask does not only constitute the thoughts ones lives and bears but it also includes the silly mindset that we inculcate in children, right from

their childhood. And this, she attributes to what Michelle terms as being the most useless question children are ever asked: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” As if after becoming that something will be the end.

It is a good essay. It has a good flow of language, good use of imagery and also the writer’s use of rhetoric questions captures the reader’s attention as the reader feels involved in being part of that situation.

It is also a good piece as it impacts and positively helps one whose face is also covered by masks that end up covering that person’s future.

GENRE: SHORT STORY

TITLE: MY UNCLE RAGWA

WRITER: FRANCIS MKWAPATIRA FROM MALAWI

REVIEWERS: COLIN STANLEY KARIMI FROM KENYA

Well, the story is well plotted with the theme ‘future’ being elaborate through the beginning and the end. At the same start of the story we have Mama Muchapo’s son being promised a full scholarship by his Uncle Zagwa, which was in fact a deal to secure his future bearing in mind that the beneficiary had lost his father. With the only piece of land in they had, Muchapo and her son were already set to secure a bright future.

However, in a drastic change of events, tables turned and the once-nice uncle turned to a savage beast.

He claimed that selling Mama Muchapo’s land and house was the only way they could settle the hospital bill and afford a wheelchair for her now paralyzed son. Apparently, the uncle had his mind sabotaged by his wicked wife who wanted to take advantage of Muchapo’s misery. Uncle Zagwa was determined to break his own part of his extended family simply because of his bad choice in choosing a wife.

Nonetheless, the future is still bright for the son of Mama Muchapo as his will is stronger than his disabilities. He forged his way up the academic ladder and became a lecturer at the same college he attained his certificates.

See, the theme is well choreographed in this setting as it remains well represented from the start. Muchapo’s son was determined from the very start in matters concerning his education.

At the end of the tale, Uncle Zagwa is on the receiving end of abject poverty and the child of Muchapo who once in his life he claimed to be useless to the society was the

only one who could save his life after his once sweetheart broke his heart and scampered away with what men ooze with pride and prestige; property and children.

GENRE: SHORT STORIES

TITLE: STRANGE COLORS OF LOVE

WRITER: ACHI GODSPOWER EMMANUEL FROM NIGERIA

REVIEWER: COLIN STANLEY KARIMI

In this story, there is a critical call for the preservation of morals and ethics in our so-called modern societies. With the constant campaign of feminism in our atmospheres, it is clear that those who call for equality in the male and female gender do not have the shock absorbers to deal with negative impacts of feminism, which in turn leads to a constant rot generation after generation. Such is evident in the story with the main character who is a victim of lesbianism.

Apparently, she was conceived through artificial insemination; thus she longed for the loving upbringing a father is supposed to give as the head of the family. Nonetheless, primarily because of such, the character finds herself in emotional chaos all through her upbringing especially when her mother's lover and nanny succumbed to death.

In this setting, we see the importance of a complete family as the character received motherly love from her nanny as her mother quenched her fleshly desires with her partner. As the story goes on, we realize that the character now uses her body to forge ahead in life. She becomes a prostitute and primarily due to a lack of dignity she improved her skills in the bedroom with an aim of taking advantage of steamy men.

In this tale, the future becomes more realistic as challenges regarding sexuality are becoming a headache to parents of this generation. Nonetheless, there is hope as the introduction of an older character in his 60s clearly identifies the purpose of love. With further ado, it symbolizes we should slow down in accepting new trends in our modern societies primarily those based on gender non-conformity.

The older man knows how to chase a woman with such passion the lady has no option but to run into his arms. Clearly, the story illustrates the importance of heritage especially in modern atmospheres.

Nonetheless, the two distinct situations happen within the same context meaning there is a glimmer of hope. The story has somewhat predicted the future of our so-called modern societies; however, with love and appreciation we as the human kind can be void of such societal injustices.

GENRE: SHORT STORY

TITLE: ONCE UPON GREEN

WRITER: ESTHER MUSEMBI, KENYA

REVIEWER : OGALO ODUOR BERNARD, KENYA

It is 2050, 31 years from now (2019). Esther Musembi is there, writing her short story “Once Upon Green”. This is a story full of hopelessness, stern warnings and the inevitable resignation to fate (or is it destiny?). “Once Upon Green” is a total heartbreak to the present generation, yet, a necessary warning against a future that is dark and bleak. Such a dark future is where Lenana lives, who is a symbol of the future generation. The Planet Earth is deeply polluted.

Further, parents have no time to attend to their children. It is the reason why Lenana has a robot for a friend and companion. Clocky, the robot, wakes him up and helps with homework. These changes break the hearts of both mother and son. The mother relives the once green City of Nairobi that has now turned dark and black and the son only imagines how the world was during his mother’s days. All this is vividly painted on a canvas that is ‘magical’ since it keeps changing its colour to indicate areas that have been polluted or degraded. The canvas is the piece of a seemingly science project that Clocky helps Lenana to complete as part of the homework.

Looking back at today from 2050, there is nothing as heartbreaking as having a fond memory that only brings tears to one’s eyes. Today is such a fond and green memory, made with the sentences that make “Once Upon Green”, and rekindled in 2050 when the Planet Earth is dark, old and lifeless. The story is a wakeup call to all of us. It wails like the siren of an ambulance and flashes lights all over our dark minds. We must see the danger in those plastics we keep throwing all over. For, one day, years from today, someone will tell a story of a once upon green...because green will be gone and there will be inevitable rampage.

Esther Musembi's story is what I call a "realignation"; an imagination of the reality. Environmental degradation and pollution are realities and, while the events in the story are imagined, they are inevitable realities if no action is taken today. Do not let the rampage begin. Save Mother Earth today.

GENRE: SHORT STORY

TITLE: THE SECOND LIFE

WRITER: CALVIN CHIKWATA

REVIEWER: OGALO ODUOR BERNARD

The world as we know it, is treacherous and wayward yet the only place we, humans, call home; though it's we humans that are making this world treacherous and wayward. But, just think of it: what if there was another home far away from this Planet Earth? What if, say, Jupiter was as homely as this Earth, would you want to make a home far away from home? Would you miss anyone or anything in this world? Would you wish you lived life on Jupiter differently from the way your cousins on earth are living theirs? Given a chance, Calvin Chikwata, in his story, "The Second Life" , would make a home on Jupiter, far away from this Earth.

"The Second Life", told in a first person point of view, paints the crookedness of this world. Through the character of a young student who wonders why there is so much hatred in this world, Chikwata becomes euphoric about life out of this world. He wonders if it is possible for his youthful and boyish soul to find true happiness in this world. His friends are not true friends since they only appreciate him when it is time for examinations. The rest of the time, he is ridiculed and laughed at because of his physical appearance, his name and the way he appears old-fashioned. Life is a heavy load with all this weight in his heart.

The Second Life is a reminder to the human family that home is no longer home without the warmth that comes with love, care, kindness and the Biblical Golden Rule: Do Unto Others What You Would Like Done Unto You. Life on this earth will only be meaningful if people started caring for each other and loving one another. Let us not think about our friends and neighbours only when we want to get some help from them. Every person has only one life on this earth and we should never live it in a way that would make other people wish for a second life on Jupiter, far away from us. As wishful as the tone of this story sounds, it is laced with pain, sor-

row and hopelessness. Maybe, all these will change when we cross the sky in search of a second home; a better home.

In the heavenly words of Jim Reeves: “This world is not my home, I’m just passing through...and I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.”

GENRE: COLUMNS

TITLE: AT A COST, EPISODE 9

AUTHOR: AMAMI YUSUF, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: PETER BLESSING PEVER (PPBLESSING), NIGERIA

“At the very first glimpse of dawn, Sadiya arose from her bed where she didn’t get any sleep at all. She had prayed, wept, feared, worried and thought endlessly all night about Zarah.”

These are the opening lines for the ninth episode which leaves one in an apprehensive mood, sharing in how Sadiya must have felt in that wee hour of the morning. In this episode, we are presented with the turn of events after Zarah was caught in the act and the emotional turmoil that grips the people around her; from Sadiya who plans and ensures her escape, to Mohammed who kept praying for her all through the night and morning. One cannot help but be in the story and share in its characters feelings reading through.

Now, Sadiya has successfully helped Zarah escape but will the community let things be once they realize that Zarah is gone? Will Sadiya recover well from the wound which is probably tetanus infected on her toe? Will Mama be able to keep the secret of Zarah’s whereabouts? All these and more are questions we are left to ponder on as we await episode 10.

GENRE: COLUMNS

TITLE: LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

WRITER: UGBEDE ATABOH, NIGERIA

PLOT: LUST

REVIEWER: KWEKU SARKWA, (THE ROMANTIC WRITER), GHANA

Ugbede is a very cool but naughty lady and I wouldn’t hesitate to try my luck as well on her. It looks as if she had a strong rule which she lived by and as well a dream to

become a nun but this dream was shattered to pieces as she enjoyed the juices that life squeezed right into her mouth without any struggle.

She moved from Ghost of Christmas, to Ghost of New year, to Danaka #candy crush, to Mr. Dapper, to Kay and back to Mr. Dapper because she was confused by the kind of affection that Mr. Dapper showed her when she tried to lie about cheating on him with her ex boyfriend who got her pregnant in the process.

In fact Kay was not fair to Ugbede at all. How can you be seeing someone, get caught and still insist on getting married to somebody else at that very moment? That was very rude attitude that Kay showed.

But all the same Ugbede has decided to enjoy life with a good looking and rich man who is no other person than Mr. Dapper without considering what the future holds for her.

Life can be hard sometimes but I think continuing to live a life full of remorse by taking a decision to live with pain because of past experiences is rather a suicide but to forget the past and look forward to what the future brings is rather a brave decision to take.

GENRE: COLUMNS

TITLE: THE OBSERVER, AFRICA'S FUTURE

WRITER: LEO MUZIVOREVA

REVIEWER: BILDAD MAKORI

Were it not for this article, trust me, I would not have known Africa's statistical data based on those living in the diaspora. The numbers are quite impressive for our continent as there are a whopping 30 million Africans who have migrated and are living in other countries. And so basically, this is an article that talks about the advantages and benefits that are coming along with this trend. Africa is seen to be the continent that will have the most transformative impact in the region's future.

The article revolves around a good use words and also proper use of conjunctions and word connectors. The choice of story and topic itself is timely at a time when we as a continent are scaling the heights of development. It is therefore a great encour-

ager for we as Africans into realizing our potential.

In the article, the move by those Africans who are migrating and living in the Diaspora is being applauded as the social, economic and demographic capital that they are currently bringing is important in ensuring that our demographic as a continent will yield good dividends by 2050.

For anyone wondering about where as Africa are currently, and where we are headed to, this is a good read.



WSDA



Writers Space Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving new literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for her **February 2020 Edition** in the following categories:



Short story



Flash fiction



Poetry



Essays



Children's Literature

The theme for submission is **Love**

The submission window is open from **9th December to 23rd December**. Response time is typically within **4 to 5 weeks after submission** window closes. We look forward to receiving your best work!

To submit, please visit www.writersspace.net/submissions