



WSA
Writers Space Africa
Empowering African Writers

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAAZA MENGISTE

“THE SHADOW KING”

VOL. 5 NO. 4



APRIL 2021

WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

WWW.WRITERSSPACE.NET

THIS
EDITION IS
SUPPORTED BY



WSA-Z
Writers Space Africa - Zimbabwe
Empowering Zimbabwean Writers

For enquiry and membership, please contact:
+266 5165 2284



CALL FOR **SUBMISSIONS**

THEME: POWER

**WRITERS SPACE AFRICA (WSA), AN INTERNATIONAL
ONLINE LITERARY MAGAZINE, WILL FROM 1ST TO 14TH
MAY ACCEPT SUBMISSIONS FOR THE JULY 2021
EDITION IN THESE CATEGORIES:**

- FLASH FICTION**
- ESSAYS/ARTICLES**
- POETRY**
- SHORT STORIES**
- CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

**TO SUBMIT, PLEASE VISIT
WWW.WRITERSSPACE.NET/SUBMISSIONS**

EDITOR'S NOTE

“Adversity is inevitable; misery is optional.” This is how my friend Marita Banda, a poet and author, puts it. The bad, the terrible and the worst things one can think of happen to all of us at one time or another in this life. How we react to them is entirely up to us.

Our contributors have run the gamut of this month's theme: Misery. Explored in these pages are physical pain, mental health, self-reflection, parental expectations of children, secret love, depression, suicide, rape, unrequited love, social stigma and much more.

Gracing the cover of our May issue is Maaza Mengiste, author of the critically acclaimed and Booker Prize shortlisted novel "The Shadow King". I sat down with her for an interview that quickly felt like a conversation with a friend. That's a credit to her warm and welcoming nature. We hope you gain some useful insight into what she revealed.

Just before publication, we got some wonderful news that Writers Space Africa has been awarded 'Best African Writer Promotion Platform 2021' in Acquisition International Magazine's Business Excellence Awards 2021! We are raising a glass and celebrating this award with you all!

Happy reading!

Namwanja,

Chief Editor.

EDITORIAL CREW

PRESIDENT & FOUNDER

Anthony Onugba

CHIEF EDITOR

Namwanja Margaret Chikwabi - Zambia

ASSISTANT CHIEF EDITOR

Neo Space Poet Masetlane - Botswana

CREATIVE EDITOR

Houda Messoudi - Morocco

ARTICLES/ESSAYS

Efua Eshun - Ghana

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Peter Blessing Pever (PPBlessing) - Nigeria

Ngalim Jusline Veeyeenyuy - Cameroon

FLASH FICTION

Marjorie Moono Simuyuni - Zambia

POETRY

Omadang Yowasi - Uganda

Temani Nkalolang - Botswana

Comfort Nyati - Zimbabwe

SHORT STORIES

Kimberly Chirodzero - Zimbabwe

Fomutar Stanislaus - Cameroon

PUBLICITY

Namse Udosen - Nigeria

Bildad Makori - Kenya

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editor's Note	4
Editorial Crew	5
Table of Contents	6
Short Stories	7-14
Articles	16-17
Children's Literature	19-22
Flash Fiction	24-25
Interview With Maaza Mengiste	27-33
Wakini Prize (2nd Runner Up)	35-36
Poetry	38-45
Reviews	47-50

A BEAUTIFUL THING NEVER DIES

SYLAS JEHU
NIGERIA

If the people living in the neighbourhood were to speak of the woman who lived in the veranda of the old uncompleted building down the street, they would call her mad. It was not that she was always dirty and ragged like other mad people touring the streets of Uyo, or that she occasionally attacked passers-by or spat on them like Ito, or that she came out every morning to dance at the bus stop to the amusement of school children who sang and clapped while she danced passionately to their music with a gracious smile on her face. It wasn't any of that. This woman was neat, her long hair always combed and held back with a rubber band. She wasn't wild either, but for the single fact that she lived with a scarecrow in her home, she had to be mad.

There was a time when Mary used to speak and smile and laugh, when she used to call

me Mummy, but that was a long time ago.

Mary had come into our life seven years after Charles and I got married. Before she came, I had known the feeling of a child inside my womb, children actually. Children who probably saw how terrible the world was through my eyes and disappeared back into inexistence. When they disappeared, I would be in anguish for months until another one formed inside me, giving me hope that I would be a mother, only to crush it by disappearing. Finally, Mary had seen the world and liked it, or maybe she had seen how scarred I was from the series of miscarriages and pitied me, deciding to stay on even while knowing the world was a terrible place.

When Mary came into our life, she revived the joy that was dying in our marriage. She filled the void, the emptiness eating

us up, and Charles and I loved her more than any parent could ever love their child.

Mary was beautiful, with a round face and bold eyes, just like Mami, my mother. Mami had taken me to several churches and herbalists, and given me all kinds of concoctions to drink when I was searching for a child. When all her attempts failed, she gave up, saying that God knows best. And that was when Mary had showed up; when we weren't expecting her, and stayed.

It all started that cold windy day in January, a day that held fate by its reins and turned it against me. Mary had gone to school neatly dressed in her school uniform – a white shirt to go with a navy-blue pinafore and white stockings – with her usual smile gracing her face, a smile that always warmed my heart.

She always looked good in that pinafore, and she always liked going to school. "Bye bye, Mummy." That was the last thing she said just before she waved and entered the school bus. And that was the last time she spoke, or smiled. I never saw her again until recently.

I had waited impatiently for Mary to return that day, looking out of the window through the blinds for the school bus every time my heart skipped in worry, but she didn't return. The school bus never came. When I dialed the school's line, it kept ringing, sending waves of worry and fear into my heart, but nobody answered.

When I had exhausted all the patience I could muster, I decided to go to the school myself and see what was keeping my child. I was approaching the door when Charles returned home with a look I had never seen on his face before, a look that said something terrible had happened. There was shock and fear and sadness hanging on his face, and my eyes froze, and my heart dropped to the floor. I knew. A mother would

always know when something bad has happened to her child; but it was too bad to be true, so I asked, hoping I was wrong and praying that the universe would not condemn me in such a devastating way. But I was right.

"Honey, you need to sit down," Charles said, his voice dry and breaking. But I didn't sit down; I couldn't, not with my heart burning away.

"What happened? Where is Mary?" I asked, and he broke down in tears and led me to the couch.

"There's been an accident... the school bus. Mary is gone." The words rolled out of his lips like he was a character in a sad movie. I didn't cry at first; the shock threw me up into air and Charles couldn't hold me. When I started crying, I didn't stop. For days I cried and cried, and then days turned into months until crying lost its meaning for me, and that was when I stopped recognizing myself.

Two years later, Charles told me one morning over

breakfast that he wanted a divorce. I wasn't angry or surprised – our marriage was dead, dry like an orange that had been left on the ground to wither after all its juices had been sucked out. I didn't ask why either, I knew why. This man wanted a child and I couldn't give him that. Mary was the last life my womb could carry.

Charles and his new wife had a son a few months into their marriage, and it dawned on me that he had been cheating on me the whole time. I didn't blame him; nobody deserves a bitter wife, especially Charles. Before the divorce, I had stopped talking to him; all I did was cook and clean the house.

He had tried to make me happy, to bring me back, but my spirit was too dead to be resurrected.

It was four years later that I started to doubt if Mary was really gone. They said the accident was so terrible that it was better I didn't see her. Mami told me no parent deserves to bury their child, and I had agreed.

I didn't want to picture Mary in any tragic way. I couldn't imagine a different image besides her shiny olive skin, her bold mesmerizing eyes, and the warm smile she always offered. I couldn't imagine seeing her bloodied in her uniform, her pinafore that she always looked beautiful in. I couldn't imagine seeing her dead, and so I had agreed not to see her. I wanted to be able to console myself with fleeting thoughts that she may still be alive.

Soon, I began to believe that Mary hadn't died, that she had somehow survived the accident. How could such a beautiful thing die? I began to search for her. Every day, I would walk the streets around her school from morning till night hoping to find her. I would sneak into the school and search all the classrooms and every other place hoping to see my baby girl, but I never found her, and I never gave up. I took to the streets of Uyo, searching every corner. I kept telling myself, she has to be somewhere in this town. Sometimes I saw girls who really looked like her, walking

hand in hand with their parents and smiling the way Mary used to smile, and it strengthened my resolve.

Finally, I saw Mary one very hot afternoon in the market. She was lying helplessly on the ground in her pinafore which was now old and faded, with a bunch of old clothes around her. A woman stood behind her, ringing a bell and shouting: "Two hundred naira! Two hundred naira! After today, no more!" The woman was going to sell Mary, my baby girl, and I wasn't going to let that happen. I snatched Mary and fled, snaking my way through the crowd. She felt so light in my arms, so light like ... a piece of cloth. It has to be hunger, she must be starving, I said to myself as I ran.

When I brought her home she was very weak and could barely stand. I had to use sticks to support her.

Mary never eats anything I give her, and she never says anything to me either. I know it's because she is angry at me for abandoning her the whole time, for believing she was capable of dying; that she could leave me alone in this world after all we had been through, after all the promises we made to ourselves. I know she'll forgive me one day because she still smiles knowing I could never do without her smile, the smile never leaves her face. I know one day she will stop standing and run to me with open arms and call me Mummy. And we would be happy together once again.



MISERY

EZELIORA NDIDIAMAKA
Nigeria



I knew I had to leave this place; I could not take it anymore. I hurriedly packed the few things I had come with inside a yellow nylon, as I didn't want it to seem evident to the nosy neighbours that I was running away. The loud chiming sound of the clock startled me. I could feel my heart beat faster. I was running out of time, and I knew it would not be long before he arrived. I continued to pack my things when I stumbled upon the

picture of my aunt.

She was laughing in this picture, and I found myself smiling at the memory of that day. It felt like ages since I smiled; it felt very alien to me as I watched my eyes brighten a bit. I remember when I used to have a smiling face, my mother had told me it was what made me stand out from everyone. Things, however, changed when I moved in with my aunty. I was excited to move in with her as she had always been my favourite Aunt.

The day I had arrived at my Aunt's house, I had been very shocked at her appearance. She looked nothing like the picture I had tucked inside my suitcase. She had dark circles under her eyes and looked lean as she tried to smile at me. I was tempted to run away until spoke to me in her sweet

angelic voice and then hugged me. My Aunt welcomed me with a lovely dish of jollof rice and chicken. She lived in a duplex, was unable to have children, and always treated me like her daughter. I had settled in nicely in her house for two days before her husband, Uncle Sam, came back. The day Uncle Sam arrived, I had gone to plait my hair. I came back into the house laughing with my Aunt as we ate roasted plantain. I saw my Aunt's countenance change the moment she locked eyes with Uncle Sam.

"This is Ada, my niece," Aunty said with her eyes downcast as she urged me to come forward with a slight push.

"Good afternoon, Uncle." I said, smiling.



I was surprised at the cold face that had stared right back at me; Uncle Sam looked at me like I had seen my mother do in the market when she wanted to select the fattest goat to buy for Christmas. He had looked at Aunt, then back at me one last time before disappearing to his room. That was the last day I saw my Aunt smile while breathing. The next time I saw her smile was in her coffin; she had looked like she was at peace.

"You know how clumsy your Aunt is," Uncle Sam said as he broke the news of my aunt's death to me when I entered the house. He said she had slipped down the stairs and died instantly. He smiled like it was a joke to him. I cried so much that day, and I wondered how my sweet Aunt had ended up with a man like Uncle Sam.

The day after the burial, I had packed my bags intending to go back with my parents. Uncle Sam, however, insisted that I remain with

him. He was friends with most of the professors in the university I planned on attending. He told my parents he would meet with them to secure my admission. This overjoyed my parents, and my mother had even knelt in appreciation. I had cried myself to sleep that night as I wished my Aunt could come back to life.

A month after my Aunt's death, I was accepted to my dream school. I was so excited that I hurried to Uncle Sam's room to break the news to him, and that was the first time I saw him smile genuinely.

"I knew you would get in," he had said proudly as he squeezed my shoulders.

That night while I slept soundly, Uncle Sam had come into my room. He said he wanted to celebrate with me. I was surprised he had a key to my room; I had hugged my wrapper tighter to cover the transparent part of my gown. Uncle Sam had

smelt of beer that night; he put his hands on my chest and I saw him smile in my dimly-lit room. I had no words coming out of my mouth no matter how hard I tried to speak up. Inside I was screaming, I wanted to kick and push him away from me. Uncle Sam pushed me onto the bed and told me I was just like my Aunt. He called her a mute. I screamed so loudly that he hit me. He hit me repeatedly and forced himself on me.

I slipped in and out of consciousness that night and woke up at precisely 2PM the next day. The was the first thing I checked. I believed I had a very horrible dream until I saw the bloodstains on my bed. My whole body had been covered in bruises, and I my legs could no longer carry the weight of my body.

I saw a white paper lying on the bed, and I picked it up to read inquisitively: SHUT UP OR LOSE YOUR ADMISSION.



These words were written in bold on the paper. I looked around the room in fear before breaking down in tears wondering what I had done to deserve such wickedness. When evening time came, I had the strength to wash my stained bed sheet and take a hot shower. I scrubbed myself thoroughly, grateful that I could not remember anything that happened the previous night. However, I still felt dirty, and no matter how much I tried to scrub off the dirtiness from the previous night, it felt like I only made things worse. I also tried to eat, but my body refused the meal I had prepared, and I threw up. Afraid and feeling alone for the first time in my life, I decided to go into the room that my Aunt had always called her thinking room. It

was a spacious white room with piles of books on a shelf and a very long sofa. I had felt my aunt's presence as I settled on the sofa. I began to cry again as I realised that she was not coming back. I walked towards her bookshelf and ran my hands through her collection of books. As I did this, I noticed a book I was not familiar with and pulled it out. It was a brown book with no inscription on the cover.

I flipped through the first two pages and discovered it was my aunt's journal. I began to read each page as I digested how Uncle Sam had abused my Aunt ever since her first miscarriage. She was scared he would kill her, but she decided to remain in the marriage. She had written many nice things about me

and expressed how much she loved me. The last day she had written in her diary was the day she died. It was as if she had known she was going to die. She also wrote about her dreams and things she wished she had done differently.

I then heard the front door open. I quickly hurried to my room, hoping to block the door with a chair so Uncle Sam would not be able to come in. He, however, beat me to it and barged inside my room like a bull. He beat me until I lost consciousness and kept repeating that I needed to be punished. My only relief was that I hid my Aunt's journal before I blacked out.

This was why I planned on jumping out of the house through the window; it was my only means of escape. I knew I had to leave this house filled with sadness, and as I jumped, I thought of my Aunt once more and how I wished she could jump with me. I ran out of the compound as fast as my legs could carry me and never once looked back.

RAIN

OSEMUDIAMEN OMONDIAGBE
Nigeria



I've always loved the rain. My mother says it rained heavily on the day I was born, thunderclaps eclipsing the sounds of her agonising wails as she pushed me into the cruel reality I've come to know as the world. I guess it makes sense that the sounds and smells that accompany the weeping skies have always made me feel comfortable.

I've always been angry at the world, discontent by the state of it, and unable to fully accept my place in existence. I often feel like my head is in the clouds, unable to settle and focus on anything. That all changes when the clouds decide to bare their watery contents upon the earth. Rain clouds are a welcome sight and thunderstorms are when I'm at my sharpest, almost as though the chaos that accompanies heavy rainfall is in sync with my tumultuous soul. Joy in buckets.

It was raining that day. I woke up to the pattering sounds of the raindrops hitting the rooftops. The weather was perfect and my mood, buoyant. I left for work that morning with a spring in my step, raincoat on, ready to take on the world. I was in my element, and it felt great.

I walked down to the bus stop and barely waited a minute before a Danfo bus stopped in front of me. "CMS" the conductor yelled, announcing their destination. "How much?" I asked. "200 Naira," he responded, his breath tinged with the smell of ogogoro "I hold 500 Naira, you get change?" "Enter," he said, so I got in.

The bus was sparsely populated, janky, and had a leaky roof. It made several suspect noises as we sped through the streets of Lagos. The cold wind rushed in through the windows, accompanied occasionally by

tiny droplets of water that felt like a million little needle pricks on my face. There were six of us on the bus in total, eight if you counted the driver and conductor. The heavy rainfall probably discouraged most people from leaving their homes early, their loss.

We made good time, the usual morning traffic was non-existent, and soon we were ascending the Third-mainland bridge, the giant concrete monstrosity which was responsible for bridging the gap between the Lagos mainland, where I lived, and the Island, where I worked.

This dynamic was commonplace amongst Lagosians. Many of us have to wake up at unholy hours in preparation for this daily commute to and from our places of employment. In Lagos, if you had a 9 to 5 job then it wasn't really a 9 to 5, it was a 5 to 9.

Our ascent was rapid, the driver seemingly in a hurry to complete his first trip of the day. The other passengers did not appreciate this. "Driver slow down, be careful," they interjected, their words bouncing off the walls of the old bus and producing an effect akin to that of an echo chamber.

The driver did not take kindly to the criticism of his driving. "Who dey shout for there? You want make God punish you this morning?" he yelled, displeased. "It is you God will punish, idiot!" a female voice behind me shrieked in reply. I found the exchange slightly humorous, able to see the lighter side of what I felt was an unnecessary exchange of words. The driver, however, did not.

Incensed by this response, he turned around with a mouthful of curses aimed at the lady who was bold enough to defy him. What followed was, for all intents and purposes, a series of unfortunate events. The driver, lost in the heat of the moment, seemed to forget that he was behind the steering

wheel. The passengers, myself included, screamed at him to focus on getting us safely to our destination.

The bus veered out of control, and by the time the driver realised he was supposed to have his hands on the wheel and eyes on the road, it was too late. We were headed towards



railing at high speed, the weathered bus tires made extra slippery by the rain-soaked turf, and then, we fell off the bridge. It all happened so fast, yet slow. Time seemed to stop in that moment as I braced for impact, the waves of the Atlantic waiting to swallow us in its cold depths.

"Is this it? Am I going to die?"

We hit the water hard, hard enough to kill the driver on impact. Fitting that he died first, the current situation was both

his doing and undoing. The bus filled up with water fast, sinking deeper and deeper. It took a while for me to realise that I was drowning. I'd read about it, but experiencing the stabbing pain in my eyes and ears and the fire in my chest as my lungs oh so desperately sought for air, was surreal.

I willed myself to move, willed myself to find a way out of the bus that seemed destined to become my final resting place. All I could manage was a pathetic struggle against the current, as we sank further into the depths of the Atlantic.

"Move, MOVE! MOVE!!"

This wasn't supposed to happen. I was supposed to be in my element, at my best, unstoppable, ALIVE. At some point, after what felt like forever, I stopped struggling, and it felt as though the chaos of the raging currents were finally in sync with the raging of my tumultuous soul.

It was raining on the day I was born.

It was raining on the day I died.



KALULU KREATIVEZ



Zambia's Hub of
African Arts & Culture

OUR HEAD OFFICE

Is Located in Shingalwano
Village, Off Great East Road,
Chinyunyu, Rufunsa, Zambia.

We Are The Home of African
Arts & Culture

Visit Our Crafts Shop

At plot No. 30220, Off Shantumbu
Road, Near Chalala Mall,
Lusaka, Zambia.



 www.kalulukreativez.org



+260978641999
+260957481775

+260967424283

✉ kalulukreativez@gmail.com

MISERY, THE SILENT KILLER

RAWAT LUQMAAN
SOUTH AFRICA



The word Misery is thrown around so often these days, one can argue that it has lost all meaning. Misery is basically defined as a state or feeling of great physical or mental distress or discomfort. Which is worse though: being miserable because of physical pain or mental pain? Someone who suffers from physical pain can be treated. There are pain medications and other remedies that can be administered to alleviate the pain one experiences. Meanwhile, it is easy for others to see the pain people go through. The sounds of discomfort, bruises and scars make it even easier for people around to see and hence sympathise with them, and to offer help if they can.

Misery born out of physical pain can be treated quite easily; however, the same

cannot be said about misery born out of mental pain. The brain is one of the most important, if not the most important, organ in the human body. Not only does it control our every movement, it also houses our thoughts and emotions. How then can something so vital to our survival also be something that can be detrimental to it? Our minds are extremely malleable. We are the ones that shape it and it in turns shapes our values, emotions, and personality, which explain who we are.

We can attribute the changes our minds go through to the experiences we get. The better the experiences we acquire in life, the better our minds become. The worse experiences we go through, the more broken our minds become, which further causes mental pain. This

kind of pain cannot be described or expressed, neither can it be seen, and is the main reason why people who suffer from mental pain/illness do not always get the help they need.

In those rare moments we hear people lament over their mental misery, they are usually shut up with harsh words like 'Just get on with your life', 'everyone has bigger problems' and other inhumane utterances. Statements like these can be extremely detrimental to a person who is already on the edge; who is not looking for someone to compare problems with, but may only be looking for someone to vent to. No need to have a problem Olympics. As members of society, we need to come together and help one another. We can no longer blame our ignorance for our inability to understand one's mental pain.

A person engulfed by misery no longer sees the happiness and beauty in this world; neither do they see the wonders that you and I see. Instead, his or her mind focuses on the negativity and the bad in this world and in their life. Being in such a state for a long period can be fatal. Misery leads to depression which could, and often leads to suicide. To best explain it, misery can be likened to an ocean that you step foot into. First, you feel the coldness of the waves dulling the heat of your feet but still walk in, thinking you can handle it. Deeper and deeper you go, firmly believing that you can handle it on your own, till you eventually realise you may have gone too far. It becomes too late however to turn back, since the crashing waves overpower you. At this juncture, you start fighting against this overpowering strength, fighting just to keep your head above the cold, crushing water.

People we lose to this battle



against misery simply give up. They give in to it and let it take them to the depths of the ocean, which becomes the end of the battle for them. Some would say they are cowards but when you have been fighting a battle all your life and cannot see victory in sight, giving up becomes your only choice.

Different situations bring misery into our lives, and we all may have encountered someone who lost the battle to it. We need to try as much as possible to find ways to pull ourselves out of misery should we find our strength waning in our battle against it. The easiest way is to find someone you trust, or find a therapist to talk to. Otherwise, journaling is also a very good option. Grab a

book and write down all your emotions. Let it all out; let your emotions run through the pen onto the page. Understand that the only way to get through this is to let it out. Let it all out and ease the burden that you have placed on your shoulders.

Whenever things become too hard for you, when you think you cannot carry on anymore, remember the many times that you fell and got back up on your feet. The many times that you overcame the trials and obstacles that stood in front of you. You had the strength to defeat them, and you still have that strength in you. If you defeated those, you can defeat this. Believe in yourself and never give up.

AVAILABLE FOR FREE DOWNLOAD

<https://www.publishwithacacia.com>



FLORA'S PET

PRISCAH MWANGI
KENYA

Flora was a young, intelligent and obedient girl who lived with her mother in a house in the mountains. She worked hard to get good grades and was happy because her mum promised to get her a gift for performing so well in school. One day, Flora arrived at home from school and entered the kitchen ready to tell her mother about how her day was at school. She was eager to tell her mother about her new friend, Lisa. However, Flora's mother was not in the house, but on the table was a slightly big box wrapped up with a beautiful red bow.

Flora got curious and wanted to know what was in the box. She carefully untied the bow and opened up the box. Inside, was a brown puppy with smooth fur, fluffy ears and round white eyes. She was a beautiful

dog and Flora was very happy. She could not believe her mother had bought her a pet as a gift. Flora ran outside to the kitchen garden behind their house where her mother was busy picking tomatoes.

"Mum! Mum! Is that dog mine? The one in the box?" Flora asked her mum excitedly.

"Yes Flora, she is your pet now. You should give her a name," Flora's mother told her as she finished up harvesting tomatoes.

"Thank you so much Mum. I know what to call her..." Flora said as she ran back into the house.

Flora named her new pet Rosa just like her grandmother's dog who lived in another village away from theirs. Rosa became Flora's new best friend. They

played together, went to the shop together and sometimes even ate together. Rosa would walk with Flora to school in the morning and back home in the evening. Flora made sure that Rosa ate every day and that her kennel was clean throughout. Flora's mother was happy to see how much she cared for her pet. At school, all of Flora's friends and teachers knew of her pet and how much Flora loved her.

For many days Flora and her dog, Rosa played a lot, until one day, Rosa did not want to anymore. All she wanted to do was lie on her mat and sleep the whole day. Flora could not understand why Rosa did not want to play anymore or even walk to school with her. She was sad and begged her mother to tell her what was wrong with Rosa.

One afternoon, Flora's mum decided to take Rosa to the vet to find out whether she was sick. After a few hours of doing some tests, the vet told Flora's mum that Rosa had a serious disease that could not be cured. This made her very sad. When she got home, Flora was waiting to be told what was wrong.

"Mum, what did the dog doctor say? Is Rosa sick?" Flora asked.

"Yes Flo, the vet said that Rosa is very sick..." Flora's mother tried to explain

"...but will she be okay? We will give her medicine and she will be healed..." Flora

interrupted.

"No baby, I'm sorry but Rosa cannot be healed. Her disease is very serious," her mother continued to explain.

"Is... she going to...to...to die?" Flora asked crying.

"I'm really sorry baby. But don't worry, Rosa is going to be in a better place with God.

She will be able to play again without pain. She will even watch you from up there," her mother tried to comfort her.

"So she will be happy again when she goes to God?" Flora asked.

"Yes baby, Rosa will be

okay," her mum added.

After a few weeks, Rosa died which made Flora very sad. She cried so much that her head hurt. She did not eat for two days. Flora did not want to play. She missed Rosa so much. Her mother told her that Rosa was with God and that she was fine. This made flora somehow happy.

Days later, Flora started to play again. She was happy that Rosa was happy with God in heaven. Every night before sleeping, she would pray to God and ask Him to take good care of Rosa because they were best friends.



WHEN I GROW UP

TEMANI NKALOLANG
BOTSWANA



In a copper-nickel mining town, where black smoke from the mines greeted the mornings and the blast of dynamites shook the town to sleep every evening, Ujeura stayed with his grandmother.

Uje's mum was never around, she stayed at Jubilee Mental Hospital and people treated him differently because of that. They whispered, some pitied him but others said it to his face, that he is the son of a 'mad' woman and they stopped their kids from playing with him. Although this always sent him home in tears, he never allowed his grandmother to see him cry because she was already worried about his mum.

But at school when other students said bad things about his mother or sang 'mad Jeta, mad Jeta' when he passed by, he punched

their faces. As a result, he was always at the principal's office being punished for hitting other students. Uje couldn't understand why he was called a bully and not those students who sang 'mad Jeta, mad Jeta' when they saw him. This made him hate school and he performed poorly in school work.

One day, the teacher gave them homework to write a composition about what they wanted to be when they grow up. A boy seated behind him whispered loud enough for Uje to hear, that he is the reason his mother stayed at Jubilee. Uje wanted to punch him, but what he said scared him so much because he wondered if it was really true that it was his fault his mother was sick.

Uje could not ask his granny whether he was the reason

for his mother's sickness because she never really told him what was wrong with his mother except that his mother was not well but she would get better soon. So, he went to his aunt who worked at the hospital to ask for the truth. He wondered whether he was a bad child. Was that the reason his mother never seemed to recognise him even when they visited her at Jubilee?

At the hospital, his aunt explained to him that he was not the cause of his mum's sickness and that his mother was not 'mad' but she had post-natal depression. He could not pronounce the name so she wrote it for him on a piece of paper. But what confused him was that if he was not the reason his mother was sick then how come she only became sick after he was born? He felt like a bad child who made his mother sick.



The piece of paper in his hand, he read the name again and knew then what he wanted to be when he grew up.

In class, the teacher asked some students to read their compositions to the class and Uje stood up.

"Uje? You want to read your composition?" The teacher asked surprised.

"Yes mam." He answered in a low voice.

She looked at him for a moment then said, "Ok, go ahead Uje."

The whole class started whispering and he felt embarrassed. His hands

were sweating and shaking so, he grabbed his exercise book tight so it wouldn't slip from his hands.

"Whe...when I grow up." He stammered

"When I grow up, I want to be a doctor and, and heal..." the whole class laughed at him, even the teacher looked at me with shock

"Shhh!" The teacher silenced the class

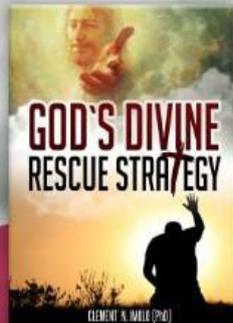
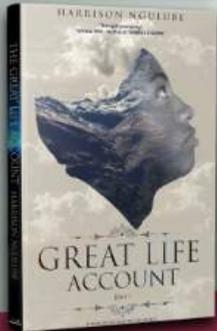
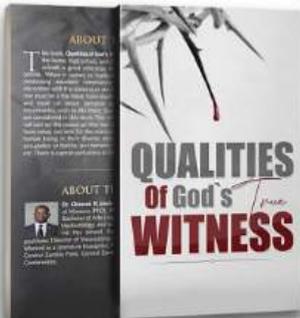
"I want to be a doctor and heal my mum, so that she will smile, play with me, take me shopping to buy new clothes, a lot of toys and cook nice food for me and granny." Uje continued

reading.

No one believed a grade C student like Uje could become a doctor but his granny believed him, so he stopped punching their faces even when they sang 'mad Jeta', instead he took his aunt's advice and thought about good things, like what he would do when he becomes a doctor. So, he would write at the back of his exercise book, in capital letters, over and over again until he felt angry no more; DOCTOR UJEURA, SON OF JETARERA.

ROSEBUD

EDITING | PROOFREADING



For more info :

 +260 978 707 875

 editingrosebud@gmail.com

 [rosebuediting](#)

 [rosebuediting](#)

MISERY

CHRISTIANA AGBONI
NIGERIA



You watch Richard drape his hand across Ajuma's shoulder, his fingertips playing with the flayed sleeve of her Ankara blouse, it's the casual way of one who is familiar with her body. He nudges you with his other hand and smiles. Your eyes tingle, like you have dust in them.

"Mary, isn't this wonderful?" Ajuma trills. She lifts her left hand again, a silver engagement ring glitters. Ajuma looks so innocent, so beautiful she practically glows. You open your mouth and twist

it into what you hope will pass for a smile.

Richard reaches out with his other hand drags you close to his side. Your heart skips, your body tightens. You listen to the beating of his heart, absorbing the warmth of his body. You have a mind not to let go, but you fight the losing battle. You stay glued to his side like you have been surgically attached.

Richard is your best friend. It does not matter that whenever he smiles, you want it to be for only you, that you spend precious time thinking of things a girl shouldn't about her best

friend. You know he does not see you as anything but his pal, one of his buddies. You are the one that introduced Ajuma to him, you get to witness the falling in love of your best friend and your girlfriend, and watch your soul grey up, sliced by pain that streaks across your inside. You should be happy, even if your heart feels like a dart board, pricked by invisible pins.

"I'm so happy for you guys." You manage to form the words from your scorched throat. You excuse yourself and go home to wallow. Alone.

THE COLOURS OF MY SKIN

KEGBU MGBE
NIGERIA



The privilege of normalcy, to be among the larger group humanity acknowledges. To be heterosexual, to be intelligent, to be pretty. My flesh will never enjoy the warmth of this light, I will forever endure the darkness, waltzing through life under the shadows. It was difficult searching for some sort of endorsement that would never come, not from my family or my non-existent friends, at least I now lived in my own skin. It was harder at first seeing

through eyes that weren't mine, expressing a love I didn't feel, learning a course that was of no interest to me. Everything changed when I found refuge in his lips. The first time I felt my own skin was when he touched it, playfully running his fingers over my arms. I rebuked myself at first; what sort of man loved another? But when I felt my skin, I became addicted to me and the wholeness that accompanied existing in my own flesh. The dark skin stranger; the man that claimed to love me and I

believed him enough to love myself, the man that held my hand as we walked down the streets to buy packs of tomatoes paste for rice that he made with too much pepper and salt, the one that bought the course transfer form for me. He was never ashamed of who he was, and I was like a baby just learning to love me. He danced with me through the darkness and showed me little rays of the light.

I attended his big church wedding, the person he vowed to in a flowing white dress rather than a silver suit like he had always claimed it would be and I watched the lips that made me feel mine be given off for eternity.



WSA-Tz
Writers Space Africa - Tanzania
Empowering Tanzanian Writers

CALL FOR

THEME:

SUBMISSIONS

THE FUTURE OF AFRICA

Of recent, there has been a number of economic, technological, political and social shifts happening globally, which in one way or the other dictate what will become of us. Narrowing it down to our continent, what do you think the future of Africa is and what does it mean to you? What does it look and feel like?

Writers Space Africa-Tanzania welcomes submissions from Tanzanian writers for her short story anthology bearing the theme-THE FUTURE OF AFRICA.

GUIDELINES:

1. Word count should range from 2000 -5000
2. Your document should be in MS Word and sent as an attachment to tanzania@writersspace.net
3. Include your name and the title of your work in the email.
4. Submissions must be in English language.
5. Submission window is from 15th March 2021 to ~~15th April 2020~~

Deadline extended to 20th May

**THIS ANTHOLOGY WILL BE LAUNCHED IN OCTOBER, 2021 DURING
THE AFRICAN WRITERS CONFERENCE**

INTERVIEW WITH MAAZA MENGISTE

BY NAMWANJA MARGARET CHIKWABI
CHIEF EDITOR

Maaza Mengiste is an Ethiopian-American author of two critically acclaimed novels, *Beneath The Lion's Gaze* (2010) which tells the story of a family struggling to survive the tumultuous years of the Ethiopian Revolution and *The Shadow King* (2019) which is set during Mussolini's 1935 attempted invasion of Ethiopia. She also edited an anthology called *Addis Ababa Noir* (2020). *The Shadow King* was shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize (United Kingdom). I sat down with Maaza to get into her creative mind and learn a thing or two about her experiences as a writer.

Welcome Maaza Mengiste! Thank you for acceding us, as Writers Space Africa Magazine, this time to converse with you.

Thank you. I'm really happy to be here.

My first question is how did you feel when you were nominated for the Booker Prize for *The Shadow King*?

I was really excited obviously, but I was really shocked to get the phone call. I had worked for so many years alone on this book that it was hard for me to imagine what would happen when it was published. I was writing and listening to my own instincts, so the idea that people were responding positively and that a group of people that were judges for this big prize responded well was a wonderful shock. It was really an honour, very grateful and you know, it happened in 2020. So, it was nice to get some good news in such a dark year.

Congratulations and yes, it was a difficult year for a lot of people the world over. You've said you wrote it over many years, how long did it take you?

From the very beginning until publication, it was nine years, almost ten years. Year by year, you lose track of how many years it's been. But, looking back, I realise how long that was. When you're in the middle of it, you're just trying to get through to the next chapter, to the next scene. So, it took a while, a lot longer than I expected when I started it.

In that time, what was happening? Where you doing your research, putting it aside, then going back to it?

I work full-time. I can't support myself as I write. So, I was working full-time, then I'd write at night and do research. On weekends, I would be writing. I travelled to Ethiopia and Italy several times using my own funds to carry out research. Sometimes, I had a fellowship that would come in handy.

It was always a balancing act between the real world and employment, and the writing and research that this work required.

I think it also speaks to the passion and determination you had about the work-saving up and doing the research when you could, that's incredible.

I was really inspired by this history and by all the stories of anti-colonial rebellion. Stories from all across the continent helped feed my motivation to write this story.

When did you first realise that you wanted to write? Do you remember?

It was not a natural thought to want to write nor was it an assumption when I was



growing up that a writer is something I could be. I had no connection with the writing world. I didn't know any writers. My parents wanted me to be a doctor or an engineer, something reasonable and dependable, something solid. So, this wasn't part of my understanding of who I could be. I was a literature major in college, but only because I liked to read, not thinking about writing. So, it took many, many years of working and eventually, I started thinking about the possibility of writing a story that was in my head. I didn't know how to do it, so I applied for summer workshops and graduate programmes and that's when I started thinking I could become a writer. It was a decade between college and that thought of possibly becoming a writer.

Tell me, what was specific about the story of The Shadow King that made you want to write it? You mentioned earlier that anti-colonial movements

in Africa inspired you.

The odds were stacked against those people who were fighting for liberation. They were working against a system that was bigger and stronger than them, and they were working against an entire philosophy. They were fighting that physically as much as they were fighting in military terms. I find it inspiring to think about the fact that we've had these liberation movements that have succeeded. In one way or another, they toppled a powerful entity. In Ethiopia, hearing stories about how other African countries had fought and that we had also fought against a colonising force was inspiring. That we ousted them when they were better equipped with bombs, tanks and artillery was even more inspiring. Logically, we should not have won and yet we did. That was really my motivation. As a little kid, it's something that was always in my mind.

That's some motivation indeed. What an important piece of literature you have put out, a proudly African story, with well-rounded characters, and one that does not dehumanise us as Africans or minimise the contributions of women.

Thank you very much.

What was the first book that made you laugh or cry or made you think differently about the world?

I think one of the very first books I read as a child that terrified me was the story of Hansel and Gretel. I was living in Kenya then, in the British education system. I was just starting to learn English and was learning to read as well. I remember reading that book and thinking, all these white people eat children! Why are they eating children? I don't want to be anywhere around them. I was terrified of Europeans after that, for a long time. It was my introduction to reading and also to how your imagination could be captured by a story and change the way you see

the world. I really thought that we were all in danger. So, I laugh at it now, but I've been moved by books since I was a child, and always felt that they were as real as anything that existed in my world.

That's amazing. Who are your literary influences now or in the past?

The novel *Our Sister Killjoy* by Ama Ata Aidoo. It changed my sense of what literature could do and reflects a particular experience. It's the story of an immigrant, Black African woman who goes to another country but is not understood and doesn't understand them either. It really resonated with me. Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter* was another influence. These writers were instrumental to me in realising that Africans have a claim to literature also. We are in books and we've been writing ourselves for a very long time and it is really good, brilliant work regardless of whether people recognise it or not. What makes this even more

inspirational for me is that it is women producing this work.

What is your ultimate dream as a writer and what does success look like to you? Is it the Nobel Prize for Literature or ten million copies sold of your works?

You know it has nothing really to do with prizes. It is the ability to continue to grow as a writer, to challenge myself in the way I write and in the way I can develop a narrative. How can I grow as a thinker and as a creative artist from book to book? In the second book, *The Shadow King*, I challenged myself to do something I had not done before with structure and voice. I wanted to see if I could really push it and not be afraid to take risks. As for the third book, I've set myself that challenge again and I count those as the successes; when I take those leaps.

You're working on your third novel right now?

It's very new, so I can't say very much about it but yes, I am working on it.

That's an exclusive for us, I do believe. Looking forward to reading it.

Thank you.

You have a schedule for it, as far as publication date?

Not yet.

Alright. That's exciting and all the best with that.

Thank you.

That actually brings me to this question. How many unpublished works do you have that are just sitting there, waiting to be completed?

I have parts of stories lying somewhere. I do have a story that I need to revise and complete. Working on The Shadow King took all my energy. So, I had ideas written down that I told myself when I'm finished with this book, I'll come back to. Slowly, I'm beginning to come back to it.

I've always wanted to know, what is the one thing you found out or you're finding out that's challenging in your writing?

What happens often in writing is that we get

frustrated with ourselves and the biggest challenge is to continue, to just keep going, to know that you're not writing for anyone but yourself. Write what you want to read and that'll help you in those moments of frustration. It happens to all of us no matter how many books you've written or how comfortable you think you are with literature. Those moments will come and the biggest challenge is to sit down and just write, even if it's one sentence.

Have you ever experienced writer's block?

I think writer's block is when you just don't put anything on paper even though you have it in your head because you feel like it's not good enough. So, you erase it before you put it down. I have learnt to just put something down on paper. Even when I don't know what I'm going to be saying, I say anything. When I look back at my writing, there's an idea even in those moments. I have to trust the process. So, I haven't had writer's block, but I've had bad

writing and that's fine. It's still writing.

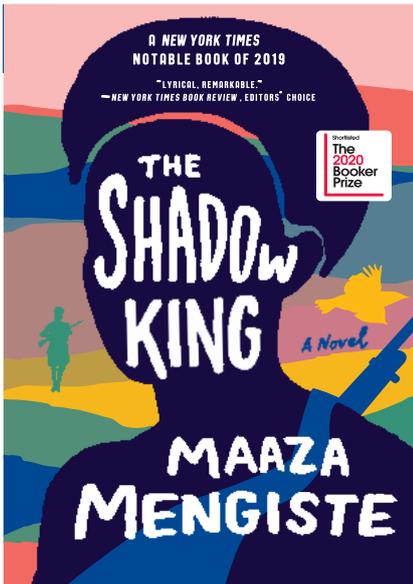
How you've explained this is really important for our writing enthusiasts who send in their works to our magazine, Writers Space Africa. It's good for them to know that no matter what and no matter how you're feeling, you still have to plod along.

Yes. Absolutely.

Have you ever considered writing under a pseudonym?

Ooh, sometimes. I think it would be so much fun! I've thought about it, like could I write a series like the Jason Bourne one. So, who knows! But, that would be an exciting project.

I can imagine it would be fun! Let me take you back to The Shadow King. What surprised you as you were working on it or once you were done and you looked back on it? Was there something you came across in your characters or your research that really



It took a lot of revisions, a lot of drawings on a board of how each scene would pan out and looking back, I was wonderfully surprised at how each step was necessary to create the final book that it became. I was surprised at that process.

That's amazing. I'm curious as to how you spend your time when you're not working or writing. I read somewhere that you're teaching at a university in New York.

I am. I teach and it takes up a lot of my time when I'm not writing. So, between that and writing and reading, that's my day literally and lockdown. We've been on lockdown for so long. I keep

in touch with friends. I like photography, I have a camera and I like to walk outside with it. I read a lot too, both as part of my work and as a hobby.

Take us through the experience of that period from the nominations for the Booker Prize to the final announcement of the winner. What did all that feel like for you, including doing interviews and getting to know your fellow nominees?

My goodness, if you can imagine! Everything was happening on Zoom. At any other time, I would have been going from one office to another for interviews. This time around, everything was happening here at my desk. In some ways, it was a strange experience, to have the world on the other side of my screen. I could see one person, but I knew hundreds were watching and listening. It made me realise how interconnected we are. I thought about all the readers that have come to this book because of technology. It was a

wonderful experience to have gone through, all the conversations and interviews I was a part of. But, Zoom can be exhausting. So, there were days when I would want to go outside and not look at my TV screen. But, when we had the Booker Prize ceremony on Zoom, it was surprising how festive it still felt, like something special and having people from everywhere watching was really wonderful.

I'm curious, what are you reading right now?

Let me hold up this book my nephew wrote and he's seven!

Oh wow! You're a family of writers!

Oh, yes. It's all about his travels and where he wants to go. He's playing football on this page here. The plot is very interesting and often surprising.

Of course! That's just wonderful, a young author! Look what you've inspired!

I tell you! I was talking to him the other day to say thank you for sending me this book and he said, "I'm done. I'm not writing another book!"

At seven, he's giving up after one book! It really must have taken a lot out of him!

He's like "I'm finished! I'm done!" He's so funny. As for me, I like reading several books at the same time.

So, I'm also reading Lemm Sissay's incredibly powerful memoir *My Name is Why*. It's a beautiful book about a young Ethiopian boy who was adopted in the UK foster system by a white family and when he was twelve, that family didn't want him anymore and they gave him back. I would recommend it to anyone. I would also recommend another book by Namibian Remy Ngamije called *The Eternal Audience of One*. A Ghanaian friend of mine Bisi Adjapon has a book coming out called *Of Women and Frogs*, and I'm reading that one too right now. I would

recommend looking at those ones.

Of Women and Frogs. That's quite an intriguing title.

Oh, yes it is.

We love readers as Writers Space Africa Magazine and so we are glad for those recommendations.

You're most welcome.

Our WSA Magazine is an international platform that showcases poetry, flash fiction, essays and articles, children's literature and short stories.

That's wonderful.

Thank you indeed. Every month, we send out calls for submission and people respond incredibly well.

That's fantastic.

Thanks. I wonder what advice would you have for writing enthusiasts who do send their works to us? A lot of them are not published yet, but they're passionate about the their art. Any word to encourage

them and for them to improve their art?

The most important part of writing is revising. It takes a while sometimes for a piece of work to be finished. So, when you have that first draft and you love it and you think that you're done with it, set it aside and come back to it in one week or two. Read it then and have somebody else read it, and then revise it.

I would say that part of the writing process is revising. That's really when the magic happens. That's really where the writing is. And also, don't be afraid of the process, just keep going.

That's really sound advice. I'd like you to talk a little bit about the importance of Africans telling our own stories as you have in your works.

Our stories have been told by other people for so long that it is absolutely important that we tell and share those stories, whether they are told through song,

dance, literature or through visual arts. To tell those narratives in your own way is significant because it is a way to rewrite history by writing in the present moment.

We can reshape how

people have talked about Africa in this way.

Well-put. You know what, I'm done with my questions!

Oh, this has been a wonderful conversation! Thankyou.

I've really enjoyed it and I'd like to just express our gratitude as Writers Space Africa Magazine for your time and engagement with us. We really appreciate it.

It's been lovely. Thank you so much and you take care.



Photo Credit- Nina Subin

A NEW YORK TIMES
NOTABLE BOOK OF 2019

"LYRICAL, REMARKABLE."
— NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, EDITORS' CHOICE

Shortlisted

The
2020
Booker
Prize

THE
SHADOW
KING

A Novel

MAAZA
MENGISTE

HESSY AND THE LOST TOOTH

HALIEO MOTANYANE
LESOTHO

Hessy was seven years old and had not lost any tooth yet. His mother said it was because he was special and had beautiful teeth. However, Hessy had one extra tooth on his lower jaw. This made his incisors five. No one else had an extra tooth in his family. So he usually bugged his father to remove that tooth.

"Why don't you like this tooth, Hessy?" his father asked him one day.

"They always make fun of me when we're playing," Hessy looked at his father with teary eyes.

His father took him and sat him on his lap.

"But you know you were born like that. We can't remove what God has given

you."

"But why did He give me something I did not inherit from you or mom or grandparents?"

Seeing that Hessy was emotional, his father embraced him.

"Oh, my son! I should have told you that I used to have that tooth, too."

"Really, Dad?" Hessy's eyes glowed with excitement and hope. "So how did you get rid of it?"

His father sighed. He had thought that Hessy would be relieved that he too once had the tooth.

"I didn't get rid of it. There came a time when the other teeth pushed until it got out. When that time comes, you

take the tooth and throw it on the roof. When you throw the tooth, you have to tell the lizard on the roof to take its ugly tooth and never return it. That way, the tooth will never grow again."

Hessy seemed satisfied and never talked about the tooth again.

One day his tooth started feeling loose. Hessy was very happy. He started practising the song of the lizard every day. However, many days passed and the tooth still hang on in his mouth. His father told him many times to leave it alone, but Hessy would keep pestering the tooth until he bled. Then he would be smouldered by his mother, who made him promise never to pester the tooth again.

One day, while playing with his friends, Hessay accidentally collided with his friend and they both fell. When he stood up, he felt a rusty taste in his mouth and spat the blood.

"Look, Hessay's tooth is out." One of the friends cried out happily.

But the tooth was nowhere to be found. The games stopped and everybody started looking for Hessay's tooth. He was determined not to go home until he found the tooth. The search extended to dusk. His friends were being called to go home one by one. When he was left all alone to continue the search; he began to cry. His father called him to come home, but he didn't answer. He

wanted his tooth. His father came to get him and found him fighting hysteric hiccups.

"What is wrong Hessay? What happened?" his father asked him.

Hessay sat down and started crying again.

"I... I have... I...lost...my tooth," he said in between the cries.

His father raised him from the ground and hugged him tightly.

"It is okay son. Don't cry," he said, patting him softly.

Hessay tried to calm down in his father's embrace.

"What is going to happen to my teeth now, Dad?" he asked in a faint voice.

"It is lost now. Even the lizard will not find it. So, it will not grow back because lizard doesn't know that it is lost. Does that make you happy?"

Hessay nodded happily and hugged his father tightly.



Halieo Motanyane is a Mosotho girl born and raised in the mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. She's a writer by passion and a filmmaker by profession. She is an independent video editor and screenwriter. She spends most free time reading and writing stories, both in Sesotho and English.

Hessay and the Lost Tooth emerged the 2nd runner up in the [2020 Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature](#)

Call for Submissions

The Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature was established in 2019 to honour the memory and legacy of Wakini Kuria who served on the Advisory board of the African Writers Development Trust and as the Chief Editor of the monthly Writers Space Africa magazine. The previous winners are Marjorie Moono Simuyuni (Zambia), Madeha Ezekial Malecela (Tanzania), Blessing Aliyu Tarfa (Nigeria) and Halieo Motanyane (Lesotho).

For the third edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize, the 1st place winner will receive a cash prize of \$150 and a certificate. The second place will receive \$100 while the third place will receive \$75. We are calling for submissions in the Children's literature genre and it is open ONLY to writers of African descent from 15th February until 1st June, 2021.

Please note that there is no theme for this call. The entry should not exceed 1,200 words and must not have been previously published anywhere including personal blogs. The entry should be sent in MS Word format only to wakiniaward@writerstrust.org. Please include your name, country, a short bio and your social media handles - if any.

If you have any questions about the award, please send an email to info@writerstrust.org.

The Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature.



ORBITING FLAMES

SUSAN GAZA
ZIMBABWE



Strolling on the margins of orbiting
flames

Helplessly with hands too short for a
hand

The petals are drying off in excess
sorrow

And tears are dripping irresistibly

Blown is the joy, sinking beyond our
reach

For the dilemma is flowing in our inner
vessels

A burden press, a source of grief
emanation

If only the flames could illuminate the
horrible night

COME TAKE ME QUICK

NICKSON O. MAGAK
KENYA



Come take me quick
From these jumbled jungle jaws
Of hypo-critic ferret in the burrow
A bestial barbarian.

I saw her quaff a hunk
Imparting intoxicating amalgam
In the candle lit galarious table
At the petunia exotic tourist hotel.

At home, she had no motherliness
For a local breed!

She fried the weed vegetable
Plucked from the un-weeded path
And served it with a turd of thumb
Ugali.

There are beds,
I spread on goatskin
A liced spurted floor.
There is a feast,
I scramble for the aftermaths-
The remnants with the pets
Under the vastry table.

Come take me quick
From this woman,
This woman, my aunty!
My uncle's wife.

BEYOND

SAMANTHA LIONESS MOLEFHE
BOTSWANA



I dream of a new age;
A new era
Where misery is not embraced.
An age of happiness
Where love reigns-

Where man understands true strength;
Where "pinning" a woman is not
"An achievement"

For misery is;
pinning down a woman "to show
strength".
Misery is robbing a little girl
"of her honour".
Misery is teaching boys
"meash ideas".
Misery is taking a life because of colour.

An age where there's no
"black nor white"
I dream of an age not full of "despair"
An era free from misery
An age of difference
An age of burst full happiness,
not busting bombs-
Love not hate.

MISERY

HUBAIDAT ISHOLA
NIGERIA

There was a period of tide,
When the vast ocean,
With its sparkling cyan,
Used to be a sheer comfort.

The waves,
As it swayed,
back and then forth,
Swooshed my current pain,
Very far away.

And it makes me, wonder -
Wonder how it all changed.
Just how this ocean of bliss
Somehow formed in me,
A dark sea of misery.

For my sailing mind,
once driven,
by the sparkling cyan,
Is no longer adrift.

Now, it drowns,
Oh no, it sinks,
like a deflated ship,
into a deep, deep sea,
of salt-drenched misery.

WOE IS ME

BISMARCK KIMBI
CAMEROON

With streaming eyes, my kith and kin
are woe,
Death and penury are bold, me they
woo,
My kindred, these vile thugs have set
ablaze,
The cattle I envy, they're better graze,
I wail, groan and whine, yet there is no
grace.

My people are trapped in an atrocious
strife
In which the men of peace pieced them
up,
Freedom fighters feed fat; they on us
thrive,
They with men in uniform will not stop,
For they make merry from this callous
strife.

Half a decade, eyes and roofs set
ablaze
Yet sycophants, their master, they raise,
For fear, hunger, girls fill towns as
whores
Some are abused or flogged for not
doing chores,
Some are lodged in town buildings
without doors.

Alas! Vultures have devoured our
granny,
They're still arguing on the corpse
guiltlessly,
The statesmen pointing accusing
fingers
At those who called themselves
freedom fighters.

Woe is me! We're ensnared in a
fratricide,
Elephants are fighting, the grasses
sobbing,
The world is silent to this genocide
The ancestors are mute in this
butchering...

SILENT CRY

RUTENDO S MATURURE
ZIMBABWE

I stepped over the line;
 And I will have to die another day.
 Submitting to the claws of a blunt razor
 Cutting pieces of myself
 In a dark corner, I moan to the pain.
 The numbing reality, not my pain,
 I suffocate in the weed, lie to my mama
 about it.
 I make love to the miracle I hope will
 save my buried soul.
 I allow the kisses from the red wine to
 embrace me,
 Till I call her home.
 Silent I let out her cry.
 Not for the people to gather;
 But for my Creator to step in and pull
 my skin up.
 Though I continue to crumble at his
 every touch,
 He guards me against the dogs that
 feel deserving to nibble on my disgust.
 I pop up bible verses in search of this
 healing and answers.
 I can't stay too long, for instead this
 book torments and directs my burning
 soul to hell.
 Each touch from these sons creates
 desires on my gripped heel
 To open my smoking chest and give a
 test to the wrath of Eve's rebellion.

I am not a metaphor;
 But the whispers of death cuddles, into
 my mind
 Leave me gasping for something salty
 and ashy.
 Like I said my silent cries are not for
 people to gather;
 May you please forgive me for the sins I
 am about to commit on my body (sighs)
 ... And the mistakes that will tuck me to
 bed and kiss my depression.

HOW TO WAKE A BUTTERFLY



Loic Ekinga

DOWNLOAD/ PURCHASE LINK FOR THE BOOK

<http://www.odysseybooks.com.au/titles/9781988311306/>

TELL IT TO MOTHER

ADETOYESE ODEKUNBI
NIGERIA

Tell it to mother
I may never be the man
she wants me to be
for I am my father's son.
I tried to be a fisherman
but bad luck followed me to the river,
I tried to be a hunter
but I can swear the hyenas
laughed at my clumsiness.

Fortune lies faraway
and I have spent all in pursuit,
all I found
was more agony and misery
I would have returned home.
but I have nothing left but her love-

Tell it to mother
I'll never be the village chief
or a wealthy farmer
I'll never be anything but her son
I hope that will be enough.

A SEARCH FOR A BETTER LIFE

SUKURAM AVI-NASH
SOUTH AFRICA

She did not choose this life,
Pregnant at 15 – a statistic of rape
Destined to raise her child, alone.
Hers was a rocky start,
Though her eyes, well with sorrow
Still, her commitment is steadfast
For a better life, she deserves.

The corner of Musgrave road, she
stands
In her hands, a handwritten placard:
Qualified with Degree - Seeking
Employment
Lights turn red, an analogy to her life
Which has stopped moving forward
Still, she detests the red-light district
Where morals trade for comfort.

Even as her 7-year-old is now in school
Even as her unwell mother needs
chemo
Even as she's wary of whoonga
addicts...
She never loses hope.

At grueling days end,
They return to their candle-lit shack, in
Mayville.
Scrambling for scraps from scattered
morsels.
All three retire body and soul on the
unforgiving concrete,
Survive. Eat. Rest. Repeat.
Different day. Same misery.

I WANT TO SMILE

CHIPO CHAMA
ZAMBIA

The storm is coming
The tides are rising
The walls of my heart are closing
My throat is drying.

The more I peddle
The more I drown
The more I breathe
The more I suffocate.

I try to look closely
I go blind
I try to listen carefully
I become deaf.

Is this the end?
Have I reached the edge?
I see no meaning
The end of the tunnel is quite different.

From the edge
Will I fly like an eagle?
If I fall and die
Will I rise like a Phoenix?

Someone, hold my hand
Pull me to the shore
Loosen the rope tightening my throat
I too want to smile again.

JOY AND PAIN FOND

BOL DENG
SOUTH SUDAN

I know there will be no time
When I will forever wipe away my tears,
Precedes of my worst fears
To stop crying-It is still early
Or perhaps, the pain's so haily
Hails that rain down my heart
Threatening to break it apart
I know there will be no time
I will forever wipe away my tears
But I know I will be happy once in a
while
And cry so many times in a short while
Like a knot in a knot.
Joy and pain will tangle
Agony will shoot
Joy will trot
I wear both like a bangle,
So today, I embrace the beauty of this
pain
And unlearn to gain
From this misery forest
And pain stymied redemption jungle,
And seek where to just rest
Before my mind gets fungal
For one can't hide or run in a fond
Where pain and joy bond.

DEVOURER

MASEGO OLEFILE
BOTSWANA

Misery takes and blames fate.

Like a swelling sea of sadness
Heaving with waves of distress
She drags you into utter madness,

Your peace, seven days a week
She feeds on, till you're weak
Hope in your heart starts to leak...

A trickle, a trickle till you're dry.
Hallucinating like you're high
You bid your dear life goodbye?

Take a stand and fight harder.
Grab her heart, pull till you feel her
shudder
Killing misery is no murder.

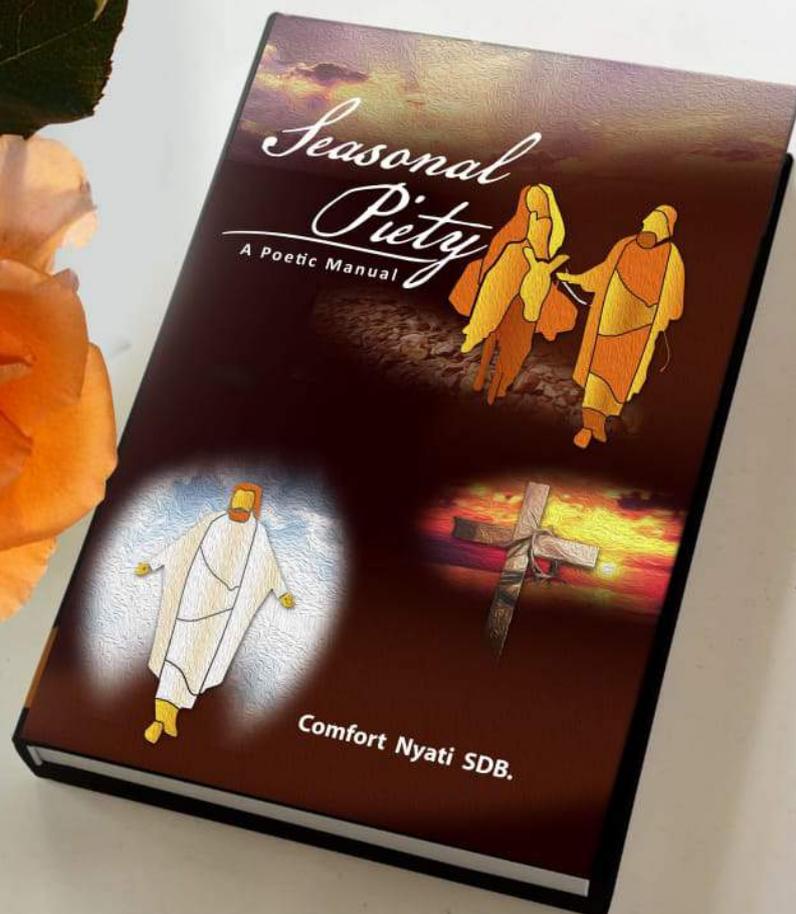
Brace yourself for the fight will be long
Give misery no place to belong.

MISERY

PATRICIA TRISHA EJANG
UGANDA

Like a shadow;
Not one that brings cool breeze
But one like a plague,
Bringing shiver to the spine
Congestion to the heart,
Tears to the eyes
Death to the soul.

It quashes water and life,
A relentless fire
Consuming all and some more,
Leaving in its wake
Stones and ashes.
Death and a coldness,
Misery.



SEASONAL PIETY

BY COMFORT NYATI SDB

for more info.

Email: nyaticuea@gmail.com

WhatsApp: +254712753742

GENRE: SHORT STORY

TITLE: IN MY NAME LIES THE ANSWERS

WRITER: PEARL MOKGATLANE, BOTSWANA

REVIEWER: YOLANDA KUEI P. MACUEI, SOUTH SUDAN

■ ■ They say a good name is better than riches." In most African societies, a naming ceremony is a cultural ritual held in honor of and for generational values of true identity; according to distinct origins and ethnicity. That's to say, living up to the standards of our names could lead us to extraordinary directions in life but without proper guidance to embrace a name, can either make you or destroy you.

"They say we belong. They say we have freedom, yet we are continually chastised by the limitations of boundaries."

In my Name Lies the Answers speaks of a girl who from childhood had to deal with identity crisis and low self-esteem in the part of the country where her complexion made her inferior amongst her peers. She then resulted to solitude to avoid the stigma she was subjected to whenever she sought for closure. Little did she know it was a path to her breakthrough to victory.

Uatara, in her quest to sublime into the societal recognised traits of beauty, stood unperturbed by the conundrums she faced. Rising up to the tower of glory, she channeled her energy into pursuance of academic excellence. In most obvious scenarios, people succumb to these influences and cause an alteration in their identity. They end going through stress of surgeries and suppressing their skin to harsh conditions just to be accepted into society's standards.

Life couldn't last being unfair as she gifted her with a man, who valued her for who she was and made her comfortable in her discomfort. Such soothing to her soul outweighed the stigma she was brought up with. She couldn't be more thankful with her job of saving lives and a beloved partner. Indeed she was victorious. She conquered her flaws, societal stigma. Not with armors and spears but with undisturbed academic excellence and unpriced virtues.

With imagery and symbolism as stylistic devices, the persona has vividly portrayed the African setting thus revealing the main themes of Culture, Love and Victory throughout her life journey of Rural-Urban migration, in line of growth. "They say if you know where you're coming from, you will know where you're going and you will not get lost in return; who you are, what you are and where you're from is all answered by a name. Thus, "In My Name Lies The Answers."

GENRE: ARTICLE

TITLE: WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN?

WRITER: OJO-IBUKUN TIM, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: JOSEPH ODURO, GHANA

Man's insatiable thirst for wealth has sieved the goodness gifted us by the present. In this frame rests the author's argument, which refers to the famous biblical quote by Jesus in the Holy Bible (i.e., what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?) With no intent of buttressing the essence of the present with the "rhetorical question," he seeks to refer to the brevity of man's soul and how we are oblivious or unconscious of this truth in our course to achieve wealth and victory.

Meanwhile, the act of risking one's life in pursuit of victory could be traced to the very nature of the stakeholders of socialization. These sects are wired with a radical sense of making wealth which subjects all other values to inferiority. Such saturation of life purpose with the acquisition of wealth and victory by any other means possible impedes the growth of human relations and living the present to its acme.

The search for victory and wealth has given birth to a partitioned society, and has created a viable society for the growth of self-centeredness and individualism. This reminds me of the fascist Nazis who saw themselves superior to all other countries and those who failed to submit to their beliefs. The former Soviet Union holding communitarian beliefs in high-esteem led to the loss of lives of millions. The segregationist and racists Southerners of the United States deemed it right to preserve cultural ideals and identity to perpetuate the execution of blacks who dwell on their lands. Thus how far we have grown partitioned as a society giving much repute to race and other bigotry values whereas the larger human society is disregarded.

It behooves on us as individuals and as society at large, to review our perceptions of victory and to understand, that the end does not justify the means; in the same vein, our pursuit for wealth should not alter our human relations.

GENRE: FLASH FICTION

TITLE: THE WIN WITH A PRICE

WRITER: MARYCYNTHIA CHINWE OKAFOR, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: MARJORIE MOONO SIMUYUNI, ZAMBIA

The Win with a Price, just like its title is a tale of competition. The contest is between two football teams, which eventually entails a contest between father and son.

One team hires Kaluana, a sorcerer, to gather odds of victory in their favour, and on realising this, the other team hires his father, another sorcerer, Eleanya.

Here we find that blood is thicker than water, and therefore the competition between father and son becomes of more importance than that of the teams. Will they go against each other? Eleanya dares his son to drop the challenge, citing that an Ikuku, a strong wind will carry him, marking his end. To Kaluana, it's a laughing matter because the offer is too handsome to be passed on. That means father and son actually go head on.

Kaluana's team carries the day, and celebrates their victory. That, however was far from being the end of the story. The father-son rivalry still stood, and true to his word, Eleanya saw to it that Kaluana pays for his defiance.

Questions that linger are; is Eleanya victorious for getting rid of his son? Was Kaluana victorious by defying his father? Is it still victory if for it we have to harm our family? Footballing ought to be a talent, but are those who win through sorcery also worthy of being celebrated? Maybe or maybe not. But Okafor, through her well-thought out flash fiction, suggests that some victories are not worth it!

GENRE: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

TITLE: AMAGA AND THE FOOTBALL MATCH

WRITER: PATRICIA PEACE EJANG, UGANDA

REVIEWER: FUNMI RICHARDS, NIGERIA

A maga and the football match tells a story of a young boy who is smart, playful and in some ways troublesome. It is written in a quest narrative form that teaches children the values of hardwork and discipline.

Amaga young, as any other playful and lively child plays pranks on peers and falls into a lot of mischief. Of course this leads to him being "excommunicated" from his peers because their parents don't want his influence on their children.

However, the tides change when his future is foreshadowed through his dream. In my view, this is where the story really begins.

Didactic lessons flow from here and we see how with a focus in mind — being the best football player in the world, he is able to turn a new leaf, challenge himself to be more responsible and go on to receiving prizes from the village chief at the end.

Funnily enough, the narrative technique employed in the story reminds me of Hua Mulan, the legendary folk heroine's story that's been adapted into the Mulan animation and film. It especially reminds me of the soundtrack in the movie "I'll make a man out of you".

Amaga's story like Mulan's is a story that can be told to one young generation and another under the moonlight, just before bedtime, in classes or wherever. It's a simple story that reminds children that success is first in their mind before anything else and once they make the choice. They can throw in determination and wise counsel which is what Ocuku's place in the story symbolises, then, they can take action to achieve their dreams.

The pitfall here is that not all dreams come through, and while this is beautiful, innocent and hopeful, it does pose the question of what Amaga would have done if his dream hadn't come true?



Call for Submissions

Since 2018, Writers Space Africa in partnership with the African Writers Development Trust, has held the annual African Writers Awards as the highpoint of the African Writers Conference. Previous winners include Manu Herbstein (Ghana), Andrea B Matambo (Zambia), Priscillar Matara (Botswana), Asoloko Gloria Akayi (Nigeria), and Benson Mugo (Kenya).

For 2021, we are delighted to announce a call for submission for the African Writers Awards under the theme:

THE FUTURE OF AFRICA.

This is open from **1st February until 31st May**.

We accept submissions to the following categories:

- Poetry (Structured or unstructured)
- Creative Non-Fiction (1,500 words maximum)
- Drama (6 acts maximum)

A cash prize of **\$100** will be awarded to each winner along with a certificate.

For more information, and to submit your entry, please visit -

<https://www.africanwritersconference.com/awards/>.

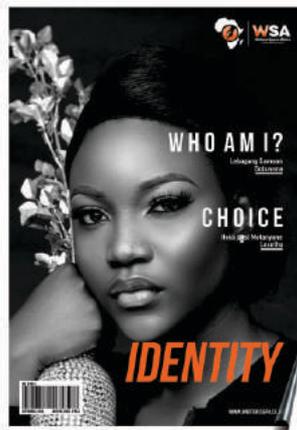
Please direct all concerns to

info@africanwritersconference.com.





Advertise your Brand in our **monthly Magazine**



Send a mail to wsa@writersspace.net to get your
Ads Featured in our next publication



A perfect blend of **CREATIVITY** and **FIERCENESS!**

Meet the Tiny Giants

Follow us on social media

  thetinycreatives  tinycreatives_

 +234 915 344 9637  Infotinycreatives@gmail.com