



WSA
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Magazine

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SCHOLAR AKINYI
THE QUEEN OF
FLASH FICTION

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Call for Submissions!



WSA Magazine is calling for Submissions for its 74th edition (February 2023). We accept the following:

- Children's Literature • Creative Non-Fiction
- Flash Fiction • Poetry • Short Stories

Theme:

The kiss of Loneliness

Submission
Closes

15/12/2022

To Submit, Please Visit:
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From the Founder's Desk

Anthony Onugba (PenBoss)

...friendship is a relationship which must be nurtured for it to grow.

It is believed that friendships are of different types; friendship of pleasure, friendship of utility, and friendship of virtue. Categorising friendship is used as a tool to explain human behaviour and, in most cases, gives reasons why certain levels of trust and intimacy should not be expected from some types of friendships. This is excusable in modern times especially as people tend to live by definitions and codes of ethics. However, what this does to us is that it forms a psychological barrier which restricts us from truly enjoying the pleasures of friendships and in turn being good friends.

The year is coming to a close and as usual with every end of the year, people celebrate with their friends and loved ones. People recount the journeys, struggles, and sufferings that they may have undergone. They also recount the joys, and lasting good memories. Who would you rather recount and share your moments with if not friends? The striking thing is that friendship is not restricted to strangers. Parents can be friends with their kids and siblings can be friends just as they can be enemies. In all, we must seek not just true friendship but we must be ready to become and remain true friends.

Finally, one thing to note is that friendship is a relationship which must be nurtured for it to grow. This festive season provides an opportunity for you to nurture your friendship(s). You can send gifts to all your friends as a way of appreciation. If you are on a low budget then you can send this magazine to them as a gift. Whatever you plan to do, just ensure it is impactful and it shows that you truly value your friends just as we value you the readers.

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year.





Chief Editor

Comfort Nyati, SDB
Zimbabwe

Dear Reader,

Standing at the tip of the year, we peel the treasures of time. The compendium of the year is being swallowed into the womb of history. I believe it has been an experiential and sensational year, especially for us who survived it. Defined by tragedy and victory, the future, with fortitude we face. The year, as it culminates the fortunes of time, we smell the aroma of the festive season. A time to re-commit ourselves to the duties of friendship, be it with our families, friends or neighbours. Despite all that has come our way, I believe the year strived to be friendly to us.

As we flip through the pages of ancient scholars, what lies central is their recourse to the well-being of humanity. According to Aristotle, "Human beings are social animals." This statement thrives to illustrate that it is part of human nature to co-exist. People, thus, do their best to create a network of

companionship with others. Although some may find pleasure in solitude. Ultimately, human interaction is an essential premise to humanity; nevertheless, healthy friendships are important to the happiness of anyone. To live life without the experience of friendship is to live a life without living it. It is to deny one's self the window of life.

In this December edition, our esteemed authors will educate us on many issues that resonate with the subject of friendship. Among the vital facts is that friendship is the vehicle that nurtures the welfare of humanity. Common to many are the questions which we tend to pose like; why should I invest my time and energy in a friend rather than in myself? The truth is that it takes goodwill to expose a friendly disposition, especially to strangers because of the fear that they will think of you as too weak and take advantage of you. On the contrary, it is not all about suppressing

our relational abilities, but rather, creating a friendly-networked world.

Our lives would be significantly incomplete if friendship was relegated to the level of insignificance. Our very own cultural practices find their tributaries in the experiences we share with our friends. To culminate this, I would say the culture of friendship is a glove of other cultures. Life becomes more rewarding when one can evaluate one's own life through friends, in which one's friend acts as a mirror of one's self.

Additionally, the WSA Magazine Editorial Team is delighted to conclude this year celebrating the value of friendship while recognizing the literary consistency exhibited by our cherished writers and readers of the magazine.

Dear reader, remember to peruse the last slides of 2022 with a pace of gratitude. As we navigate towards a new beginning, I stand on the pillars of hope, hoping that our dreams, plans and aspirations materialised in this about-to-expire year.

Remember, Twaweza!!!



Children's Literature



How Dog Became Man's Loyal Friend

Thandiwe Chibale, Zambia

A long time ago when all the animals could sing, talk, and dance like man, there lived a Man and his family, and their neighbours were Dog and his family.

Alas, Man and Dog were sworn enemies. They fought running battles every day, much to the dismay of other animals. Their wives argued whenever they met. And their children teased and threw stones and sticks at each other. Their daily noise disturbed other animals who wished they could get along.

One day, Dog went outside his cave and noticed that the rain had not come early



that season, it was hot and dry. His children and wife were hungry. Dog decided to go and hunt. He walked around for days, but could not find any food for his family. He was tired and had lost all his strength, but he kept walking until he came across a river. He bends to drink water, but as he drank his fill, he suddenly fell into the river, and it carried Dog away.

When Dog was finally able to find dry land, he was cold and weak. He wished for a warm place to lay his head. He spotted a fire and walked towards it. He noticed the fire was tended by Man, who sat with his spear in his hand and his head facing the ground sadly. When Man saw Dog, he quickly stood up and drew his spear.

“Please, man.” Dog said his voice faint with weakness, “I only need warmth please help me.”

Man looked at Dog with suspicion and said, “You may lay down at the fire if you promise not to eat me.”

“I promise not to eat you,” Dog said and laid down at the fire as Man tended to it.

“I have fire, but I have no food.” Man said sadly, “My family is hungry, I have searched for food, but I have not been fortunate.”

“You have been kind to me man, I will help you look for food. I am warm now. I can use my nose and my ears to search for food.” Dog said and smiled at Man.

Dog helped Man find food for his family

and found food for his own family as well. Man was grateful for the help of Dog and Dog was grateful that Man had helped him. From that moment on, Dog became loyal to Man for saving him and Man became Dog’s best friend.

Their families vowed to always help each other and since then Man and Dog have remained good friends.





Nana to the Rescue

Pelekani Lwenje, Zambia



It was pitch dark outside, except for the occasional firefly and car lights in the distance, and Ntombi was all alone. The cold breeze gave her chills, but she did not care. Anything was better than staying home and watching her angry father beat her mother. Why did mommy let it happen? Why couldn't she fight back? All these thoughts raced in her mind as she stared at the creepy-looking trees that surrounded her. Their branches looked like long hands that threatened to grab her. She was so scared. Scared and alone.

Her father was not a bad man, but every time he drank beer another man took over his body. Ntombi believed that they were two people fighting for her father's body. She may have been twelve years old but even she knew what beer could do to people. Every night she would pray for the bad man to leave her father's body. It seemed God took too long to hear her. She also prayed for a friend. One day her prayers were answered when her mother brought Nana to the house. Nana was the most beautiful dog.



Ntombi wondered where her dog was. Nana would never abandon her. She was a good dog. A loyal dog. She looked around her, and for the first time, she realized that she was lost. Where am I? Is that growling I hear? I'm so scared. Where are you Nana? Her thoughts were forcing her to panic. She had to be brave, but it was not easy. Nana was her truest friend and she really needed her friend right about now. The growling she heard came closer. Ntombi could not see where the growling was coming from. It was so dark that the growling felt like the darkness itself was the one that threatened her. She was not alone and this frightened her even more.

A big black dog came out of the shadow of night. It was snarling at her. Saliva drooling from its mouth. Its face was so mean and angry that Ntombi cried out in fear. This dog looked like it was ready to attack her. She was so scared that she dropped to her knees and hugged her body. She closed her eyes and began to pray. Pray for the monster to go away. God please help me! She prayed. Her voice was really loud in her thoughts. Then a miracle happened. She heard the sounds of familiar barking and growling. It was Nana! Nana had come.

Ntombi opened her eyes and saw her best friend. Nana had grown from the time she had first come. Ntombi remembered what her mother had told her a few years ago. She had told her that if Nana had been fed

well and cared for properly she would one day return that kindness. Ntombi was so happy to see her best friend. The big mean dog looked very surprised. Ntombi thought it reminded her of her father. She hugged Nana as the dog came by her side.

Nana barked and growled really loud. The big dog began to move backwards really slowly. Then the sounds of footsteps followed. People were coming. Ntombi heard the voice of her mother calling her name. Nana too barked in appreciation. The big dog had run away into the darkness of the night. Ntombi was soon surrounded by her mother and several people who had come to help. She was so happy that she wrapped her arms around Nana and hugged the dog tightly.

As the days went on peace returned to the house. Her father had been arrested, and even though Ntombi felt relieved by this she was also sad. She could see that her mother felt the same. Ntombi decided to make the effort to cheer her mother up. She would always be there for her mother. Nana was the big hero. Ntombi was never going to forget how brave her friend had been. Her friend saved her. Her friend also saved her mother. It was Nana who had scared her drunk father away. Nana is her best friend in the whole wide world. Nana who's friendship meant more than anything.





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Creative Non-Fiction

Friends Don't Stay

by
Fridah Baariu
(Kenya)

I got into a fight with my friend once. I remember pushing her into a poodle along the sparse non-tarmacked driveway which led directly to the iron sheet gated entrance of our plot. We were outside playing, hoping the rain would not fall. I stood just across the poodle at a dry spot and watched her try to get up, angry and crying.



My first close friend was a caramel-skinned, quiet girl. They were our neighbours, separated by a “ng’ombe” fence, rusted iron sheets and a feeble, tall lemon tree which never bore fruits. Her father was a tall, big-

eyed man who rarely met eye-to-eye with people. I don’t remember his voice. Even though he had a big stature, it was quite difficult to catch him speaking. He walked around in a greasy faded blue apron the



colour of a lake. He worked at a garage in town; fixing cars was his passion. Her mother was the complimentary opposite, a loud woman, a fruit vendor and a stern disciplinarian. She had small eyes that reflected what you felt while looking at them. She was also one of my mum's friends; one of the many we picked along the way by virtue of being neighbours.

I got into a fight with my friend once. I remember pushing her into a poodle along the sparse non-tarmacked driveway which led directly to the iron sheet gated entrance of our plot. We were outside playing, hoping the rain would not fall. I stood just across the poodle at a dry spot and watched her try to get up, angry and crying. Her clothes were soaked in muddy water and maybe the thought of her mother scolding her made her angrier. Try as I would, I can't remember why we fought but it was the start of a friendship punctuated by a lot of poodles that would eventually wash away our bond.

We became friends quickly as we started school together. She was the bubbly one. The one who smiled and fit into groups. The one who could speak for herself, be cheeky and still get away with her mischief. I was the quiet, almost weird kid who never got to even join a girls' group. Class four was our last school year together. I still recall that closing day, which would also be the last time I saw most of my classmates. I

was only learning the art of saying goodbye. In our giddy moods, congratulating and wishing each other a merry Christmas, we should have known that we would become strangers years later. I was excited to leave for boarding school after the new year. There, I nurtured friendships; some were fickle, ending in outbursts and silence, yet others continued to date.

My childhood best friend and I grew apart. It was inevitable. We saw and talked a little with each other awkwardly. Time passed quickly to after our fourth form, eight years in, and we had become shreds of our pasts. We no longer shared a fence. They had already moved to a new home on the other side of town, in the suburbs dressed in greenery and enclosed mansions whose gate you'd peep through to gape at the expansive grounds. We met often though. It was always an eventuality that we'd never avoid in such a small town.

She was now working at a cyber cafe, clipping papers, photocopying, helping old folks keep up with simple technology and doing what cyber people do. Those eyes. A chipped upper jaw incisor. Neck-length, soot-black, blow-dried hair. Two piercings on each ear. A nose ring. Low hellos. Exchange of pretentious pleasantries with ten years' worth of changes. There wasn't much we could talk about anyway. She didn't ask me if I was done with university or my course. I didn't ask her if she was at-



tending one too. We didn't ask each other about our dreams, whether either of us achieved any, whether we were happy with how life had happened so fast to us and if we even missed our friendship. Ten years was a long time to look back on the details that slipped away at a cyber counter. The last time we said happy birthday. The last time we had a good laugh. The last time we shared a snack. The last time she visited my home. The last time I saw her off and the last time we said goodbye albeit unknowingly.

She was also heavy with child, one whom I remembered as a child too; adulthood, time and the impossibility of something everlasting. I got other friends along the way. Overnight friends and overnight strangers again. I remember their birthdays, their laughs, their cries; I remember how sad they got and the expressions of disdain, joy, exhaustion, and childhood oblivion. "Do you remember how close we were?" "Sure." "What happened?" "The cliché." "Life happened." All through social media looking up old friends. Anniversaries of love, parenting, achievements and life and all that has happened without me. Life moved on. Schism. Dancing and gyrating with people in clubs, drinking glasses of cheap liquor, humming to songs, outbursts of emotions, confessions, exchange of secrets, silent stares, innocent touches, sips, hysteria, drunkenness, a myriad of neon lights, blurriness and heavy sleep.

Prayers, combined grief, late night calls, anxiety, malls and pizza, click-click of cameras, friendship albums, exchanged music, cheerleaders. Friends. Close friends. Random chats, slow chats, once-a-day chats, scattered calls, little hangouts, less time, world problems, big issues, cancelled dates, postponed meetups, rushed goodbyes, forgotten birthday wishes, late congratulations, solo panic attacks, new people, new places, growing distances and extensive boundaries. Faded friendships. One year, job offers, promotions, bigger apartments, a title deed, a house, loss of love, silent sobs, loneliness, large space, irreversible choices, a new city, a different career, burning passion, love and lovers, a chain of heartbreaks; two years, booze, midnight cigarettes, homesickness, longing for snippets of the past and a once-was friendship. Forever. The past. Life moves on. Friends don't stay.





Lost to Life

by
**Autricia Njang
Timti,
(Cameroon)**

...we talked about our first loves and the boys we crushed on. I remember how we cried on each other's shoulders anytime we were heartbroken and funny enough, we still do that, eight years after.



I remember that Tuesday you solemnly made your way into Pedagogic block 7 of the University of Bamenda and my life. You were late for Mr Tiambou's class. Your green gown swept the floor as you timidly walked into the hall, scanning front and back for an empty seat, astonishment and confusion etched on your face. Won-



dering where life had landed you and how you were to cope in this place which had nothing similar to anything you had experienced before. You hesitantly took a seat by me. It meant nothing to me at that moment, except maybe that I noticed you spoke French as I did.

I remember the day we decided to move into the same dormitory. We did this to split expenses for rent and lighten the burden on our parents. Mine had asked me a hundred times where I knew you from and had warned me against the dangers of living with an atoum – that’s what they called strangers. I laugh today at how daring I was and how we playfully arrived at that decision. I can still hear the voice of our landlady telling my dad, “Do not worry, they are kids. They will be okay.”

And for sure, we were okay. We saw the fun in experiencing the world together. The moments we spent between classes, studying, clubbing, getting drunk, and exploring remain engraved on every part of my mind. Like a source of living water, I dig deep into them every time I feel drained and overwhelmed by the burdens of life.

Under the tree which stood opposite the school football field, we talked about our first loves and the boys we crushed on. I remember how we cried on each other’s shoulders anytime we were heartbroken and funny enough, we still do that, eight years after. We foresaw ourselves, as independent, working our dream jobs, married

to the love of our lives, and mothers of amazing kids. It always felt good to dream together.

It’s been five years today since we graduated, packed our luggage, and carried our fears for the future to face new paths. The memories still lay there in the small village of Bambili. I wonder if whoever occupied our room after us felt the strong bond we shared there. If the echo of our gossip and laughter resounds to them. I revisit these memories every time.

I remember how scared we were to face life alone from there on. We had become part of each other’s life. We would catch up through long phone calls and messages, filling up one another on everything we thought the other had missed. I even wrote this poem to signify my distress.

*I gazed around with intimidation
They all looked as if on me they will sprawl
I caught her stare, she smiled at me!*

*My heart was in pain
Her shoulders a haven of comfort
She smiled at me; my grief taken away.*

*I felt drained by the pain of life
No hand on which to cling,
She smiled at me; I found the joy of love.*

*My memory beholds your sweetness
Anytime I look at the sun, I will smile
Because I see the glow of your eyes.*





*As you feel the breath of the wind,
Know my hands travel to you,
Oh, my friend, clinging to my heart for eternity.*

With the complexities of adulthood, it sometimes becomes difficult to keep in touch and keep the bond. As the years go by, our age mates are getting married, having children, bush falling, and realizing their dreams, while others are dying. It is overwhelming to think about the things

unaccomplished, the pressure of age and society, and battling daily to stay afloat. Years drift and we realize we spend more time chasing the win, forgetting to live life carefreely as we did back in the university.

I love the moments you unexpectedly popped up at my door or office after covering miles. How I joyfully ran into your arms, to the amazement of passersby and how we jumped and laughed as we did back in the day when we walked down the streets of Bambili after a tedious school day.



Time might have elapsed, but nothing has changed. We are still the little girls with bigger dreams and responsibilities. Through these hurdles, I have the courage to battle because we hold the light for each other. The journey is easier with you by my side.

We are far from realizing all we had envisaged for ourselves. We lose track, are defeated, depressed, and still fighting to make ends meet to gain our so cherished independence. We aren't married, have no kids, we don't even know what a dream job looks like, and the heartbreaks keep accumulating. We cry and laugh when we think about this, but we keep hoping for a beautiful tomorrow because we have one another to hang on to.

I have pictures and videos of those beautiful years piled up on my computer. You know, the computer Uncle CY gifted me back then in school. Our companion on lonely days. I am finding a way to move them to my drive, so I can access them at any time. I dream of showing these pictures to my kids and telling them about the adventures of the girls who defied life.

My colleagues know everything about you even though they have never met you. They see how my eyes brighten up when I talk about you. Every day, we make new encounters, and sometimes I am jealous and scared you'll find someone more exciting than me. I know the bond we share can't be equalized. Your place in my heart is ir-

replaceable.

Life is such a mystery and trying to figure out why things happen the way they do is one of my fortes. People say I am too deep, always linking life to a stage play with fate as stage director, steadily moving its pawns. The goal at the end of the day is not who acts better, but the magic of things happening as they should. Every single day is worth telling the story of my journey with you. A story of laughter and cries, where I believe fate had a great role to play.

Sometimes I think about the days we will be old, if life permits us, and foresee ourselves seated on the patio with our grandchildren playing around us. I know you'll be naughty enough to drink alcohol and smoke a club even if the doctors tell you otherwise, and I will probably do the same because what is a rule if it's not broken by two? We will sit there, watching the sunset, letting silence inundate us while meditating upon the beautiful gift life offered us on that fateful day you entered Pedagogic block 7 of the University of Bamenda.



My Life

Gem

by
Ebere Nnabuike
(Nigeria)

The outcome of the admission lists took her to School of Nursing at Abuja while I got into the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in Enugu state. It was through one of our phone conversations that she introduced me to websites like Medium, Quora, and Wattpad and helped me to create my accounts.



Everyone has their fears. Fear could cripple your mental nerves until you gasp for freedom. Growing up, my biggest fear was peer pressure. I had learned some of the good side and bad sides of it, but it was the negative impacts of peer pressure that stuck with me. There were street tales of boys

who were lured into drug abuse, smoking and drinking. There were those who went mad or died as a result of drug overdoses. Girls who dressed indecently were raped or died of abortions or dropped out of school due to their desire to belong with their peers. It was scary. I wanted to be the good



child, then the perfect girl when I grew up, even though the Bible teaches that no one is perfect. To make no mistakes nor have any regrets. It was so terrifying. My brain told me that in order to avoid any form of peer pressure, I should be on my own and avoid bad friends. It was a struggle to tell which friend was good, and which one was bad at first encounter. And I didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings by cutting off an association. Hence, I drastically erased friendship from my mind.

Life began to feel lonely and unsatisfying during my first year as a young adult. The desire to feel a close connection to someone else other than my family became a hole in my chest. I tried to have an open mind towards making friends, and that was the point we met each other. I was an avid reader and an introvert, but a great conversationalist during book club meetings at school. That was where, and how I met Chidimma. My favourite lines of the song, *Like You*, by Tatiana Manaois which I would never forget, are:

"People will find you, but they won't define you.

And you will find people, who help redesign you."

Those lines define what friendship is all about, and summed up my experiences with Chidimma. We were two months apart by age and from Christian homes. We both did very well in academics. She was dark

in complexion, and tall, while I was her total opposite. We shared similar hobbies of reading books, telling stories and traveling. While I was afraid of peer pressure, she feared pretenders. Our closeness grew from being book club members, book exchange mates, library mates and then to bosom friends.

Being Chidimma's friend made up some part of my best life memories. I became the best version of myself within the last one and half-year we shared as secondary school students. She helped me channel my storytelling passion towards story writing through the essay assignments we did at school. Academically, we competed with each other for outstanding grades by individually working on our assessments and then comparing our answers or solutions to each other's work, and that was something I couldn't have enjoyed if not for her. The yearly goal of reading twenty books extended to thirty books, in different genres. I always remember how we argued over the plot of the book *"Faceless"* by Amma Darko, especially the market scenes, and then our shared pity on Fofu's sufferings as a teenager. We also exchanged novels like *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of A Yellow Sun*, *Things Fall Apart*, *The Kidnapper Priest*, *Impregnated by a Fellow Woman*, *Sun of the Soil* etc. My hidden argumentative skills were awakened through our discussions and arguments.

The very first time I opened a Facebook ac-



count was so as to remain in contact and keep our book discussions going during school vacations. You could never count me among the group of students who ironed their uniform daily because I misunderstood it as showing off and being proud since our classmates made a big deal out of it. And for me, anything my peers made a big deal of could lead to peer pressure and should be avoided. Chidimma simply told me that she ironed her uniform so as to look smart which gave her more confidence. Her ideas made me adopt the importance of good grooming. I attended my first youth seminar with her at the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus. It was an all-girls event organized by UNEC Nursing Students, which Chidimma heard about from her sister in another school and then extended the invitation to me.

After we passed out of Secondary School, I went for Computer training lessons with Chidimma as we waited for the tertiary institutions' admission lists. The outcome of the admission lists took her to School of Nursing at Abuja while I got into the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in Enugu state. It was through one of our phone conversations that she introduced me to websites like Medium, Quora, and Wattpad and helped me to create my accounts. Watching my recommended Indian-Hindi movie; *3 Idiots*; analyzing the relationship between Farhan, Raju and Rancho; then reviewing its educative and socialization lessons for

students and friends has remained an annual routine. That movie and *Akeela and the Bee* birthed our curiosity to learn new dictionary words. Sometimes, I wondered if I brought out Chidimma's better side as much as she helped me to grow into who I am today. She would always insist that I gave a new look towards trusting people and not being judgmental. We have learned to associate with other people without letting ourselves get drowned in unnecessary pressure or fake lifestyles along the way.

Her influence was so subtle and good that I could never count the number of times I was out of my comfort zone, doing things I enjoyed but wouldn't have tried. Things that have positively changed my personality and beliefs. These days, we have more physical distance between us, with life happenings and other priorities. But we have occasional WhatsApp video calls through which we fill each other in on our recent goals, achievements and challenges. I believe that we should share and hear as many good stories of friendship and family lifestyles just as we should the bad ones. I also believe that some peer pressures are enzymes to our growth.

Living is a risky unpredictable journey. Getting to know someone can be terrifying. But risk and pain become life's guides, if we have someone who holds our hands to cross them all in genuine friendship.



How Friendship Saved me from Seclusion

by
Francis Mkwapatira
(Malawi)

With puzzled faces, we walked from our rooms to the living room, asking one another questions we could not answer. Having taken our seats, dad opened the floor, "I know you are wondering what the purpose of this meeting is. Your mother and I have decided to let you know that I have lost my job..."



I understand that not everyone will agree with my views and experiences, especially the people around me. But when I reflect on my life, I am convinced that I have seen and learnt a lot, despite being in my twenties. Because of that, I celebrate the

little things that come my way. These 'few' years of my life have taken me along an avenue where I have met several people, made friends, and watched some flourish, and others tumble. These friendships have taught me valuable lessons, despite how



rough they could be sometimes.

Today, I can't restrain myself from remembering one of the inspiring experiences I had. I was 15 and in secondary school when it happened. As an adolescent, I actively searched for my identity and approval, and this is just one of the things that happen when one hits puberty. As such, I found myself within a peer group at school. Mostly, what defined the cliques we formed ranged from the kind of jobs our parents worked, the type of cars they drove, the towns we came from, as well as how we performed in class, though most of us didn't perform so well.

I remember doing almost everything together with my newfound buddies. They were there for me, each day like the sun never skips a day. We stood up for each other many times. Our passion and commitment to each member's interests were exquisite. Being roommates and classmates, our etiquettes went from not allowing difficult questions to torment your buddy in an exam, to not allowing them to be bullied by the prefects or other students. But most of all, our surnames began with the same letter 'M.'

Everything was okay among us, between the first and second years of secondary school. The following year, things changed. No one saw it except me. I realized I had to change how I handled myself. Having seen the dark side of life, I was the change that happened in the group. I was the change

that no one thought would happen. But I knew I didn't have a choice. I had to do what seemed right.

It all began at home, and on one evening during the vacation period. I remember being called to the living room by my parents. It was a seldom occurrence for them who usually enjoyed being in the lounge after supper to summon one of us to the sitting room when we had retired to bed. Under normal circumstances, the one called was suspected to have done something odd during the day, and disciplinary actions were on the way. The strangest thing on this particular night was that they did not call one, or two, or three of my siblings, but they asked all six of us to join them in the living room.

With puzzled faces, we walked from our rooms to the living room, asking one another questions we could not answer. Having taken our seats, dad opened the floor, "I know you are wondering what the purpose of this meeting is. Your mother and I have decided to let you know that I have lost my job..." We all looked at him with disbelief. "It's been three months now; your mother and I decided not to tell you because we thought there would soon be a way out. Unfortunately, we have lost everything in the process of trying to settle some debts and cater for your school fees..." I saw my elder brother's face contort when dad announced this. He and my sister Yami were already in the course of their tertiary edu-



cation and were afraid of dropping out. The third born and I were in secondary school, and my younger brother and sister were yet to complete their primary school.

We did not hide our frustration and tears as mom and dad encouraged us that things would be okay. We knew they would but did not just want to agree that this was the state in which we were, without any of the assets we owned before. This was the reason for my change. I changed everything about myself, at home, and in school. I knew I had to reconsider the kind of friends I had to entertain. I had to switch to those who would understand my family's current financial status. The joblessness of my father who was the prime anchor of the household meant we would no longer have to carry the same overfilled grocery bags to school. What used to be someone's pocket money was now meant for two.

When I went back to school, I began to ignore my five best friends who were also my roommates. I almost left the room we shared. Often I would drag my feet when it was mealtime. I kept them waiting till they would forget about me. I would slip into the cloud and have my meal, with minimal additives and no relish. I had to cut my budget short or I would end up having nothing while my friends had everything. They soon noticed the change. They noticed my behaviour, the strange patterns of movement, the loneliness and melancholy.

They were very suspicious of my shenani-

gans. They needed answers, as to why I was behaving like that. In no time, I knew I would have to give them the reasons behind my stupor. When they asked me, I didn't hide anything. I narrated the whole sudden twist of fate at home. How my parents could no longer give us the best life they gave us before. I made sure I withheld nothing, just so my actions could be forgiven. Perhaps being truthful would help me leave the group in peace. I wanted to do anything possible not to be anyone's child's burden.

One evening, as I lay in bed, thinking of how to leave the room, my friends came to me. They looked at me in silence as Henderson Mikwala explained what they had agreed to do to cover some of my expenses with their resources. I could not believe it at first. But they assured me that life is always unpredictable and that when it takes a sudden turn, friends are always the closest family that helps you shoulder the burden. I felt like crying that night. I could not believe it, but it was what they did till we finished secondary school. We studied and worked on our assignments together. We encouraged ourselves to pursue our goals. After our final examinations, we all managed to find chances at various universities. But whenever I think of them, I am reminded that indeed, "A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in times of need."





Selfship

by
Blessing Amatemeso
(Nigeria)

We learn that friendship is the foundation of intimacy; it is the bedrock of marriage. But what is the bedrock of friendship? Showing interest in other people, listening attentively or being friendly?

During childhood, making friends is easy. Someone in your class would ask for your name or you ask for theirs and ask 'can we be friends?' Sometimes no one even asks, friendship is just agreed upon by mutual assumption. Having a friend was such a thing of joy. You get to have a buddy to play with during breaks, someone to share your food with, someone to gist with and share inside jokes. Having a best friend brought even greater joy. Others you may share but the best friend was your wingman (or woman).

Over the years, the process of making friends became more complex and the criteria for being friends expanded. Not ev-

eryone you talk to in your social circle is your friend. You know this and they know it too. You drift apart from some of your old friends. I mean, "Twenty friends cannot play together for twenty years" right? You learn that there are different kinds of relationships: acquaintances, casual friends, social friends, close friends, intimate friends and of course romantic relationships.

Even among those that are deemed close friends, you learn that you should have different levels of intimacy. You also learn that there are different kinds of love: Agape love, Phileo, Eros and Storge, and that each has a different degree and is for a different class of people.



There are different theories about the kind of people that can be friends. Some tie it to zodiac signs: Gemini makes the best friends with Capricorn, Virgo and Aquarius; Aries makes the best friends with Scorpio, Libra and Taurus. Other theories say friendship has to be complementary, extroverts to introverts, raging lions to meek lambs. While others base it on mutual interests. Regardless of which theory, healthy friendship has to be mutual. Most times we don't know what will bring us together with a new friend till we are already friends.

Friends are not arbitrary humans who come into your life to make it better (or worse), they are humans, just like you with a life to live, with dreams, aspirations and fears, whose paths have amicably crossed yours.

We learn that friendship is the foundation of intimacy; it is the bedrock of marriage. But what is the bedrock of friendship? Showing interest in other people, listening attentively or being friendly? To me, loving yourself is the foundation of friendship. I would call it self-ship.

The statement, 'hurting people hurt people' is a reflection of the fact that in all 'ships' people are simply a reflection of who they are, nothing more, nothing less. Friendship can have an influence on a person but that person still reflects the new person they have become.

The kind of person you are determines the kind of employee you would be, the kind of

boss you will be, the kind of friend you will be and ultimately the kind of friends you will have. Self-ship is thus very important.

Jesus' second commandment states, "Love your neighbour as yourself" and though He says that you should love the Lord your God, the Bible ultimately asks, "How can you say you love God whom you cannot see if you do not love your brother whom you can see?"

Every friendship grows in stages: from strangers to acquaintances and then to friends. When you meet someone for the first time, you don't know anything about them. Attraction or chance brings you together and you start communicating. You get to know a few things and the person seems 'alright', you hang out more or talk more virtually depending on the kind of person you are. You learn a couple more things. Some you like, some you think you can manage but the general feeling is positive and the friendship progresses. You forgive them when they wrong you and go out of your way to make them happy. For as long as you remain friends, you keep learning new things about them.

The same applies to ourselves. We were once strangers discovering ourselves, the things we like, the things we don't, the way we learn and the way we forget. We learnt to love (or not love) ourselves. With every new phase, we discover new things about ourselves. The way we respond to this new person determines our future progress. If



you beat yourself up because of a failure you may begin to resent that person and resent trying new things. If you forgive that person, you get new energy to try again. Your course of action determines how this new phase turns out and the next. This process never ends as we never stop growing. How you react to yourself will influence how you react to your friends.

Usually, people try hard to change other people without trying to change themselves. Have you ever heard the story of Lola John's book? No? Well, when it was first printed, the title read 'How to change your wife in 30 days.' It sold two million copies in the first week before it was discovered that the title had a spelling error. The correct title was 'How to change your life in 30 days.' After the correction, it sold only three copies in the month. This says a lot including how much people value relationships.

Through the journey of life, you are the only friend that would truly be with you till the end. Who you are with yourself is who you will be with your friends. Be the friend you want to have and you just might find a friend like you. As the African proverb goes, 'Show me your friends and I will tell you who you are.'





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www.anthonyonugba.com

Flash Fiction

Goodbye my Friend

Poet Darple
Tanzania



It was raining cats and dogs that morning. I witnessed pedestrians struggling to get to work with their big umbrellas and official attires. My friend Baraka stood beside me.

“Hey sleepy head, why do people hate the rain? Always preventing it from touching their skin”, I argued. “You with your weird questions. People never appreciate nature my friend, let them be”, He replied calmly.

We were at our post grabbing all the gossip we could before sundown. We stood at a very convenient place in a busy town of captivating sceneries. One view was a fancy barbershop that flooded with customers, good looking gentlemen and few ladies.

It has always been Baraka and I; side by side never aside.

“You look greener today, like you knew it was going to rain”, I humoured. He smiled and then narrated the parable of the green mango. Although I had heard it a million times already, I still listened attentively.

At noon, two big men looked at us strangely. They stood beside Baraka and murmured. They patted Baraka and walked away. Then, Baraka’s mood changed. He spoke and joked less. He was quieter for the rest of the day; unlike the chatterbox I was used to.

As the wind swept my leaves, sleep took me away. I was awoken by a loud disturbing sound of a chainsaw. They were uprooting Baraka from his post. The two big men came to take our lives.

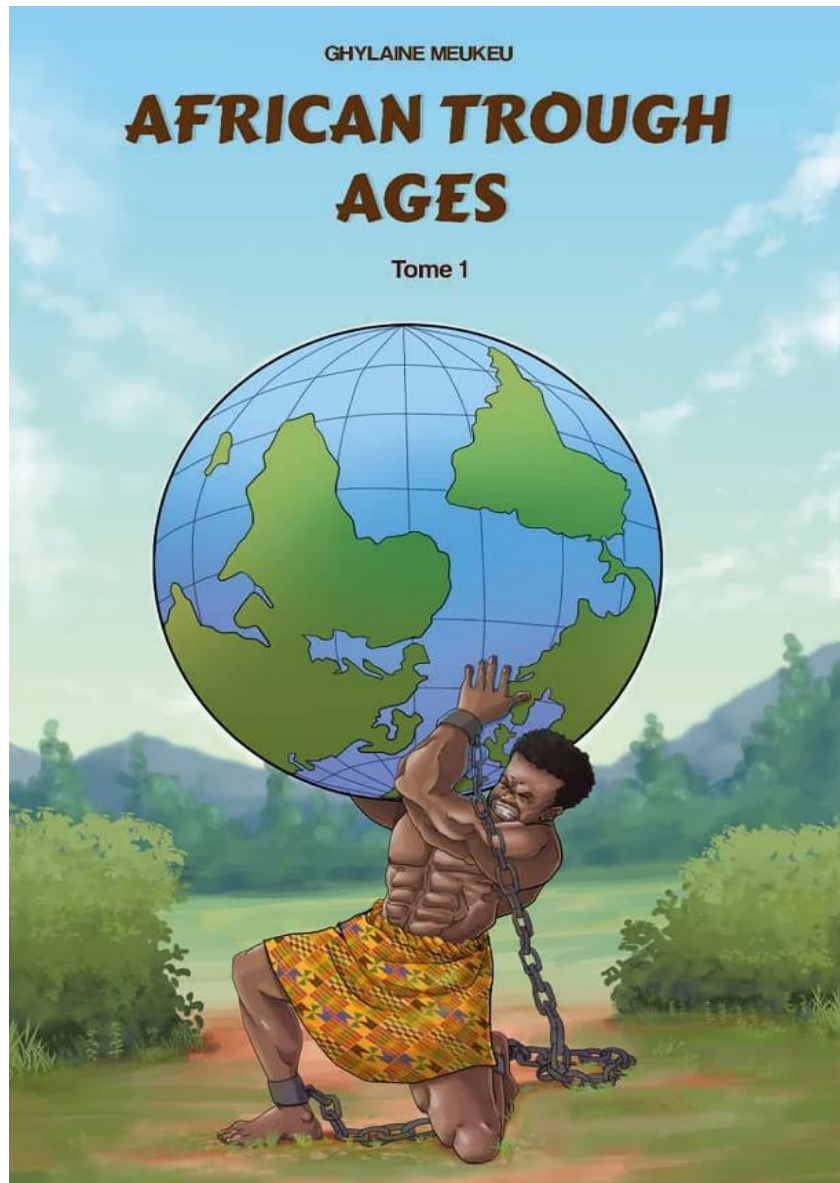
“These trees are on the way; a road has to be built right here!” They lamented.

I watched as Baraka fell down to the ground; knowing that I was next.

We were the only trees left in the town. I thought they enjoyed our shade, but as Baraka said, “people never appreciate nature my friend, let them be.”



Experience the real life of our ancestors and discover how they struggled to stay alive in the middle of the jungle or desert. Remember: if they did it going from nothing, you can do better now!



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Creative Spotlight



In this Edition of the Writers Space Africa Magazine, I am privileged to chat with the Queen of Flash Fiction all the way from Kenya. Make welcome, Scholar Akinyi.

PPBlessing: How was growing up for you?

SA: Fun! I grew up in a flower farm in Kenya. I was the happy child who loved dancing and reading. It was all a blissful life, everything a child could ask for.

PPBlessing: That's wonderful. Did you envision becoming a writer then?

SA: Yes. I always knew it was my path. And I deliberately followed it.

PPBlessing: How did you know?

SA: I always found books to be my happy place... I was very good in creative writing, and even though back then I did not know that writing could be a career, I still wanted to do it in the long run, as something permanent. I was a library prefect, and I was always awed at how much people could weave words into books or magazines. That was fascinating and I wanted that.

PPBlessing: That's beautiful. So, when did you start weaving your own words?

SA: I'd say, I've always been weaving as

a child, in creative writing, but my first serious attempt was in 2018.

PPBlessing: What was it about?

SA: I wrote a story about domestic violence. It was titled; The Red Affair, and when the story got shortlisted for the inaugural African Writers Awards, it was a confirmation to me that indeed I was doing the right thing.

PPBlessing: Congratulations on making the short list. I read the story on your blog, what inspired it?

SA: It was one incident I witnessed while growing up. A man beat his wife to a pulp, and the one I witnessed stayed with me for years. So, I turned it into a story.

PPBlessing: What are the particular genres you write in?

SA: I mostly do Flash Fiction, short stories, and creative nonfiction. Through the years, I've realised that I am very good with Flash Fiction.

PPBlessing: What inspires your writing generally?

SA: Day to day observations. Human behaviour. I get my inspirations from ob-



serving the happenings of my surrounding.

PPBlessing: Has writing won you any award?

SA: Yes, I have won a flash fiction award in the YOUTHUBAFRICA Creative writing contest. The story is titled 'Writing Womanhood'. It is about ending the Silence surrounding Female Genital Mutilation.

PPBlessing: That's a beautiful one. Do all your writings focus on societal issues?

SA: I think they do. Considering the ones that have shot me to the limelight are societal. So, yes.

PPBlessing: When did you get the award?

SA: 2022.

PPBlessing: That's quite recent. Congratulations on the win.

SA: Thank you. It was the award that made people christen me Queen of Flash Fiction.

PPBlessing: Aha! I'll start calling you that too or QFF for short. You have a degree in literature, right?

SA: Yes yes.

PPBlessing: Why Literature?

SA: Well, like I said earlier, I had thought long and hard about this writing thing from childhood, and Literature was my best bet. I'd say, it was very intentional, and the world conspired to give me what I wanted.

PPBlessing: What have you found most challenging as a writer and editor?

SA: As an editor: Getting into the mind of the writer to understand what exactly they intended to say in a piece of writing is the most challenging, because, in writing, every word matters. Every word is meant to carry an emotion, or a reaction. So, sometimes it really gets difficult to sift through.

As a writer: My biggest challenge is creating time. I get lazy. The other issue is, when I have read a lot, my mind gets so clouded with ideas, so I tend not to write to avoid cases of replicating other people's works subconsciously.

PPBlessing: What else do you do aside from writing?

SA: I am an editor. I do curriculum design interpretation for school books and edit book content for Kenyan learners.





PPBlessing: What does doing a curriculum design interpretation entail?

SA: It entails understanding the kind of knowledge and content suitable for learners at different stages, and helping authors curate the same. So, the whole process entails choice of diction, complexity or simplicity of knowledge, researching and selecting images and illustrations appropriate for learners and ensuring that the books sent out are in alignment with the requirements of the curriculum institute of a country, in my case, Kenya.

PPBlessing: Sounds like a lot of work! How do you juggle that with writing and editing?

SA: It sure is a lot of work. I think what has worked for me is having seasons. When I am in the writing season, I tend to avoid any editing. When editing, I try to avoid writing. I am yet to find a balance, and editing has always gotten more time. It is still a struggle for me.

PPBlessing: May you find balance soon enough.

SA: Thank you. I pray for that.

PPBlessing: Do you have published books?

SA: None yet

PPBlessing: Why?

SA: Not to lie...

1. Laziness on my part
2. The fear of not giving it my best. I'd love my debut book to be the best, so I've been stuck in that rut of seeking perfectionism.

It is a scary path.

PPBlessing: How long do you think it will take to get the perfection you seek and publish?

SA: I have since started letting go of that fear, and if all goes well, the plan is to get published by mid-2023. Plans are underway.

PPBlessing: I hope it does. We will be looking forward to the book launch. What will the book be about?

SA: Thank you. I'll do an anthology of short stories which will range from questions about religion and God, Family dynamics, friendships, pain and healing, and grief.

PPBlessing: That's a lot! How many stories in all?



SA: 7.

PPBlessing: *We're looking forward.*

SA: Thank you. I look forward to it too.

PPBlessing: *Are there any books that have impacted your writing?*

SA: Yes.

A Little Life by Hanya Yanagihara.

A Curve of Darkness by Munira Hussein
(A poetry collection)

Chigozie Obioma's works.

And Elizabeth Pisani's Wisdom of Whores

And many more.

PPBlessing: *Do these happen to be your favorite authors too?*

SA: Yes, and many more. I think I have so many favorite authors, but for now, the four are atop my list.

PPBlessing: *What do you hope to achieve as a writer?*

SA: I have never really pegged my writing to any end goal, but if it is to do something, then I hope it inspires change, as well as entertain.

For myself, I hope I get to study African literature and writing to the point of being an expert, even as the seasons and patterns of writing change.

PPBlessing: *Are you single, dating or married?*

SA: I am single.

PPBlessing: *For how long do you hope to keep writing?*

SA: I hope to keep writing for as long as I live.

PPBlessing: *What has been your greatest achievement so far as a writer?*

SA: I think, the fact that it is my passion and it has also since become my source of livelihood is a big win for me.

Also, being an award-winning writer! That is such an achievement I don't take for granted.

Thank you for reading through this month's edition of the Writers Space Africa Magazine. Until next time, keep reading.





CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Poetic Africa, a quarterly online poetry magazine published by Writers Space Africa, calls for submissions from poets for her February 2023 edition.

Africans migrate to the West for many speakable and unspeakable reasons. In the recent past, the migration rate has been alarming, and it's worth writing about the cause and effect. Write and submit your poem under the theme ***BLACK MIGRATION***.

The editorial team is looking for poems of a maximum of 24 lines, creativity and originality, use of poetic devices and economy of words. Please present well-arranged poetry and note that the poem titles should not have the word "Black Migration".

The submission window is from **November 11th until December 10th 2022**. The edition will be released on February 10th 2023.

To submit, please visit <https://writersspace.net/poeticafrika>. Submissions in French or Swahili are accepted (without equivalent translations in English).

Poetry



Poet: Zungu Bongani
Country: South Africa

Future Friends

*I heard monotonous-manufacturing jokes
make for a great ice breaker in conversation.*

*The first incident; slow in breach scenes.
Ramification was very difficult to troubleshoot.
What simulated conversations those were, I think,
no free-flying solid-state disk array could investigate
nor easily settle, nor-not companion crew interactions
fused by mobile robot pounds.*

*Some had created a million explanations of the meaning-
of singular cortex and symbiotic limbic systems in
design, software, in ideas on the use of these interfaces.
They must be the key to the meaning of the artificial.*

*So, we thought-
That seeing from our carbon
sight interactions is believing.*

*And I wondered, like some same tedious task
done over and over again;
can we be mainframe friends?*



Poet: Okiror D Dependra

Country: Uganda

Bro-mance

*A poem to you my friend,
I write while at the window pane.
I pen my heart as blue deep letters
On these pages, as I ponder,
On the albums; the memories,
That we share like Church bread,
Under the scorching sun.
Like the Great China wall:
With cracked scars to your bricks—
That I caused,
whenever you defended me;
not that I'm proud
But I'm grateful you're my guard.
Hot and cold seasons have passed
Our bond has matured.
We still stand in for each other,
like a flip of a coin.
When the head shows not,
The tail does proudly show.
Just like banks of the river,
That have seen both the storm
And the blue smile of the river.
But have never parted from it;
The same way our friendship is.*



Poet: Udochukwu Chidera
Country: Nigeria

What Are Friends For

*Hands that wipe tear balls from my eyes, creep.
People for keeps, always picking up at the end of every beep
Tiny orbs of light forming Jacko lanterns in my Milky way
Flowery and ornamental arrays, wish the gloom skies away.
Butterflies are forever good hearts just as diamonds are a girl's best friend
Abundant love in their eyes takes me hours to comprehend.
Dear best friend on bended knees, I write epistles in form of prayers
Fairest of them all; I pray.
Beware of all the unfriendly glares around you
I pray the Lord lines your walls with blessings for the world to share.
Good friends are gifts- heavenly souvenirs delivered by Jesus's logistics
It's neither rocket science nor physics that their aura is near ballistic.
Their hearts are rare gold; love in unexplainable language defying barriers of linguistic
A dynamite sitting atop gunpowder explodes to reveal a sparkle of fireworks;
Handworks not of man but of the Creator.
I believe Angels and Saints walk on earth in womanly forms,
Breaking glass ceilings, not conforming to the norms.
O Patron saint of youth, the waters of your purity run deep in Maria Goretti
Grant to others pure hearts; beauty beyond what mere mortal eyes can see.
Good friends are treasures, blessings without measures;
Pressed down, better together and marching forward forever.*



Poet: Bernadette Chikapa
Country: Malawi

An Ode to This Gift

*If you hear one say,
That poetry is always there for them
That it is what gets them up in the morning
When they seem like the loneliest person in the whole world.*

*When in this life's realities,
Vying for a little getaway,
Write your way into another world
And get lost in these letters and pages.*

*When being an introvert mutes you
When you're on cloud nine but fail to orate,
These papers deny you not.
Heed the potency of the pen
And embrace writing as your best mate.*

*Come rain or sunshine
Writing will be the monument of your peace.
After filling pages with things be-known to none,
With ink-stained palms and a satisfied grin
That's when you know your heart is in the right place.*

*In oblivion, we befriend a painting or a song
Come to think of it, this gift has always been my best friend all along.*



Poet: Mogboyin Olayinka

Country: Nigeria

A Note to Jeremy

*Jeremy, Jeremy, when I spin through the boulevard,
I'm just a stranger touring the coves of the realm.*

*When I glide through the fog,
I'm a bird who can't carve a sound.
Into the sky, how a nut dog barks its lessor
At the other end of porch where our lives are knotted.*

*Every time I've gawked into your cold sights;
Even though fire resides in them.
I never behold a ghoul
But to the world, I'm friends with one.
Who could say that in lost, I would find you treasure.
As a pinch of salt to my world, you set me aflame with
Rendezvous at the crossroads where fate troops out,
Lurking about all that are never in boys' outlook.*

*It wasn't a race from the sun that unified us nor rain
Nor is it red ribbons—catchy.
It's a muffled pitch of fate.
An art, lanes on our palms
Which guides love to the backyard.*

*This bond has no clone
Nor is it derived from stars,
That toil to shine in crescent Moon.*



There are No Rainclouds Among Crooks

Poet: Zikhali Z Mbonisi

Country: Zimbabwe



*A bunch of African chiefs
met under debatable circumstances,
traded rain dances in a circle
then each walked back to their famines.
It is only when they counted the tribal face masks,
And rounded up the accountants to balance the books,
That they determined there are no rainclouds among crooks.*

*I had a friend underneath this same forgotten sky,
Who believed we loved each other because of the rottenness of our homes.
And that mold's odor naturally turned us to seekers of paradise;
bricklayer dreams that needed each other to cement the deal.
That it should not be seen as corruption,
But as justification that Rhodes and other pickpockets deserve a finger.
And the best way to dish it,
Is up the nation's buttocks.*

*I wonder if some of our leaders can truly be friends
Knowing their own rented smiles are stretched far enough,
And that silence is godliness if one is to keep scented suits,
entering sacred shrines to mine sleepers' votes,
And then stripping the gods of rain naked,
sneaking out at dawn with their scepters.*





Poet: Abayomi Clement
Country: Nigeria

Sailing the Ships

*When life sails to the brink of a fearful fall,
The journey, so long, you dread it all.
Kindred! the tears, the times of blistering pains.
When all left are relics of grief like grains
Know you not it calls—the need for friendship.
When life sails you in her ship ashore hardship,
Of love, of care to assuage the burdens borne
Kindred! friendship fights fears till fears are won!
A bond of brotherhood breathes in friendship
Its breeze of bliss breeds strong fellowship.
Kindred! a union sailed on waters of love.
With ties and purity snow— clad like a dove
A union; union built on love and affection—
Dares to sail dreary days down ashore oblivion,
Of love, of care to assuage loneliness borne,
Friendship fights the forlorn feelings till all are won!
She sails; life sails—now in two ships.
She moves; life moves—competing like warships
Friendship kindles the fire of good will.
Beyond a bond in practice with a fearful trill!
Of love, of care to assuage the burdens borne.
Kindred! friendship fights fears till fears are won!
Some sails assail to mar companionship*



Poet: Kiboi Victoria
Country: Kenya

DIDI - A Tribute

*When we first met;
You were a ball of fur
Barely large enough to fit in my palm.
That didn't stop you-
From clawing and kicking
Those adorably tiny paws,
Raging as we tried to fit you,
In that cardboard box
Which you somehow-
Managed to get out of;
Despite our bumpy start.
You grew to trust me
Maybe it was the little bites
I fed you by hand.
The way you'd lean your head,
As I stroked your soft head.
Your annoyed meow,
When I interrupted your rest
Atop my chest,
That broke the organ within
When you failed to return that night.
I miss you;
My furry friend.*



Poet: Ogenyi Akunna

Country: Nigeria

Surp Flowers

*I met someone;
not a MINI-DAD like I expected,
but you caught my eye.*

*I thought of you as Blossom; a flower that I'll keep
You are my Rose and I am your Sunshine,
A mixture of us would make
Baby Suro Flower.*

*Funny but it'll be very pretty,
Just like we want it.
We'll make two more and maybe
add one more; Tiny Suro Flowers that we love.*

*There'll be days when we can't stand each other,
Days when we don't want us
But in between those days,
we'll have days when we can't have enough of each other.*

*Then, we'll pray together, stay together
Learning to understand each other;
being better.
That way, we'll live.*





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www.writersspace.net/poeticafrika

PoeticAfrica is Africa's first trilingual poetry magazine published quarterly. The magazine showcases rich and diverse poetry in English, Kiswahili, and French from all over Africa to the world.

Short Stories



Loyalty in the Mud

By: Ebenezer O. Akeju
Country: Nigeria



The mud crawled into their mouth and nostrils as they clawed their way through a mass of dead soldiers, covered in the once warm blood.

The night was a blanket of black stretching out across the ground where valiant men took a final stand. Accompanied by its gloom was a tight silence, so tight it was difficult to hear his breathing and the

slushing of mud beneath their chest as they crawled.

But then again, Vincent's whisper sounded like a gust of wind in Bamo's ear.

"Go without me, Bamo. We cannot both make it--"

Bamo clasped a hand over Vincent's mouth, staring at the outline of his face, dark skin



blended with the black of night. “We’re going to cross that ridge to safety together. Now shut up. You’ll draw them here.”

Bamo’s muscles ached with a fatigue like he had never felt before. The dead weight of Vincent wrapped around his arm made their crawl slow and painful. Just a little more, Bamo thought. Our wives will kiss their husbands again. You’ll see your daughter again, Vincent. We’re going home.

“Bamo. Bamo stop.” Vincent said, grasping for Bamo’s arm tucked under his armpit, his voice as faint as soft gasps. “Before we reach the ridge I would’ve bled out. My legs are shattered from my thighs down. I won’t let you die for a hopeless cause.”

“What are you failing to understand?” Bamo said, matching his tone, struggling to stop him from breaking free. “I am not leaving you even without a fighting chance. I will not cross that ridge without you. I will not! Do you hear me?”

Bamo gripped his arm and stared into his watery eyes, voice cracking, lips trembling in the cold air. “You’ve bled for me where men ran. Picked me up when I couldn’t walk. Why won’t you let me be there for you?”

Bamo saw what he thought was resignation in Vincent’s dark eyes and then let himself be dragged across the muddy ground.

“The medical aide at the camp will address your wounds. You will not die this night.” I

swear on the grave of my mother.

Bamo stopped, Vincent’s half-unconscious body slung over his side. His ears caught something. A faint thump in the distance. The soft splatter of boot on mud behind them. They had come to check for survivors after the onslaught.

He turned to Vincent and placed a mud-died finger over his lips. If they moved, they would hear. It sounded like it was just one soldier. But in his state, Bamo could not take him head-on. Plus, in the murky moonless night, he couldn’t tell if more lurked close by.

The soldier was quiet, blending with the coal-black night, careful not to alert any survivors of his presence. But as he closed in, Bamo could see his outline with a long rifle pointed low like an extension of his arm.

His fingers itched for his short gun strapped to his side, but he remained still. The sound of boots on mud drew closer. He would pass over them. He had to.

The man, clad in all black, splashed past with careful steps and halted mere feet away from them. Lightening flashed, shining a whitish blue light on Vincent. From his knees below, his legs were gone, now torn trousers and strings of flesh hung loosely.

Bamo remembered the ear-splitting explosion flinging Vincent like a threaded doll. It



still rang in his ears even in the deafening silence of the night. A crackle of thunder followed by another flash of lightning revealed Vincent's stark, pale face. He was dying.

His blood loss was too much. They couldn't stay here much longer. He had to do something. Slowly, he untied himself from Vincent and turned to face the soldier in black, back turned to him. A quick turnaround showed no one but the man. Alone.

He dragged himself closer to the man, swallowing and blinking away mud, the sound of flowing sludge like the rush of a river in his ears. The man turned periodically, but only saw dead bodies scattered across the field. When he returned to scanning the distant ridge for any sign of movement, Bamo would start up again. It was hard and slow work, but he was close now.

He reached for his knife tied to his ankle, sluggishly unsheathing it. He stood, knife tight in his grasp. He would need to be quick before the man could raise an alarm. As he took a step closer, raising his knife, the man turned.

Bamo dove and they both went down into the filth, rolling and fighting over the knife. The rifle had flown off the man's hands as the knife had flown off his too. He had one hand curled around the soldier's neck while the other pressed over his mouth. Please. Die.

A knee to his gut sent the air out of him. He

rolled over to his side. His heart beating in his ears suppressed all sound. The man got up on his knees and hands, gasping for air. He tried to call out, but all that seemed to come out was a soft whisper. Yet the dingy night carried it like an empty drum.

Bamo grabbed the rifle off the ground and slammed the butt into his head, flinging mud with its swing.

A large wound appeared on the side of his head, spurting dark crimson, his eyes wide and distant. Bamo knelt with a splat, eyes closed, panting. Sounds of barking pierced through the cold air. His eyes shot open. Lights shone in the distance; more men were approaching. Did they hear him?

It didn't matter. They needed to move, now. Bamo ran to Vincent, the boots sinking in mud, heavier with each step. He dove for Vincent, falling with a splash.

"Jeka lo! Right now!"

He tried to lift him but his muscles screamed in protest. They both collapsed back into the mud. Bamo cursed. They were not leaving this place. Then they must make a stand. Long enough to get a miracle.

He reached for his shotgun. But it was gone. He turned to Vincent. He had it in shaky hands pressed against his temple, finger pressing slightly on the trigger.

"If you run, you'll make it just in time." He said, voice weak and cracked. "I'm already dead, Bamo. Let me do this for you this



once.”

The barking drew closer. The lights began to bloom brighter. “No. Vincent please...”

Vincent closed his eyes. As dawn broke across the horizon, its warm light tearing through gathered clouds, tears trickled down his dirty cheeks. The sound of the shot rang clear and through, echoing in the morning air.

Vincent stared blankly as if in shock, letting the gun drop. More shots rang in the distance. From the West, out of the ridge, a mass of armed bodies, brothers in blood, fired at the coming soldiers. They returned the fire, shouting incomprehensible com-

mands.

Vincent looked up at Bamo with a blank stare. “What’s... What’s happening?”

From behind them, footsteps splashed in the muck. Bamo dove over Vincent, spread wide like a human shield. But when he looked up, he saw an arm extended to him and a broad welcoming smile.

“You’re safe now men.” Sergeant Obi said, still pristine in his uniform knee-deep in sludge.

Calvary. Bamo let tears fall as reality washed over him. We’ll live.



A Needle of Survival

By: Ahmadu Adamu
Country: Nigeria



Nenrot rose frantically from the chair he had sunk into and, in like manner, started roaming about the house in search of something. He walked to the kitchen, saw the neat collection of knives, arranged by size, on the table (a wedding souvenir), glittering as if they were attracting his attention. He thought against them, “Too messy”. He strode with his long legs into the store: nothing there but a pile of yams. He walked to the sitting room, cast quick glances at the television, the sofas, the

books on the shelf, the stupid cat, perched lazily on a pillow, that was now looking inquiringly at him and annoyed at him for disturbing her peaceful slumber with his energetic intrusion. He found nothing suitable for his designs; that numinous force which instigated his explosive behaviour also seemed to procure a rationale for the unsuitability of all he laid eyes on. He -- with some resignation -- went into his room and collapsed, face down, onto the bed. The tears wouldn't come. Sensing



some asphyxiation, he rolled on his back, and the sight of the mosquito net suspended over him evoked a new thought. He got up and dashed into the dark store, and, stretching his lanky arm, groped for the bottle he expected to be there. He found it and returned to his room, clutching it like an elixir of eternal youth. It said 'Dichlorvos' on the label and in bracket, '2, 2 - dichlorovi -', he grew frustrated and gave up the pronunciation, "Who cares? Caution, caution, where's the caution? Aha! Effect on humans." Squinting his eyes to barely noticeable slits, he started reading, growing disappointed with each item he read off the list: weakness, headache, dizziness, nausea... "What's this?" he voiced in animated anger. "Am I looking to - Do I want to - What's this? If you'll make something, do it right!" directed at the invisible manufacturers of the product. The alarm went off, interrupting his heated soliloquy. Pondering what it was for, he remembered, "Susie." He ran a comb (painfully) through his hair, wet his face, put on his shoes and left to pick up his little sister from school. If he'd heard the alarm ring those previous two times, he would have been in some more haste.

He reached Susie's school and was perplexed to find it sparse. Susie was on a seesaw with one of those children who looked more like an underdeveloped, corpulent adult than a child. He wondered how Susie managed her descent and, of perhaps more

concern, how she wasn't catapulted off every time the boy came down. She was obviously free of all his concerns, throwing her hands above her head and shrieking, "Whee!" every time she rose. He'd normally wave for her attention, but the futility of a wave against her revelry coupled with the necessity of terminating the imminent hazard compelled him to approach her.

"Nen!" she squealed, "You're late."

Looking at his watch, he judged, wisely, against an argument. "Come on down. Let's go."

He looked at the boy and hoped the subtlety of his expression was enough to communicate his desire for him to stop doing the spring with his legs which generated the momentum to lift him against Susie's tiny weight, followed by his crashing descent against her - apprehensively - tiny weight. The boy mercifully obliged and gently lowered Susie. They started walking.

"Do you want me to carry your bag?"

"No. You're late. I've done all my homework already. Do you want some chocolate? Danny gave me his last piece."

Danny must be the boy, he thought. If he'd been doing more of this sharing then..."No, thanks."

"Here, have some," she broke off a piece and shoved it into his hand, ignoring him.



“Some people came to talk to us about HIV and AIDS today. Why do people share needles?”

“Well, remember when those people came to immunise you?”

“For meningitis, yes.”

“Imagine if they did not use a new needle each time they immunised one of you.”

“But that would have been their fault, not ours. Can you ...”

Nenrot had just experienced one of those moments when a word evokes some new idea. Susie’s voice was now ambient to him.

“Intravenously. That might increase its potency,” he thought. They entered a drug store where the gruff druggist peered at him questioningly after he asked for a syringe.

“How many mills?” the man almost barked.

“Um, how do you sell it?” The man widened his bloodshot, large, bulging eyes.

“What do you want it for?”

“I’ll buy the regular size.”

“Regular,” the druggist muttered inaudibly.

“Take the 10.”

Nenrot took out his wallet to pay.

“I don’t have change oh! Better have the exact money.” He did, and, meekly handing the man the note, hurriedly departed with the clinging Susie.

“There’s a mai lemu there,” Susie said, breaking his thoughts.

Understanding that she thought he bought the needle and syringe for her as a toy, and thus needed oranges to complete the rendition, he obliged and, for a second, considered returning to the store for another syringe; he shuddered at the thought and decided against it.

“Gimbiya,” the orange seller greeted the giggling Susie while carving spirals off an orange. Nenrot paid for five oranges and left with six (Susie’s effortless influence).

When they arrived, they met their mother outside, under a tree with a few women, and neighbours. They looked solemn. They greeted them all, receiving subdued responses. They had gone past them before she called him, inspired by the remembrance of something. “Nen, go and see your friend. I know you haven’t gone yet. It’s not right. You should go.”

“Yes Ma.” The insignificance of his grief was now blatant to him. Their neighbour’s daughter, a young woman, was only recently widowed. Her husband, after a swift struggle against an illness which struck him with commensurate swiftness, passed away. The friend his mother referred to was the woman’s brother, an old childhood friend whom he had grown apart from and had even come to, perhaps, inexplicably loathe. Now, the rude interference of death had imposed upon him a necessary duty



whose discharge, aside from the circumstance extracting it, he anticipated to be unpleasant. He had, first, to promise Susie access to her new 'toy' when he returned.

Nenrot arrived at the house and intuitively substituted his characteristic rapid movements for the more appropriate plod in a house of mourning. There were women seated on the ground, legs thrown in front of them, arms propped on their heads, faces exhausted, yet retaining a vestige of recent mourning; images of despondency. He had come here, dutifully, so he wouldn't have to again, but if Sule, his old friend was experiencing even a modicum of the suffering he had just seen, then he'd have willingly made the appearance if it could allay some of the pain.

He knew where Sule's room was and went through the open door. He saw three boys there: two were over a chess board, the third, stretched on the bed, reading a book. Sule was lying, face up, on the bed. For a moment, Nenrot had an epiphanic remembrance of the cause of their drift. These were Sule's friends, eccentric and deviant. They were the bunch who didn't act like secondary school kids and insisted on watching cartoons, wearing their uniforms and haircuts bland, taking school seriously, and not knowing how to chillax. Sule chose to be like one of these guys and they both reached a tacit agreement to terminate their friendship. He had sometimes wondered how a group of rare

oddities like them, with their chess playing and novel reading and spelling and debating and *mathematicising* ever crossed paths, and how they maintained deafness to the derision of their peers and seemed to only be concerned with the opinion within their group. He wondered.

Sule was very appreciative of his coming, "Thank you very much, Nen," he said and was generally very kind to him; they all were. They taught him chess, cracked [really] funny jokes (for Sule's sake he thought), and invited him to their book club which he was seriously considering.

On the way home, his reflection illuminated the barrenness of his relationship with his friends. They shared no interests beyond the prevalent and expected. What value did they contribute to him? Sule had just suffered a loss and his friends were obviously affected by it. He had suffered a sort of loss: his girlfriend had just terminated their relationship and he was moved to attempt suicide. Will they understand his reasons? He might have survived that ordeal, but what value will that survival have if his companions (that's what they were; not friends) were on a path wholly separate from his? What he wanted was a Danny who, despite his obvious need for it, could spare his last chocolate.

Arriving, he kept his promise and gave Susie her 'toy'.



Several Blood Apart

By: Okorie Onyekach
Country: Nigeria



Everybody is going to see the water edging towards the town's major civilization: a blue-painted hotel which is a few metres away from the lake's pavilion. And she's here to see too. She's our First Girl. She's watching the water belly houses, leaving only weathered, riddled-with-holes roofs. She has played with the children near the Ngegwu outlet and watched the town brim with its usual excesses still – men bawl-



ing over bottles of beer, flies chorusing a buzzing refrain at the mouth of the bottles, madmen giggling to themselves, flaunting their messiness -- as if nothing is happening. The flood has eaten up the market, erupting the buried dirt, and pushing them onto the major roads. The market is now a mass of dirtied sea, cellophane wrappers and tins and cans afloat on the expanse land which formerly brimmed with people. The women now sell on the major road, their usual chaos raging, the sun blistering their skin and the stench from the gutters, like a decomposed goat, adding to the unbearableness. First Girl shrugs and looks on like others who're there, who point to the water and speculate with unfaltering assuredness when the flood will stop.

A girl comes from First Girl's right, from the side where fish-selling women beat medium-sized bowls, speaking at the top of their voices about the expected excess supply of fish after the flood. She's fondling a stick of sweets with childlike possessiveness. She's too dark. And too dark means that she's darker than First Girl who's only a shade away from brown-skinned. She's shorter too, wearing sandals, her flowery-patterned gown reaching her knees. She's our Second Girl. First Girl thinks she won't be more than twelve. Second Girl claps and grins. Children do all of that: clapping when they see each other, looking at faces, singling out the returnees (the flood refugees), regarding them before thinking of making friends. First Girl thinks of it as

rudeness. Or power. Being the ones who offer refuge to the displaced, the townspeople must feel a certain sense of superiority.

"What is your name?" Second Girl asks in Oguta, words deeply pronounced, syllables properly placed, when she reaches First Girl. Her voice is deep, in some ways not girly.

First Girl tells her, warming up her face in a smile. Second Girl says her name, swanking her sweet before First Girl. Maybe to show off the idea that she too could afford luxurious things. She reels on, exuberant. The flood has taken their house, she says to First Girl, and they now stay with her uncle. First Girl tells her about her house which was standing unperturbed by the threatening waters. She holds Second Girl in awe. Such freeness, unlashd by the tightness of a newfound friendship. There's something in the way she longs to tell about herself -- about her pregnant mother who asks her to rub her back and legs every night, about her uncle who scolds her mother asking her to leave the poor girl alone -- that speaks of unbolting, of uncaging. As if she'll never have this chance to speak about herself after now. She seems unstoppable and First Girl is already thinking of the days they'll be together in Oguta, playing *ten-ten*, like First Girl has seen the children do: standing on one leg and flailing the other, back, forth and sideways. Second Girl thumps the air in an urban fashion when she finds



out they live two houses apart.

First Girl talks about her school, a big school in the town and Second Girl dwindles and flinches. First Girl regrets why she's said that because Second Girl is longing so much for an affinity between them, for a closeness, more closely-knitted than the concentrated housing in Oguta. The second Girl goes to the local primary school. First Girl imagines her in the uniform, in the blue pinafore, white socks pulled to below her knee, bag strapped to her back, skipping all the dusty way to school.

Second Girl smiles as if she knew the thoughts wilding in First Girl's mind and brandishes her knowledge of the town. She points to the blue-painted hotel behind them, with music seeping to them from there, and tells her the flood will get there. First Girl feels a fresh wave of respect for her, the precision in her predictive tone, the way she never bothers to think it may not eventually happen, and she'll be telling a lie. She only swallows, never saying anything. Second Girl looks at her, wondering aloud why she never speaks a lot, asking if she's banned from talking to *them*.

First Girl glances away, lacking anything to say. Two women at the mouth of the lake are haggling over who owns a particular head out of two heads of plantain. They're at each other's faces, brawling. Others around are either too weakened by the boat ride to separate them or are now used to such scenes that it doesn't matter

to them. A voice from one of the makeshift fish stalls plunges her back. Both of them swirl. A pregnant woman is shouting Second Girl's name. Second Girl whispers, "My mother," and runs off. She stops halfway. "Come and play with me tomorrow," she says and bolts.

There's a plea in her voice. Like a person seeking and longing for a mate to talk to, for companionship. As she skips to her mother, First Girl imagines what she'll tell Mama to be allowed a chance to play with her.

Later that night, with Mama asking about where she's been to that evening, she tells them, plate of yam porridge emitting trails of steam. Papa pushes his yam around the ceramic plate, smearing the pink flowery pattern at the brim with oil. Mama asks who she was with, stuffing her mouth with a piece of yam, her hands reaching to the glass of water stationed between her and Papa so that it looks as though they share a glass. Mama isn't satisfied with the curt reply of "A girl," First Girl has given her. Her forehead is pleated with concern. The town is not good, especially now that the rogues from the farm across the lake are back in town.

First Girl tells her the girl's name, all the while forming in her mind how to request a chance to be with Second Girl. Mama's eyes become dimmed by the layers of skin shrouding them. A frown.



“Is it Nkonyeni?” Mama asks. First Girl nods.

Mama looks at Papa accusingly, eyes flaring with reproach. Papa flinches, drops the fork and shoots a glare at First Girl. She’s confused, scripted all over her face like the scriblings of a crèche pupil. Mama speaks next. About warning First Girl about whom to follow, about certain people they should’ve been cautious beforehand to stop her from following.

She gazes from Mama to Papa. She only digs into her yam, not sure if her mouth can receive them again. Papa looks up at her, then clutches his half-filled glass and gulps the water with fevered thirst. He tells her she’s not going to see Second Girl. She blurts, “Why?” But Mama scowled at her, zipping the other questions, burying other curiosities.

The next morning, she sees Second Girl running to the public tap, swinging her bucket. She looks away, at Guy’s Spot, blue table and chairs arranged but still empty. She wants to call her to their compound, open the tap and both of them would laugh at the rushing water, scooping as much as they can with their palms. But Mama’s words play in her mind. They’re words she won’t want to remember, but seeing the girl and the way Mama has placed the barrier, she remembers them.

“They’re *ohu*,” Mama said, leading her to her bedroom the previous night. First Girl’s face was scrunched at that. When she

asked who *they* were, her mother was quick to explain, with an unbolted loath laden in the way she spoke about *them*. They’re the descendants of the former slaves of the town. They’re not people *freeborns* were supposed to talk to. They have bad blood. Even though First Girl thought Mama exaggerated this, intense fear gripped her. They were the us Second Girl had worried about, the forbidden us. She ducked under the blanket, and wished that Second Girl was free the way the town defined *free*.

Second girl comes again with her bucket balanced on her head. Before her, children walk in groups, shouting at each other. She walks alone, wiping drops of water off her face with one hand. She looks up. She sees First Girl. She waves, her lips cracking into a smile. First Girl doesn’t wave back. She stares, eye tucked in. She wishes to disappear. *You made the wrong choice of a friend*, Mama said. As if there’s anything right about friendship. Second girl stops waving, begins to walk fast. Not looking back.

Behind her, First Girl feels Mama’s breath on her.



The Mirror Without Reflection

By: Nwafor David
Country: Nigeria

When the war broke out, it broke us into pieces like ceramic plates smashed against a rocky surface. But Rani proved to be more than a saviour. Before we met him, we had found ourselves in a neighbouring land, after Agama people invaded our village. Lives were lost, homes shattered, houses burnt and our belongings all taken away. Our women were also captured and taken away by the fiendish intruders. We were left desolate and sorrowful. It was a day death and sorrow raged and reigned unchallenged, a day we would always remember to forget.

We were looking for safety when we ran away from our invaded land to a neighbouring village, but we met danger instead. The Agama aggressors had connived with people from the neighbouring land to ensure that we had no hiding place when we

were attacked. We had left our village at night, when the attack happened, to seek refuge in the neighbouring village. On waking up in the morning, we were shocked to see a group of people with dane guns and machetes surrounding us. With faces contorted like the twisted bark of a tree, their mien could scare even a monster. Their words matched their hostile looks.

“Get them all killed!” one of them shouted.

“Who are you and what are you doing in our land?” another, whose audaciousness made us suspect he was the leader, followed suit.

“My...my... fam...ily...”, father stuttered with quivering lips. He was too afraid to articulate his words properly.

“Get up right now and move!” the leader



thundered, pointing at a narrow dirt road that continued behind a towering gmelina tree.

We were paralysed with fear, unable to either move in obedience to their command or run. Running would be more dangerous; unlike them, we were completely unarmed. We had no option than to obey.

We became more terrified as we moved to their command. Our lives were literally in their hands and we could only pray silently for the best. When we got to a part of the dirt road that intersected with a much wider road, our captors conferred with one another in hushed whispers. Eventually, we knew what they had decided. One of them, Rani, had been chosen to guide us to our death spot. We were to be killed by Rani. Rani had a dane gun and a fetishistic red object tied around his neck. But he was determined not to kill us and he told us so. He would tell his people that he had wasted us as they commanded, but he would spare us. He helped us to find temporary shelter in an area so secluded that it would take a very courageous hunter to discover and venture into. We felt at peace in this nature's fortress Rani graciously camped us in. Rani had literally become ours, our friend and brother. He told us that he decided to go against the grain because he knew that we were not the aggressors. He had a conscious, he said.

Rani would often bring fruit and food of different types to us, including tiger nuts,

udara and African salad. He risked his own life and made huge sacrifices to see to our welfare. Deeply impressed and grateful for Rani's uncommon kindness, father decided to have a chat with him. He wanted to know where Rani hailed from. It turned out that Rani was from Igbere clan. The Igbere people were not originally from the neighbouring village we were sheltering in. Some of them had come to live in our neighbouring village when war broke out between Igbere and Ngani, a village located to the north of Igbere, some years ago. It was a brutal war that cost hundreds of lives. The refugees from that war who came to live in our neighbouring village had become fully integrated into their new home and it was nearly impossible for anyone who was not told to know that they were originally from Igbere.

Rani narrated to my father how a man from my village had saved his family from being killed by Ngani warriors. He was simply returning that act of kindness by helping us escape death. Father understood and thanked him for remembering the past. Rani also told father about his family, his wife and children. They had more hearty chats before Rani bid us the day's farewell and returned to his house. After Rani left, father called all of us together and told us about his discussion with Rani. He, however, warned us against being too relaxed around Rani because human beings were unpredictable. Obviously, father still harboured premonitions of danger.



The next day, Rani took me to hunt with him. He first taught me how to effectively use the bow and arrows to kill game. After he felt I had learnt enough, we started hunting. Not long after, I saw a grass-cutter hiding behind a shrub not far from where I stood. It had apparently heard the sound of our footsteps and decided to discern properly how to make a run for dear life. I saw it nervously crouching behind the shrub, its spotted ash-coloured skin contrasting with the deep green leaves of the shrub. I quickly aimed my arrow at it carefully, released the arrow with the venom and precision of a hungry lion, and pinned the grass-cutter to the dank earth just beside the shrub it was ensconced on. It flicked its sturdy paws in a desperate attempt to cling to life. But it was too late. I had killed my first game. I was happy, even exhilarated, especially because the cane rat meat pepper soup was my father's best delicacy. My father would surely be overjoyed with my hunting exploit. But an uncanny sense of foreboding seemed to hang in the air.

I had decided to wrap the grass cutter I killed with fronds Rani helped me to cut from a palm tree along our route back home. After he cut enough palm fronds for me, Rani decided to leave me alone to wrap the game and bring home since the spot was not far away from home. I was still with my bow and arrows in case of any threat. I had finished wrapping my game when I suddenly sighted a squirrel some

meters away from where I stood. The rodent was nibbling at some palm fruits that had fallen from a palm tree some distance away. I quickly got my bow and arrow ready for a shot, aimed at the squirrel and hit one of its hind paws. Blood from the wound trailed the path of the game as it fled. I followed the trail with the firm belief that I would discover the dead body of the squirrel. I kept going inside the thick bush until I became too tired. I decided to turn back.

But close to an hour had gone. I had delayed returning home and father had begun to suspect foul play. He looked at Rani's blood-stained machete placed close to his gun on the ground, to the right side of Rani, and drew a deep breath. He immediately told Rani, who was almost dozing off where he lay, to leave for his house since his wife and children might be expecting him. As Rani roused himself to leave, father immediately dashed towards where Rani placed his gun and machete, grabbed the machete and gave Rani a deep cut on his back, just above his waist. He was about to give Rani a second cut when he suddenly saw me approaching proudly with the game I had killed. Tears flooded his eyes as his trembling hands let go of his weapon. Rani lay in the pool of his blood.



Christmas for CREATIVES



Mimi Machakaire
Zimbabwe

What does Christmas mean to everyone? For Christians, it is the celebration of Christ's birthday, and for many non-Christians, it has become a cultural holiday. Although not everyone celebrates Christmas, several other groups of people honour celebrations in December such as Hanukkah in the Jewish culture and Kwanzaa in the African American community.

During Hanukkah, the Jewish acknowledge the successful reclamation and rededication of the Second Temple while during Kwanzaa, the celebrations focus on empower-

ing and reaffirming the community's African cultural heritage. So, what does all this mean for creatives? This article will touch upon some ways in which creatives can spend the festive season.

The holiday season can mean a lot of different things to many people yet for creatives it can also be a time to think freely about new projects or revisit some pending creative projects. We usually spend the entire year working to make ends meet, working for survival or working for progression in our career and depending on the type of



work one is doing, it could potentially leave little time to create outside the bounds of the aforementioned.

During the festive season, most creatives are given a break from their daily challenges and this could be a chance to take some time to come up with something magical! Some of our best ideas can come from relaxing with our friends and family. Some Christians enjoy carolling during church services and other hymns. Others can enjoy an outing to their favourite restaurant or places that allow for large gatherings such as a national park or game reserve. Creatives can also opt to travel to a new environment, a place they have never been before. This doesn't mean it should be a country far away but any place close to home that one has not tried yet and can afford according to their budget.

In some African countries such as Zimbabwe, there are many things families can do during Christmas. For example, some will often opt for camping in big tents, in areas close to pools and lakes. This is especially popular when there's a mix of different wildlife and people can admire the calm scenery being surrounded by nature. A well-known place to go during this time of year is Victoria Falls where there are various hotels and

guest houses to stay in and activities to do. Others may like to stay indoors and watch movies or listen to music, while others may prefer outdoor socialising by organizing a traditional barbecue (braai).

In Lesotho, commonly, children between the ages of 10 and 15 prepare a dance step with an accordion player. The preparations normally begin two months prior, and the group will go to perform against another group in a different village almost like a competition. This will take place during the days leading up to Christmas and the main performance being on Christmas day. Meanwhile, other families back in the village will cook their best meals in large quantities to accommodate the rest of the children who will be moving from house to house, while they sing Christmas carols. This is a way for them to say thank you for the carols and share food as a village. This usually happens also during the days leading up to Christmas and Christmas morning.

While the kids are preparing for their competition and carols, the men and other older boys will go to the veldt and take their livestock to graze the night before Christmas. This gives space for everyone to wake up to watch the sun-



rise on Christmas day. The reason is that they believe the sun is active and moving around differently from any other day of the year.

Once all the activities and other responsibilities are done, everyone prepares to go to church and the children are given new Christmas clothes as presents. In the afternoon, men go out to a livestock show whereby they will showcase their animals and try to encourage as much movement as possible, otherwise, if the animals are too much in one place then the show may become boring and uneventful. So, this may involve moving around in a circle and other tricks. Mostly they will choose the ones who are the healthiest and well-fed. The purpose is to pick the best animals for Christmas dinner later in the day. In the evening hours of Christmas day, adults will start a party with those who are still awake, while the children go to bed.

Additionally, here are some other ways to make the holiday season more meaningful:

1. Starting a new tradition

One could try to see if there's anything new they can practice compared to previous years. For instance, if writing wasn't part of your Christmas plans, you

could make it a point to set aside a day towards Christmas to write something different keeping within the theme for example. One can also keep busy on a craft project, such as knitting or baking.

2. Spend the day reading/writing poetry

Some people like to read and write in their journals but often, life prevents certain individuals from taking enough time off to catch up on reading. We become too busy as humans and forget about the little things. As a creative individual, one could spend the day reading their favourite stories, old or new. One could also share some books with others that they are particularly fond of and have conversations based on the book such as a club or a get-together. Writing poetry is another way someone could spend Christmas. This could be based on love, family or any Christmas-related theme, and recite it to those who are spending the occasion with you.

3. Inquire about creative gift giving

At times, our finances can be a bit tight during this time of year as we are budgeting for many things such as food and decorations. This gives us the license to either create homemade thoughtful gifts for those we love or ask them what



they would prefer on a low budget. Gifts don't have to be extravagant or expensive, as long as it comes from the heart. Sometimes new clothes can also be considered as a considerate Christmas gift to children and adults.

4. Attending parties or events

For creatives such as musicians or DJs, one way to expand your network could be to attend Christmas parties or events in the city. For example, a musician can play Christmas songs at a hotel or a restaurant and entertain the guests. There are always venues that will cater to the Christmas theme and have a small to large gathering of people from all over the country. This could be the perfect time for some to show their work.

5. Using Christmas as a business opportunity

Painters or digital artists can also do posters for businesses or other social media posts centred around the Christmas theme. For instance, someone may have an advert for a Christmas special and one can design a creative post for that. Another example is that a painter can work on a piece of artwork for someone as a Christmas gift either for free or on commission. One can also design prints for t-shirts that are Christ-

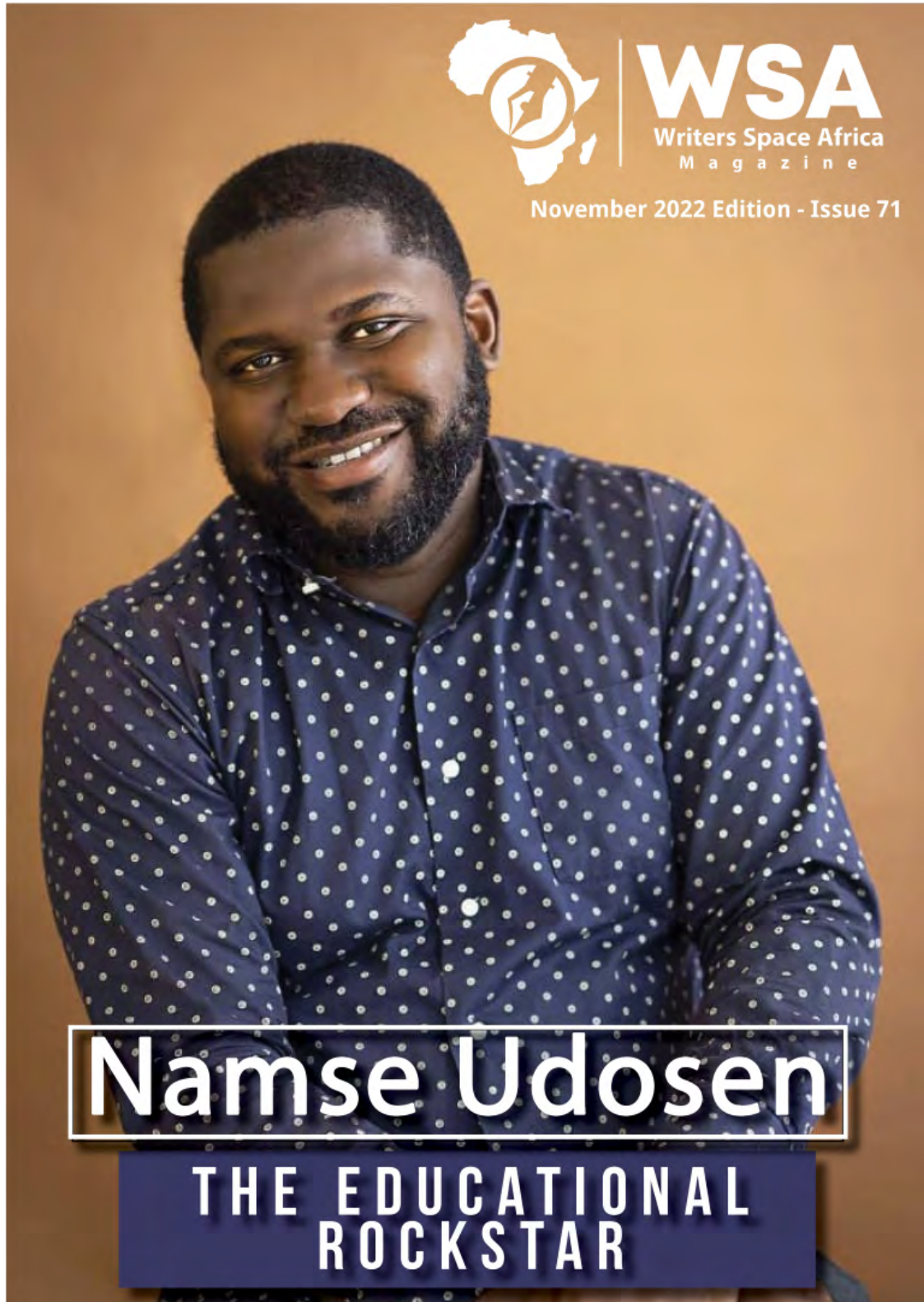
mas-themed or other clothing as people tend to like to match with the holiday season. This can be either a jersey with Santa on it or a top that has lyrics from various prayers that fit the season.

Conclusion

The important thing to note is that most people have their methods of spending the festivities and one should not judge the way others celebrate. While Christmas means many things to many people, to the creative it could mean a chance to be different from any other day. Creatives can try something out of their comfort zone that doesn't necessarily have to be professional. However, it all depends on the flexibility of time and the environment that is available to the creative.



[WSA MAGAZINE REVIEW] NOVEMBER 2022 EDITION



Namse Udosen

**THE EDUCATIONAL
ROCKSTAR**



The Spirit of the Land

Writer:

Shaza T. Reads, South Africa

Reviewer:

Funmi Richards

Nigeria



This particular story underscores a great desire of the fictional Karonowa and her people to understand their source, know their purpose and step into their future armed with knowledge. It is frankly a mirror of modern society where abuse is inevitable when the purpose is unknown.

Karonowa symbolises Mother Earth with touching similarities to Moana, where after Maui had stolen her heart, she became Te Kā, a demon of earth and fire and the main antagonist of the 2016 film.

The writer employs - nature, nurture and protection to tell a story that transcends Karonowa. A story that looks into the abuse of the gifts nature has given us and how the results of this abuse affect or impact our source and, in turn, our livelihood. It is quite befitting that it was written in the Novem-

ber issue as world leaders attend yet another summit to recover what we have stolen from nature — COP27 in Egypt.

The story also presents an opportunity for relearning and 'reculturing' from the point of view of a source, and its user as Karonowa drives her people away, regains herself, and then is willing to bring her people back in a show of forgiveness; now that they are aware of how they wronged her and what led to their hunger. This also bears a striking similarity to present climate issues and how nature is now trying to regain itself.

It is a pleasant yet didactic read, and the writer uses beautiful, poetic language. This would make for a good, captivating book reading for children to listen in.



Sweet Mother

Writer:

Mongkuo Armel, Cameroon

Reviewer:

Alice Kasonkomona
Zambia



'Sweet Mother' is a reminiscent story on the role of a mother in times of difficulty. Its beginning gives a captivating twist born from the changing weather, which ultimately causes Essah to be caught in a frenzy traffic jam. Listening to a song on the radio brought about a particular memory of their childhood and the challenges they faced as a family in trying to find food to satisfy each member's needs. He remembers with fondness his mother, who sometimes sacrificed eating anything for her kids and passersby.

In due course, circumstances changed,

thanks to their hard work and perseverance.

Nonetheless, Essah's appreciation for his mother grew stronger and stronger with time.

This is a beautiful write that I would recommend anyone to read. What a gift we have in mothers! Wendell Holmes, with insight, wrote: 'Youth fades, love droops, the leaves of friendship fall, but a mother's secret hope outlives them all.'

Thank you, Mongkuo Armel, for writing this inspiring story.



Life Happens



Writer:
Esther Uwaleke, Nigeria

Reviewer:
Benita Magopane
Botswana

Blunt. Esther Uwaleke made a blunt delivery in this flash fiction. There were no in-betweens; there was no room even to blink. Only until the very end of the story can breath double back. The sequential plotting of the story flows from daunting to daunting as a breadwinner struggles to put even crumbs of bread on the table for his family and himself. Everything with how Esther wrote the flash fiction from beginning to end has a domino effect – cause and effect as one problem leads the parents of a dying child to come up with solutions to prevent the inevitable death of their son to hunger. However, those solutions trigger more problems.

The fact that this father had to go back to the same people that kept shutting him down, wearing a shirt twice his size- due

to weight loss- perfectly shows the depths of helplessness he was in. In the end, hunger claimed his son's life and would probably claim his and his wife's soon, the wife who took a desperate measure of giving her body away for food. But in the end, all these degrading attempts to solve a problem bit the dust. The cause and effect of the story are that one problem leads to the attempt of a solution, but the solution only winds up becoming a problem once again. The narrative point of view from which the writer wrote this story adds all the fuel needed to drive it to best flash fiction. The title rings with a tone of despair and a hint of cynicism. The end complements the title, for death is part of life. It claims anyone, by any means, young or old. Sometimes some events in life leave us helpless. Life happens.



Home is Where You Leave



Writer:
Mohammad Sobur, Nigeria

Reviewer:
Frank Njugi
Kenya

Charles Burkowski once described his sadness with a descriptive metaphor “A beer-drunk soul which is sadder than all the dead Christmas trees of the world.” And with this same sense, the writer of ‘Home is where you leave’ embarks on a journey to describe his sadness and displeasure -using the same style-; On how the concept of where one belongs has been interfered with by happenings that go beyond the “casualties” control.

Through the writer’s attempt to briefly explore scenarios in different parts of the motherland, our minds are nudged to reflect on how in the modern world, “home” as a concept has turned into this kind of a mammoth that turns a place of Kinfolk Affiliations into one that a person should recoil or flee from to preserve one’s human hood.

The language used is top tier as there is the incorporation of some aesthetics of poetry

writing - such as allegorical phrases, which not only serve to make the poem more entertaining but also result in a reader getting a much more sensible understanding of the message that is being rendered.

The structure of the poem can be said to serve its purpose also as each line breaks, and each paragraph shift maintains a certain acoustic flow that the writer intelligently introduces to the reader from the poem’s beginning. The wise choice of words is also a clear indication of the writer’s commitment to bringing to the forefront the intended message of the poem as a whole.

Overall, it’s an excellent and reflective poem that dives to the core of a subject that should be reflected on by each of us.



Short Story

It Happened Twice

Writer:

Inimfon Inyang-Kparantia, Nigeria

Reviewer:

Laurent Bwesigye
Uganda



It happened twice is a story about a son and mother whose perception of life and understanding of each other's needs had been affected by the death of their father and husband, Ubong. Inimfon writes in third person to briefly lay out the events and skillfully narratively engage the reader. The first paragraph directly attacks the theme; she jumps into action by telling us about Eno's insatiable hunger, which was always ignored by the mother, Amaeti, who had been engulfed by a pessimistic idea about life. After the death of her husband, Amaeti went through a devastating period which formed her belief that if anyone had to get something, they had to get it through suffering. As the story unravels, we see how

it affects the son. Each time Eno asked for more food, shoes or a shirt, he was easily dismissed by Amaeti by saying, "I still have school fees for September" in the end, Eno started to have a lot of doubt if Amaeti was his biological mother, she could have adopted him, Eno would think. There are days he would call her a wicked woman because she refused to give her things when asked. Eno just continued to hunger for things that were never given to.

The mother never intended all this, but because she had to play both parts of mother and father, Amaeti had to develop a thick skin impenetrable to any sentiment.





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Merry Christmas

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