



# WSA

Writers Space Africa  
Magazine

FEBRUARY 2023 / ISSUE 74

## *Temwani Mgunda*

2022 African Writers Award Winner  
for Poetry, and a multi-talented  
creative writer, teacher,  
and journalist from Malawi

### **Desperate Vigil**

Bongani Zungu  
South Africa

### **A Bird of Passage**

Favour Obilor  
Nigeria

### **At the end of the Hallway**

Masinde Neema  
Kenya



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M a g a z i n e

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# Welcome

*“Sometimes you need to be alone. Not to be lonely, but to enjoy your free time being yourself.”*

—Anonymous

Loneliness is a complex emotion that can take on many forms and present itself in various contexts. It's not just about being alone; you can feel lonely even when surrounded by people. Despite the popular belief that technology and the fast-paced world should provide enough connection and companionship, loneliness is still prevalent.

But wait! Before you brush off loneliness as a negative emotion, let's take a moment to look at its silver linings. For starters, loneliness provides the opportunity for self-reflection and introspection. It helps us understand ourselves better and provides clarity on what truly matters to us. Loneliness can also be a creative

catalyst. With ample time to focus on our thoughts and imagination, it inspires new ideas and opens the doors to boundless possibilities. Finally, loneliness can lead to emotional growth and personal development. It helps us develop resilience, independence, and the ability to cope with difficult emotions.

Now, we aren't saying that loneliness is all sunshine and rainbows. But, just like everything else, it's about finding balance. Embrace it in moderation and let it be a tool for personal growth.



So, as you delve into this month's edition of the WSA magazine, remember to share it with others. You never know, it could be the company someone needs to find the light in their loneliness.

**Anthony Onugba**



## On the cover

→ This edition's spotlight is on the multi-talented Temwani Mgunda, the 2022 African Writers Award Winner (Poetry Genre), creative writer, teacher, and journalist from the beautiful country of Malawi

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## Awards

- **Monthly Digital Literary Magazine of the Year - 2022/2023**  
(The Corporate LiveWire Global Awards 2022/23)
- **Best Monthly Digital Literary Magazine (Africa) - 2022**  
(Global Business Awards 2022)
- **Best African Literary Magazine - 2021**  
(MEA Business Awards 2021)
- **Writer Promotion platform of the Year - 2021**  
(The Corporate LiveWire Global Awards 2021/22)

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# Chief Editor's Note

**Scholar Akinyi (Kenya)**

*Hey February, Hello Reader,*

February is here; the little month with love sprinkled all over it. So, then, what's with the month's theme, A Kiss of Loneliness when we dive into the month of love?

Here is the thing about love; there is an abundance of it all around us if only we looked closer. Look at the wonder of the swaying trees and their leaves, the smile of a little one, the wagging of a dog's tail and everything that stirs a little light sun in us.

In this month's edition, our writers have focused on what on the surface

level, looks like the contrast of love. My hope, dear reader, is that in the contrast; in the silence of loneliness, and as solitude embraces your being, you find the epiphanies that will bring you sizzles and bubbles of joy that will burst in your face with brilliant colours. That loneliness will not kiss you under, but from it, you will rise up above into the clouds of unmistakable joy. And that peace immeasurable, will find you in the silence!

Here's to a Happy, Love-ly, Reading Month!



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# THE KISS OF LONELINESS

**Tu Turton**  
*South Africa*

Your warm kiss woke me, and I embraced you as the night's sleep left me. We prepared ourselves for our journey miles away. I travelled miles and miles with you. We stopped the car to view our beautiful skyline and mountainsides. I walked in the refreshing sea water, and you looked on and smiled. We wondered what our beloved dog was doing at home with its two-master travelling to a new city.

You so often cuddled my head in your loving arms and allowed me to sleep. You kissed me on my head. I knew then your presence will never leave me as I helped you over the rocky patches of grass to enter the place where we were to witness the union of another child of yours.

When bedtime came you hushed me to bed. I did my ritual kisses and hug. You blew your kisses into the palms of my cupped hands. I closed my kiss and kept my hands close to my chest.

When you were no longer there, I walked around empty as a drum. When she came to our home, this foreign being unkind and uncaring, her husband said he knew

how you were doing.

I sat and ate my dry brown bread silently. I drank my coffee and rolled another slice of your dry brown bread in the palm of my hand. Two fried chops, two fried eggs and buttered toast they ate. The smell entered my nose and travelled with speed to my stomach. I knew that this was not for me.

I walked out of the back door silently. The fresh morning air carried your kiss and gently brushed my cheek. The loneliness of your kiss overwhelmed me, dear mother.





# Temwani Mgunda



# Creative Spotlight

Welcome to this February edition, readers! I am thrilled to bring you an exclusive interview with the 2022 African Writers Award Winner (Poetry Genre), the multi-talented Temwani Mgunda. A creative writer, teacher, and journalist hailing from the beautiful country of Malawi, Mgunda's work has captivated audiences worldwide and earned him recognition as one of Africa's most promising voices in poetry. Join me as we delve into his inspirations, writing process, and the impact he hopes to make through his work. Don't miss out on this chance to get to know this rising star! – PP Blessing

**PPBlessing:** *Could you introduce yourself?*

**TM:** I'm Temwani Mgunda, a Malawian creative writer, journalist and teacher of English and History

**PPBlessing:** *Which of these did you study professionally? Journalism, English or History?*

**TM:** Both. I first trained as a high school teacher of English and History. Later on, I studied Journalism.

**PPBlessing:** *How has combining these fields with creative writing been?*

**TM:** They blend very well. Actually, I have benefitted a lot from history in that a number of historical events have inspired some of my literary works. It is the same with journalism whereby some events I have covered have ended up in a poem or short story. As for English, I mostly write in that

language plus I benefitted a lot from what I learnt in English Literature both as a student in high school and college as well as a teacher of the subject.

**PPBlessing:** *Was your winning poem in last year's African Writers Award also inspired by history?*

**TM:** No, I would say by journalism in the sense that I have covered a lot about life in the slum townships.

→

**PPBlessing:** *What else inspires your writing apart from your job and history?*

**TM:** Personal experiences, reading the Bible and the Quran.

**PPBlessing:** *Part of your tagline on Twitter reads ex-cop. Were you a cop at some point?*

**TM:** Yes, though not a hardcore cop. It hap-

### What you should know...

→ *My father was a primary school teacher and he used to buy magazines for our home and we started reading and admiring the poems and short stories that were published in the magazines. We also had a rich bookshelf in the home.*



pened that I once taught at a Police Secondary School, the only high school in the country for wards of police officers. Now, it was noted that it wasn't easy to promote a civilian in the police service because promotions there follow ranks. To solve the problem, the police service trained us in the basics of police life and job and gave us police ranks. But our core job remained that of teaching.

**PPBlessing:** *Interesting. How was the experience?*

**TM:** It was quite exciting to be called Superintendent Temwani Mgunda, plus we enjoyed all the privileges accorded to police officers like at the officers' mess and the like. Once in a while, we wore the police uniform though it was not mandatory for us teachers. I authored a short story titled Detective Sergeant Kasongo which was based on my experience in the police service and it was published in Malawi News.

**PPBlessing:** *Where can one get a copy?*

**TM:** It was published at a time Malawi News was strictly published in print form around the year 2009 but I have the copy.

**PPBlessing:** *Nice... Why did you leave the school?*

**TM:** After I acquired a Bachelor's degree in Journalism, I went on to join the newsroom.

**PPBlessing:** *Has it been a worthy move?*

**TM:** In many ways, yes. It opened up a lot of opportunities for me.

**PPBlessing:** *Do you write other genres or it's strictly poetry?*

**TM:** I'm more of a short story writer than a poet. Sometime back I attempted writing plays but I stopped.

**PPBlessing:** *Why did you stop?*

**A point to note...**

→ *I authored a short story titled Detective Sergeant Kasongo which was based on my experience in the police service and it was published in Malawi News.*

**TM:** Most of the local publishers are not into publishing plays.

**PPBlessing:** *Does that mean all your stories and poems are already published?*

**TM:** No, I have fresh ones which are yet to be published, especially short stories. I currently write 'long' short stories which if they are to be published then it should be in anthologies or online publications because the print newspapers in my country do not allocate enough space for stories of that length.

**PPBlessing:** *Okay... Are any publishing plans on the ground?*

**TM:** Yes, I am compiling a short story collection likely to be published this year.

**PPBlessing:** *Self-published or through a publishing house?*

**TM:** Through a publishing house. The collection will include my short story which was shortlisted for the 2018 African Writers Awards.

**PPBlessing:** *When should we expect it?*

**TM:** By mid this year it should be ready. I

started working on it last year.

**PPBlessing:** *Godspeed. We look forward to that time. Will there be a book launch?*

**TM:** Funds permitting, I will hold one. But most of us rely on the media guys to publicise our works.

**PPBlessing:** *How come you don't have a personal blog or website seeing that most creative writers have one?*

**TM:** I think I am not much into these things but it's time I embraced such platforms.

**PPBlessing:** *Has winning the African Writers Award influenced your writing in any way?*

**TM:** Of course, I am now encouraged to do more on the international stage. The President of the Malawi Writers Union recommended me to the organisers of a continental writing competition to be one of the judges and I think it is because of my winning the award.

**Now we know...**

→ *I currently write 'long' short stories which if they are to be published then it should be in anthologies or online publications because the print newspapers in my country do not allocate enough space for stories of that length.*

**PPBlessing:** *That's awesome. Have you won other awards aside the African Writers Award?*

**TM:** Not winning but I was once a second runner up in the First Merchant Bank/Malawi Writers Union Short Story Writing Competition in 2005.

**PPBlessing:** *What has been your major drive as a creative writer?*

**TM:** The ambition to be recognized locally and internationally plus the passion to, in a small way, educate society through my works.

**PPBlessing:** *Have you achieved some part of these?*

**TM:** Yes, locally. At least I am among some of the recognised contemporary writers in Malawi and some of my poems and short stories are currently taught in high school as part of the Literature syllabus

**PPBlessing:** *Wow! Such amazing outcomes. How long have you been writing?*

**TM:** For close to 15 years now, I think.

**PPBlessing:** *What made you start writing?*

**TM:** My father was a primary school teacher and he used to buy magazines for our home and we started reading and admiring the poems and short stories that were published in the magazines. We also had a rich bookshelf in the home. When I went to secondary school, we had very helpful teachers of English who encouraged those of us who had the passion to write. I at-

tempted writing poems for the library and dining notice boards; they were liked by teachers and my fellow students. That's how it all started.

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

**TM:** I'm married to Umma and we have a daughter Anastazia

**PPBlessing:** *Which are your top 3 favourite books?*

**TM:** *Petals of Blood* by Ngugi wa Thiongo

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hussein

*Cry the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton

**PPBlessing:** *What would you tell a young writer trying to find his niche in writing?*

**TM:** To prioritize reading as widely as possible

**PPBlessing:** *In your years of writing, what have you found most helpful when writing?*

**TM:** Mostly having my colleagues critique my works before they are sent to publishers.

*...And with that, we conclude this month's enlightening conversation. We can't wait to introduce you to another incredible African writer next month, stay tuned!*

# DESPERATE VIGIL

Bongani Zungu  
*South Africa*



There was fright here, from this ancient fortress.  
The sun so soon became as black as figures; clothes  
five feet high  
The skies fell forth, clad in leather jerkin  
to the desolate.  
The moon turned to the shadows;  
there caught a baby's darkest laugh  
which spat and dropped in droplet  
grey hose.  
A sight no eye could see with the nook-noise  
of another's stare.  
Like a broken window clad in crinoline—  
There she waited and waited and waved  
in the vigil's rot—  
For her loss, yes, or the one who followed her  
windy sweat—  
But, of course, there was no-one there.

# LAST KISS

Steven Binen  
*Uganda*



The last kiss you stamped on my neck when we made love  
Flooded my eyes with tears  
And it made me lose a trace of even myself  
since I was soaked in a storm of fear  
When my lips got cracked.  
Because the radiations that you emitted burnt my soul  
With a sensation that was cosmic in kind,  
I entirely felt it in my heart that knelt on its muscles  
to plead for another day to stay in your chest  
But you kicked me out saying our love couldn't drive  
any further since it was stagnant.  
Your mind was blocked with departure to the one that was new  
So you decided to leave me alone  
In a circle with no one to share my thoughts with,  
Since there is no point of intersection between me  
and the rest that are still a part of my small world.  
The last smooch was poisonous to life  
because my eyelids fell to the ground  
And I was left in soils having no channel  
of joy to flow towards them.

By face value it is sadness  
because it is only you and only you  
you have no one with you  
if you need a hug, there is none to receive from  
if you need to cry, there is no shoulder to lean on  
if you need to laugh, there is no one to share a joke  
with.  
loneliness  
but is it that  
or is there light at the end of the tunnel?  
a moment of realisation  
a moment of self reflection,  
of understanding yourself more deeply by assessing  
oneself  
where wrong and what to improve or learn from  
on how to be better  
like a kiss to the frog that turned it to royalty.  
this too is it,  
with knowing oneself comes energy  
with knowing oneself comes a new breathe of air  
to correct the mistakes  
or to applaud oneself for "you did well,"  
in essence a new dawn arrives  
you arisen to grow bigger  
or to continue being the best that you are.

# LONE TIME

**Hamid Abiyo Omar**  
*Kenya*





# A BIRD OF PASSAGE

Favour Obilor  
*Nigeria*



I am a nomad, led in hand  
by my crimson past, carrying satires  
across the wastelands  
of sighs & of heaves.

I'm a nomad—a bird of passage—  
a wandering star, living in a sky  
I can not call my home.

My people see me & take to their heels  
I have become a prayer  
they no longer say 'amen' to.

My children see me & they all flee  
they never want to see, or even  
be like me— my friends  
have condemned me  
to my very end— I'm the sun  
they wish to have never shone.

Everything good debars me—  
Even death has abhorred me.

I am the nomad  
who's not fit for living  
neither am I worthy  
of dying.

# PICKY PECK

Meuyanui Sydonie Wayih  
Cameroon



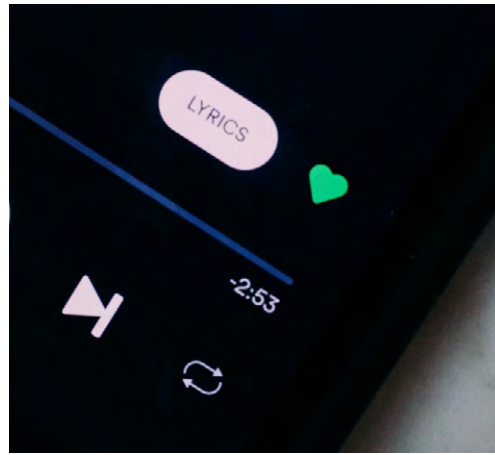
Broken into pieces none to reminiscent,  
To what was foretold, we faultily behold.  
The promise we deem makes no sense,  
Do not refute, it's the feast of loneliness.

Plain words from the Word, we conceal  
Vide, nos cœurs sont seul  
Sole hearts cry, 'Take it all, obscurity!'  
That's "a-keep-it-short-and-simple, solitude".

Pursue not Orwell's 1984, 'Ignorance is strength'  
For no piece of life can you rent  
When buss of soleness is a muss for weakness!

# THE SONG I KNOW NOT

Charlotte Apiyo  
*Uganda*



I don't know about this song,  
It rings in my ears like a dreadful death-wish

Or a death wish it is.

Smiles withered into pale and grey  
And dear dad sat on the edge of life  
And embraced death like his trusted  
pills and caffeine.

So the song bleeds more,  
Stretching its rhymes and beats  
to the shores of my upbringing  
I've been tamed by my thoughts  
about childhood and family.  
Swayed my hips to the footsteps  
of the reckless rapists.

This song of loneliness rides  
through my spine and to my bare flesh  
Like a venomous fang.

It gave me the dark scars on my neck and thighs  
And for the very first and last time,  
daddy left without a single utter of goodbye...  
And still, the song went on.

# LOVE, GONE

Mussa H. Mwinga  
Tanzania



My house is no longer a home,  
My friends fear for what I have become  
Some say I was a fool to fall for you,  
But beware of what love can make you do.  
You kept feeding me lies, in every word, every phrase,  
I was a rat running around in your little maze.  
When I was overwhelmed by love,  
You were planning your next move.  
Hopeless and helpless I wander around,  
Smoke, drugs and booze can't stay off my mind.  
I do not recognise myself anymore,  
People say I resemble a creature from a lore.  
Painful it is, down to my last bone  
To accept the truth, that you are gone,  
Go on my love, I wish he loves you better,  
Go on my love, I wish I had known better.

# AWAY

Comfort Okyere  
*Ghana*



Oh, how empty the sofa looks!  
No one to sit in them to read some books  
The garden untended,  
The flowers unwatered.

The breeze from the sea  
Whispers across the balcony,  
The windows slap each other  
Oh! What a meal of cacophony.

The dusty pathway,  
The blurred window panes  
Resuscitate the pain  
And tell of the measure of days  
Oh dear, that you've been away.



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# AT THE END OF THE HALLWAY

Masinde Neema  
*Kenya*



Diallo had tied my hands behind my back and put me in the corner of the room. He stood by the hinges of the thick metal door and kept his eyes trained on the gap between the door frame and the door itself. We were playing prisoner, ironically, and he was keeping watch for when the guard might return. He had ordered me to remain quiet and would turn back every now and

then to silence me when he thought I was about to speak. His eyes would burn into mine as he wordlessly brought an index finger to his thin dry lips.

Not long after, I grew tired of the monotony of the game and stood up. I undid the imaginary shackles that Diallo had used to keep me captive, walked up to him

and gently tapped him on the shoulder. He nearly jumped out of his skin and I couldn't help but laugh.

"I'm bored now, let's play something else," I said.

Diallo searched my weary eyes.

"Like what, Amanda? What else could we possibly play in here?" he asked.

"Ooh! What about 'I spy'?" I smiled, and then Diallo smiled too – a little joke between us. We looked around the stark four-square-metre room, bare, save for a narrow bed frame with a thin mattress and a small, metal ablutions bowl. The white of the walls had scattered scratches with droplets of red where I had attempted to claw my way out. There was little to spy in this room, and the game would be over within minutes.

Diallo and I had little of such jokes. It was why he was my favourite. His sister Esi was a little cold and their cousin, Kirui, was moronic and slow-witted. Diallo usually came with them both and we would all play together.

Today, Diallo had come only by himself. I wasn't pleased with this as I held the maxim "the more the merrier" quite close to heart. Despite my complaints, Diallo would not go back for the others. Because I was unable to leave, I couldn't go and get them myself either. I, therefore, had to be content with having only Diallo for the company this time.

"I don't know what to play anymore since you no longer want to be my prisoner,"

Diallo announced with a slight frown on his face. I was tired of being his prisoner. I spent my days as someone else's prisoner and could hardly begin to do the same as a pastime.

"Diallo, I've had enough of that!"

Footsteps echoed with a rapid crescendo on the other side of the door.

"Sshhh!" said Diallo, and I kept my chapped lips pressed together. It was the guard.

The little flap in the centre of the door slid open with a screech, and a tray of food appeared. The guard said nothing, closed the flap and went on his way.

Diallo ran over to the tray before I could. "Eww!" he said, and I guessed what it might be. I walked over to the tray, knowingly, and the image of cold rice with sticky bean soup that I had conjured in my mind materialised in front of me. I had grown used to the leathery texture of the food since my arrival here, and often found myself looking forward to the bland, unsatisfying meals, which were also the only indications of the time of day. This was the second meal. The first had come with a cup of what I assumed to be coffee. My stomach rumbled as I grabbed the dark-grey tray with both hands and headed to the space on the floor at the foot of my bed.

A heavy silence invaded the emptiness around me. I jerked my head backwards to survey my little box. Empty. Diallo had left without saying goodbye. I made a mental note to admonish him for that the





next time he came to visit. Loneliness set in again. He and I seemed to be bound in an inseparable way – like twins conjoined at birth, with no medical intervention in existence to split them.

I ate slowly, savouring each bite of cold rice and tasteless beans. I dragged out the eating process, as it was one of the few activities that filled the infinite, excruciating blocks of time. Between meals, I had nothing to do and nothing or no one to look at.

I wish I had a mirror or at least a cloth that I could use to shine the metal of the door so that I could see, what I assumed would be a pitiful reflection. Sometimes I would spend hours feeling the contours of my face, trying desperately to transmit an image from the blistered skin of my hard hands to my mind's eye. I am yet to be successful. I am afraid I am forgetting what I look like. I remember that I was beautiful once. I only remember that I was. I don't recall what made me beautiful. Was it the

shape of my nose? Was it the mystery hidden in the brown of my eyes? The tone of my once perfectly, clear skin? I only mention these as they are stereotypical of beauty; I fail to remember beauty as it once related to me.

I craved the days when Diallo, Esi and Kirui would come. When they didn't, I would go places. My favourite place to go was my grandmother's house. It was a quaint, single-storey townhouse with a modest garden in the front and a large manicured backyard with a swing set and a swimming pool. I would knock on the wooden, patterned front door and she would pull it open, slowly, because of her dwindling strength. Her small frame would then appear from behind the door and she would smile up at me, opening her skinny arms so that I could step into her warm embrace.

My cousins would be there, and we would run around the narrow corridors playing "Cops and Robbers" until granny ban-

ished us to the backyard, where we would take turns pushing each other into the ice-cold water of the swimming pool.

Sometimes I would go to an open field – bright, airy, and bursting with sunlight. I would walk through the knee-high grass, barefoot, towards the sun. The sky would be a clear azure, and I would be the only one walking amongst the flora of the field. I would stretch out my arms, close my eyes and crane my neck upwards. The warm rays of the sun would bathe the entire surface area of my skin: my face, my neck, my bare arms, and penetrate the thin fabric of my linen dress. A smile would tease my lips, slowly morphing into a beam, and then an eruption of giggles. I would be so ridiculously content. Oh! how I missed the sun.

I scoffed the last spoonful of rice and set the tray back into the meal flap. The guard would return sometime to retrieve it.

“Was that delicious?”

I turned and saw Diallo splayed out on my bed. He had returned.

“I think she enjoyed it.” Esi appeared next to him.

“Yep! The plate is almost spotless.” It was Kirui, staring at the empty tray at the door.

I bubbled up with joy, elated to have a room full of people.

“Esi! Kirui! I didn’t think you would come today. I thought Diallo kept you both away.”

“I had to go back for them because you looked so sad,” said Diallo.

Both Esi and Kirui giggled and made their way to me, pulling me into a tight embrace. The air left my lungs, but a smile remained fixed on my face. At that moment, the loneliness I harboured constantly like a dead weight felt lighter. Esi and Kirui then began to tickle me aggressively. I broke out into bouts of laughter, which were punctuated by cries for release: “Stop! Stop!”, I begged, but they gave me no reprieve. Diallo jumped off the bed to join them, and soon we were all on the floor in tears.

...

My boots cling tightly to my feet as I walk towards the solitary confinement cell of the prisoner on death row. The eerie echo of my steps forces me to pick up my speed. I look down at the prisoner’s supper. Is that supposed to be meat?

I get to the door at the end of the hallway and push the meal flap open. I quickly replace the empty lunch tray with the dinner tray.

I am only ever able to hear the prisoner. I wonder what she looks like. Today she’s laughing hysterically and begging Diallo to stop. There is no one else in the cell.

I close the flap and head back to my post. Of all the prisoners I’ve seen go into solitary, I have never come across one who has fallen so far off the delicate edge of sanity.

I pity her, and all the lost souls that can never be saved.

# YOU KNEW

Juliet Ikegwonu  
Nigeria



My tears touched the paper before my ink did. Dabbing at the fluid only blotted the A4 paper and made thin the embedded fibres. I didn't bother to reach for another paper. Littered around my desk were balls of scrunched-up notes. Some were still smooth - I hadn't bothered squeezing them. It reminded me of a Disney musical I watched years ago, where the groom was unable to write his vows.

I didn't have to write though. I could have

called or left a voicemail for you. But I didn't.

I had written the words repeatedly till the page filled and my wrists cramped. But maybe that's all I needed to say: you knew

\*\*\*\*\*

You knew I hated when you and dad fought. It went on for hours after I did my chores and assignments. Dad worked long hours and you would wait for him

in faded blue jeans. You stomped around the kitchen until dad came home looking tired and an old argument would flare up. You and dad fought everywhere: at home, at church, at my birthday party. The bigger the audience, the louder your voice. I made a chart for school functions; you attended alternate events and he attended the events you didn't.

You knew I hated it even more when you and dad divorced. Dad moved far away and I saw him only on weekends. I couldn't talk to him like I used to. I had to wait; not for him to be back from work, but for the digital clock on the settee to read 6:00 pm. If I waited too long, I had to wait till the next day. And the weekends I spent with dad, you stood by the door reminding him of the consequence of returning me late.

You knew I hated it when you looked at your wedding album because you cried yourself to sleep. When you weren't crying, you were drinking. I made sure a bottle was always in the house because then, I won't hear your sniffles when I passed your door. When I hid the album, you found it under my pillow, destroyed it, and still drank. When you first went to my PTA meeting drunk, you cried, apologized, and promised that things would return to normal. When you forgot to turn off the gas, nearly burning the house because you were hung over, you also apologized. And then you forgot to pick me up from school and didn't apologise. You stopped apologizing.

You knew I didn't like it when your friends came over. You called them your 'support

group.' They were loud and I couldn't study. They visited frequently and sometimes, some of them stayed the night. The men always stayed the night. Before going to school, I had to clean up after them else I didn't get breakfast. "Taking care of the house is not a one-person job," you said.

You knew I complained to dad about you. When he brought me home, he demanded to see you privately. He spoke furiously, pointing at your face while I watched through my half-opened door. Your eyes slimed, and your voice increased. His voice increased too until the neighbours complained. He stormed out and you fell on the couch and cried, and I threw a blanket over you. For a few days, your friends did not visit and suddenly they came back 'en masse'.

You knew I hated coming home to the smell of stubbed cigarettes. The smell of nicotine itched my nostrils and the smoke made my eyes watery. You knew I held my breath to avoid smelling the alcohol covering you like a cologne.

I would rush to my room when your 'support group' visited, making sure to lock the door behind me. It was the only way I could sleep. Once, I forgot and woke up with a man sprawled on the floor. I dreamt about him for weeks. Sometimes I still do. But in my dreams, I am asleep as he hovers around me, drooling over my motionless form.

You knew dad was working on a custody case with a lawyer. The lawyer smiled so I knew it wouldn't be long. But later



dad said lawyers were on strike and the judge wasn't on the seat. He said I had to be strong a little longer. I prayed for the strike to end, but it didn't, it went on for months. The lawyer said he knew someone in Abuja that would expedite our hearing based on the sensitive nature of the case. I thought I would go mad. Dad promised that it was going to be OK. 'We were going to get through this,' he promised with a strained smile.

You knew I hated Andrew. Of all your friends, I hated him the most. He was the one who had slept sprawled on my room floor. It was he who always accidentally brushed my buttocks. He first brought home the white powder. The one I later knew to be cocaine. I saw you give it your

first try. You were sceptical, but you did it anyway. And weeks later, I came home from school to find you unconscious on the floor with the powder on your nose. The powder made you happy and jumpy and then sleepy.

You knew Andrew always seemed to mistake my door for yours. I would hear him turning the knob before chuckling 'oops' and heading the other way. When I told dad, he punched Andrew repeatedly in the face. Your lawyer prevented dad from seeing me for six weeks, but Andrew didn't mistake my room again.

You knew we took that picture on my 12th birthday: me and dad. We sat on the bleachers, eating ice cream, and laughing,

even as our team was defeated. It was the second time my birthday coincided with a weekend. We smiled because it would be the 'bestest' weekend ever. We were going to spend the night at Auntie's place. We didn't have to worry that the sun was going down. It was dad's weekend.

You knew the picture was the only thing I had of him. The only way I knew to keep his memories alive after he was hit by a drunk driver. I couldn't sleep without the picture beneath my pillow. You knew Andrew seized it and hid it, allowing me to have a peek only when I did as he asked.

Sometimes, Andrew bought provisions. He didn't "accidentally" graze my skin anymore, but his gaze became bolder. When I rushed to my room to avoid meeting him, he 'forgot' to buy food for weeks. And later, you murmured into my ear

"Your father is dead! No alimony, no child support. No money!"

You pulled back as I noticed your wrist, they were finger marks on them from where you had been clawing at yourself. I lifted my eyes to yours but you turned away mumbling something incoherent.

At dinner, Andrew sucked on the chicken leg too long with his eyes fixed on my chest.

You knew I hated going to your room. But you said the picture was by the lampstand.

Andrew's shadow darkened the door as soon as I entered. I turned, suddenly realizing he was between me and the door.

"Looking for something?" He held the pic-

ture in between his fingers.

"Give it back!" I didn't care that my voice shook. I could feel the cloud that hovered over our roof descend and close in. It became harder to exhale

Andrew smiled. "When did you become so rude?" He laughed as he rubbed his finger on his upper lip. "But my, my, you certainly have grown."

I picked up the bed lamp behind me. It felt cold and solid. I swung it over my shoulder, but he was faster.

The ashen clouds constricted faster and became a ball lodged in my throat.

I felt the intrusion into my body like a battering ram. My upper body was bent over the table. His arm was like an iron across my back pressing me to the table.

My throat felt achy though you swore I never made a sound. Auntie's car pulled into the driveway minutes later. She met the three of us in the parlour; me staring into the candelabra, you tracing the floor patterns, and Andrew picking his teeth behind you. I must have said something to you because you shook your head. I picked up the picture beside your feet and walked out.

You told Auntie I just had a case of flu. I never said differently.

\*\*\*\*

My tears fell in torrents as I folded the letter into an envelope, hastily scribbling down the address before placing it in my mailbox.

*YOU  
ARE  
LOVED*

## Calling Christian Writers

THE CRUSADERS, an online nondenominational Christian Magazine, is calling for submissions in Christian poetry and stories for its third edition.

The submission window is from December 7 until February 7, 2023.

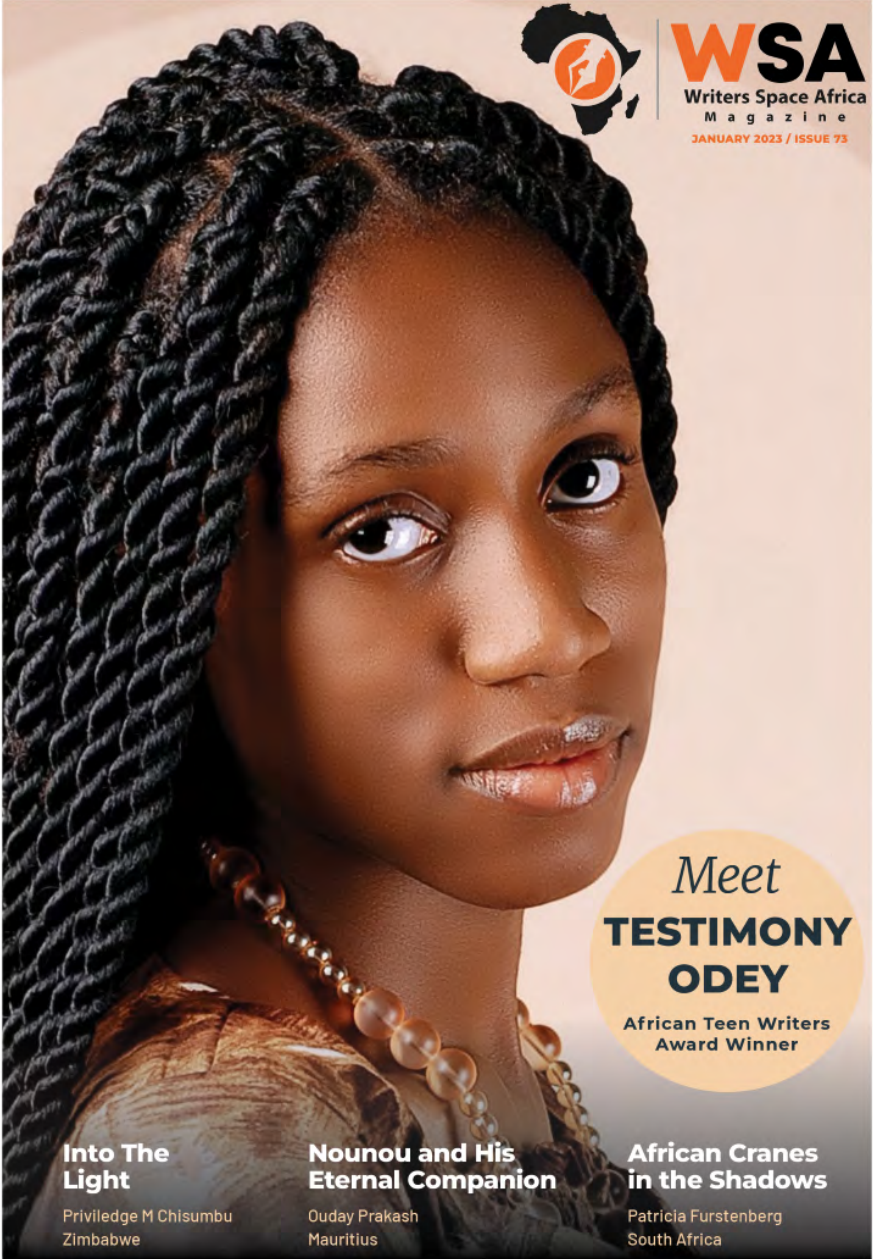
### Theme: FAITH


- We accept poetry, and prose (short stories and articles).
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- Please use your entry creatively to evangelise.
- Only selected entries will be published on April 7, 2023.
- We accept one entry per writer.
- Please visit [www.crusadersmagazine.com](http://www.crusadersmagazine.com) to submit your entry.

# WSA Magazine

# REVIEW

*January 2023 Edition*



 **WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Magazine  
JANUARY 2023 / ISSUE 73

*Meet*  
**TESTIMONY  
ODEY**  
African Teen Writers  
Award Winner

**Into The  
Light**  
Priviledge M Chisumbu  
Zimbabwe

**Nounou and His  
Eternal Companion**  
Ouday Prakash  
Mauritius

**African Cranes  
in the Shadows**  
Patricia Furstenberg  
South Africa



# SHADOWLAND

A Children's Literature by Stephen A. Kube, Cameroon  
 Reviewer: Anthony Nwagbaoso Onyeador, Nigeria



This is a vividly captured story of how we perceive shadows. The writer rightly paints the mood, behaviour and dispositions to an abstractly impossible state, a detailed description of a place.

The story begins by giving a yearning for a location called shadowland. And from there went on to express his feelings about why it's feared and shouldn't be. Thus, it

gave illustrations of the practical use of Shadows, thus challenging the audience to use it more effectively than the writer.

The practical implications of Shadowland are to assist any with difficulty to make such a tool of courageous but tutoring experience for the audience to explore. Shadowland is eventually an experience worth trying.

# HALF-LIFE

**A Creative Non-Fiction by Faith Simbizo, Tanzania**  
**Reviewer: Mathew Daniel, Nigeria**

Grief is inconceivable, and one would almost never know what it does to the next person except they tell it. Life is brief, however, beautiful. Death is cruel, yet all living must die. Sometimes, it is not death that hurts us, sometimes, it is just the memories, and every day, I see grief in a new light.

Recently, Akpa Arinzechukwu embarked on a translation quest alongside A'bena Awuku-Larbi. The first poem he translated, 'It is impossible to live' by Pamilerin Jacob, struck a lightning bolt straight to my heart. Although Pamilerin's poem was written in response to Nigeria's Youth End-SARS march, what struck me was in his 7th stanza:

*"When Jimoh died, the sky was perfect. I consider this cruelty. When Ikechukwu died, the sun did not flicker.*

*I consider this cruelty."*

In Faith Simbizo's 'Half-Life', I could feel the surging emotions of her pen, perhaps because I've experienced grief. Some of Faith's salient points that struck me, like in Pamilerin's poem, include when she wrote of the cruelty of nature, unflinching at the loss of a beloved and the fake love people shower. It is cruel for people who rarely

cared about you to show up wearing facades of love and care. It's too cruel to the grieving and as hard as swallowing stone, having to swallow those pretentious gestures.

Sometimes, knowing you have to move on is perhaps even too cruel for you. When a beloved dies, it would seem like a part of you died with them and moving on would seem like resurrecting the part of you that died while leaving them dead. That, perhaps, is also cruelty.

Often, I do not get drawn into the artistry of a work that circles grief. However, it is impossible to overlook Faith's artistic flow and powerful imagery that makes it easy for almost any reader to stay plunged in the abstruseness of grief.

A little takeaway from Half-Life, for me then, would be the appreciation of the ephemeral life we are given. Perhaps, this is the clarity grief brings. To grab every moment by the scruff of the neck and embrace the magic of people, of love, of time-passing, appreciating life more, because, of course, there's beauty and joy in the ephemeral, but rarely without the pain.

# DÉJÀ VU

A Flash Fiction by Muoghalu Britney, Nigeria

Reviewer: Elizabeth Nafula, Kenya



The brevity in Moughalu's *Déjà vu* is what I admire. Dorothy Parker, a renowned flash fictionist, said, "Brevity is the soul of lingerie. A flash story is the lingerie itself, an invitation to come hither, a promise, a hint.

The opening phrase, "I'm a girl with the flow", kind of girl, slapped the hell out of me. What did she mean? I realised she meant she lets things happen and accepts the situation rather than trying to control it.

She narrates how her life started with an unplanned trip then it happened that she met the supposed love of her life. She later realised that she could fall in love not strategically but recklessly. Initially, she had never embraced the concept of monogamy, and so she let the bi-racial God sweep her off her feet into bliss. I like how the writer has expressed herself, and she feels certain about the occurrence of events.

The story starts late, which is expected for flash fiction. When the writer says she cannot explain how she screamed a tearful yes when the love of his life went down

on bent knees or how she walked down the aisles in a princess dress to tie herself to someone permanently. She doesn't care about what happened; the bottom line is she's married.

The writer further shocks the reader when she brings in the subject of the bi-racial man who is constantly on little blue pills. For the writer, it is a *déjà vu*. She borrowed the word from French, which is a state where a person feels certain or cognitive judgement that he or she has previously seen or experienced something that is being encountered for the first time.

The title was well thought out and had a hist impact on the context used to drive the plot forward. The fact that this story is a *déjà vu*, I'm glad that the writer let things happen and doesn't try to control what happened to her.

I look forward to reading more flash fiction stories from Britney. Thank you for sparking my interest in this story. I highly recommend this flash piece; it's worth reading.

# YOU ARE NOT ALONE

A Poem by Zainab Omotayo Raji, Nigeria

Reviewer: Prudence Gakedirelwe, Botswana

The greatest force that mankind reckons with from time to time is loneliness. It makes the spirit crumble and tells the being of its unnecessary and worthlessness. Shadows are attributed to immortality and believed to be sinister. Such superstitions exist in the land of the living through a projection and entry point from outer dimensions. These anomalies are manipulated through faith. This preview catches onto a religious perception and a course to a positive mindset. Positivity is what is being attracted and manifested.

This rhythmically structured poem of a well-woven iambic-metered ending of rhyme scheme, 'aa bb cc dd ee cc df dd', cradles the poem's coherence with cadence, reassuring a pulse in the poem and also for coercion emphasis.

Exaggeration is used S1\_L2 to characterise the depth of a matter or challenge. It is known to us that rough roads are gravelled, and such roads do not present an easy journey. As such, this exaggeration helps the reader to relate to past life experiences, as life itself is so. The poem deeply permeates the presence of an ominous being that remains guardian and companion through all life trials. This characteristic drives the poem from its beginning through a deeper

symbolism brought forth by the description of events that show lifelessness and the constant and undying profession of there being somebody with you through the words "you are not alone".

The paradox in the last stanza takes the reader to the point of 'light at the end of a tunnel'.

Shadows exist in the presence of a light source, which gives them a figure or form. The lingering effect coming throughout the whole poem brings life and light through hope resonated by the voice of the persona as an encouragement of stealth and stillness in the time of the night or loss.

The night and death being the main causes of shadows, are used in the poem to drive us to the core of the message. It is in the night where shadows are formed, and it is in death where loneliness is birthed; whereby a loved one is left and passes on to be a shadow in the human imagination and the afterlife. These aspects help readers' thoughts gather in one place and become the thread that ties it all to appreciate the ending as written and conveyed.

# I MET A HOBO ONCE

**A Short Story by Tumisang Shongwe, South Africa**  
*Reviewer: Benita Magopane, Botswana*



The main character of Tumisang Shongwe's *I Met a Hobo Once* is only living to fit the mould. He lives to fulfil the book, the "religious" book of society, about what/how a young man should be or be like, look or look like, and even sound or at least sound like. And if it had a title, it would be called, 'how to be an original fake.' Get it? Anyway, he is living this dreadfully drab life until a hobo comes along. Someone deemed a human decay of society, whom nothing could be expected of, or nobody would ask for anything - hardly.

However, in this short tale, this homeless man shares a piece of his mind with a young man who thought he had one, but the truth is, it was held hostage by the wrong ideals he was living by. Help came from an unexpected place, from an unin-

vited company. From a bold hobo, who knew that if he asked to talk, his request would have been declined, but because of all the times he had observed this young man, what he had to say would have to be said without request. And the last thing the hobo heard from that young man after all his advice was, " Thanks, bro. But I'll pass." I believe he understood that he couldn't convince a proud young man in an instant but that at least he could sow a seed in his thoughts. That could get him thinking just a tad different because many big changes begin as little thought. The madman succeeded at sneaking into his mind, slowly starting to become free. An enjoyable story that pops with the light humour provided by the hobo. A lovely character, and I loved him the most.

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