



WSA
Writers Space Africa
Magazine
APRIL 2023 / ISSUE 76



Ogbu **EME**
The Writivist



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Prepare to be inspired by the extraordinary achievements of Ogbu Eme, a gifted author who has captured the hearts of readers worldwide.

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Editorial

Scholar Akinyi (Kenya)

The Spirit of Ubuntu that runs in our blood keeps us all in one accord, but as sure as the day breaks, the fabric that holds our sense of brotherhood together almost always gets a stain or two, or ten thousand, whenever politics enters the room. We draw lines and draw machetes. We scamper for safety as others gather for measly handouts; all for politics. For some, politics gives another flicker of hope that, after all, there is a chance for a better tomorrow. Hope that there is a turnaround looming somewhere with a progressive politician who needs but a chance to show it.

Delving into the theme of

African Politics is a long shot since every single unit of political geography in Africa has experienced it differently.

In this edition, we bring to you a broad range of what experiencing politics in Africa feels and looks like, from the eyes and pens of the month's featured writers. In this buffet, savour the sour and the delicious of African Politics. With a flowing river of literature, I welcome you once again to the April Edition of WSA magazine.



Take a seat and look straight into the mirror that so defines African Politics... that so reflects on us.

Karibu tena!



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- **Best Monthly Digital Literary Magazine (Africa) - 2022**
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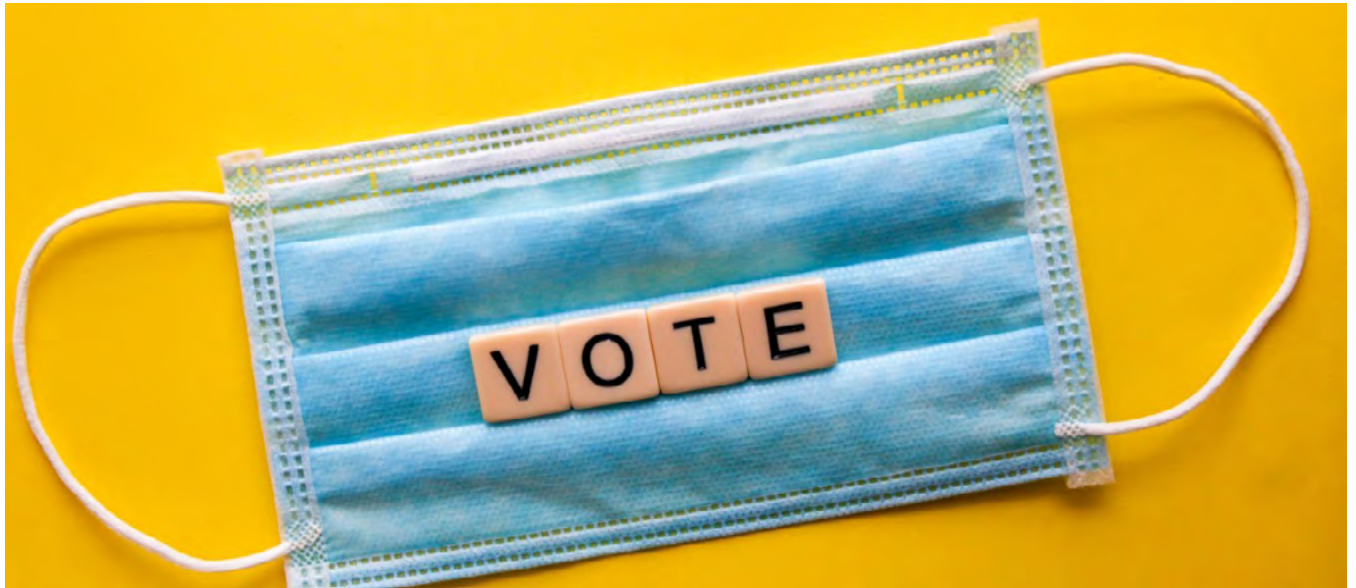
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CONSEQUENTIAL VS. CATEGORICAL MORAL REASONING

THE DILEMMA OF DICTATORSHIP IN AFRICAN POLITICS

PART 1

Solomon A. Mutagaya
Uganda



About 12 years ago, Professor Michael Sandel, in his Harvard Lecture on “Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do? The Moral Side of Murder” discussed the moral dilemma involved in taking particular decisions in different sets of scenarios.

What would you do if you had to choose between killing one person to save five others or doing nothing even though you knew five people would die right before your eyes? What would you do? Professor

Michael Sandel began his course on moral reasoning with that case. When the majority of students chose to kill one person to save five others, Sandel offered three identical moral conundrums, each carefully engineered to make the decision harder. As students argued for their opposing choices, it became apparent that, as humans, our moral assumptions are often inconsistent and complex.

Scenario 1a: Suppose you’re the driver of a

trolley car and it loses control. At the end of the road, you notice five road workers. You realize that the truck can't stop. Assuming that you know that if you continue down the road, you will surely knock all of them down to death. In the middle of this, you notice that there is a side road, at the end of which there is only 1 worker. Would you turn the steering to knock down the 1, sparing the 5, or would you do otherwise? What is the right thing to do?

Scenario 1b: This time you're not the driver of the trolley car but merely an onlooker. You see it speeding with no brakes toward the five workers; it will surely kill them. You notice that next to you is a man who is standing and leaning forward. You could give him a slight push; he would fall into the road and die, but it would stop the trolley car from crushing the five. Would you push him into the way?

Scenario 2: Imagine you are an emergency doctor in the emergency room, and you have six patients brought to you. They have all been involved in a terrible car accident. Five of them sustain moderate injuries (which, if not treated, would lead to death), but one of them is severely injured and could die too. Would you spend the whole day caring for the one severely injured patient (where the other five would die), or would you care for the five and let the one die? The majority of us would opt to save the five so that one dies and the other five live.

Scenario 3: Imagine being a transplant surgeon, and this time, there are five patients in need of an organ transplant to survive.

One needs a heart, one needs a lung, one needs a kidney, another needs a liver, and the fifth needs a pancreas. You have no organ donors, and as you prepare to watch your patients die, you realize that in the next room, a healthy man who came in for a checkup is sleeping. You could go in quietly and yank out the five organs. He could die, but you would save all the other 5. Would you in this case sacrifice the one so that the other four live? (Following the same philosophy you did in Scenario 2?) I don't think so.

Certain moral principles and paradigms emerge from this discourse. The notion that the right or moral thing to do generally depends on the consequences that will result from your action. That group of five will live even if one must die. Consequentialist moral reasoning is based on the idea that what is right or wrong depends on what happens after an action. (Scenarios 1a and 2).

On the other hand, categorical moral reasoning tries to find morality in certain duties and rights, no matter what happens. Taking into account the value of the act itself, let the results be what they are. It is categorically wrong to kill an innocent person, even for the sake of saving five lives (Scenario 1b and 3).

This speech also sets a model for the "so-called" dictators in Africa throughout history and even today. Consequentialists have tried to find morality in the results of what people do, while Categoricalism has tried to find morality in certain duties and rights, no matter what the results are.

Superimposing this philosophy on the African Political Framework points us to the fact that the question of what is right and what is wrong to do for a country and its people is not always black and white.

Long-serving leaders, 'dictators,' and others who crave power have dominated African politics for a long time. Labeling such politicians as adversaries of democracy without understanding their motives. The translation loses so much meaning that we don't care what they do or what they should do. Many people think that the motivations of African "dictators" are love for their people and country. But we seem to miss the other side of the coin.

African political development accelerated in the decade after World War II. The pan-African anticolonial movements showed how socialist and labor movements around the world have different ideas. Julius Nyerere in Tanzania and Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana are examples of Western European socialists. Another shows Algerian radical Maoist Frantz Fanon, Kenyan Dedan Kimathi, and Cameroonian Ruben Um Nyobé.

No wonder the names Nyerere and Nkrumah sound much more common than Kimathi, Fanon, and Nyobé. A very unfair comparison has been made because we don't understand how African politics work intellectually. We've become so used to the western waves and standards of democracy that we use them as a measuring stick and compare them to our own. It hasn't worked, but regardless, we are not



about to stop.

When a dictator's actions are based on what will happen as a result, we love them for it. But we don't like it when he tries to find morality in certain duties and rights, no matter what the consequences are. This is a way of looking at the quality of the act itself, no matter what happens. We quickly jump on the bandwagon of criticism.

Western democracy's venomous utopia may have distorted our judgment. It has made us despise our own and label them non-democratic and tyrannical. Consider Muammar Gaddafi, the great Libyan politician, revolutionary, and political theorist. He developed Libya and galvanized the tribes. The public called him a dictator for staying in power despite his aim of creating an African Central Bank.

All leaders have shortcomings. Selfishness, lack of accountability, and habitual denial of personal rights are other temptations. But dictatorships help keep governments stable, cut down on crime, and put government money where it's needed.

When we talk about African leaders based on how they rule, we have to look at how they deal with specific problems as they come up naturally in their time and place instead of trying to force a utopia on them, which isn't always the best way to do things. As consequentialist and categorical moral reasoning shows, the right cause of action isn't necessarily black and white.





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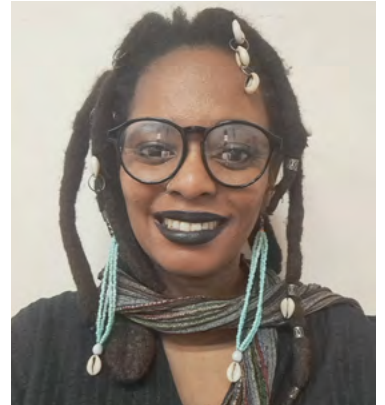
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HOPE FOR AZANIA

Ngemntu Vuyokazi
South Africa



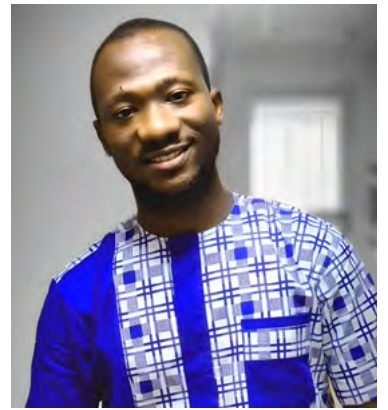
The respirator seemed to be sucking the air out of his decayed lungs instead of assisting Bra Joe's breathing. Self-pity accompanied the realisation that he was to die an indigent despite having squandered his youth in exile 'fighting the good fight'. Memories of his sacrifices pervaded that hazy state of drowsiness.

"Tatomkhulu," his mzukuwana Azania's voice ushered him back to his hospital bed. "...brought you a book...Steve Biko..." she seemed to trail off excitedly, leaving a smile on his face at the budding fruits of his labour.

Perhaps, there is still hope, he thought, expelling his last breath.

DREAM IT DRUM IT

Joshua Robertson
Ghana



I felt a sense of dread as I entered the polling station. Who else wouldn't? This was the day of the big election, and tensions were high. The tantrums and curses from each side had set the stage for yet another deadly-fierce political drama.

As I cast my vote, I couldn't help but wonder what the outcome would be. Would the country move forward with progress and equality, or would it once again be thrown into chaos and corruption?

As the votes were counted, the room grew tense. The two sides were neck and neck, and it seemed like the election could go either way.

Suddenly, one of the candidate's supporters burst into the room, shouting that their candidate had won by a landslide. The other side cried foul, claiming the election had been rigged.

As the chaos erupted, I felt a sense of hopelessness. It seemed like the future of the country was in jeopardy, and that the election had only served to divide the people even further.

But then, something unexpected happened. The two candidates stepped for-

ward and announced that they had agreed. They had decided to work together, putting aside their differences for the good of the country.

The room erupted in cheers, and I felt a sense of hope. But just as I was about to bask in the hopeful feeling, I woke up. It was just a dream, but the hope lingered. I couldn't help but believe that, since my mind had dreamed of it, it was possible. One day, the key players in African politics would put aside their differences and work for the betterment of their people. And until that day comes, let's keep sounding the drums of unity, dreaming, and hoping for a victorious Africa. Yes, we can!





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Creative Spotlight

Prepare to be inspired by the extraordinary achievements of Ogbu Eme, a gifted author who has captured the hearts of readers worldwide. In 2019, Eme's outstanding literary talents were recognized when he was awarded the coveted African Writers Awards for Children's Literature, a well-deserved honour that solidified his place as a rising star in the literary world. Not content to rest on his laurels, Eme continued to push the boundaries of his craft, culminating in yet another impressive accomplishment – winning the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature in 2022. If you're curious to learn more about this talented author's motivations, plans, and prospects, then get ready for a fascinating journey through the mind of one of today's most promising writers. – PPBlessing

PPBlessing: *Who is Ogbu?*

OE: Ogbu is a children's author and an English teacher with a mass communication degree from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. As a children's author, his stories draw their breath from the communication development theory in which characters and events are models of change. He likes to call himself a writivist.

PPBlessing: *Why writivist?*

OE: It's a quirky coinage from "write" and "activist". In essence, I want to use my writing to fight for what is right.

PPBlessing: Being an English teacher, do you actively mentor your students towards becoming writivist like you?

OE: Academic writing is a different sort of writing. As a writing instructor, your job is to teach students the skills for writing essays and for succeeding in school and in real life. But I hope to start teaching writing outside the classroom where mentoring on becoming a writivist will be done.

PPBlessing: *What's the connection between mass communication and teaching?*

OE: That's simple. It's called mass communication, with the mass meaning many and communication meaning exchange of messages. What better way to pass knowledge than teaching in a class room to a mass audience. I could work in the media, but working in the classroom gives me the opportunity to inspire lives.

PPBlessing: *How do you inspire lives?*

OE: A classroom is a micro-unit of society. The teacher is the president while the pupils are the citizens. When you are a teacher, you are responsible for the lives of those you teach.

PPBlessing: *How exactly are you responsible for their lives?*

OE: Children are natural imitators, especially young children. They learn by copying. Again, children often wonder what it's like to be like the characters in the stories they read. So, being responsible for their lives for me means setting examples of leadership, courage and humility, both in person and in print.

PPBlessing: *How has this been so far?*

OE: So far so good. However, the results may not be explicit now; the future is a reminder of lessons learnt in the past.

PPBlessing: *Aside from influencing and shaping the future of children, why else do you write?*

OE: I write to be heard: to express feelings and words that I can't say. I write in the hopes that one day, I will be able to put my village, Alayi, on the map.

PPBlessing: *Is it strictly children's literature that you write?*

OE: No. Children's literature is a genre I discovered after I noticed there weren't enough African literature for children that talked about current social themes. I have tried my hands on poetry but gave up after

a short time practising. Then I tried short stories and that stuck. I actually have published a collection of short stories titled *6 Extremely Easy Ways to Die in Nigeria and Other Stories*. Long before all of these, I had completed a full-length manuscript for a prose fiction. It's lying on the shelf by the way.

PPBlessing: *That's wonderful. Why haven't you published the manuscript yet?*

OE: This was many years ago. I had just finished secondary school, and I didn't have the knowledge about publishing that I have now.

PPBlessing: *Now that you have the knowledge, why haven't you still published it?*

OE: I will have to have a proper look at its suitability first.

PPBlessing: *How can someone purchase the short stories collection?*

OE: It is sold on Okada books and I hope to print it someday.

PPBlessing: *Any plans for the printing?*

OE: Yes, absolutely! I am working on adding more stories to the collection. I have titles like "There are no Witches in Nigeria".

PPBlessing: *How many stories are you considering and when should we expect it's publication?*

OE: The collection has three stories. I am looking at adding another three. Well, I have to first finish the stories. Maybe, in

A point to note...

→ I am looking forward to winning the NLNG \$100,000 Prize for Literature in the children's literature category.



November this year as I have a children's picture book I am working on at the moment.

PPBlessing: *Godspeed. How do you plan on publishing?*

OE: Do you mean the children's book?

PPBlessing: *Yes. Are you using a publishing house or self-publishing?*

OE: I have queried a few publishing houses. Fingers crossed. But I am open to self-publishing. The plan is to give traditional publishing a try. I will fully revert to self-publishing this April.

Did you know I self published "Not Too Young to Run"?

PPBlessing: *I'm just learning that now.*

OE: And I thought I was famous.

PPBlessing: *Of course you're famous... Winning the African Writers Award (AWA) and Wakini Kuria prize is fame.*

OE: That's soothing. Thank you.

PPBlessing: *Aside AWA and Wakini Kuria prize, have you won other awards?*

OE: No, I haven't. But I will like to win more. I am looking forward to winning the NLNG \$100,000 Prize for Literature in the children's literature category.

Now we know...

→ I write to be heard: to express feelings and words that I can't say. I write in the hopes that one day, I will be able to put my village, Alayi, on the map.

PPBlessing: *Fingers crossed. How did you feel when you won these awards?*

OE: AWA was my first award, that was in 2019. I grinned from ear to ear when I received the news. It helped to validate my writing as I won in the Children's literature category. Then Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature came after three years (2022). I had gotten better with my craft. The feeling wasn't as euphoric as the first, but I was elated all the same. You know, winning awards makes your writing recognisable. You go from unknown to known. I should add, it was good to win some money there.

PPBlessing: *How have these wins influenced your writing?*

OE: Very much. I write better stories. I look at every manuscript that I write as though I was preparing it for a writing competition.

PPBlessing: *How long have you been a writivist?*

OE: I started writing as early as 11 years. It was merely for the enjoyment of my family. But I got more serious with the craft in 2018.

PPBlessing: *Interesting, what made you serious?*

OE: I had published an article about localising the Nigerian curriculum on my defunct blog called Drafts Paper. I felt Nigerian authors (African authors by and large) needed to come up with African children's literature that were socially conscious.

And since I could write, I decided to practise what I was preaching. That was when I got serious.

PPBlessing: *Now that you've mentioned, do you have any online platform where you publish? I couldn't find the Draft papers and the other website on your profile <http://ww1.ogbueme.com/> was also down.*

OE: Drafts Paper is defunct. There's a mistake in the url, its ogbueme.wordpress.com

PPBlessing: *Okay. What made Drafts paper defunct?*

OE: On Drafts Paper I blogged on a variety of topics. But after I published Not Too Young to Run, I decided to trim it down to publishing. Sometimes, I publish articles on education since I am a teacher.

PPBlessing: *What do you do for fun?*

OE: I enjoy skating and listening to music. I like hip hop a lot. Rumba is also one of my favourite.

PPBlessing: *Who are your favorite authors*

OE: I am a children's author, so it's not hard to see why the following are my favourites: Roald Dahl, Nancy Churnin, Dr. Seuss. For adult fiction and non-fiction, I enjoy any story that is well-told, both African and Western.

PPBlessing: *What has been most challenging for you as a writivist?*

OE: That's reaching a global audience. That's been most challenging for me.

PPBlessing: *Have you been able to tackle it yet?*

OE: I haven't had solutions yet.

PPBlessing: *What's your ideal day like?*

OE: I wake up at 5:10 a.m. Between that time and 6:45 a.m., I prepare for school. I find time to read in the morning when I'm in the bathroom (It works for me.). At 7 a.m. I am in school. School ends at 3:30 p.m., and then I am off to home tutoring. I do some writing while on transit as I have my stories stored on Google Drive. But I write mostly on weekends.



What you should know...

→ AWA was my first award, that was in 2019. I grinned from ear to ear when I received the news. It helped to validate my writing as I won in the Children's literature category. Then Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature came after three years (2022).

PPBlessing: How do you read in the bathroom?

OE: It's easy... while I am bombing the bowl.

PPBlessing: Any tip for writers who hope to become award winning like you?

OE: Write stories that haven't been told before, or that have but yours takes a dar-

ing style. Be the big fish in a small pond rather than the small fish in a big pond — I got this wisdom from Malcolm Gladwell.

PPBlessing: This is great advice. What inspires your writing?

OE: It's the fact that society is yet to become Beulah Land. My writing is driven by the need for a better world.



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THE OLD SONG

Margaret Edum Chi
Cameroon

I sat on the veranda in my rocking chair;
Under a conspicuous broken moon,
Listening to a voice on the radio.
My stomach appeased by that night's food,
Praying appointments be good this time.
Familiarity in those names and that voice,
Crippled my hopes for a change of tune.
My wrinkled face looked away,
Aware of the unfruitfulness of that night;
Even stars had denied me of their glimmer.
The breeze caressed my facial furrows,
Whispering to my ears a better tomorrow.
Yesterday has birthed a thousand tomorrows
With unlived moments.
From my cradle to this chair.
I knew of these same names in power
With sugarcoated words of hypnotization.
Maybe if we dance a new tune,
We'll rewrite the narratives.

OUR REBIRTH

2023

Chisom Nsiegbunam
Nigeria



I come from a place,
Where tribe rules not human race,
Fights between regions,
Judgements based on religions.

What is a nation with paper democracy?
A torn people, shredded bureaucracy.

We were always lured by change,
Too blinded to see the chains,
Now, we've seen blood like a river,
Wounds unhealed even cut deeper.

But we dare to hope, this once together,
Repudiating leaders who toss around power,

Burning the bridges that kept us apart,
Creating scripts, penning down our acts,
Now being the best days for history,
We fight to create a finer story.

To make the way we lacked for the future,
Our differences and wounds, we suture.

Let the pause linger,
Voices may seem to wither,
Yet deafening beneath the silence,
Failures trashed, now we decide,

'Cause if democracy isn't given,
Then it must be taken.

DING-DONG DITCH

Bernadette Chikapa
Malawi

A thousand million promises were made that day.
My youthful heart rapt in anticipation!
The sugarcoated lies we swallowed in naivety,
Diabetic from former candies.
We licked the sweetness down our elbows still,
A feeling of déjà vu should have left us skeptical.
Like I should stand on a podium and shout
Once beaten twice shy, anyone?
But it'd all fall on deaf ears.
It will forever be a wonder to me,
How easily we're swayed,
Over and over and over again
With the same old story, same old song.
Kind of like that game;
We hear a ding on the door,
And know pretty well it's all a hoax.
Hastily we open the door and act surprised.
When the porch is empty,
Oh, well,
We can't lose faith in humanity, eh?

MY STOMACH FIRST

John William Katamba
Uganda

Camouflaged atop a huge mahogany,
Cowering Simian peers at intrusive
Messrs Potbelly, Foodlove plus Twolegged Voter,
tactics tsars – cum – lumberjacks
parleying dense undergrowth diplomacy.

Come nightfall,
egocentrism regurgitates.
A senseless drilling grinding drone,
A stubborn sawing ghostly whine
Reverberating vampiric metallic wheeze
and finally
A mammoth thunderous smashing scraunch.

Now, there lies killed in his prime
the erstwhile sylvan canopy giant.

Dream greedy Potbelly: What an immense till!
Salivates gleeful Foodlove: What a juicy kill!
Testifies Twolegged Voter:
There had been a bloodbath here
But for sawdust and dew veneer.



OUR NEST OF CONFLICT

Tatah Laika
Cameroon

Africa slept on the cozy womb of her sacred Ubuntu
 That birthed identical triplets of love, peace and unity
 Whose allegiance was sworn in the sacred shrines
 That was an impeccable court of truth which
 Placed victims on the nipping accused box of a haunting conscience
 Whose damnation was the karmic kiss worse than an electrocution
 And whose innocence was garnished with a red feather of enkindled trust.
 Our credo flew from Accra to Lagos through Bamenda
 Till it enmeshed the violent tides of the devouring west
 That with a muffling gun, uprooted seeds from our shrines of oaths
 And planted seeds of votes through fickle ballots.
 Truth eluded through the gates of fear
 And like a snake slithered through the ballot box.

Today ... chaos!

Blood of unwilling martyrs paves the way
 For our saints turned vampires to cling
 To the gurgling throne from which like the Victoria falls,
 The precious liquid inundates the courage of many.
 Our politics nests conflicts.

GAMBLING ADDICTION

Elizabeth Hanai
Tanzania



Tattooed on the skin of our motherland,
 are stories of power,
 tales of sweat and blood,
 men and women who died for its deliverance.
 Their backs, footstools used to fashion
 the now *so called politicians*
 who forget what history doesn't deny
 a land refined by fire
 now blemished by jokers
 as they grasp corners of a podium
 their voice harboring pretense,
decade old promises sprouting from
 sweetened tongues
 dusted away by day's end
 and though I find myself young and naïve
 to understand a politician's gambling addiction
 my eyes and ears are not immune
 to its sting.
 My skin shivers as it feels hunger
 weave itself among rubbles of distrust.
 A nation of people in hopes for a better future
 cast down their ballots
 yet even their own vote can't be trusted;
 their voice silenced before night's end.



THE BURDEN OF BEING INVISIBLE

Oladele Bello
Nigeria

Of what use
is a living dog
to a man who
seeks something new,
something unusual,
like the dead lion in the backyard.
He'll pick glory of life.
A common life.

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE OF 'POLITRICKTIANS'

Onoruoiza Mark Onuchi
Nigeria



I am the canon of the muse,
the canticle of the cruise,
the gadfly from the blues,
the firefly of the truce.

I have come with festoons of dawn
and a barrage of greens and a mix of fruity fawn
with sparklers and bangers to hurtle the town,
to reinforce the unity of the city's brawn,
the wasp is here with envelopes brown
and campaigns with bullets and missiles on the loose
plus tons of cash and barrels of booze
flaunting his ill-gotten wealth with a heap of fuse,
he blares, 'me, you must choose'
'every other contestant is a ruse.'
He whines, 'I'm here for change not abuse.'
The wheel of change is void of hope
all noise and a suicide rope.

How shall the passionate patriots cope?
As all watch without air of redemption but mope!
Now, many who seek hope in better shores elope...
Those who remain wield their PVCs with a ray of hope!

PoeticAfrica



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SHATTERED DREAMS

Florence Moma
Cameroon

“Passed with distinctions: Monica...” I screamed with joy upon hearing my name through the loud speakers of my grandpa’s radio. The results of the national exams were out, and I passed with distinctions. My mother looked at me with tears in her eyes, crushing me in the embrace of her arms. My father looked at me, a small smile lurking at the corners of his lips — he wasn’t a very affectionate person, but the sparkle I saw in his eyes was only one thing; he was proud of me. I turned to my grandpa, his bald head and jaws covered in white beards— which he says is a sign of wisdom— his wrinkled skin and flaky fingers as he pulled me in for a hug. Grandpa looked at me, smiling— his front tooth missing— and he spoke,

“My Doctor.”

“Everyone, go down!” Gunshots. Screams. Tears.

I crawled under my bed, curling myself into a ball and covering my mouth with my shaky hands to avoid being heard. I was in class reading when Yannick, a short light skinned girl from science D class entered screaming,

“They’ve come! Everybody, run!”

My brain took more than a minute to understand what was going on but before I could fully comprehend what was happening, my feet were already carrying me out of class, just as the other students were running into the dormitories, looking for any safe space.

Unknown gunmen broke into our boarding school—one of the best in the country—

shooting anyone they found.

“Remove your clothes!” a husky voice ordered. I saw a little girl that I recognized to be in form 2 frightened and at the mercy of the 5 men that entered our dormitory. I closed my eyes and ears and blocked away her screams, praying to God to do something— anything.

After what felt like forever, with only the sounds of my racing heart, I heard footsteps entering our dormitory again.

“God” they breathed out.

“Is anyone here?” the feminine voice that I recognize so well called out. I peeped from under the bed and slowly got out of my hiding spot with uncontrollable tears

streaming down my cheek when I saw her. fight against their will.

“Monica.” My chemistry teacher, Mrs Rose muttered when she saw me. She took me and a few other students that survived the attack out of the school as we manoeuvred through the layers of dead bodies.

My heart aches for the lives that were lost, those that were abused, and others that were held captive.

My heart aches for those whose dreams were shattered — for me whose dream of becoming a doctor was shattered.

The political state of my country had been unstable for a while but never would I have thought that it would grow to be this bad. The fight for a better country wasn't a peaceful fight as it resulted in killings and other atrocities, which in return claimed thousands of civilian lives.

I looked at my grandma's framed photograph from across the room, a heavy feeling in my chest as I realize that I'd never accomplish the promise I made to her.

As I sat on my bed thinking about the political state of my country and how affected we were, I couldn't help but feel helpless and compare it to the situation of the heart-wrenching Biafra War that I read in the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Because of this crisis, I have been at home for more than a year now. Our education has been halted due to the constant insecurities, and all we can do is hope for it to end soon.

“How much for this one?”

“It's 400. It's very fresh you'll like it”

“Ah!! Madame 400 for these small tomatoes?”

“Aren't we in the same country? Don't you know things are expensive now?”

“Na wa oh! Ha! Na so e dey?” the lady grumbled as she searched through her purse to pay for the tomatoes.

My heart bleeds as I face the reality that I would never accomplish my dreams. Unlike my other friends who were opportune to escape the crisis by fleeing to the other part of the country to live with their relatives, I couldn't because I had no one there.

“Thank you, ma. Have a good day,” I smiled at the angered lady, despite being frustrated myself.

I turned around arranging the items on the top shelf when I heard someone call my name.

Does that mean this is the end for me?

“Monica?” I turned around; confusion written on my face as I wondered who it was. A dark-skinned beautiful lady dressed in a yellow jumpsuit, one I recognized to be like the ones I see in movies. She stepped out of a Mercedes car and walked towards

My heart aches for those that are in a similar situation as I am.

My heart aches for others that are in the

me. Her demeanour gave off wealth and affluence and I felt a mixture of excitement and confusion. Excitement because rich customers were easier to manage as they paid without complaining and mostly bought in bulk. Confusion because she knows my name.

“Oh, my goodness! Monica! Is this you?” the lady smiled showing off her white straight teeth.

“Welcome ma. how can I help you?” I decided to be formal and not bother too much about it. I was well known in the market so it could be that I was referred.

“Monica, it’s me! Alisha. We were benchies back then in secondary school.” I looked closely at the beautiful lady before me examining her every feature and then it clicked. Alisha and I were classmates, bench mates and even friends back then in school.

“Oh my! Ali! What a pleasure to see you again. I heard you left the city. Please come inside and sit.”

Alisha and I discussed anything and everything. We talked about us, my life and her life out of this country furthering her education, and how she’s accomplished the dream she always spoke of— becoming an accountant. After we spoke, we bid ourselves goodbye and exchanged contacts promising to stay in touch. When she left, I stayed glued to my seat, hidden in the dark, and began to get lost in my thoughts.

I was so happy for Alisha but I couldn’t help but feel the bile-like liquid on my

tongue— bitterness. I was bitter, not towards her, but towards how unfair things were. I was bitter towards the inequality in the country. I was bitter towards the fact that nothing was done to remedy this tragedy.

I thought back to the moment I had with that customer. I was used to this scenario every day by customers. The rise in prices was really worrisome and it was not only affecting them but also us, the salespeople.

I thought of the way my life took a rollercoaster; from me stopping my education in upper sixth because of the crisis, to my parents and grandfather being gruesomely killed in our home one fateful day after I went to hawk pure water. To me being here 5 years later, a saleswoman at the central market to earn a living. Bitter tears streamed down my cheeks and I quickly wiped it off with the back of my hands.

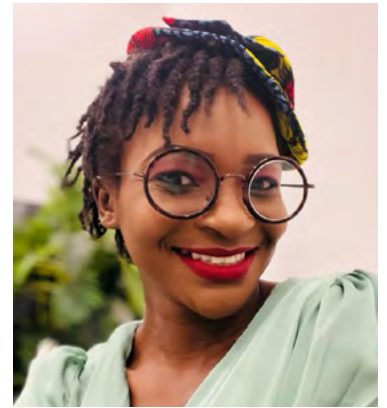
Where is this country heading to? There’s so much insecurity and fear. How does one feel comfortable in a place he used to call home, now a battlefield?

5 years later and the crisis hasn’t ended. 5 years later and the fears and insecurities increase by the day. 5 years later, the country’s political state takes no turn for the better. 5 years later and the country goes into billions and billions of debts. 5 years later and there’s no assurance as to whether things will go back to normal. 5 years later and my dreams and that of millions of others are shattered.

WSA Creative Academy TOP CHOICE

A HAPPY AND A SAD BOY

Chishimba Kaputo,
Zambia



Once upon a time there lived a happy boy and his name was John. John lived in small village called Makeni. John used to go to a community school in their village. The school had mud and wooden toys and John and his friends walked as they went to school. John did not care if they did not have expensive or nice toys. What was important to him was that he played and went to school with his friends.

There lived another boy in the next village, his name was Andrew. Andrew was a sad boy. Andrew was always sad even though he went to a nice school and it had

very nice toys. Andrew would always see John happily walking to school. One day, he stopped him and asked why he was always happy. John smiled and hugged Andrew and answered because I have my family and friends. We play together and make each other happy. John invited Andrew to play with him and his friends so that he would stop being sad. After school Andrew asked his dad if he could go and play with John. John and Andrew became friends, they played together every day and Andrew become a happy boy.

**WSA Creative Academy
TOP CHOICE**

CONFESSIONS OF A HOPELESS ROMANTIC

Oyinloye Michael Oluwatomisin,
Nigeria



It's happened again.

I try, you know? I actually try to not give in to the tiny voice in my head, but at the end of the day, it happens. I fight it, deny it, shove it down to the deepest parts of me,

yet, I still end up back here. Sometimes, I actually black out. I don't remember doing anything. When I eventually come to, the deed has already been done.

Maybe I secretly like it. You know, scratch

that. I love it!

My serotonin and dopamine levels go through the roof. My nerves and synapses are on fire! The butterflies in my stomach are unending. My heartbeat is a rock drummer's foot pedal. My veins throb from the pressure of the blood pumping.

If I go to a therapist, I'm sure they'll say something about my parents' early divorce causing my unnatural, irregular emotional connections, or rather, disconnections.

A load of bull, obviously.

I am who I am today in spite of my parents' chaotic separation.

I'm not crazy, I promise. I'm just a romantic. My step dad understands that, and supports me wholeheartedly.

That word is thrown around quite a lot: romantic. It irks me, because no one's willing to back it up with their actions. How can you truly love someone and not be willing to go to any lengths for them, consequences be damned? All bark, no bite.

I guess it makes sense, since no one really cares about the proper end of a love story. They settle for 'happily ever after.' They don't want to smear the perfect picture they've painted in their heads.

Not me.

I've never believed in 'happily ever after,' so whenever I acknowledge my emotions and feelings, I go in one hundred percent. I don't shy away from the messiness. I embrace it. It's what makes me know it's real. But not everyone feels the same way. Not

everyone wants to put in the work. Not everyone is willing. Hence, my not-so-great track record with relationships.

First was Atinuke, when I was only ten. We kissed behind the swings of our primary school's sandy playground. I thought we had something. Her missing teeth when she smiled was my first definition of beauty. I even bought her packs of candy with my pocket money AKA bribe from Pops for me to choose him as my guardian. Atinuke and I talked about writing the same common entrance examination, so we'd go to the same secondary school.

She was the one!

Imagine my surprise when I found 'the one' at our spot behind the swing set, locking lips with Ifeanyi.

I hold my hands up. I was less than graceful about the whole thing. I was distraught, heartbroken and highly volatile. Safe to say, we didn't end up in the same secondary school. We didn't even graduate from the same primary school. I had to be transferred after Ifeanyi mysteriously got stabbed in the neck with a pen during the general assembly.

As if that wasn't enough, Atinuke fell down the stairs two days after. She broke her neck and died on the spot.

Mother thought it best for me to have a change of scenery. Dear old dad would've wanted me to continue slumming it in that school. Good thing he never got custody of me. I'd have turned out to be a wreck.

My step dad came into my life, and showed

me real love and affection. I was privy to watch firsthand how he showered my mother with said powerful feelings, even when she didn't want it. I still remember her yelling "No," and screaming in pain on some nights. Other nights, it was just tears, all because of little playful slaps. The neighbours didn't understand they were tears of joy. Mother didn't understand sometimes too.

I did. I understood! I still understand. Stepdad was treating her like a princess and more. He was hopelessly devoted to her and her alone. It's a shame she wasn't able to handle it. It was just too much for her in the end. She had been starved of good loving; she didn't know what to do with it. May her soul rest in peace. I hope she's resting peacefully, knowing she left me in good hands.

That's why on the 18th anniversary of my kiss with Atinuke, I ring the doorbell before me and adjust the bouquet of flowers in my grasp. My phone vibrates in my pocket and I bring it out to read the message. It's from my stepdad.

Go get her, son.

It's good to know he has my back no matter what. He's always rooting for me. The road wasn't always smooth. Mother feared my continual heartbreaks would burden him, but he assumed responsibility from my mother.

After Atinuke, there was Veronica in JS1. That lasted for a month before I found out she had a boyfriend in another school.

Coincidentally, it was around that time stepdad got a job in another state, so we had to move. It had nothing to do with Veronica drowning in the school's pool. Us changing our names was for my stepdad's work, of course.

NINE schools, ELEVEN names, SIX girls later, and I finally feel ready.

Atinuke, Veronica, Maeve, Ada, Fareedah, Kira, you've all prepared me for this very moment. You have my eternal gratitude.

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger, and I feel like I can crush a boulder, thanks to all these experiences with all these women.

I take a deep breath as the door opens slowly. My definition of beauty has evolved over the years. From Atinuke's carefree smile, to Maeve's curious eyebrow raise, I believe it's now her dimples. They're so deep, I want nothing more than to swim in them.

Her face brightens when she notices the white roses I'm holding. It's her favourite. She loves it. My smiling eyes travel beyond her, into her apartment kitchen. I immediately notice the stack of varying knives on her counter. She did mention she loves cooking.

Hopefully, there wouldn't be a need for me to use those knives. I'm not that great in the kitchen.

Maybe it's you, Gloria.

Maybe you're the one...

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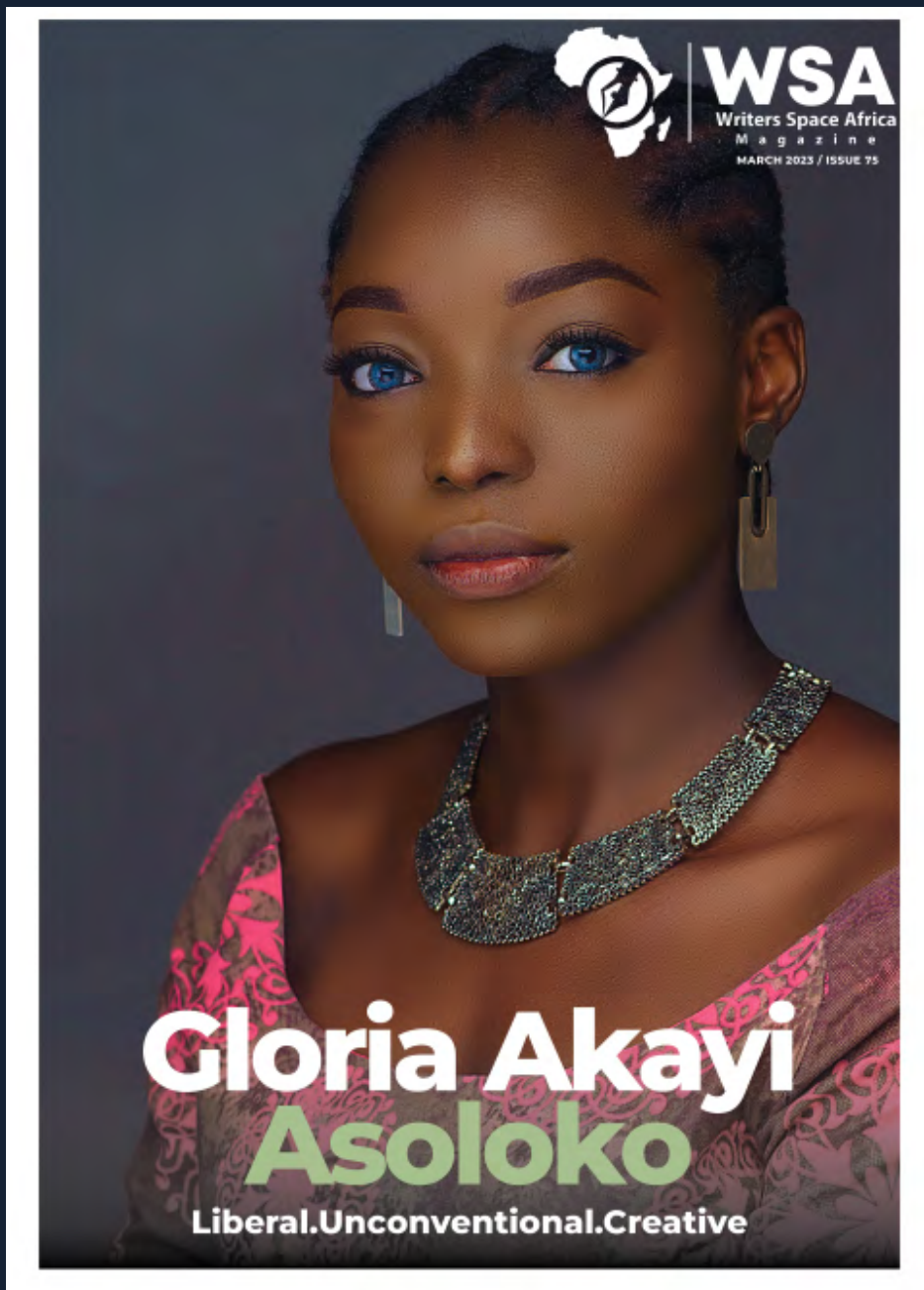


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REVIEW

March 2023 Edition



YOUNG KWAME

A Children's Literature by Moses Tololo, Zambia
Reviewer: Elizabeth Nafula, Kenya



Kosamu is Musa's grandfather. He is enthusiastic about educating his grandchild.

Moses uses flashbacks to explain how Young Kwame was a tool for change in Chief Mulishi's area.

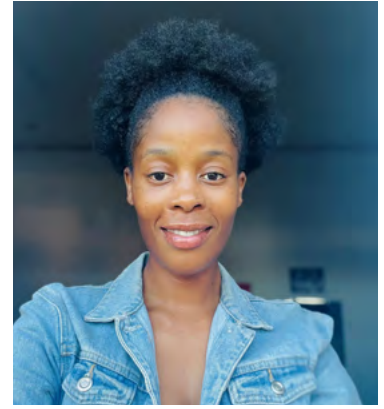
The people had no food, and people were unemployed. The Chief asked his son, Kosamu, to find a solution, but he was unable. Through Mateyo, he learnt of the young prince from Ghana. Young Kwame received an invite and educated parents on the importance of planting trees, which

would later be sold as logs, timber, medicine, and paper. Twenty years later, there was a revolution in the Mulishi area.

The story teaches us to conserve what we have, for they will benefit us in the future, and working together brings about change. We should also maintain good relations with our friends. The language is modest, and children can easily understand. I enjoyed reading this.

BORN ON FRIDAY

A Flash Fiction by Nsibande Refilwe, South Africa
Reviewer: *ohlokoa Lephoi, Lesotho*



The story shared is a powerful and thought-provoking narrative that explores issues of gender inequality, toxic masculinity, and cultural norms. It tells the story of a father who prides himself on providing for his family but has deeply ingrained beliefs about gender roles and expectations.

Through the lens of the narrator's personal experiences, we see how the father's beliefs and attitudes toward women can be harmful and result in unfair treatment towards his daughter and other women.

The story raises important questions about how these beliefs are perpetuated and how they can be challenged and changed.

Overall, the story is well-written and engaging, with vivid descriptions and strong characterizations that make the reader invested in the narrator's experiences and their family. It is a powerful reminder of the ongoing struggles for gender equality and the importance of examining our beliefs and attitudes toward gender roles and expectations.

GHANA MY BELOVED HOMELAND

A Poem by Rycha Heemachai Devi, Mauritius
Reviewer: Prudence Gakedirelwe, Botswana



An epistle of devotion and utter allegiance, which some could refer to as a great show of patriotism, is the real core of the poem. Reading through this poem will give you an essence of pure adoration, as suggested by the title, specifically tied to the word 'beloved.' This narration strikes the past and present feelings and thoughts of the persona to depict just how precious the subject is. It carries the readers through to the final plea for reunification.

The poet takes us down memory lane, unravelling all the packed-up feelings of Ghana being the homeland. These feelings are explicitly presented and written with a simple diction for the fathoming of all who would be curious as to what being in another part of the world such as Ghana would feel like; after all, all minds in their wandering find beauty in creation.

For lovers of adventure, their search is completed. They can quickly decide on an embankment to Ghana to explore "the soothing ambiance of Labadi beach," as highlighted to be 'a place to heal broken hearts' S4 L2 and from S6 L2 "my eyes yearn to have a glimpse of your exquisite beauty."

This poem has a utopic lingering of a place without worry, and with all the happiness

this world can offer, which is often declared throughout in various words.

The first six couplets are reminiscences and declarations of love, one would say wishes, while the switch in the seventh stanza suggests a change in tense, setting, and mood of the persona. As many assumptions may erupt from this, there is a sense of belonging and attainment of victory that creeps through that crack.

This may have come due to a window of living within a mind-contoured reality with the person sounding to have found their way back to their roots by S8 L1&2 "without you in my life I was so sad..., I had to lose everything I ever had" this is suggestive of a past pain that is nonexistent in that current reality. The use of the ellipses suggests much is said on the matter.

This couplet draws love on the canvas of the minds of those reading and not in their homelands, somewhat encouraging them to think back on the beauties of their motherlands and hold tight to the hope of going back. It shows a pride that could not be bought away by what the world gives since it preaches the message, 'there is no place like home.'

POET-STRESS

A Poem by Tabitha-Munyoki, Kenya
Reviewer: Mathew Daniel, Nigeria



A good way to think about this poem is to think about hymns, sonnets, limericks, villanelles, pantoums, or haikus. To think ‘what is the process like?’ One would realize that each word in each line contributes to the whole. Structured poems have specific beauties and rhythms that make them special. To realize this, the poet searches for words that fit into that form while maintaining one’s creative impulse. Each word is strung to produce the desired melody or beauty in accordance with the dictates of the form. This undoubtedly requires mastery.

Often, especially for emerging poets, or some who might favour the freedom afforded by free verse, this process of finding words and carefully stringing them together may seem strenuous and make them favour the free verse form, which provides freedom for poets to express freely without needing to worry about rhythm, rhyme, or syllabic stress.

Tabitha Munyoki’s ‘Poet-Stress’ is experimental. A simple yet, complex poem that takes the reader through poetic elements and wittily expresses a poet’s dilemma, especially when writing poetry using specific structures that deny a writer the freedom that free verse offers. For instance, in the first stanza, she starts with “syllables, they said...”, referring to syllables as basic units of speech, which naturally would require adherence to a systematic arrangement

to realize a meter and feet (also requiring careful notation of the stress pattern).

At the end of the first stanza, the poet concludes with “so stressed,” on the one hand, could suggest that having to take note of all these can be breathtaking and stressful, while on the other hand, it is suggestive of the ‘stressed syllable’ in a foot. If one considers the preceding lines, counting “one-two-three” suggests a trimeter. While in line four, “feet, at times three,” suggests anapestic feet. In stanza three, the poet asks, “shall I weep?” This line carries the tiredness of the poet having to go through the rigorous (and perhaps torturous) path of writing structured poetry.

It is no surprise that this poem is one of WSA Academy’s top choices. The poet displayed her brilliant understanding of poetic elements and the economy of words by succinctly delivering her lines with purpose and spicing them with scintillating rhymes (particularly in stanzas one and four). And while I would have preferred that the poet sustained the rhyme throughout the poem, perhaps, this poem lends itself to use as the poet’s statement of preference for free verse.

Generally, this is a beautiful and exciting poem to read, particularly for its adventurous nature.

BLOOD KNOT

A Short Story by Ruth Nyadzua Mwangome, Kenya
 Reviewer: M. T. Mazimba-Kaunda, Zambia



Blood Knot is about a man and a woman, love and marriage. Eva is the happy bride to Boaz, who has waited for what seems like an eternity to taste his beautiful wife. But sticking to her Christian beliefs, she insists that they should abstain until they are legally married.

Boaz tries to seduce her using his best moves, but alas, she proves resolute in her beliefs. She still maintains her vow to remain celibate. In a funny description, we are made aware that Boaz is impatient for

the ceremony to end. When he thinks it has finished, Eva informs him there is still a two-hour photo shoot to endure.

It was a joy to go along with Ruth Nyadzua Mwangome on the journey of suspense as we all waited for Boaz and Eva to consummate their marriage. Then came the twister: after unremarkable coitus, Eva discovered that her new husband was actually a long last relative! I loved this story immensely; it is a wonderful take on the mistaken identity trope. Good job to Ruth.

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