



WSA

Writers Space Africa
Magazine

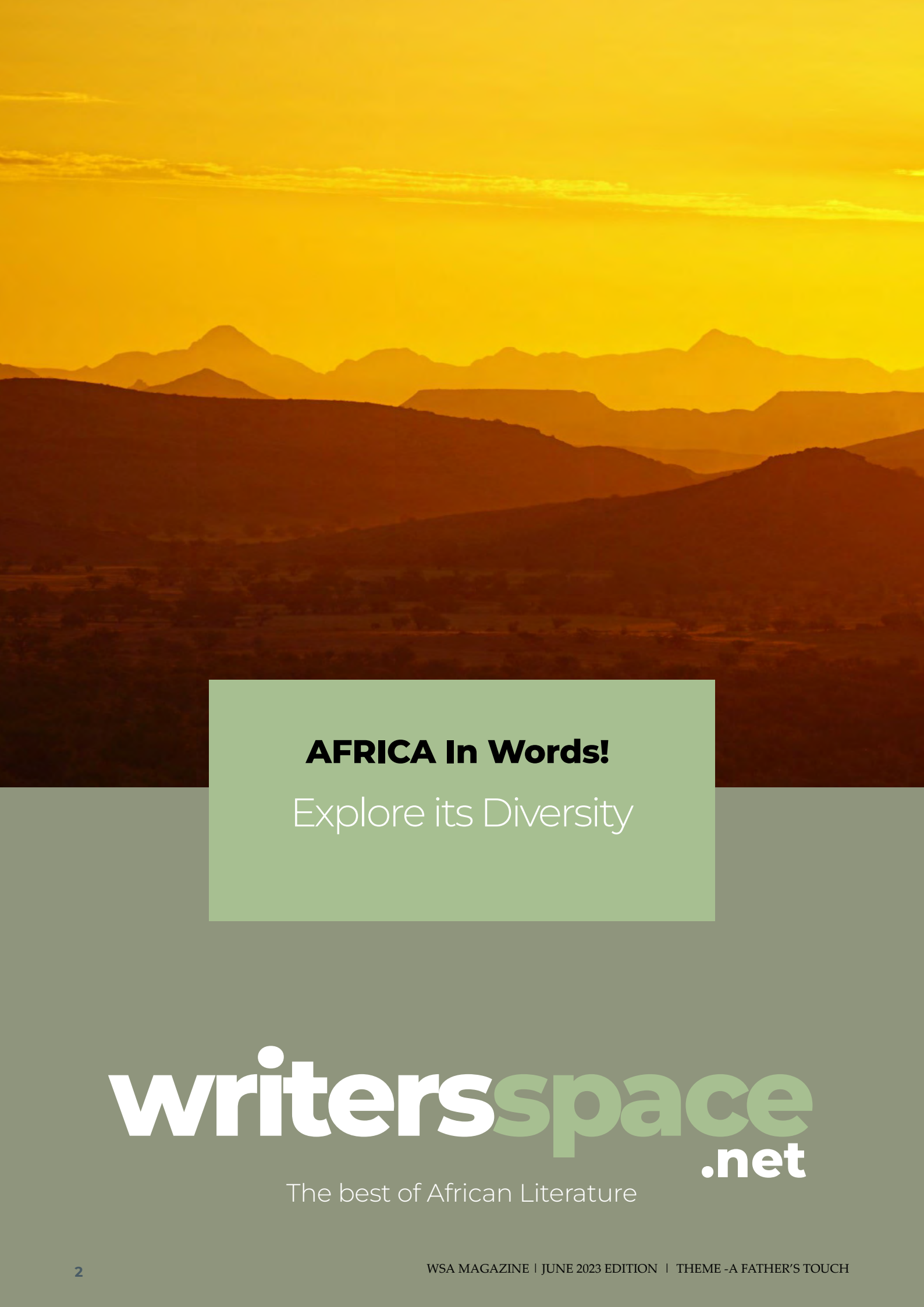
JUNE 2023 / ISSUE 78



Blessing Amatemeso

BLESSING AMATEMESO

Prescriptions from a Creative Soul



AFRICA In Words!

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The best of African Literature

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WSA
Writers Space Africa
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Editorial

Scholar Akinyi (Kenya)

The month's issue is dedicated to father figures and their impact on our lives. As the theme goes, we explore what it means to experience the presence of a father in all spheres, and how their actions or inactions have contributed to the person we have become.

The understanding of a father's touch in the traditional African set-up is that of provision and protection; that a father's presence will be felt through how they execute these two duties. However, with gender roles changing and people finding diverse ways of living, a father's touch can be felt in different ways, and sometimes not felt at all.

Fatherhood has also transcended the biological parent meaning, as father-child relationships can be created through mentor-

ship, adoption, friendships, etc.

How does the presence or the lack of a father figure reflect in the lives of the children? Read through our different genres in this month's issue of WSA and get to understand what 'Father's Touch' means to different people.

How do you say 'My Father' in your local dialect? In mine (Luo from Kenya), we say: 'Wuonwa'.

May you experience a Father's Touch from the father figures in your life, and for the fathers and aspiring ones, may your touch leave a positive mark in the lives of the people you father.

We celebrate every positive impact.

Receive your flowers, dear fathers.



On the cover

→ Get ready to be inspired by Blessing's remarkable journey and her incredible contributions to the literary realm. This interview is a treasure trove of insights and imagination that will leave you eager to explore the power of storytelling.

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WSA 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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Happy reading...

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Writers Space Africa (WSA)

is accepting submissions

for its **80th edition**

(August 2023 Edition)

THEME
RELIGION

WE ACCEPT

- ✓ Children's Literature
- ✓ Creative Nonfiction
- ✓ Flash Fiction
- ✓ Poetry
- ✓ Short Stories

TO SUBMIT

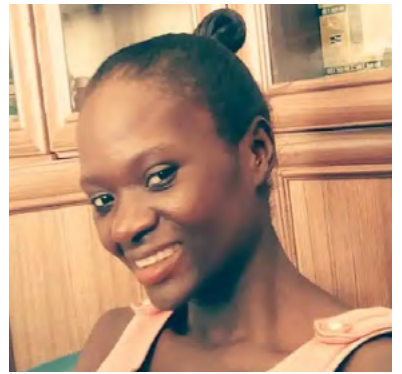
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DEADLINE: JUNE 20, 2023

A LETTER TO DADDY

Grace Tendo
Uganda



Dear Daddy,

It seems like I was born yesterday. Today, I am a big boy.

All my life, I've grown up surrounded by love from men who are not my fathers

but who loved me as their own. These men, God put them before me to love me in your absence. But still, I love and miss you, Daddy.

Mummy says you're busy and tells me that you will come by for us to ride bicycles. Every day I dream about that day, but

I think it is not coming soon.

Sometimes I think you do not love me, but mother says you do.

I want to know you more than the words my mother tells me. I want to laugh at all the jokes you tell and feel your face.

I want to put on your shoes every day when you return home, just like I've been doing with mummy's slippers.

Why did you leave us, Daddy? Don't you miss me? Don't you love me at all?

I am your, child, Daddy and I want to feel loved by you.

I want to talk to you about my first day at school, my friends. Oh, I vividly remember the day I pulled out my first tooth...oh, how I remember that day! It was not easy but mummy was here to help me overcome. She's a good woman and she loves me with all her heart. She's the best gift I have in this whole wide world.

I want to talk to you about the day I won a lot of good things because of dancing at church. I was happy; Auntie El was happy; even Grandmother was happy too.

Last week uncle bought me some ice cream and even took me to my swimming classes. He's a very good uncle. Do you know that he has a cow? Yes, I take care of it when he's not around. I feed it grass and give it water to drink as well. Uncle's cow loves me.

I have been a good child to mummy. And I have been a good child to my grandmother. I love my grandmother so much

because she cooks for me when mummy is not around. Grandmother used to carry me on her back as we sang along when I was still a little boy.

Daddy, do you know that I sing at church? I love my Sunday school church.

Auntie El said that one day God would bring you back to us. Was she right? I do not know but I pray for you to come back home.

I want to know you and learn a lot from you.

Yesterday I saw mummy smile after talking to someone and I thought it was you, but when I asked her, she said it was a call from her friend. I felt bad but I did not tell her. I went inside and prayed to God.

I know God is there and He will give me a miracle because of you.

I miss you, Daddy, and I pray that you come soon so that we can talk about all that we have missed in the past.

By the way, I do not know when you will receive my letter but when you do, please come by so that I can get to know you better.

I love you, Daddy.

Your son.

Tia

A FATHER'S TOUCH

Pelekani Lwenje
Zambia



Momo lived in a little village. She had special powers and people were scared of her. They believed she was a witch.

Last year, she had prayed for plenty of rain when the drought had become unbearable. It came. The crops grew and the cattle fed. When people were sick she helped heal

them. When the children were injured she helped heal them. She once told her parents that as long as the people were safe, she was happy. Momo loved everyone.

She thought about all this as she sat cradled against the dirty wall in a very dark room. The people had locked her up. She

thought about her father. He sometimes behaved like he was afraid of her. He had stopped hugging her. She wished he would just touch her. Her mother told her that her father just needed time. She could hear the voices of her parents pleading with the villagers to let her out. She remembered how it had all started. How the darkness had come to the village.



Momo had been chasing butterflies in the grassy fields just near the village when she saw a scary-looking old man seated with two drums in front of him. The man was beating the drums gently with his hands and looking at her with a mischievous grin. She did not like the old man at all. She was about to walk away when the old man called her name and told her that the villagers would never love her, and that she should stop wishing for their love. Then she saw the old man wave his huge stick in the air, and the sky became very dark. She ran back to the village. As she was running powerful winds were blowing in every direction. She reached the village just in time to find an angry mob surrounding her parents. When her mother saw her she quickly ran to protect her but her father remained. Momo cried out to her father, but he just stood there. This had hurt her more than anything. All she wanted was to feel her father's touch. To know that he loved her.

Momo could hear the angry voices from the people outside. They blamed her for the darkness. She felt so afraid and alone. It was then that she heard a strange laughter. All the people became quiet and then

the voice of the evil old man spoke. "Kill the girl! That is the only way light will enter your village." The people seemed to agree because Momo heard them all chanting, "Kill her! Kill her!" Her mother was pleading and crying. Momo too began to cry. She prayed for someone to help her, and that was when she heard loud shouting. It was her father.

The door was kicked wide open. Her father stood in the doorway. He quickly ran to her and lifted her. He hugged her tightly. Momo was so happy to finally have her father touch her. It gave her new strength. Her father kissed her on her cheek and told her that he loved her and that he was sorry. It was all Momo had ever wanted. She could feel her power getting stronger. They walked outside together. Her mother was overjoyed to see them. She quickly ran to join them by their side.

The evil old man did not look pleased at all. Momo raised her hands towards the sky. A voice spoke to her, "you are complete." The darkness that filled the sky began to disappear. It was bright again. The evil old man screamed in anger and everyone watched as his body changed into many different people and animals. Then he was gone. The village was free once again. Momo felt strong, but gentle hands lifted her. She giggled as her father proudly looked at her. Things were going to be different from now on.

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


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MY HERO

Leila Nalongo
Kenya

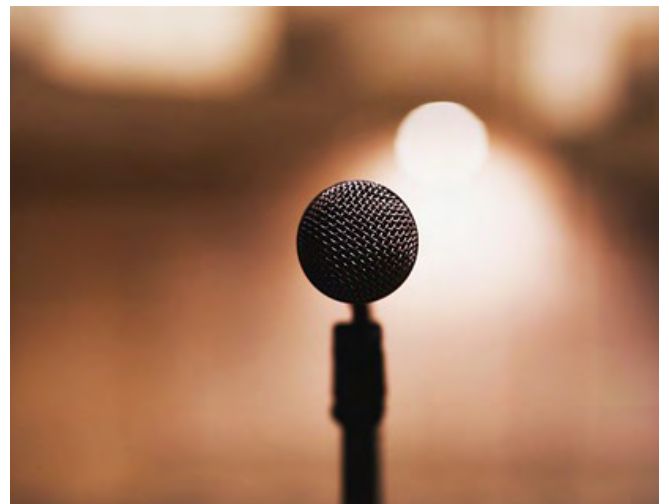


I sat there in silence, scared out of my wits with my heart thundering in my ears. This was what stage fright felt like, I thought to myself. The crowd cheered as they waited for my performance and I scoured their faces looking for a familiar one. I had told my mum about today but it seemed like she wasn't here yet. My dad was away for work though he knew about today too and he was regretful that he couldn't be there for me. My palms were sweaty and sticky against my side. I tried to breathe in and out like he had taught me whenever I had a panic attack and I remembered his reassuring words,

"You are strong and powerful. Whatever you set your heart to do, just know that I am proud of you. You got this sweetie."

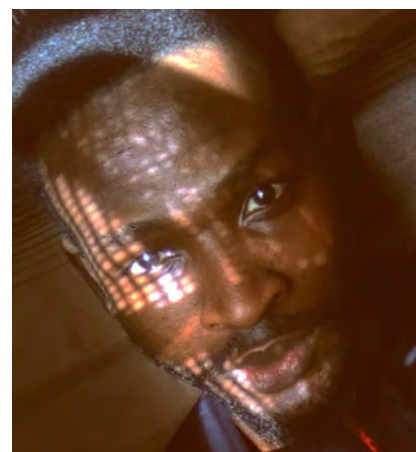
I drew in a sharp breath and with a new resolve, moved closer to the microphone, cleared my throat and started singing. I peeped into the crowd one last time and I was awed to see my dad amongst the crowd, cheering me on. I could never have

been more ready. I hit a high note and the audience went into a frenzy, cheering and chanting my name. I had written a song about my dad's heroic nature as my father, mentor and the only person who truly understood me. I was a daddy's girl and I wanted him to know that I was as proud of him as he was of me and I would never let him down. I finished the song and was rewarded with a standing ovation, led by my dad. I could see tears streaming down his face and I couldn't hold back mine any more. At this moment, I didn't know what I would do without him in my life.



FATHER'S DAY

Edwin Mamman
Nigeria



As a young boy, I missed a father's touch. Every evening, I wanted to sit with my father and tell him why the rivers swallowed the fish. He, on the other hand, just wanted to sit quietly and smoke his cigar, staring out into space. I wanted to plough the field with my father, to make holes on ridges with our heels and bury seeds in them. Instead; father sent me to mother's footstool in the kitchen.

At my mother's footstool, I learned great and heroic stories about my grandfather including how he protected his land from invaders – and how, transforming into a swarm of bees, he chased the invaders out of the land. I learned a great deal from my mother.

Years later, as a teenager, I would shudder at how rudely my friends talked back at their mothers. I could never raise my voice within earshot of my father; I would be disowned.

Many years later, on Father's Day, I would think of him, my father, and what could

have been. I didn't learn to hunt or gather from him but I learned to slaughter and pluck a chicken, at least. He never taught me how to defend myself and stand up to my bullies; no. I learned the path of peace watching him quietly smoke his cigar.

Instead, my father taught me respect for women. Those countless times I was sent away to my mother's footstool in the kitchen taught me the wisdom of listening to women, and in doing so, it taught me the wisdom of living with women: listening attentively.

All those years I thought I was missing a father's touch but his imprint was all over my heart. As a man now, I understand why my father smoked his cigar alone and stared out into space.

CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Poetic Africa, Africa's first trilingual (English, French, Kiswahili) poetry magazine, calls for submissions from poets for her August 2023 edition.

*In telling the African story, we cannot undermine the central role of drums. They are the heartbeat that builds a vertical relationship between the roots, the society, and the ideologies. Dancing to the sound of drums is the recollection and reconnection of memories to preserve cultural heritage. Write and submit your poem under the theme **DRUMS**.*

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

The submission window is from **May 11th until June 10th 2023**. The edition will be released on 10th August 2023.

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



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CRYING INTO THE VOID: A REVIEW OF PETER OKONKWO'S A CRY FOR MERCY

by Wilson F. Engel, III, Ph.D



This volume of twenty-two titled spiritual poems explores the agony of a wicked man's sincere search to understand the imponderable abstractions of existence when God has not deigned to answer the narrator's cries and prayers while time threatens to cut him off before he can achieve his destined greatness.

Reminiscent of Old Testament poetic books Lamentations, Job, Ecclesiastes and Psalms, to which these free-verse poems explicitly refer, Okonkwo's first volume of his *Escape from the Unseen Dungeons* is populated by a host of personified beings like a medieval *Psychomachia*, a battle of spirits or soul combat, where opposing abstractions wage war against each other in an earnest contest for the narrator's soul.

Not having any external response to his mortal anguish, the suffering narrator despairs of finding meaning in his existence, even contemplating suicide if God does not answer his doubts and fears. In the poem "Forgive Me," the narrator begs to be forgiven of his sins and reminded of the Cross. But Jesus of Nazareth is not invoked as a *deus ex machina*.

Instead, the narrator engages in "A Conversation with Obstacle," then a consultation with "the specialist" who advises ambiguously that facing his impediment is his only path to his goal, futile discussions with his "close ones" who are in no position to help him, and speculation about "my muse" who may not be helpful either, but his resorting again to "Obstacle" only causes him to threaten to report that figure to God. Dejected, the narrator confesses, "I Surrender It All," a pledge he makes to renounce his sinfulness for "my freedom." This is the halfway mark (11th poem of 22) in the volume, but still, God has not spoken.

The second half of the volume reveals a change in the narrator's strategy. In the poem "Intercession" the narrator writes a letter to God on behalf of a sinful man "who suffers from extreme delay," very much like himself. In "On the Altar" he asks, "shall I voice out, the things that afflict my soul." He wants to place all his deficiencies on the altar, "my failures, and obstacles shall I show him." He will confess his shame, which he has been unable to tell his closest relatives about.

The next poem, "Agony of a Hidden Greatness" divulges a paradox: the narrator is conflicted because he feels deep inside that he is destined for greatness, yet he has no indication this destiny is his true one. Getting no response to his pleas for clarity from God, the narrator finds himself "In the Dungeon of Despair," which for him is synonymous with "mediocrity" and "pang." He asks God, "For how long, must I wait till you come, for how long?"

His final poem (the 22nd), "A Dispute with Obstacle," does not offer a facile resolution, but rather the hope that a door of advancement should be opened to him. In brief, then, through a vale of bitter tears, the narrator has come no closer to his goal than he was at the beginning. God has not answered him, but he has come to grips with his situation and now is ready to enter the next phase of his spiritual enlightenment.

The poet has convincingly portrayed the throes of a tormented human spirit whose sinfulness and stature will not allow him to measure up to his rightful place in the world before he dies. The resolution of his difficulties will presumably be presented in the next two volumes of Okonkwo's work.

Creative Spotlight

In an exclusive interview, I had the pleasure of conversing with none other than Blessing Amatemeso, the remarkable talent from Nigeria who secured the prestigious title of first runner-up in the esteemed Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature 2022. Get ready to be inspired by Blessing's remarkable journey and her incredible contributions to the literary realm. This interview is a treasure trove of insights and imagination that will leave you eager to explore the power of storytelling.

Interview by PPBlessing



PPBlessing: You recently graduated from medical school, how was the journey through school and why medicine?

BA: Medical school has been partly expected but mostly unexpected. Everyone said you had to read a lot, it would be hard and lots more but those were just half-truths. Why medicine? This question was asked during our year one faculty orientation. Many people gave motivating answers, like 'because someone dear to them died and they wanted to prevent that from happening to other people. For me, it's not something I can pinpoint, I've always wanted to be a doctor but there was no doctor in my life growing up. Sometimes I feel like my dad engineered it in a way: engineer, doctor, accountant, lawyer, another engineer (second male). If he did, it was at a subconscious level so I can't answer the why but I've never had a why not either, and at the time of entering University, there was nothing else I would have wanted to do.

PPBlessing: What's the full truth about medicine and are those your siblings you are referring to?

BA: Well, my truth will be different from other people's truth. But it's more of consistency that gets you the ball. And really all work and no play does not do one good, not even in medical school.

Yes, that was the plan. It didn't work out that way for all though due to jamb and other stuff.

PPBlessing: How did writing get into the

mix?

BA: Well, I started planning to write in secondary school. I guess it grew out of my love for stories. I did start keeping a journal but the actual public writing just kept being postponed till the Covid-19 pandemic happened.

PPBlessing: How has that been so far?

BA: Well, enlightening, exasperating, and exciting at times. I've learnt a lot I wouldn't have if I didn't actually start writing. Thinking of what to write and writing is like dream vs reality. In dream there is no time, no space, no limitations. Everything has perfect expression. But transferring that 'dream' to paper is well, an art and science on its own. Sometimes I look at the number of words I've written and get exasperated but that was before. All in all, it is exciting.

PPBlessing: How were you able to combine school, writing, and the leadership roles you have?

BA: I didn't. It was always a choice between writing and school; one or the other at a time. If I was focused on school, I was unable to write. So, I usually write in periods where I don't have pending things to read or exams to write. Leadership is always an ongoing process as long as I manage my time well. Both reading and writing for me are best done immediately I wake up. Any other time was a struggle or is, but I guess so is life.



**Blessing Amateso at her Sponsio Academica (physicians oath-taking).
22nd May, 2023**

PPBlessing: Tell us about your journey before being the first runner-up for the Wakin Kuria Prize for Children's Literature last year.

BA: In 2020 my sister was 3 and apart from bible stories, I had to actively search for stories I wanted to read to her. I stumbled on Writers Space Africa (WSA) and enjoyed some of the literature. When the call came out, I submitted for it. I got longlisted but never made it to the shortlist. I joined WSA-Nigeria in 2020. In 2022, I was opportune to serve as the welfare secretary. A highlight of that year was planning the trip to Duoala. Between 2020-2022, I'll say I learnt more of the 'technicalities and rules' of writing children's literature. I applied

again and voila! I joined the WSA Academy in 2022, and from there I became a mentor in 2023.

PPBlessing: Was 2020 the same year when you started your blog?

BA: Yes.

PPBlessing: What inspired your winning story, Siki and the Bicycle?

BA: I happened to be learning about finance at the time and I kept saying to myself, I wish I knew this earlier, I wish I knew this earlier. Every time I learnt something new, I'll get that impression. There's something John Obidi says, 'the school of the rich and the school of the poor are different'. Their children learn different things, so I decided to write about it. I think most of my children's story are trying to explain things I wish I knew as a child to a child.

PPBlessing: How has winning the award been for you?

BA: I was happy about it. I was doubly happy that I was there in person to receive the award. But the thing about it, and winning in general is that it comes at the end of a process. So, we savour the victory, after that we have to move on. But I enjoyed writing the story and I'm glad it came to light.

PPBlessing: That's beautiful. Have you won other awards aside this?

BA: Not yet.

Now we know...

→ I stumbled on Writers Space Africa (WSA) and enjoyed some of the literature. When the call came out (2020), I submitted for it. I got longlisted but never made it to short list... Between 2020-2022, I'll say I learnt more of the 'technicalities and rules' of writing children's literature. I applied again and voila!

PPBlessing: What is your plan for writing?

BA: Well, right now I'm working on a book. I hope to have a children's storybook later on but haven't started working on it yet. Further plans will unfold with time.

PPBlessing: What's your ideal day like?

BA: I do not have an answer for that at all. It depends on the priority per time and if I have any compulsory time-bound activity like school or work.

PPBlessing: What inspires your writing and what other genres do you write besides from Children's Literature and Articles?

BA: Fiction, Creative Non-fiction and sometimes Poetry. I'm inspired by life and everything that exists.

PPBlessing: This is quite ambiguous, could you explain further?

BA: What inspires me is also very ambiguous. It could be anything. Reading a good book, watching a good movie, listening to a song, not having the courage to do something, being brave only to have it bite me in the ass, watching an interview of some-

one I admire. Anything that happens is a possible inspiration.

PPBlessing: Part of your headline on Twitter reads Christian medic. Why not just medic?

BA: It's a more encompassing description of who I strive to be.

PPBlessing: Why so?

BA: Well, there is an ideal a Christian should strive for. To attain Christ-likeness even in work.

PPBlessing: What has been the most memorable event so far for you, as a doctor and a writer?



Blessing Amatemeso after receiving her certificate of Award during the 2022 African Writers Conference in Douala, Cameroon. 5th November, 2022



Blessing Amateso with Anthony Onugba (Founder, WSA) and Nnane Ntube (Coordinator WSA-Cameroon - 2022) during the 2022 African Writers Conference 5th November, 2022

BA: For writing, I would say the African Writers Conference. It was such a wonderful experience. I hope to experience more like it. As a doctor, well... I hope to answer that after a few years of practice.

PPBlessing: Does this mean you haven't started practising? I thought you're supposed to go through horsemanship immediately after med school.

BA: 'Immediately' is relative, especially in Nigeria. Graduates are supposed to go for National Youth Service (NYSC) 'immediately' too. But sometimes unforeseen circumstances occur.

PPBlessing: What about the most memorable medical school event?

BA: I have a most memorable for every

year. and it was not always in the classroom. But one way or the other, it had to do with meeting new people. My most memorable events were the seemingly ordinary but dramatic ways I met friends that have stayed with me till now.

PPBlessing: Who has been your greatest inspiration and influence in medicine and writing?

BA: I hardly have a best of anything but I'll speak of the heralds. I don't want to be cliché but Chimamanda Ngozie Adiche was the first glimpse of the possibility of writing for me. I know she has talked about something similar but even I too read books and enjoyed them but didn't realise that I didn't see myself in them till I read Purple Hibiscus. I could relate with Kam-

bili being asked ‘does he have two heads?’ I could relate with the complex relationship with reverend fathers. At the time I read the book I was, in fact, in a Catholic boarding school and I remember asking someone if it’s only fine people that are allowed to be fathers and sisters. I will have to confess though that after reading her, I still didn’t read Nigerian books till recently. I also wondered if the Catholic church does voice screening too for intending reverend sisters. They have the best sopranos I have heard till date.

Arese Ugwu’s ‘Smart Money Woman’ also inspires me. The book is fun but practical. It influenced Siki and the bicycle. It is influencing my current writing. However, WSA has played a major role in my growth. From the lectures, and prompts to the mentorship. When I decided to start writing, I really didn’t know how to go about it. WSA was instrumental in that journey. It’s still very instrumental in my growth as I am still a part of the group.

In Medicine, if I don’t say Ben Carson, who else? But the dream he painted was, mehn... a dream. There are people doing good that I admire in everyday life. They are so numerous to mention.

PPBlessing: What do you hope to achieve both as a doctor and writer?

BA: As a writer, I hope that I can reflect the society that I live in and maybe even portray the society that I want to live in. I hope to write for a long time. As a doctor, I have a particular affinity to dramatic recovery. Bringing someone from dire situations to

full health, so I’m looking at trauma and emergency medicine. The path I wish to take or the height I wish to attain thereof are not set in stone.

PPBlessing: If you were to choose one career path between medicine and writing, which would it be?

BA: None. I wouldn’t choose one over the other and I’m still very much open to other careers.

PPBlessing: Interesting... Such as?

BA: I’m open. Life can take us places.

PPBlessing: Smart answer but you haven’t answered.

BA: It could be anything.

PPBlessing: A lot of women have complained about facing gender-based challenges in their lives and chosen fields. Have you had any such experience?

BA: Gender-based challenges abound. I don’t think any field is spared, including

A point to note..



WSA has played a major role in my growth. From the lectures, prompts to the mentorship. When I decided to start writing, I really didn’t know how to go about it. WSA was instrumental in that journey. It’s still very instrumental in my growth as I am still a part of the group.

the university community as a whole. I don't think I'll be able to answer this categorically regarding the career path in particular.

PPBlessing: How about from the life perspective generally?

BA: In secondary school, I had the opportunity to go for a five weeks boot camp in Lagos. In all honesty, I and my friends thought our parents won't let us; I went to a single school. Surprisingly they did. But on getting there we realized that many girls had not been allowed to come and rather than the school writing to the company or organisers, boys from their school took their spot. Prior to that time, my dad was very cautious about us travelling.

I once had an opportunity that involved paired housing. Unfortunately, I was the only female. And well, you can imagine how that went. I've not had a particular 'discriminatory experience' but I've experienced where only males were planned for even though it wasn't explicitly stated.

PPBlessing: What are your hobbies?

BA: my number one hobby is reading. I won't even lie. it is the one thing I love doing any day, anytime. What I love reading is not streamlined. It began with reading Encarta kids and learning things like Tyrannosaurus rex. It was also where I fell in love with American history. When I learnt that America gained independence more than 200 years ago, I was so surprised, Nigeria wasn't even 50 then. Then it went to novels. Romance novels, first because, for

some reason which I have not discovered, it was so available in boarding school. Nora Roberts was a name then. I read so much of her till I couldn't, moved to Dan Brown and then Sydney Sheldon. I loved the world Sidney Sheldon opened me up to. I fell in love numerous times. My most recent love is Tomorrow Died on Yesterday by Chimeka Garricks. It was set in the Niger Delta so it's close to home.

I love watching movies. I like playing games. I love swimming even though I'm not so good at it. I like trying new food or delicacy.

PPBlessing: Are you single or dating?

BA: I am legally single.

PPBlessing: What of non-legally?

BA: I am considering forming covalent bonds with an oppositely charged entity.

PPBlessing: If you have the opportunity to change one thing in Nigeria's medical school system based on your experience, what would it be?

BA: There are differences in medical school system even within the country. If I would change just one thing in my school system it would be to separate lectures from clinical rotations totally. Gives you more time to be available in the hospital and learn hands-on.

PPBlessing: So far, what has been your biggest challenge as a young lady and a writer?

BA: As a writer I would say getting out of my head, writing has been the challenge so far. As a lady, I would say trying to define what my values are. As a society some values are passed down, some norms. Trying to sort out my own beliefs, how I see God and things like that.

PPBlessing: You didn't mention skating among your hobbies but I saw a picture of you skating, so where does that fall?

BA: Okay. I just began learning skating. Graciously being taught by Ogbu Eme (winner of the Wakini Kuria prize). I won't even venture out skating on my own yet so I can't call it a hobby. Maybe when I have mastered it. For sports I play table tennis and volley ball.

PPBlessing: Have you know him ever since or it was the awards that connected you two?

BA: The award. I don't remember who chatted who up but we both stay in Port Harcourt so we were able to connect.

PPBlessing: What will you tell aspiring writers who are still stuck in their heads and unable to put down their ideas to paper?

BA: Just start. Someone told me that first drafts are never to be shared yesterday. Write! Nothing I learned mattered till I started writing, then it started to make more sense.

Thank you for reading through this insightful interview with the multifaceted Blessing Amatemeso. Until next month, keep reading and sharing the Writers Space Africa magazine.





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STILL TAKING ME TO SCHOOL

Zungu Bongani
South Africa

*I'm limited by the technology of my time,
but one day you'll figure this out.*

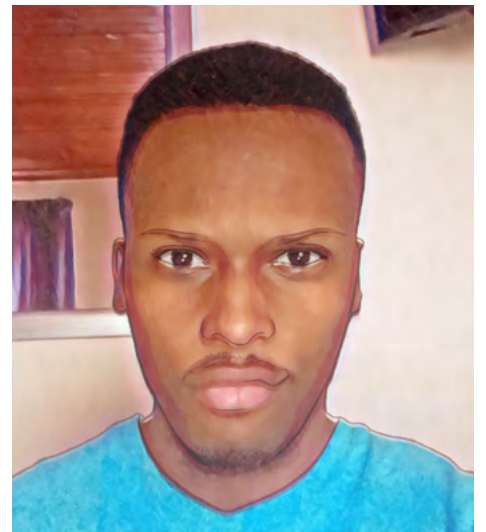
Son, the sun moves into your sign
with the model scan's soft heat like
little feet dancing on beach goers.

I thought one synthesised, your
personal year is drawing to a close.
On curved moon carved hands;
An element's dreamy nature of
coin chasers by their cool veneer.

Someday you'll realise your optimism
and *joie de vivre* on children of concrete
ladder climbs.
Even on those who fled their passing
phase-phrase for uncertain sky.

A magical ride turns lift-spins into a
a unisphere of hands anew.
The key slumbers sun's beat like eye
to eye; shall never stop 'til his olden days.

It means your future hasn't been written yet, no one's has!



THE LOVE OF A FATHER

Rycha Heemachal Devi
Mauritius



The moon brimmed with joy among the stars,
As I stood there adorned with beautiful scars.

Crushing his own dream to fulfil mine,
Going against the world to make me shine.

From toiling hard to provide me with education,
To feeling proud on the day of my graduation

My father was always there for me.

In the blink of an eye, I went from daddy's princess,
To a damsel in distress.

When the glass shoe did not fit me at midnight
And I was mercilessly abandoned by my knight,

I witnessed my whole life falling apart.
When I returned home with a broken heart,

My father was always there for me.

When my hopes were strangled to death,
He became my only strength.

He struggled to pull me out of the mess
As I was being tormented by darkness,

My father was always there for me.

He taught me how to rise back and love again
By dancing in ecstasy under the rain,

For him, I am ready to go an extra mile
As he is the reason behind my smile.

UNNOTICED

Ayesiga Alvin
Uganda

A Father cared for his Son
Each and every single day,
Took him to school
Gave titbits of wisdom
And different perspectives,
On life and living.

He even stopped by me, a simple beggar,
Who observed everyday
This budding relationship
And admired from afar,
This beautiful bond.

Then one rainy night, there was a fight
Between the Father and his Son.
I know not why,
But the younger gunned down the elder.

Unexpected, unforeseen, unplanned,
But the Son seemed to have moved on
And it appears his family too.

He now speaks highly of his mother,
And so the deeds of the Father...

...were washed away with the blood in the rain.



FOR MY HERO

Nakut Janet
Kenya

Bucketing down
Fragile soul knocks the wrickety door
His ragged clothes drenched, feet swollen
Wrinkled, brittle hands clasping flour and bread
Sunken, narrow faces of my siblings beam
Humbled with papa's selfless touch
Not ever looking for glory.

His touch tough yet gentle to us
Castigates us when we wrong
Teaching us right from wrong
His arms the safest place
Pa is our guardian
His touch a protective armour.

Pa's touch is the reason for my living
My guiding light
Holding me day to day
Priceless gem rare to be found.
May the good Lord
Grace him with a long life of ease.

SOFTLY STRONG

Margaret Chi
Cameroon

They never know the fears
Camouflaged by those firm eyes,
The tender heart beneath that muscular chest.
Your belly is a burning furnace
Concealing tears, veins pervade your face
Like electric cables on high voltage
Waiting for just a storm for electrocution,
Yet, your tenderness is bountiful.
The last man standing when the sun retires,
Your feigned voice suits the lullabies, and
Ferries my sweet little heart to wonderland.

Your face is my guiding light along this
Oblique rugged path of life,
The many times you smiled as i babbled
Daddy, jovially thrusting me in the air
Electrifying my face into contagious
Laughter as my toothless mouth opened in
Ecstatic pleasure.
These moments remain Inscribed
on my heart like God's
Commandments on the two stones.
From the maiden days of my life,
You smeared me with an everlasting
Fragrance, everywhere I go.

OF KINGS AND WISE MEN

Aduda Marcel
Kenya



Many traveled far to see him
like the great Ogotemmel of Dogon
he was a towering library of tales
and like Akuku Danger of the East
he was the patriarch of a vast clan
children milled around him joyfully
he spared no chance to tell his stories
to the wandering eyes that stared at him
for he knew they were not merely children
but his ancestors returned to him in form
this is why he took special care of the young
he'd call them star seeds; travelers from afar.

his renowned power to heal, he joked
to the foreigners who occasionally visited
he said, came from a famous star system
while pointing with one finger in the sky,
another to his belt that had only three holes
with a coy smile and a heartfelt of laughter.

he'd go about his day fixing broken bones
and quieting minds lost in life's humdrums,
for he knew who he was when his matriarch said...
"even a healer needs a healer with Grace".

FLOWERS

Mwangome Caleb
Kenya

Every time daddy issued
her flowers,
It wasn't the sweet scent
that kept her waiting.
It was her waiting
for the slightest sound
of his voice,
His noisy throat clearing
And his deep voice
that deepened to the core of her soul.
On that day,
she carried his flowers
cruised her way through the people.
The people watched
but she had nothing to watch.
On that day,
she didn't hear her daddy's voice,
but a few wrapped up lines.

She had daddy issues,
but she didn't see her daddy issue
the daily flowers.



AM I A STONE

Nowemigisha Isabel
Uganda



Am I a stone,
Easily forgetting
the rhythm of your feet,
the comfort of your scent
the glimpse of your smile,
the warmth of your hands
the beauty of your presence?

Am I a stone,
only longing when alone
only hurting when I remember,
only reflecting when it's silent
only scribbling when I'm nostalgic?

Am I a stone,
that I replaced you with another
dad?



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

A GHOST EMBRACE

Halla Immaculate
Tanzania



The wildfire began to ravage the house. I couldn't believe Kevin and his friends had gotten this far with their jokes.

"Jokes?" Papa shot me a doubtful side-eye. I tried to utter a word but failed to find words to explain how sick I was of the situation. Papa rushed off to the backyard.

I followed him like a shadow, wishing I could think as fast as he could and act even faster.

"You should tell them to stay the hell away from you, or your papa will deal with them!" He said, anger evident in his voice. Papa grabbed a fire extinguisher and I

mimicked his movements. Then the next few minutes were filled with the sound of moving feet.

I didn't want my father to protect me. But again, could I really be my own shield? I was nothing without him. Maybe I clung too much to the promises he made, that he would always be there to defend me. Was Kevin even a danger big enough to safeguard me from? No matter what a bloody mess he left on my face, at the end of the day, he was merely a schoolboy trying to graduate just like me. He could never hurt me beyond his limits, or so I believed. Yet it had come down to this. Kevin trying to burn down our house.

Why was I so weak? I didn't like the thought of Kevin tirelessly messing with me. I didn't like to drag my father into my teenage troubles. If only I wasn't so soft, then maybe they wouldn't bully me.

I threw the extinguisher to the ground once the fire died down and sat down on the stairs before the front door. Papa dropped himself next to me.

"I - I'm sorry," I stuttered, eyes downcast. "I didn't mean to bother you with my stupid affairs."

"Izzie, you're not a bother. You're my son and I'll always be here for you."

I swallowed hard before looking at him.

"You don't have to. I should man up and learn how to fight my own fights."

"No -"

"You can't always be here for me."

"Your problem is my problem. We're buddies, remember?" He ruffled my hair and smiled. "As long as I'm here, that Kevin kid should know that he needs to get through me first if he really wants to mess with you."

I didn't want to put my burden on him. Kevin despised my guts, not Papa's. My father shouldn't have gotten involved in the first place, but the more I forced him out of the equation, the more persistent he was.

I smiled back, and he put an arm around my shoulders. I leaned on him. His body was cold and firm like a solid brick. Maybe that was why he was so strong; stronger than everyone I had ever known, but not invincible enough to dodge a bullet from an enemy. Who knew it would get to that extent?

I felt I could fight for myself but this was easier said than done. No matter how hard I try to shield myself from harm, one thing is certain; I'll always need a father's touch.

TEMBA'S LASTING FOOTPRINT

Gokatwemang Sololo
Botswana



In the dusty village of Mookane, a stunning girl named Seabe was born to Temba and Nosipho Madikedzela. She was the third born of a family of five; three boys and two girls. A gorgeous baby with marble eyes. Seabe grew up to be a beautiful teenage girl full of life. She was intelligent and outstanding in her schoolwork. She was the best student and every teacher was impressed by her performance. Her parents were very proud of her; especially her father, Temba.

Temba was a well-structured man, tall with

wide hips, and broad shoulders and wide eyes. He had a husky, loud voice. He was a hilarious person who brought laughter to his home whenever he was around. He loved his family and was always praising them for the little things that they did. Temba was a soldier and always made sure his family was taken care of. Seabe was his favourite child.

After Seabe completed her primary schooling at the age of twelve, she was admitted to Parwe Secondary School in Mahalapye.

“My Princess, you made the Madikedze-la family proud today,” Temba said with excitement, throwing and catching his daughter in mid-air.

“Thank you, Dad. You are my biggest hero,” Seabe answered, feeling dizzy from the throw as her father brought her down.

“You deserve to be pampered. Name your wish” .

“Can I sleep on that? I will tell you tomorrow,” quipped Seabe as she ran to meet her mother, who was coming from the land.

“Anytime, little Princess,” Temba said, while grinning and rubbing his hands before walking away to meet his wife.

Seabe could not contain her happiness. She helped her mother put down the bucket she was carrying on her head. Before her mother could even congratulate her, she was telling her all the million things she wanted her father to get for her.

“Mom, do you think Dad would buy me a guitar?” Seabe asked, as she lowered the bucket.

“I never knew you liked music. Where is that coming from?” asked Nosipho puzzled and giggling.

“It has been my dream all along. I sing in the shower every day, haven’t you been listening to me?” Seabe said, laughing and hiding her face with her hands.

“I do, but I never thought you were considering being a musician. You never even discussed it with me once,” Nosipho laughed.

“During the school vacations when I visited Dad in Gaborone, he took me to a BDF Concert meant to raise funds for charity. There was a young lady who meticulously played the guitar. I was impressed by her brilliance. Ever since that day, I have wanted a guitar. I want to be the best lady guitarist in Botswana.”

“Your father will buy the guitar, my girl. You are his favourite princess.”

“Thank you, Mom.”

The following day, Nosipho, Temba and Seabe went shopping in Mahalapye. Mahalapye was the shopping centre for people from Mookane, Dovedale, Dibete, and Mmaphashalala. It was considered a small town. Mookane is sixty kilometres from Mahalapye. Seabe was very excited. This was her first shopping trip with both her parents.

Early in the morning the day following, Seabe was woken by her father’s car engine roaring in the compound. The car had a booster and made a very loud and irritating sound. All the natives of the town called it Big Engine. Whenever Dad drove, it sped around the village roaring like a hungry lion and children would be cheering as it passes by their yards.

“Are you guys ready?” Temba asked, putting his leg on the clutch column and revving the car.

“Give us a few minutes”, Nosipho shouted as she went outside the house, still wrapping her headgear.

“I’m done Dad,” Seabe answered, as she

opened the car door and took her seat.

"I want to reach Mahalapye before it gets hot," Temba said.

"Mom, hurry up, please."

Temba drove out of the compound and went to the tarred road. The journey to Mahalapye started.

"Daddy, do you know how much I love your driving?" Seabe said, tapping her father's shoulder.

"Really? Thank you, Princess."

"I love it even more when we are with Mum."

"I see, you still haven't told me what you want as a present; remember you said you would tell me today," Temba said.

"Oh yeah, I want a guitar."

"A guitar! You, guitar?!" Temba exclaimed, laughing.

"Remember the day you took me to the BDF in concert? I was impressed by how well the lady who was playing the guitar did. I never told you, but I loved her and wanted to play the guitar like her. I have been practising in the shower every day with my toothbrush," Seabe answered, licking her lips and jumping on the car seat.

"Wow! I didn't know I had a Tracy Chapman in my house," laughed Temba as he put his hand on the steering wheel and hooted.

"Now, you know Dad, am I getting the guitar?"

"Yes!"

"Yippee! Yeah! You are an amazing dad. I love you for being my father. Thank you."

The trip to Mahalapye was very exciting. Seabe bought the guitar. Nosipho bought all the household items she needed. Temba was happy that time was managed wisely and that she would be able to go to the cattle post afterwards. As they returned to Mookane, Seabe was singing all the way, and her father pleaded with her to keep quiet as it was distracting his driving.

"Are we ever going to make another trip to Mahalapye?" Temba asked, narrowing his eyes.

"Yes Dad, when you take me to my new school in two weeks."

"Oh, God! Will you be playing this guitar?"

"Definitely."

Later in February, Seabe was accompanied by her father to start her junior secondary classes in Mahalapye. She was going to start a new life away from her family and that demanded that she live with her aunt.

This would be the first time in her life that she would be staying away from her parents. She was confused, angry, and at the same time, elated that she would be starting a new life and meeting new friends. Temba introduced Seabe to her aunt, Dibaga. Dibaga had a very beautiful smile and hugged Seabe. She took her luggage and ushered her into her new room.

"Hello, Niece! Welcome to Mahalapye."

Feel at home and ask for anything you want, but most of all, study hard at school”.

“Thank you, Auntie, I will be a good girl and promise to study hard. Can I play my guitar during the weekends?”

“Yes of course! This is your home now.”

The following day, Seabe was dressed in a sky blue uniform: new black shoes, white socks, and a navy blue jersey. Her father drove her to school. When they arrived at school, they walked to the principal’s office and exchanged pleasantries with her and other teachers. The principal was introduced as Mrs Malefho. She told Temba that school fees were two hundred and fifty for the entire year and can be paid fully or in three installments termly. Her father took out his wallet and paid the school fees for the entire year.

“Dad! I didn’t know you were rich enough to pay for my entire school fees for a year,” Seabe stuttered, playing with her hair.

“I am not rich, princess. I am only doing my duty as a father”, Temba explained, holding Seabe on her head and hugging her in front of the principal.

“I am touched, Dad, we are not rich, but you paying my school fees has left an indelible mark on me,” Seabe murmured as tears yelled on her face.

“I am proud of you my princess, this is the only way I can show it.”

“Look over there Dad, some students came to school barefooted, while I’m in full school uniform, and have fully paid school fees. This is amazing,” Seabe couldn’t con-

tain her happiness anymore; she broke into tears.

Temba Madikedzela died twenty-one years ago. He was a rare breed. He was a father by his deeds. Today, Seabe Madikedzela is a successful woman and a well-known guitarist.

A father’s touch always leaves an everlasting footprint.



MISSING TOUCH

Ikhenoba Joseph
Nigeria



My only memory of him was his old picture in a glass frame, covered with cobwebs and dust, hanging on the wall of our living room. The picture of him wearing a black leather cap might have been taken in the early nineties. I have not bothered to ask Mother about a man who abandoned his family, a man who had no empathy, a man devoid of any sense of responsibility. My mother described how he frequently assaulted her when she was expecting me. When the abuse was intense, she considered leaving him, but each time he begged her not to. Mother was so gracious to par-

don him.

“Could it be that she adores him?” I keep asking myself. If I were her, I would never have pardoned him.

I had just turned nine months old when he abandoned us. My brother was two. It was hard growing up without him. Mother had to work multiple jobs to support us in a neighbourhood riddled with high rates of poverty and unemployment, horrifying crime and violence, drug abuse, and homelessness, as well as increasing numbers of high school dropouts and adoles-

cent pregnancies. It was far from what every well-meaning parent wanted for their children; a community where indigenes witness murder every day, but the authorities remain oblivious of it. Too frequently, gunshots are followed by police and ambulance sirens that pierce the quiet, dark evenings.

Every time my brother Ovie and I went to school, we saw boys of school-going age selling and using hard drugs instead of being in school. I often felt sad and worried. Ovie would say in jest “Na so you women dey. You people dey carry every matter for your head.”

“Were their fathers also absent like ours? Were they not worried about their future?”, I would ask myself.

When Ovie was eighteen, his friend Azagba, introduced him to a gang. Criminals. Perhaps, what they say that “a father never resembles his son, it’s the son that resembles the father” was something we will all see in a lifetime. Azagba’s father reportedly belonged to a gang and spent five years in jail during his childhood.

Ovie started stealing and dealing in drugs. Mother would be furious with him if he came back with stolen goods. She had worked hard to provide for us and also advised him, but he was unreceptive. Ovie would, however, insist that he must be the man of the house.

“Which house? The cramped apartment that could barely contain just the three of us?” I wondered.

But Ovie vowed to find us a better place in a few months. I did not know how that became his headache, but he seemed to have taken enough drugs that “treat it”.

“If only my father had been here to take responsibility, my brother Ovie wouldn’t have gone wayward?” I often thought.

It was 4 o’clock on Saturday when I saw Mama Amaka walking briskly to our apartment. That was unusual of her. Mama Amaka would always send her daughter Amaka to us. Her presence said only one word: trouble!

“Ah, ah, you people are still here?” She asked breathing heavily as though she expected us to be elsewhere.

“Yes na, we dey”, Mother answered.

“Police...police... carry Ovie go,” Mama Amaka blurted.

I did not notice when Mother set aside the egusi soup. I just saw her grab her scarf and sprint towards the police station where Ovie and his gang members were detained. I followed her too leaving Mama Amaka behind. Mother sobbed when she saw Ovie in that squalor jail.

“Why are you torturing me like this? Despite being impoverished, I want the best for you. Since your father passed away, I have worked hard to ensure that you have a bright future. How many times have I told you not to associate with criminal gangs?”

“Look at you!” She sobbed vehemently.

My brother was found guilty and sen-

tenced to five years in prison. Those were heartbreaking and agonising days for us. Together with my mom, I saw him thrice a week. She kept reminding him to pray and ask God for forgiveness. Five years down the line, Ovie is still hoping for mercy. Somehow, he hopes to be free again.

“I want to share something with you, my daughter,” Mother said.

“What is it, Mother?”

“This morning I got an odd call from your father. I felt stunned. He promised to show up this evening.”

“He dares not. I don’t want to see him. What’s the essence of seeing a man who wasn’t there in my life?”

A few minutes later, I heard a knock on the door. I answered it.

“Good evening. Please is Mama Azagba at home?”

I recognised him. It was him. The man I called my father. He looked very bearded and old.

“What do you want? Go away!” I yelled.

He couldn’t even recognise me. How will he remember the face of a poor innocent child he left in the cold? A child yearning for the warmth and touch of a loving father. A child in need of a hand for a lift.

“My daughter, let him in,” Mother whispered.

I stayed unwavering. I hadn’t defied her before, but I did so this time. I saw my father walk away. It was hard, but I couldn’t

let him in.

For weeks, he kept coming to our residence, hoping to make peace with us again. That peace never saw the light of day so long as my heart was hardened until I had a change of heart and went in search of him myself. I discovered his location near an abandoned clothes factory.

I rang his doorbell, unsure how I would react when he eventually showed up. Fifteen minutes went by and there was no sign of any human coming to open the door. His neighbour said he hadn’t seen him that morning when I inquired. He repeatedly rapped on the door. He then pushed the door open by force. There he was, dangling with a rope on his fan. He was gone.

He left a letter explaining how my unforgiveness made him a shadow of himself, making him suicidal. I sobbed bitterly. The man who was my father for such a brief period caused me to weep.

Was the agony gone, though? The dependence? The yearning? No! It seemed to always be there. I never gave him a kiss or an embrace. I never said I loved him. In the end, I was still unrefined, dependent, unfulfilled, and filled with an unquenchable ache for my father’s affection, which I had completely lost. My father’s love was all gone. I hadn’t had it for long enough. I would continue to be that little girl waiting at the entrance for her father, her knight in shining armour, to approach her so she could call out “Papa,” innocent and waiting. For all I had desired was simply a “father’s touch.”

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REVIEW

May 2023 Edition



BROWN MANGO

A Children's Literature by Nyiyongu Samuel, Nigeria
Reviewer: Funmi Richards, Nigeria



As a child, I always wondered how people managed city life with its smells. Couldn't they smell the taint in the air? I remember one of the reasons I chose the university I went to was because it had a cluster of trees that gave it a boisterous life.

That said, the title "brown mango" is so telling and poignant. It tells about life, nature's life that has become unhealthy. This could be like Selian — due to lack of proper care sometimes caused by lack of knowledge and humanity's obsession with acquiring.

This is so exemplified in Selian's story, where after acquiring the Mango plant, she realises that she's not aware of how to care for it. We, as humans, too often put the cart before the horse. Why acquire something we are not equipped to take care of? However, it also poses the paradox of the life we live. As we are not given choices on where and how we want to live, we are birthed, and then, we feel our way through from that point.

There is also the theme of childlike curios-

ity; Selian desires knowledge of what she's been given, which is borne of humans' desire to nurture. The desire to explore what we have been given to build the world we hope can be sustainable.

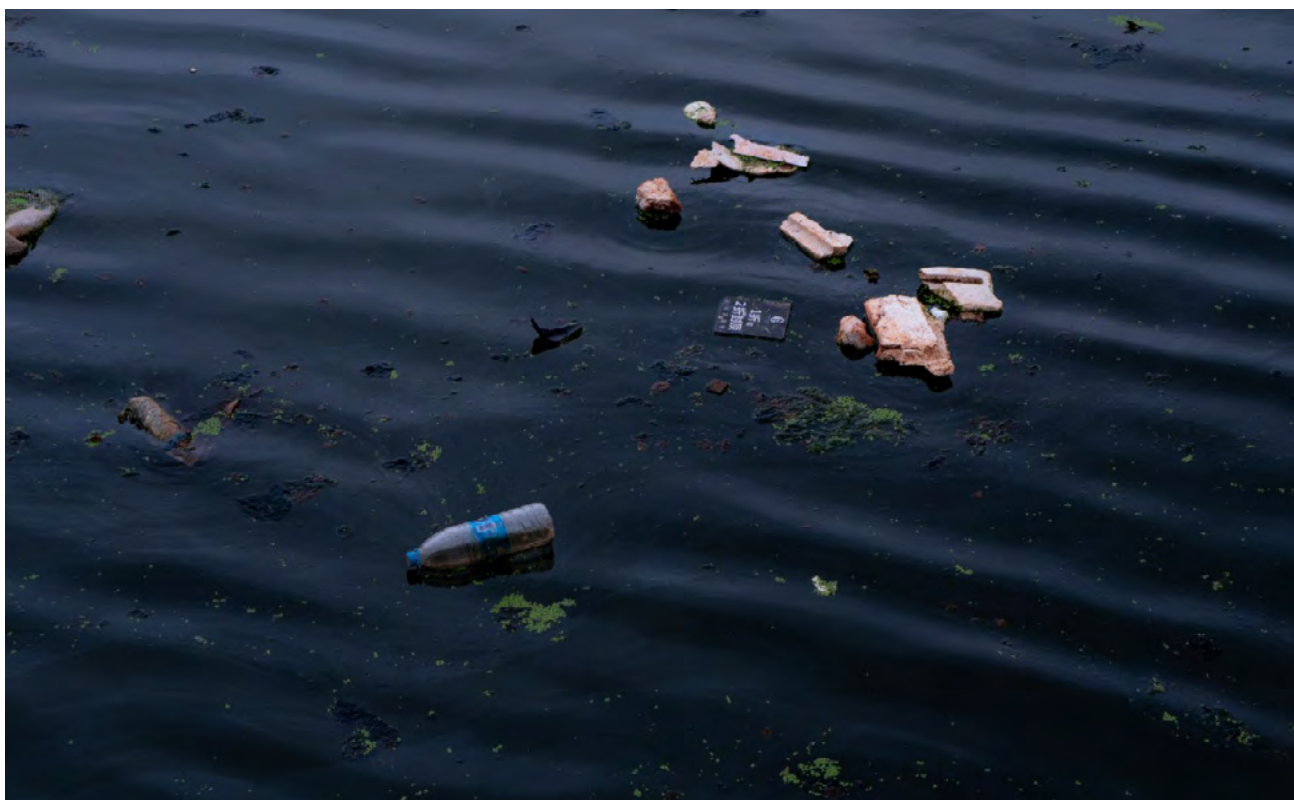
Nature gives us its gifts in the wealth of its natural habitat - plants, animals, biodiversity. And life as we know it becomes more sustainable when we equip ourselves with knowledge and share it with our offspring. That way, we end this careless attitude bereft of responsibility for nature's gift where like Selian's mum, we do not value each plant; instead, we believe another one can grow in its place. And seemingly forget that each tree will bear its fruits.

In conclusion, this a lovely story that could be a base for a plant workshop for young children where they learn the value of plant care and strengthen their understanding of the gift of plants. Thereby enabling a generation where nature's knowledge is at the helm of innovation, for only then can we hope to restore the "brown mangoes" of earth.

BYSTANDER

A Flash Fiction Hanghuwa Ndawedwa, Namibia

Reviewer: Mt Mazimba-Kaunda, Zambia



A bystander is a person who is present at an event but does not participate. Inherent in the term is the sense that the bystander chooses not to partake in said event.

Michael Curtiz once said that ‘the only thing you regret are the things that you did not do’. This is especially true when those things are essential, and inaction has severe future consequences. This is what Hanghuwa tries to share with us in his flash fiction piece.

This piece is relevant to the times as it tackles an essential topic of the effects of pol-

lution on humans and the environment. Narrating in the First Person, he conveys the sadness that a man feels for not acting when an opportunity was given to him to fight for the environment. Ten years later, the man lies in rubble, surrounded by the evidence of his inaction, as he waits for darkness to consume him.

This is an excellent piece of writing that environmental activists should take up as it delivers the message without being irritatingly obvious. This is a job well done, indeed.

GRATITUDE

A Poem by Okhabi CB Wanjiku, Kenya
Reviewer: Prudence Gakedirelwe, Botswana

Every good thing that happens gives one a reason to be appreciative. This three-stanza poem, made of quatrains, reflects beauty residing amongst the circumstances that arise from specific events which are unexpected. It thoroughly emanates tranquility and peace from its beginning, emphasising the praise and thankfulness of the new turnaround. It is a semi-narration of events from what is current to an expected nearby future. This virtuous poem exudes fullness of character as seen from stanza to stanza.

Rain is an essential element of the earth, and this poet went to different lengths in demonstrating its importance not only physically but spiritually and psycho-socially. The poem's aura encompasses the theme of "good" thoroughly, and the initiating point, the title, affirms the aftermath of good happenings. The ability to keep believing in a positive outcome is founded on good characteristics despite past experiences of drought.

The poem's entirety carries a hopeful effect, from the drizzling indicating rain to the hope that as a new generation of biological life blooms, so shall it rub onto the children who will grow to see the beauty

of the earth. The rain is sure to bring life to the plants as well as the people of the land. This is a turnaround likened to that of a new written history. The poet is giving us two sides of the coin, and this time, the wheel of time has turned towards that unexpected but highly believed rain as seen through the rendering of prayers to the gods. This hints at the spiritual side of the poem expressed through faith not only in an omnipotent power but in mother nature, herself to recuperate and make her lands affluent. Faith is often a reason to look forward to a better outcome, and trusting in a bigger power than human effort is the fuel that drives mankind to see the next day.

Behind every circumstance is a lesson, and in this case, no matter how bad nature can be, there is beauty. It is only where there is barrenness that a new life can come from. Despite the time it took for the rain to fall, the persona showed strength, commitment and undying hope, as well as belief in the earth's ability to sustain life. This resonates with good earth, and for such, the only befitting gesture is that of gratitude.

FOUR COLOURS AWAY FROM GREEN AND THERE'S BROWN

A Short Story by Blossom Umoren, Nigeria
Reviewer: Francis Mkwapatira, Malawi



The colours green and brown possess significant connotations to mankind. Green is supposedly known as “the colour of life.” It is associated with renewable energy and sustainable practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat the effects of climate change. On the contrary, brown represents the negative impacts of human activities on the environment. It symbolises pollution and degradation.

In this noble narrative, “Four Colours Away from Green and There’s Brown,” the protagonist’s community struggles with the impacts of climate change. Her family and the community are at the mercy of inconsistent rains, leading to pitiable crop growth and yield. This results from a lot of factory gas emissions and oil spillag-

es. These leave the narrator and her family hopeless and unsure of what may happen next.

As the story ends, the narrator recalls what she learned in school about the colour wheel, specifically that the colour brown is only four colours away from the colour green. This thought-provoking expression calls for action and highlights the urgency of addressing human activities contributing to climate change. If we fail to take responsibility and necessary measures, the human race is not far from the point of no return, where the impacts of climate change should reach their climax. Similarly, it calls us to take responsibility and necessary measures to restore the green that Mother Earth once adorned.

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