

WRITERS SPACE

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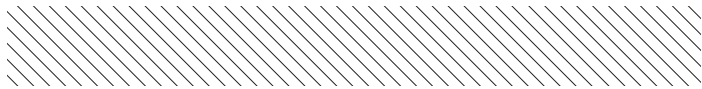
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EDITORIAL

Comfort Nyati, SDB
Chief Editor

Dear reader,

This issue presents the miraculous splendor of motherhood; the nucleus of parenthood. It is not foreign to humanity that a female gender, especially those who go beyond themselves to be called mothers, are special species that participate in God's project of creation. In every mother is found a school of thought that orients a child to realise one's philosophy of life as he/she navigates into new possibilities afforded by the world.

The concept of motherhood is confined around the parameters of a woman who is called mother by her biological or non-biological children. However, it makes more meaning

to delineate the operation of motherhood from the lenses of the 'not so much thought perception' of the male gender that plays a pivotal role in the upbringing of a child in a family, be it functional or dysfunctional. In some homes, motherhood is left to fathers who take up the mantle and becomes the 'mother-figure'.

In most, if not all African cultures, it is socially binding that every child is the child of the soil. As a community-oriented viewpoint that celebrates Ubuntu, every adult individual ought to participate in the welfare of a child regardless whose child the person is. This simply implies that in a typical African society, a community or a vil-

lage assumes the role of a mother to all and for all without discriminating against anyone.

Mother Africa, each month through the writer's space magazine, finds in herself a threshold to deliver new creative writers while fostering the already existing. Therefore, this 87th edition bears testimony. Our esteemed authors echo an amplified wittiness such that the reader's agitation will be synchronised into the mechanical and technical language that express not only the supremacy and beauty of motherhood, rather the heroism of a mother's love.

Wishing you a Happy reading



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Empowering African Writers

Call for Submissions

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Writers Space Africa (WSA) magazine is accepting submissions for its 89th edition (MAY 2024 Edition).

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- Children's Literature
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- Poetry
- Short Stories

To submit: www.writersspace.net

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Children's Literature

ALL MAMA DOES

Sisanda Mqadi
South Africa



In a small village nestled between rolling hills and meandering streams, there lived a mother named Khanyi. Her days were woven with threads of laughter, mischief, and the pitter-patter of tiny feet.

Mama's house was a haven of warmth and

love, where the scent of freshly baked cookies danced in the air. Every morning, she greeted her children with a smile as bright as the sunrise, her arms open wide like a safety net ready to catch them.

One day, as the raindrops tapped gently on

the window, mama gathered her little ones around. With twinkles in their eyes, they listened to her tales of magical lands and brave adventures. Her stories were like windows to worlds where dreams took flight.

In the kitchen, mama's apron was a canvas adorned with smudges of flour and traces of creativity. Her little chefs stood on tiptoes, eager to stir and mix, creating a symphony of flavours under mama's watchful eye. With each recipe, she sprinkled a pinch of patience and a handful of love.

The garden outside bloomed with colours, a testament to mama's green thumb. Her children giggled as they planted seeds, learning the gentle art of nurturing. Mama whispered secrets to the flowers, and they, in turn, whispered tales of beauty and resilience.

When darkness fell, mama transformed into a bedtime magician. With a soft lullaby, she chased away the monsters under the bed and painted the night with dreams. Her voice, a soothing melody that wrapped around her children like a cozy blanket.

But motherhood wasn't just about stories and cookies. Mama taught her children about kindness, empathy, and the importance of standing tall, even in the face of challenges. She was a guide, a friend, and a pillar of support, helping them navigate the twists and turns of life.

As the years passed, mama's house echoed with the footsteps of grown-up children. Yet, her heart remained a fountain of love, flow-

ing ceaselessly. In their own adventures, her children carried the lessons of mama's tales, the aroma of her kitchen, and the warmth of her embrace.

For in that small village, amidst the hills and streams, mama's legacy wasn't just in the stories she told or the cookies she baked. It was in the resilient spirit of her children, the kindness they shared, and the love that echoed through generations—a testament to the timeless magic of motherhood.



TAPIWA'S JOURNEY

Pelekani Lwenje
Zambia



Little Tapiwa was running as fast as her legs could allow her. It was windy outside, but all Tapiwa cared about was the egg she held, gently in her arms. She had to be careful not to drop it. That egg was Tapiwa's mother.

It had happened earlier in the morning.

Tapiwa had woken up from a peaceful sleep expecting to find her mother getting breakfast ready but instead found a huge egg, the size of a football, resting on top of the dining table. She had called out to her mother, but had only been rewarded with silence. Then she heard her mother's voice. It had been

coming from the egg. Every time her mother spoke, the egg would glow into many colours. Tapiwa was at first very frightened, but her mother told her to be brave. Her mother told her that a terrible woman had done this. She told Tapiwa that an old man could break the curse. The old man lived in a hut near the hillside far from the village. That was how Tapiwa's journey had begun.

Tapiwa's mother told her that the terrible woman was a witch. When Tapiwa asked why the witch had to do this, her mother told her that some people don't like seeing other people happy and filled with love. There's nothing more powerful than the love a mother has. This made Tapiwa happy. Her mother loved her and would always protect her. It was now Tapiwa's turn to protect her mother. Her mother told her that the old man was a good wizard. The wizard would help her mother.

As Tapiwa journeyed with her mother, many evil things tried to stop her. Powerful wind blew trying to make her drop the egg, but she held on tight. Strange black rain that burnt the ground and made the flowers sick never touched Tapiwa because her mother's love protected her. The rain drops could not touch her. Tapiwa learnt that a mother was special. A mother was strong. Stronger than the mightiest warriors. Her mother spoke to her once again. She told her that motherhood was a blessing.

Tapiwa finally arrived at the wizard's hut. The man's face was painted in white and he

sat staring at her. "Don't be scared. Bring the egg," said the man. Tapiwa did as she was told. The wizard pointed his long staff at the egg and then at the sky above. There was a loud rumbling sound from the sky and lightning struck the staff and the egg at the same time. Tapiwa watched as the egg grew in size and cracked open. Her mother was there. The wizard chuckled as mother and daughter hugged each other tenderly.

Tapiwa could not believe that she had her mother back. Her mother kissed her on both cheeks and told her that her love for her will always keep her safe. Tapiwa was so happy that she let herself be buried in her mother's continuous hugs and kisses.



A LETTER TO **MY SON**

Immaculate Ajiambo
Kenya



Dear Sonshine,

I love you.

You have made the last thirteen years of motherhood awesome and blessed. I thank God each time I think of you.

Your father is honorable, diligent, smart and God-fearing. He told me about you as soon as we started off our relationship. He assured me that he would be there for you as a friend and as a father. He expressed his desire to see me mother you. I accepted the call. I prayed for grace. I was scared but he

was there to put things in order.

And when the time for us to meet dawned, you called me auntie. I thought you would never embrace me as your mother. Your silence when we were together almost put me off. I questioned my parenting style every time I saw you laugh with your dad and show up gloomy with me. Time. I gave you time. Space. My son you allowed me space to think and outgrow my fears.

On that day I attended your school's parents meeting and your teachers asked where your father was you presented me as your mummy. When you stood on stage to receive your International School of Kenya Best Student of the Year award you called me to accompany you and introduced me to the world. I was humbled. Those tears of joy were a genuine expression of what I felt then. May you scale the heights of scholarship to be a PhD holder.

You have made me a proud mother. You are the best big brother to your siblings and they cherish you. With you, I have never considered myself a step-mother. What does a mother want of a son?

You are attentive.

You are ambitious.

You are considerate.

You are creative.

You are a child of integrity.

You are focused.

You are smart.

You are gentle.

You are God-fearing.

You are generous.

You are obedient.

You are thoughtful.

The blessing that you are Dylan M. is irreplaceable to your mom, your dad and I. We will support you and walk with you through life. Don't we just marvel at your sense of humor when you are explaining concepts to us? I call you my Chomsky because you appeal to my linguistic spot.

My son, I am glad that together we have shown the world that there are good stepmothers existing. My prayer for you is that you continue being the best version of yourself, reach for your dreams and goals. I can't wait for you to take your dad and I around the world as you always say.

This is a reminder to you that our love lives on.

All the best,

Your mummy Imma,



Creative Nonfiction

MOTHERHOOD THROUGH DIFFERENT LENS

Kimumwe Douglas
Uganda

Motherhood...there is so much weight beneath this word alone. It encompasses the essence of life, the very foundation of our existence. Its meaning evokes a sense of warmth, love, and care. Motherhood is a journey that a woman embarks on, a journey that is filled with joy, pain, and sacrifice. It is a journey that transforms a woman into a person who is responsible for nurturing and guiding a new life.

Motherhood is loving a child deeply without any expectations. It has many cultural references and creates many responsibilities. It is considered the greatest gift of God, according to many cultures. It embraces the

circle of knowing one's child and understanding them from a mother's perspective. I want us to explore the different facets of motherhood in these paragraphs.

Motherhood encapsulates a universe of emotions and responsibilities. It is defined by the pivotal role a mother plays in her child's life. From the moment a child is cradled in her arms, a mother embarks on a journey of nurturing, filled with countless roles that she embraces with open arms and a loving heart.

She becomes the provider, ensuring her child's needs—from sustenance and clothing to a warm shelter—are met. Education, the corner-

stone of a child's future, becomes her priority. But her role extends beyond the tangible. She is the first teacher, instilling in her child the essential life skills that form the foundation of their existence. From bathing and cooking to cleaning and much more, it is the mother who guides the child, shaping their early learning experiences.

A mother is also the guardian of her child's manners and security, their protective shield against the harsh realities of the world. She takes her child's health and well-being as her responsibility, ensuring they are comfortable in their own skin. As she fulfills these roles, she provides the guidance and mentorship her child will need in the future, protecting them from potentially harmful situations.

When it comes to prayer, no one prays as fervently as a mother. Her prayers, concentrated on her child, carry the weight of her family's hopes and dreams. So, a mother's role extends beyond breastfeeding and singing lullabies. She carries a weight, the weight of her children, and she carries it with unwaver-

ing dedication and boundless love. Motherhood is not just a role, it is a journey of love, sacrifice, and unyielding devotion.

Owing to the myriad roles she plays; a mother naturally immerses herself in the specific duties and obligations that come with her title. Beyond the constant vigilance over her child's well-being, she shoulders the responsibility of providing nourishment for both herself and her child. But her duties don't end there.

She works tirelessly to secure funds that will enable her child to access quality education. This is why a mother becomes deeply invested in her child's academics, her presence, a constant during school visitation days. Once the needs for food security and education are met, she carves out time for nurturing her child, fostering a strong bond.

This bond transcends the traditional mother-child relationship, evolving into a friendship. When a mother becomes a friend to her child, she finds it easier to guide the child in building

essential life skills. It also allows her to understand her child's social circle, ensuring that her child is in the right company.

Indeed, a mother's actions and decisions cast a profound influence on her child's growth and well-being, an impact that is far from being unapparent. The health of a mother can significantly shape her child's development. This is why maternal nutrition during pregnancy becomes a cornerstone, crucial for the baby's brain development, and a determinant of cognitive abilities later in life.

Similarly, a mother's mental health and emotional state can also leave an indelible imprint on the child's development. Her responsiveness to her child's needs and her nurturing nature teaches the child about understanding others' emotional requirements, lessons that will serve them well in the future. Two very important life skills that a child learns from their mother are learning to trust and providing emotional security.

Therefore, it's important to

remember that a mother's health and actions play a significant role in a child's development. Motherhood, in its essence, has the power to transform a woman's identity and sense of self, making it a journey of love, sacrifice, and unyielding devotion. It cultivates patience within a woman, inspiring her to extend kindness not only to her own child but to other children as well. It instills in her a sense of organization, and in the end, what emerges is a woman transformed into a being of love and resilience.

Motherhood is a journey filled with happiness and fulfillment. It allows a mother to witness the miracle of life, as the children she has nurtured blossom into adulthood. This journey is a tapestry of shared moments and cherished memories. If blessed with the gift of longevity, she may even see her children excel in their chosen paths, a sight that would undoubtedly be her greatest joy.

She may witness her child's union in marriage, a testament to the cycle of life. And even when her child embarks on a new journey, leaving the nest to build their own, the memories they've created together remain. Her love, boundless and enduring, extends beyond her child, reaching out to embrace her child's children.

The love a mother bears for her children is a force so powerful that it eclipses the difficulties and obstacles she may face, even those brought about by her own offspring. As her children journey through different stages of life, their evolving needs call for her to adapt the way she provides care. This con-

stant dance of adjustment is a testament to a mother's resilience and unwavering dedication.

Yet, amidst the whirlwind of life, there may be moments when she becomes too engrossed in work, momentarily overlooking some of her children's needs. Or she may find herself grappling with financial concerns and other worries, casting a shadow over her usual vibrant demeanor. But even in these challenging times, her love for her children remains her guiding light, illuminating her path and leading her back to her innate role as a nurturer.

Conclusively, motherhood is a journey that is both challenging and rewarding. It requires a woman to take on a multitude of responsibilities and to make countless sacrifices, but it also brings immense joy and fulfillment. By understanding the role of a mother in a child's life, the responsibilities that it entails, the impact it has on a child's development, how it changes a woman as a person, the joy that it brings, and the challenges that come with it, we can begin to appreciate the true value of motherhood. It is a journey that is unique to each woman, but one that is worth taking.

MOTHERHOOD THROUGH MY KALEIDOSCOPE

Makia Lucy
Kenya

The single-parent label clings to my childhood like a faded sticker on a half-peeling wall. It's a term that attempts to define, to categorize, but fails utterly to capture the kaleidoscopic reality of growing up under the sun-drenched canopy of my mother's love. She wasn't just a single parent; she was a universe unto herself, an ever-shifting constellation of roles, each facet blazing with a light that continues to guide me on life's winding path.

She wasn't just a caregiver, providing the bare necessities of shelter and sustenance. She was my architect, laying the foundation of my being with bricks of unwav-

ering confidence and a mortar of unshakeable dreams. With a single mother's deft hand, she built me a fortress of self-worth, her love the scaffolding against which I climbed to reach for the sun.

She wasn't just a teacher, patiently imparting knowledge from dusty textbooks. She was a whisperer of wisdom, her lessons echoing in the rustle of leaves and the crackle of firewood. Beneath the tapestry of stars, she taught me the language of constellations, the resilience of the oak against the storm, and the fierce loyalty of a mother bear protecting her cubs.

She wasn't just a disciplinarian, enforcing rules with



stern admonishments. She was a sculptor, molding my character with gentle hands. And sharp-witted humor, she would always say don't cry unless you really want me to give you something to cry about, except she had already done this. With each "no" came a whispered explanation, each consequence a lesson in understanding and responsibility. She crafted in me a moral compass, its needle forever pointing toward kindness, empathy, and unwavering self-respect. But above all, she was my mother, the sun to my moon, the tide to my shore. Her love, a vibrant tapestry wo-

ven from laughter and tears, sunlight, and stardust, held me safe through life's choppiest waters. In her eyes, I saw not pity for my "single parent" status, but a reflection of my own potential, a fierce belief in the woman I could become.

Yes, my childhood might have lacked the traditional family structure, but it overflowed with a richness that no label can encapsulate. My mother wasn't a single parent; she was a symphony of roles, a kaleidoscope of strength, love, and boundless possibility. Her story, like millions of others, shatters the monolith of defini-

tion and illuminates the true essence of motherhood—a force that transcends circumstance, a love that defies measure, and a resilience that echoes through generations.

So let us move beyond the sterile labels and celebrate the mothers who defy categorization. Let us listen to the chorus of their voices, each unique and powerful, weaving a tapestry of love, strength, and endless possibility. For in their hearts, we witness the true magic of motherhood, a force that shapes not just families, but the very fabric of our world.



MOTHERHOOD

Louise Venter
South Africa

When the call from my brother came it was still unexpected.

As always, he started the conversation with an offensive—that's the nature of our relationship, it's always been.

"Since the surgery, she's just been lying in bed," he says curtly.

"Surgery is traumatic, especially for older people," I reply. "Maybe rest is not the worst thing..."

"You're not here. You don't understand what's going on!" He cuts me off.

He sighs—the sigh he reserves especially for me, his younger sister by five years. The sigh which signifies the

nature of our relationship. The sigh which is meant to convey his irritation at my ineptness and ignorance. I've learned not to take the bait.

"Why did you call?" I ask.

I know what he's going to say. I've known for a while. I've seen the signs earlier this year when I visited Mom.

"Her doctor says she's showing early signs of Dementia." It still comes as a shock, to hear it being said out loud.

Images of my beautiful, intelligent, and fiercely independent mother flood through my mind. At 76 she was still living alone in the house she bought with my

dad in the seventies.

When Dad passed on twenty years ago, she refused to leave despite our urgings to scale down, and maybe move closer to me and my family.

"I enjoy my freedom," she would say. "I want to do my own thing, live my life the way I choose. Besides, I don't want to be a burden to my children."

My brother's irritated voice draws me back to the present. "She's in total denial about it," he says.

It must be a really frightening thing to hear. I think to myself, but I don't say it. He wouldn't want to hear it.

"She refuses to eat and sleeps all day. She's clearly in a depression bout."

He's scared. I understand. I feel it too. It's terrifying, to say the least—this new reality we're faced with. Our mother, the one person we could always rely on, who is always there for us is not going to be that person anymore. From now on we're going to have to be there for her.

He won't ever admit it, but he knows she's the only person who will ever love him unconditionally, who'll forgive him unconditionally. That's what mothers do.

He waits for me to respond. I muster every bit of courage I can find, swallowing back the tears pricking behind my eyes. I dare not show him my pain. I have to be strong for him like she has always been.

"It's time for Mom to come live with us," I say quietly. It's not what he wanted to hear. It's too soon, but there's nothing else to say. "We'll have to sell the house..." I add. His icy silence is discouraging, but I plow ahead. "You're away for three months of the year. I can't fly out to come take care of her every time you go away," I try to explain, doubting that he'll understand how difficult it is for a mother to leave her child.

I only really understood that bond when I held my own son for the first time. It was only once I had looked into his eyes—the same color as mine, as hers—that I could

comprehend what my mother tried to explain to me when I asked her why she loved my brother more than me.

The question disarmed her. "Why would you think that?" she asked.

"You are my children, both of you. I can never love one more than the other."

"But you do Mom. He's your favorite," I said.

I could see the hurt in her eyes, but I had to know. She thought a moment, weighing her words.

"A mother may love her children in different ways, but it's always in equal measure," she replied earnestly. "Your brother is my son, my first-born. That's special, but you are my daughter, my youngest. That's a different kind of special. Do you understand?"

I didn't, not really.

**

She watches quietly how the men working for the removal company swiftly load the few pieces of furniture and other earthly possessions we

would be able to accommodate in our house, 1200km away from where she lived for more than forty years. Her watery blue eyes uncomprehending.

My heart breaks as I watch this woman—my mother—who used to be a presence larger than life, a formidable force in this world, now reduced to a tiny childlike figure with hunched shoulders bent low over a walking frame and trying desperately to understand why her home, her life is now just an empty space.

I put my arms around her frail shoulders, the bone tangible underneath the thin wrinkled skin. “It’s going to be okay Mom,” I try to comfort her. She looks at me, for a moment lost as to who I am. Then recognition, the familiar smile I know and love.

“The potted geraniums would look nice in your garden,” she says as she glances over the garden that used to be immaculate, but now shows clear signs of neglect. I nod, burying my sadness under a brave facade for her sake.

“I’ll take the pot with us in the car. We can put it on the windowsill in Mom’s room,” I say.

I can see the thought makes her happy. Then she slips away again. She looks at me, once again disoriented. “Where are they taking my things?” she asks anxiously. I comfort her like a mother would a frightened child.

“No need to worry. They’re taking all your things to my house. You’re coming to live with us now,” I reply.

She looks around the empty rooms. “Okay,” she says, her shoulders hunched in resignation, “Whatever you think is best.”

She forgets about the frame she’s become so dependent on since her hip surgery. She scuffles out the door. I take her hand and walk her slowly to the car like I used to do with my son when he was just starting to walk.

She doesn’t look back, just stares out in front of her, lost in that happy place where this terrible illness takes her.

I look around at the house one last time—the home where my brother and I spent most of our childhood years.

A memory floods into my mind. I’m a child of about five, playing under the big oak tree in the front yard. My mom’s immersed in a book in one of the garden chairs. I trip and fall, hurting my knee. I cry. She rushes over, kisses my knee, and wipes my tears, then takes my hand and gently pulls me up. “You’re going to be okay,” she says with a comforting smile.

She supports me as I hop into the house on one leg. I cling to her hand. I know I’m safe. My mom’s here. She’ll take care of it, all of it. She always does...



IS IT A GIRL?

Verah Omwocha
Kenya

“Ni msichana, aah, wewe bado hujazaa,” the plump 30-something-year-old lady glances down at the baby in my arms. Her name, she says, is Ruth. We’ve just come back from the hospital because the baby has jaundice, a week after she lands in this crazy, strange, loud world.

A thought: Kenya’s first President, Jomo Kenyatta, sought to eradicate three things: poverty, disease, and ignorance. 60 years later, the trio has given birth to great-grandchildren. One of the manifestations is telling me giving birth to a girl doesn’t count.

I smile. Poverty of the mind is funny.

How do I feel? Somewhere between mild okayness (sometimes), numbness (most times), and soreness (nearly every time). My body is still shocked, but it is trying to come together; it is trying to nurture itself back to wholeness. I’m yet to understand what just happened to me. On one hand, it is a beautiful miracle. What has just happened changes the course of the universe—a child has been born, and I assure you, it is no ordinary thing. On the other hand, it seems like one of womanhood’s greatest punishments. In the how it crushes you. I will never be the same again.

How did it happen?

We check in and book a room at 8 pm. 4cm dilated. The doctor comes in at 1 am asking a series of questions which I keep pardoning because I can't catch his Cuban accent. How has humanity achieved remarkable strides in technology and medical breakthroughs, yet a more effective method for measuring uterine dilation has not been developed?

"Relax," he says. I try.

My husband is lying on the couch, and I, the patient (wait, are you still a patient if you're there to give birth?) on the customizable hospital bed. We tell stories until we fall asleep. The doctor comes back in at 4 am for another dilation check nightmare, with a nurse in tow. 50% dilated but save for the mild contractions, I have not experienced any labour pains. I'm a bit disappointed because I didn't want to miss any step in the birthing process. I wanted to properly answer the question: how long was your labour?

"I'm going to rupture the membranes to speed up the

labour," the doctor explains. Tells me to bend over. Water everywhere! Clean water. For some reason, I didn't expect amniotic fluid to be so clean—even though we refer to it as water on this side of the continent.

Quickly, he tears off the glove on his left hand, dips his hand in the pocket, and makes what sounds like an SOS call. The right hand is still inside me.

"Listen, we have to rush you to the theatre."

Theatre? But we did everything 'right', I want to explain myself but there's no time. All indications were that I was fit for a Vaginal birth.

"Cord Prolapse," he says.

Like most about-to-give-birth women, I ransacked the internet for birth stories and what could go wrong but not once did I come across this cord prolapse. It's like studying for an exam and that one thing you didn't read about is the first question in the exam paper.

I'm lifted and placed on a stretcher. My husband is

made to sign a just-in-case-she-dies-you-cannot-sue-the-hospital form that he can't even read through. All this while I'm bent over with his hand inside me, holding up the baby so she doesn't lie on the cord and cut off her oxygen supply. I try to tell myself that all this is okay, a man's entire hand inside my vagina. That there's no shame in giving birth. Statistically, a woman dies every two minutes due to pregnancy or childbirth. That's what you should be worrying about, a voice points a finger at me. That you could be a statistic. Dying while giving birth—one of the universe's saddest realities.

But, I still end up as a statistic, according to my mother-in-law. Jo'pala, she calls 'us'. People of the knife. My husband says it should be jo'scalpel. People of the scalpel. And we argue whether or not a scalpel is really a knife.

Jo'pala. Such a funny-sounding word. But when I think about it now, there's no difference. A scalpel is really a knife—at least to the extent

that it will be used to chop up the layers of your abdomen, and a baby extracted from it—like a cow, I think to myself—to ensure the sustainability of the universe.

An incision is made through the skin, then the subcutaneous tissue, then the fascia, then the muscles, then the peritoneum, and finally, the doctors arrive at the baby's house—the uterus. I can feel the first two cuts, and then the anaesthesia kicks in. It is an emergency, so everything had to be done fast-fast. In that moment, something is cut out, something I'd never recover, something I have no name for. But someone will say that giving birth through CS is unnatural-lazy-not-wanting-to-feel-pain. Not being 'woman enough'.

I was appalled at how it seems pregnancy and birth are handled as 'normal part-of-life experiences. The entire thing, in my opinion, is horrendous. It is anything but normal. Nothing I had ever read, nothing I had ever seen, experienced, or in any way interacted with. Nothing at all prepared me for the impact the processes of pregnancy and delivery and post-partum created on my entire being: Physically, it felt like I had been hit by a trailer and a tonne of bricks placed on top of me. Emotionally, I felt bankrupt. Spiritually, it felt like I was protesting against God. Mentally, I often asked myself if I was still alive.

The pain I experienced post-surgery is unmatched. The strong painkillers would wear out so fast and I'd keep ringing the bell for the nurse to bring in more. And more. They

had to give me more than the recommended dosage. I couldn't even cry. I had to channel every ounce of energy into survival; I didn't have any waste of tears. After a day, I could move my body. But my brain froze into a log for what felt like ages.

The sacrifice is so worth it. You'll forget the pain, they say. And I truly want to believe it.

I wonder what Ruth would say if she knew I bore another girl. Two more XX chromosomes!

Weve bado hujazaa.

She said it like I had failed some life exam. But I wasn't offended. Strangely, some people survive on a combination of stupidity, ignorance, and audacity.

If I had a chance for a next time, if I didn't feel completely defeated, if birthing and mothering didn't feel like a completely horrendous life-shattering accident, if pregnancy didn't feel like an attack by carnivorous aliens, perhaps I would have remembered to give birth next time. If I could go back in time, I could give birth properly, this time with the 'right' combination of chromosomes. To be a 'successful' mother. Just maybe.



THE RUDIMENTS OF **MATERNITY**

Carmi Philander
South Africa

Changing malodorous diapers. Extinguishing wild tantrums. Navigating your way through a minefield of sharp toys strewn across the carpet. Paying off titanosauric school fees. Tolerating cyclic teenage mood swings. Playing the role of the mediator in countless puerile sibling fights. And delivering hyperbolic speeches on why phone addicts are most likely to get hit by a car.

These are the painful scenarios that usually lurch to the foreground of my mind's eye when I hear the word "mother". Of course, such stereotypical and shallow associations are often spawned by young girls who are horrified by the prospect of bearing children. But it's a justifiable fear. From what

I've witnessed in my own home, being a mother does not even come close to relaxation, freedom, or any sort of rose-tinted fairy tale.

Instead, the notorious role gives rise to early-onset arthritis and suicidal tendencies. I mean, even one's own flesh and blood can drive you over the edge of your life's roofline. That's why I applaud my grandmother for staying alive for so long; she'd fallen pregnant six times and even had to take care of other people's children, yet she still hasn't fired her brain with a bullet. Impressive, isn't it? And let's not forget about my dear mother who has to break her forty-six-year-old back nurturing two spoiled teenagers. Biologically speaking, I

am an only child, but growing up with my cousin has also rendered me an older sister and my mom more tired than she would've been. After all, driving out the breadcrumbs that doze in the corners of your children's lunchboxes isn't exactly an exciting task. Nor is washing their laundry. Or constantly responding to their desperate cries for help when they can't find their charger. If you didn't know already, statistics indicate that 70% of a mother's skillset comprises the abnormal ability to uncover your lost possessions in the exact same place you had claimed to look for them. (The remaining thirty percent is dedicated to things like cleaning, cooking and carefully crafting eloquent letters to their child's principal in which they complain about the school's ignorance of bullies who freely roam their hallways.)

However, raising the youth does not merely bounce between domestic chores and joint disease (those are merely the stubborn symptoms of motherhood). When stepping into the intimidating shoes of a custodian,

one must not perceive it as signing a dreadful eighteen-year contract pledging your allegiance to a mouthful of obligations or robotically reciting a vow of reluctant obedience. If that were the case, then Google would shamelessly kick out the term "household slave" when searching for appellatives synonymous with "mother". Therefore, maternal guardians are not born under the tyrannical tongue of Simon Says. They're not bound to a rulebook of do this and do that. In fact, they can quit at any time, either by adoption or abandonment. But that's the thing—mothers don't just frantically wave the white flag upon noticing an oncoming army of responsibilities. They persevere—not out of guilt, but out of love, a rarity we often fail to exhibit.

Furthermore, I believe that God had planted the motherly seeds of competence in every female's soul. And as time progresses, those seeds would germinate, breaking past the surface of immaturity and inexperience, manifesting their fruits through soothing lullabies, sincere embraces, and support-

ive smiles. Mothers were uniquely designed to withstand the weight of a swollen womb, constructed in such a way that modern teenagers would describe them as being "built differently". Their patience miraculously overpowers their clenched fists and gritted teeth; compassion somehow clouds their callous skies; their tactful nature methodically dabs the tears from your eyes; their resilience sustains and preserves their strength. And it is those inherent qualities that usually cling to a woman's identity.

The moral of the story? —A mom isn't a mom because she has the frustrating inclination to embarrass you in public or knows how you like your coffee (although, those are two of the fundamentals). As cliché as it sounds, a mother is defined by what's on the inside. If not for them, we would all be trudging through life's battlefield without a shield, sleeping on the streets instead of under a roof, because, ultimately, mothers are the embodiment of protection—the quintessence of a real home.

THE UNMATCHED ESSENCE OF MOTHERHOOD: A PORTRAIT OF ENDLESS LOVE AND SACRIFICE

Herman Owuor
Kenya



What gift surpasses the treasure of a mother? Over the years, my mother has remained a constant, treating me with the same tenderness she did when I was a child. Her daily calls to ensure I've eaten, inquire about my sleep, and delve into the minutiae of my life. Through her unwavering care, I've come to truly appreciate the magnificence of motherhood.

Our journey began amidst the whispers of neighbors and peers who deemed my mother too stern. Yet, today, we stand among the most upstanding members of our community. Her guidance sculpted us, nurtured our values, and steered us right.

I'm not alone in this journey; I have a brother and two sisters, all of whom received the same unfaltering care. My mother, with her meager income riddled with loans, ensured our education, nourishment, and healthcare—every necessity that rendered our lives comfortable. Each month, it was paycheck after paycheck, and I struggle to recall anything she purchased for herself. Today, as I look at her, I see a woman whose love and generosity for her children outweigh her every need, a mother who sacrifices her desires to ensure our betterment.

Motherhood, for her, was never a smooth sail—it

arrived with its share of peaks and troughs. Yet, she emerged as a determined, resilient woman who refused to relinquish hope in us, who would choose her children over anything in a heartbeat. I pray that we, her four children, can reciprocate her love and paint more smiles on her face. My deepest wish is to create an environment that ensures her comfort in her sunset years.

Her realm of motherhood didn't conclude with us by the way; she carried it to her classroom. To this day, her pupils from over the years remain regulars in our home, welcomed and treated as kin. When a student vanished, she refused to sleep until that child was safely back home, back in school. She bestowed upon them the same dedication and care she showered upon us within our home.

"Nothing is too small to share," she often says, holding firm to her belief and practice. Her unwavering conviction is that anything, no matter how small, is significant enough to be distributed among everyone, ensuring each receives a

piece. Her life embodies the epitome of selflessness and generosity—the very essence of motherhood. Her resilience in the face of trials, her endless giving without an expectation of returns, and her unwavering support not just for her children but for the many young minds she shaped, all epitomize the nurturing spirit of a mother.

In the vast canvas of motherhood, she stands as an artist, crafting a masterpiece of love, care, and sacrifice. Her legacy reaches far beyond our family, leaving indelible imprints on countless lives she's touched.

Amidst the chaos of daily life, it's startlingly easy for society to overlook the immense contributions of mothers. They are the silent architects of society, quietly laying the foundation for a better world. Hence, let us take a moment to celebrate all mothers out there and acknowledge their relentless efforts, their sacrifices, and their boundless love.

To every mother embarking on this incredible journey, may your path be adorned with strength, patience, and

unwavering love. May your sacrifices be recognized, and your dedication celebrated. For what you do, the world owes you an immeasurable debt of gratitude.

As I reflect on my mother's extraordinary journey, I am humbled by the enduring strength and boundless love she exudes. Her story is a testament to the ceaseless power of a mother's love—a love that knows no boundaries and transcends all barriers.

In the end, my tale is just a fragment of countless narratives that celebrate the unparalleled depth of a mother's love—a narrative that resonates with the heartbeat of every child touched by a mother's boundless affection and sacrifice.



MOTHERHOOD: A LESSON IN **SELF-DENIAL**

Oluwakorede Obaditan
Nigeria

I was five years old when I woke up to a flooded house. Cloudy water poured in through the door and then through the open windows. Bearing pieces of wood, grass, and whatever else could float. And a lot of things floated. Things like our trash, which we usually left in a brown carton outside the door of the two-bedroom shared flat. It drifted alongside plates and utensils.

My three-year-old brother called frantically for my mother. His tiny voice pierced through the ferocious drum beats of rain on the rooftop.

On the bed, trapped in that space between wonder and

fear. I could not answer the questions that spiraled through my mind.

What was happening? What could I do? And as my brother clutched at my arm, I wondered where my mother was.

At that moment, the memories of her kissing my forehead and telling me to look after my brother before leaving earlier that morning were foggy. Did it happen or was it in a dream? I couldn't tell.

I didn't understand the concept of drowning, but I knew something was wrong. When the water rose to the bed's level, I knew things would eventually get worse.

Fear expanded like a balloon behind my rib cage, spreading goose pimples all over my arms.

The rest of what happened is foggy, glazed over by layers of memories and years. But I can remember the sound, the furious sound of something approaching.

My brother and I livid with fear, clutched at ourselves. We shivered, and our minds melted with fear as we wondered what was in the water. What was coming?

Was it a whale, or a shark? Our inchoate minds brimmed with grim possibilities. Shaped by influences from movies and cartoons, comics and tales from our friends. Finally, we concluded that whatever was making such sounds in the water was coming for us.

Our mother burst in and saved us from an imminent death from a cardiac attack.

Her eyes glazed like those of the beasts we were expecting. She was barely recognizable in the water that had already risen to her waist. She looked like a stranger in that brown

water that turned her blue Sunday's best dress a dirty shade of brown. Her voice was hoarse from screaming our name.

We flung ourselves at her, our arms looping around her neck, hers pressing us to her warm body.

For those priceless seconds, we all hugged; relived mother, and grateful children. Neither of us paid attention to the rising water and the floating objects. Our mother was there, our savior had come.

I didn't know then what that morning meant to her; what part of herself she shed for our sakes. Only she did.

My mother waded through the water. Stumbling and mumbling to us. Telling us not to panic as she carried my brother and me on her shoulders.

The floods always returned, but she was never away again. And till we left that house, she ensured that we never woke up to floating plates and smelly water.

I was ten years old when my always-busy-never-around

father died. I was in Junior Secondary School, class three.

I realized something was wrong when I heard my name on the school's Public Address system. Some might call it intuition or paranoia. I just knew it.

I met my mother, dry-faced, seated at the principal's office. The room that was stacked with dog-eared files and chintzy-looking trophies. The rectangular room smelled of coffee and paper. By the time we walked out of the principal's office, I already knew that life would no longer be the same again.

Before his death. My father spent most of his life away from us. As a staff of the Nigerian Postal Service, he always ensured that his visits were remarkable. Even the neighbors knew that his coming meant the going away of debts—the payments of their outstanding debts. Back then, I thought he hated debts more than he loved us.

He died after a truck flattened his car on the Lagos-Ibadan expressway on his

trip back to his base in Benin. For a year, our lives were perfect, untouched by the effect of his passing. He had paid our outstanding debts before he left and settled the school fees and house rent. Because he was never around, my brother and I didn't miss his presence.

It was easy to believe that his death was another of his trips and that someday he would be back. Back with a loaf of bread, a box of books, and money to offset debts.

But the year that followed his death reminded us of how faulty our beliefs were. Our father did not come back, and the debts did not go away.

There was a new dispensation. A dispensation of incessant threats from the landlord, letters from the school, and fights from disgruntled creditors.

My mother had jumped into the saddle. Playing the role of provider, one she hadn't played before. She began selling all the gifts our father bought her; trinkets she never wore because she never

went out. Yards of brightly colored Hollandaise Ankara's that my father brought from his trips.

"Soon I will get new ones," she often said, halting our protest. Our furniture and television followed.

The rest of my tweens till my early teens continued about the same way. They were filled with a series of odd jobs that barely paid enough.

She had a stint as a clerk in a local government that owed for months. She spent the evening with us at her thrift store, where she sold fairly used clothes. She got other jobs later including working as a marketer for a new generational bank and even as a personal assistant to a commissioner's wife. We never had much, but like a raft, these jobs kept us afloat.

I am in my late teens and on my way to becoming a published author. My brother is an upcoming Data Analyst. Our mother recently died of a stroke. She was fifty-two.

A part of me was relieved that she was finally free from this world of ceaseless toil.

Released from this world that kept on demanding from her. Another part of me was shattered, ground into dust. This happened when I found her diary; a brown leather-bound book whose pages were soft with age.

In the words crossed by blue ink, I learned the lessons of motherhood from my mother; a woman of few words.

On its pages filled with lots of *next years and when they graduate*, I discovered the truth about that rainy morning. How she missed an entrance exam to further her education on the day she came back to rescue us.

As I flipped from page to page, I stumbled tearfully through my mother's dreams. Dreams deferred first because of her husband and always because of us.

It might not be the best way to live. But it was how my mother lived. It was her definition of motherhood; that continual *denying* of herself so that her children could be all that we wanted to be.



Flash Fiction



FROM MIDNIGHT WAILES TO MORNING SMILES

Bilqees Olowu
Nigeria

“Wen, wen”, the baby cried out again. It’s 3:00 am in the morning and she had not closed her eyes for a second. She had fed him, cooed him and even sang for him but he won’t stop crying.

The dangling of the keys brought her back to reality. Now, he is in front of her, revealing a beautiful smile. He just arrived from the States where he bagged a doctorate degree and a massive international gig.

He called out to her, “Mummy, I made it!” Tears trickled down her cheeks as she drifted to the past again.

“Mummy, I just broke my ankle”, he had announced amidst tears as he walked to her, he was ten years old then. She did everything possible for she did not want him to have a broken ankle. He had carried the sprain but her pain was greater.

She felt his arm around her neck and she remembered that the sprain was twenty years

ago. He smiled again and said, “I have finally made you proud”.

He has always made her proud. How could she ever forget that day when he was named the valedictorian of the year and was awarded a fully sponsored scholarship abroad. The joy and pride she felt cannot be compared to anything.

He led her to the car and whispered into her ears, “Thank you for birthing me”.

Talking about birth, the memory of the nurse’s painful slap on her thigh, the scars she nursed in her private area and her mother-in-law’s thorough hot bath and massage crept into her head and the tears flowed uncontrollably, tears of joy.

Though motherhood is a demanding journey, proud moments and achievements make it worthwhile because SHE is his mother and He is her son.



OUR FOUNDING MOTHERS

Kristen Harding
South Africa

“Look at your face,” they say. “Look how it holds lifetimes of people who loved each other. Their loving is nestled between the gaps of your teeth and cradled in the rooks of your ears. It swings across the tips of your lashes.”

I look at my face. They say there’s love here?

I claw at my gums and find some black clot lodged in the root of my molar tooth. I peel the flesh from the shade of my ears and pluck every hair from my lids to find no careful caressing or leftover embraces, only remnants of that chalk-faced man’s blow to my grandma’s chest.

* * *

“Look at your face,” he says. “Who could ever love this?”

He claims my body in exchange for his founding footsteps. For what would this unwieldy piece of earth — this fragment of a human — be without him? His lust for his

newborn nation is too great to leave in lawless hands. His blow rattles through my ribs.

I see this violent birthright now sitting in the ducts of my daughter’s eyes and on the bow of her lips, lurching at any misplaced hereditary. My granddaughter’s tongue tangles around the shapes of foreign vowels — the sounds stick to the roof of her mouth like an entrapped moth.

* * *

In the mirror, I watch Ma locking my hair into braids that won’t surrender to the night. Her fingers twist tender traces into the kink of every strand until it’s dripping from my scalp. It spills over my forehead, along the curve of my brows and into the creases of my eyes. It trickles down my cheeks and, with my next breath, catches in the hairs of my nose.

“Look at your face,” she says. “A relic of my mother’s doting.”



EMANCIPATION

Isirima Grace
South Africa

My mother was a fighter. It was all she ever did. She spent three days in labour fighting to give birth to me and spent the rest of her life fighting for mine. All Mother ever did was struggle. I don't remember a moment when her hands were not full. She was either cradling my fragile heart or juggling three jobs whilst trying to help me with homework and pay rent. Her shoulders were always hunched—weighed down by the weight of keeping me alive. Then, she died.

It was oddly comforting seeing my mother free from the austerity of one plane, so, I did not weep. I stood by the door of the dark room and said nothing. The curtains were drawn, the room stuffy, and the air peacefully agitated as though it were doused in expletives and hung on a clothesline to dry. When I took a breath, my nose scrunched reflexively and my brows dipped into a frown, the stench of sickness was putrid.

It was odd how one sister—sickness—smelt like oblivion yet she was dressed in pale clothing and not entirely an unwelcome guest, but the other sister, the one who put flowers in her hair and smelt like a garden, was adorned in black and never let into a home, not willingly.

Death bowed at my mother's bed, considered the pills she had taken to end her misery and kissed her pale hands before placing a cloth over Mother and carrying her in her arms. She was gentle with my mother, held her body like it was still breathing and put her soul in a bottle hung about her neck. She touched the bottle with one dark finger and smiled sadly before leaving the room by sinking into the Earth.

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THEME:

The Role of African Children's
Literature in Shaping the Youth



Creative
SPOTLIGHT

Lindsay Katchika-Jere





In this edition, Lise Nova Berwadushime interviewed Lindsay Katchika-Jere, first runner-up of the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature 2023.

Lise: Hello, Lindsay, it's a pleasure to have you. Please tell us about yourself.

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: I am Lindsay Katchika-Jere, a Malawian children's author of four books who was born in 1999. My first book 'The Missing Meteorite' aims at promoting child participation, museum science education and girl child education. My short stories have also been published on various platforms including local newspapers and magazines. I hold the title of 'Internationally Published Author' as two of my works have been published in an anthology in Nigeria and America.

Lise: That's lovely.

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: you start writing?

Thank you. The other thing I can tell you is that in September of 2022, I compiled the anthology 'Outlive the Labels Volume IV' to empower other women writers, the anthology later became an amazon best seller! I am also a member of Malawi Writers Union and Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Network. I have a first-class honors degree in Mass Communication from African Bible College which is in Lilongwe-Malawi.

Lise: Wow! I can recognize greatness when I see it.

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: I'm humbled

Lise: By the way, when did

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: I started between 7 and 8 couple of years after my parents divorced. It was my way of escaping loneliness. I started with poetry then fairytales.

Lise: Oh! I'm sorry about that. So basically, we can say that loneliness and trying to find a way out were what inspired you to write, right?

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: Yes. Exactly! The power of storytelling as well: I noticed that there's a lack of representation of African stories especially Malawian stories. I grew up reading Cinderella etc. The only African stories I read were Kenyan or Nige-

rian. That's why most of my stories have a Malawian touch so that I can share our stories with a bigger audience in a whimsical and relatable way. In addition, most Malawian children's stories I came across communicated death, hunger poverty, being orphaned etc. As much as it could be the reality but it doesn't motivate children to read or write. It doesn't allow for imagination and dreams.

Lise: Wonderful. You gave voice to Malawian children's stories. Now tell me, are all of your four books children's stories?

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: Yes.

Lise: Lindsay, allow me to ask this question specifically. Why do you write for children?

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: I write for children because in my country, there's a problem of illiteracy. A lot of children don't know how to read. You can find secondary school children who don't know how to read so, one of my motivations to start writing for children even though I got a lot of discouragement from people was to offer a helping hand in addressing that problem. You know, I come from a developing country and parents would rather buy chicken for dinner than buying a book. When I started writing I wasn't really looking for money

I remember when I published my first book, I didn't care about how many copies I was going to sell. I simply considered it my way of giving back to my community.

Lise: I see.

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: Another thing is, writing for children is just fun. I grew up in a very traumatic place like, I didn't come from a best environment. So, when I write for children sometimes, I go to a place where I have never been. Sometimes I write a story about a child in a village... I've never been to village but through writing I travel there. That way also, children get to experience different environments through my books in an interesting and funny way. I like to mix a bit of reality and whimsical tales.

Lise: Wow! I feel you. Your "why's" are stronger!

Mixing reality and imagination is what I saw in the story that won. "The hair whisperer" was an amazing story for real

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: Thank you!

Lise: You're welcome. Now, let's talk about Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature. Please share with me some of the feelings you had when you became the second runner up of Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature.

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: When I became a runner up of Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature I was very excited because you know, I have been following the African literature. I had been following the conference for a very long time I think it's maybe for a whole year. Then I thought I should

be able to submit a story one of these days. When the theme was launched, I said “this is my time...this is something I could go for”.

Then I started crafting my story and I sent it to two people to review it then I sent it, praying that something good comes out of it. I was shortlisted then I was so excited. You know, sometimes you doubt yourself as a writer but winning that was a sign for me that writing is my thing after all.

Lise: Congratulations once more, Lindsay. Now tell me, what’s your way forward? I mean, what should we expect from you in your writing career?

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: I’m coming up with two books this year. I don’t really know the exact dates I’ll launch them but I will surely publish them.

I’m also trying to venture into international platforms because I’ve been self publishing since I wrote my first book.

Again, I have been writing children’s picture books. You know, what I liked about that competition was that it stretched my mind and made me find out that I was comfortable writing in a different style. My books and that story which won are a little bit different so basically, the competition taught me more about myself and what I can write comfortably. People should expect from me more books and fun stories about Africa.

I’m also hoping to impact many young writ-

ers and this year, I have a few plans to do that via reaching out to primary school students and helping in nurturing their writing talents.

Lise: Good luck with that. Anyway Lindsay, is there anything you do apart from writing?

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: Well, apart from writing, I do charity activities. I am the founder and director of a charity organization called The Sprout Foundation.

Lise: That’s awesome. Before we end this session, is there anything else you would like to say?

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: I really want to thank the organizers of Wakini Kuria prize for Children’s literature and AWC for motivating writers through providing a rare platform for African writers to put their stories out there. I also would like to invite people to support them since they are doing a good thing. I also suggest the organizers to encourage more young African writers because sometimes one looks down on their stories depending on where they come from, yet I think stories are so powerful that one would be surprised by the number of people who may like theirs if they were to share them.

Lise: Thank you so much for your precious time, Lindsay.

Lindsay Katchika-Jere: Thank you too for having me.



CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Poetic Africa, Africa's first trilingual (English, French, Kiswahili) poetry magazine, calls for submissions from poets for her May 2024 edition.

"People die, but names do not." In Africa, naming a child symbolises giving them an identity and establishing a link between the old generation and the new. Names not only give us a sense of belonging but constantly remind us of our duties as custodians of our lineages. What happens when bonds are broken and identity takes broader proportions? In the light of these, write your poem under the theme **"NAMES."**

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 "NAMES."

The submission window is from February 11th until March 10th, 2024. The edition will be released on May 10th, 2024.

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



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.



Poetry



TRANSITION

Nicole Biondi
South Africa

The news unwrapped me
Like a snake's unfurling from its skin
Your tiny presence, the beginning of a transformation I hadn't anticipated

We grew together
In the way of things that flourish in dark places

And now it seems we're light years away from your arrival
As you stand poised for flight at a new threshold
With my hold on you the gossamer of a butterfly wing

Why is there no ritual for this?
No cake
No tea

Only you in the doorway
And me standing on the inside
Pretending to be happy
To let you go.



THE SUNSHINE AND SHADOWS

Unathi Mphiskiswa
South Africa

I skipped a transition stage to adulthood
Jumped and dived into pregnancy with my eyes closed
I was never ready mental, emotional nor financial
I was bearing fruits of my wayward ways
A baby is a blessing, so they say
It has sunshine and shadows

I have a share of jovial days
Where I see a blessing in my arms
A gift that cultivates its way to my heart
And plants a smile on my face
Motivates me to double my hustle
Innocent soul on my chest for warmth
A feeling so satisfying

Some days are gloomy as sky promising to rain
It dawns on me that I betrayed my dreams
I'm not even a half jubilee
I needed to be a kid not a mother
Yet I had a baby to mould and nurture into adulthood
Tears streamed down my cheeks like Nile River
In discernment of the stage, I was in

With no magic to turn back time
As bittersweet as my reality was
I embraced the speed humps, mother of rollercoasters
The sunshine and the shadows of a teen mom.



SYMPHONIES OF WISDOM

Olaseni Kehinde Precious
Nigeria

Every shimmering gold ignites amidst searing flames
so let my pleasures burn to ashes
while chiselling these shards of dreams into a masterpiece
today, tomorrow and the day after
until I reciprocate the moon's smile
glimpsing at the memories from these ugly days

Kehinde, you flood the world with criticism
every time the sky strikes me with its freezing water
and you watch it beckon the sun
to pierce me with its scornful gaze
yet, I counter with a steadfast smile
and you wonder why

It takes time my dear, it takes time
for buried yams to resurrect from their dormant slumber
so let me embrace these storms as they arrive
until I can quell them with your happiness

Kehinde, time is the preeminent author
and someday you shall decipher
the enigmatic parables of this beautiful adventure

These were the symphonies of wisdom
that mother articulated into my youthful ears
and now I can boast even from my ignorance
that she's an angelic being in mortal's guise.



GUARDIAN OF GAZA

Akuei M. Adol
South Sudan

Amidst the flames engulfing the city of Gaza,
a stray mother dog seeks sanctuary
Her soul a battlefield, ravaged and bare
the lives of her pups at stake in a dire fate
Hunger gnaws at their fragile bodies
some succumbing to the brutality of famine
while others fall victim to the ruth-less cross-fire
She howls, but the world remains oblivious.

In the labyrinth of rubble and despair,
her paws trace trails on shattered streets
Each step a prayer, each breath a whimper
Her soles etched with scars; her spirit defiant
Yet the flicker of hope remains, lighting her way
Her eyes, pools of pain and resilience,
mirror the end-less hues of relent-less war.

In the dark night, she seeks solace
Her heart pleads for the safety of her offsprings
A tempest rages, fierce as a desert storm
The moon weeps, shrouded in sorrow
Her worn-out feet bear the weight of her plea
Her arms, like olive branches, shield her pups.

She is a dove, her wings battered and torn,
yet she still soars above the ashen sky
to protect the innocent, even as her dreams fade away.

THE LEGACY

Kaosisochukwu Okafor
Nigeria

Evidence of a passage
Threatened as a girl age
Never to be attributed to the faceless
Lest its essence becomes baseless
As the ripples of the sea is felt
And the rain drizzle as droplet
So does her child's first cry tingle her ears
And with the first step, comes loud cheers

With time comes a steadier stride
Then life begins like a rollercoaster ride
Reality dawns as each print is put into account
No one knows how much the sacrifices amount
A beautiful and honourable print is only expected
Alas! It calls for her to be devoted
And being resolute, she presses on
Others waiting to plant their feet upon

The young who see the strides thinks and speaks
How easy! It must have been seamless!
But prices of drops of sweats, blood and tears
Never drowning or giving in to fears
For out of her, lives were made
She gave her life that her young will live in aid
Oh Mother! The price you've paid!

BOND BEYOND THE GRAVE

**Ikobeng Gracious
Botswana**

The nine moons bled into three trimesters
A triad of the phases it took to weave tiny stars,
into the very fabric of my womb
To my dismay, the knitted strings of this bundle fray into a tomb.

The tomb hosts an angel, my love belongs to you,
so were your halo child.
The grim reaper robbed me and my fury is not mild
My love for you will not wax or wane,
for the embers of my love transcend beyond your grave.

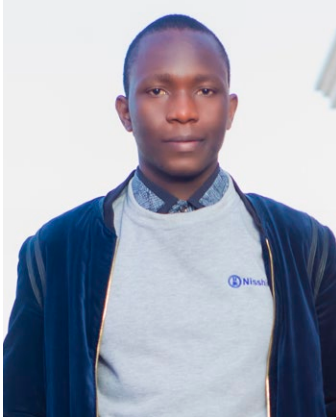
Lingering grief edges me into the verge of insanity
whilst, the billion galaxies orbit around your serenity.
The universe boasts of you with stardust and ashes
so, I wish for you whenever a shooting star passes.

Motherhood is not just red roses, peaches and cream.
At times, it is a love like no other melting into a dream
Time solidifies our bond
even though, my tears stream into a pond.

You will forever remain engrained into my memory
and I will carry you with a sweet melody.
My heart speaks of your story
Whilst my womb is imprinted with your glory.



Short Stories



WHISPERS IN **THE DARK**

Victor Chisamanga
Malawi



It is 12 midnight. The candle at the corner of her late grand ma's hut is already casting its farewell glow. Laura's gaze continually falls upon her little child, Natalie.

Natalie tries to grab Laura's left nipple, but Laura keeps pushing her away as the pain is unbearable. Natalie is starving; Laura is ravenous. Sometimes Natalie can suck

air from her mother's empty breasts; then cry for minutes. Laura keeps looking at her little child with tears flowing down her cheeks. There has never been enough milk in

her breasts since the breaking of dawn nor enough food in the house to feed her eight-month-old baby. "Perhaps if grand ma were still alive," she quickly brushes off the thoughts while wiping out the tears, but more memories keep flushing her mind.

"Laura" Ms. Kumra calls from the kitchen.

"Laura!"

Still, there is no response.

"She must have sneaked out again without leaving a word." Ms. Kumra's voice echoed through the kitchen; her tone laced with concern.

In her mind, she quickly drifts her thoughts, crafting a mental memorandum to recite upon her daughter's return, concerning her new escapade. The news of children of her age being abducted; their stories flooding social media and other news outlets, had become an incessant source of distress among families.

"This time, it is not even the children only, even grown-ups are victims of the trend.

She was even here when aunt Mervie recounted how her husband was seized the previous month. Thank God for the police. They did a good job," she kept on being worried, waiting to release fire on her only daughter and child.

"No parent should ever confine their daughter behind the walls of constraint upon her menarche," Jennifer voiced slowly.

"It's as though the world has bestowed wings upon you, and they want to clip them, instead of watching you fly," Favor chimed in.

A shared giggle, celebrating their worked plan of rebellion, rippled through the trio as Laura leaped the fence of her home. As they headed towards Mama Aloeio's unfinished mansion, three young men joined them. Handsome, tall, each boasting with a faint mustache. Laura smiled as Inno, the tallest, reached out encircling her waist with his hands. Jeffy and Vick fell into step alongside Favor and Jennifer.

Hand in hand, they moved forward with a synchronized

gait, walking as in a procession venturing into the incomplete mansion of Mama Aloeio.

"Never be like Mom, Dear Natalie," Laura whispers through her sobs. "I allowed Inno to caress me in that Mama Aloeio's house. He deflowered me, left his seeds in me and I never saw him again," her voice quivering with a mixture of regrets and shame, she turns away from her little girl.

"Foolish!"

"Embarrassing!"

This was how Ms. Kumra described Laura, after learning she was pregnant.

Foolish for being robbed of her honor and education. Foolish for not learning from her father who had gotten her mother pregnant while in college, but never took the responsibility. Foolish for being a young whore who sneaked out to sleep around. Embarrassing in the heavens, embarrassing even in the entire clan for a girl of fourteen to be carrying her fellow baby in her tummy. Embarrassing for a young lady to

have a child out of a wedlock. It is a cause of deep shame, that earns her humiliation and contempt. Even her family renounces her.

“It was out of grand ma’s benevolence that she secretly called me behind everyone’s back to be living with her here; a quiet place from the scrutinizing eyes of the world, until I delivered you, my princess charming, through the C-section. The doctor kept telling grand ma that my amniotic fluid was too low, a C-section was imperative. Her heart swelled with joy the day she gazed on you, and as she nurtured you during your formative days. She bestowed upon you the name ‘Natalie’ meaning ‘a new beginning’.”

Natalie is slowly running out of glucose. Her labored breaths leave the next morning uncertain. Laura desperately squeezes her breasts to draw the last drop of milk for her famished baby, but her nipples remain dry. Laura is afraid to fall asleep; the fear of losing her daughter gnaws at her.

She quickly grabs Natalie, wraps her in a baby blanket and puts her at her back. “At least, she should not die in my hands.” She quickly rushes out of the house and leaps into the dark. The night is serene and mellow. A huge moon, like a massive spotlight, illuminates her path into the wood forest in the east of her place. Natalie is silent and still; seeming as though she has been rendered mute or dumb. The crying has stopped, no body movement can be heard. “She is already lost,” Laura thinks as she hastens her steps into the thickets of the forest, not as in a run, but a teetering of her tiptoes.

Within the thick carpet of dense green leaves

covering the ground under a fallen tree, she conceals Natalie, cocooned in her baby blanket. Still no movement of any kind can be discerned. Only sporadic, shallow breaths can be noticed.

Laura doesn’t know what to do for her dying child. The weight of despair nails her to the ground. Perhaps she should just die too and forget about it or just abandon her baby for good, but the possibility of other villagers, who come to fetch wood or rubber, discovering the abandonment and reporting it to the law enforcers gives her second thoughts. The consequences of being arrested keeps haunting her, yet an allure of the prison’s free meals seem as a solace to her empty house.

She moves a few meters away from Natalie but pauses at almost every step she takes. The words of her grand ma are like chains bound on her, “In a society where mothers are considered as loving and caring, it is shocking to see a mother aborting or abandoning her child.”

She stands motionless, covering her face with her hands while sobbing. Perhaps it is the deep bond between a nursing mother and her suckling that compels her to halt with every step. Or perhaps the haunting memory of agonizing pangs of first-born birth that do not permit her to abandon Natalie like that.

The radiant morning star hints dawn is fast approaching. From afar, two men appear carrying timber. Her first reaction is to run. But that can only move her further apart from her daughter. She is not sure if she is really dead or not. She removes her hands from her face as the men are slowly approaching her.

She remains motionless as a statue, her face smeared with tears.

“Ghost”

They both muse in hushed tones

“A female ghost? I heard they are the most dangerous,” the taller one says.

“Fear be far from us, let’s see if she speaks.”

They muster courage and press onward. Laura watches them as they approach. Her bones are too weak to move an inch. The taller one, with a deliberate strike, uses timber to make contact with her. She falls flat to the ground and faints.

“Not a ghost!” they both scream out, abandoning their timber as they rush to her side. The taller, gigantic one, takes her on his back, carrying her to their nearby house, just a stone’s throw from the wooded forest. He gently places her on a mattress. He presses his lips on hers, trying to deliver her breath deep into her lungs as he learnt in high school.

“She is alive,” he relays to the shorter fellow, detecting a faint life on her shallow breaths.

They prepare a nourishing porridge that brings her back to consciousness. Laura notices the two men sitting beside her; she tries to speak, but her voice falters. They offer her a glass of water.

“Natalie, Natalie!” Her voice like a whisper carried by the wind brings the two to a standstill. She springs from the bed, pointing the direction of the forest. The two swiftly grab

her and guide her back to the bed as she explains her intriguing ambivalence. They all hasten to the wood forest, the sun standing high in the sky.

Natalie is still intact, deeply buried in her baby blanket, like a squirrel in a nest. Laura quickly cradles her, gently offering her nipple. Natalie slowly latches the breast and begins to suck. “She is still alive,” Laura smiles at the two strangers, relief and joy washing over them all.



BETWEEN A MOTHER AND HER DAUGHTER

Oluwabukola Olabode
Nigeria



If you thought you wouldn't miss your grown-up daughter when she left for the mandatory NYSC service, you were wrong. Laide was a computer geek who didn't care if everyone had a proper

meal at night or if her other sister called the shots like she was the eldest child. She only hit away at her computer and spent more time on the internet than with the people in the house. At other

times, she muttered away in prayer, eyes wide open at the ceiling when you wanted to have a mother-daughter moment with her.

A child who opened the womb should lead the oth-

er children that came after her in everything, and for a house with many girls, ile olobinrin, a daughter shouldn't avoid the kitchen. Laide wasn't the kind you should cross your arms for, watching blankly as she reunited with a few friends at the motor park where she would take off to 6 states far away from home. She hadn't been that far from you and for that duration.

"Ekaaro ma," one of Laide's friends greeted you, her knees almost touching the ground. She was slim, and your daughter had enveloped her in a hug. Your tired face broke into a smile, and you asked her how she was doing. During the journey to the park, your daughter had been forlorn in the car, and you tried to chat away the foggy mood. It was not the same atmosphere as when you picked her up from shopping for the things she had to take travelling.

As you listened to her animated chatter, you took glances at her. The air from the road under construction whipped her face through the window. She sat ass wide with dusty glasses on her

face. And you were stunned at her confidence concerning the next year of her life. She was no longer the little girl you knew.

"God told me that..." That was the source of her direction since seven years ago. Laide didn't stress you to make decisions for her. It didn't make you feel less like a mother. Nonetheless, you wished it were "My mother told me that..." that wasn't so far from her tongue. If things went on like this with the 'God' she had become so close to, he could ask her to remove her two kidneys, and she would do it without giving it any thought. She sang songs like "I've been offered to a deity, now I am a sacrifice..." She surely looked like a burnt offering personally supervised by her God. The pimple scars on her face would take some time and hard work to heal from the rigorous stress under the sun and in the rain from the NYSC camp.

Was it not two decades ago that she was a baby who looked into your eyes as she sucked the only thing, she thought life was about from your now old breasts.

A beautiful baby with lungs that screamed for your attention day and night, whether you were in the toilet relieving yourself, trying to fix a meal for yourself and your husband, or just trying to get a few hours of sleep. Now womanly, her grandma thought she should start having kids. You could only watch as she was almost butchered in the living room where her uncles and auntie sat. In a few seconds, she was sweating in the airy sitting room. The number of eyes piercing her soul choked up the air she breathed.

"Laide, who are you dating? Who is your fiancée?" The eighty-year-old woman who had pasted three new baby names on the wall of her room asked her first granddaughter. It was Christmas day. It was not a crime to see your extended family one out of the 365 days of the year, even if it involved cooking for more than half the time you spent with them. Laide's eyes darted in bewilderment before she burst into nervous giggling. "I don't understand," she had said.

"Which boy are you talk-

ing to? Is no boy talking to you, or do we have to go and wash your head in a river?" Laide's grandma asked again. The entire episode seems foggy to you now, but in replying to the intrusive questions, your daughter poured the whole situation on you. She wasn't going to be the center of questioning alone. She answered in what could be the popular slang that men are scum, even though what she meant was that boys are scum.

"My mummy said that boys are not good."

The answer let Laide catch her breath, but it sparked an ever-ongoing debate in the household of mostly boys now turned men.

"Is your daddy not good?" Her only paternal auntie asked, a slight look of contempt that she couldn't direct at you on her face.

The only person who could answer that question was the granddaughter that had forcibly vomited an understanding that had lodged in her head since her teenage years. But they wouldn't want to listen to the intent of the forced answer, the situation that led to it, or her present state of mind. They had grabbed on to the reply like hungry lions even after devouring plates of jollof rice and amala, gbegiri, and ewedu with the Christmas cherry on top--fried turkey.

"Daddy temi da n'temi," My own daddy is good, Laide had replied without thinking. That put some ease into your mind. You got back home angry, not at your daughter, but with her. It was the first time you saw things from the same lens and with such strong emotions. You had talked through the journey back home, unpacking all the emotional



blows dealt you. Were your husband not away on a trip, he would have found a way to avoid the situation.

The chasm between a mother and a daughter is said to grow wider as both grow older. One loathed the other for exhibiting the same positive and negative characteristics as she. In the several episodes of morning arguments you and Laide have had in the past, the generational gap between you two did not usually meet in the middle. However, the arguments have developed new mindsets in you. And now, you're headstrong about making sure your daughters can fend for themselves before getting them hitched to worthy men.

It was easier said than done for a woman to get married and try not to have babies before going back to school. If the womb watchers didn't do their unpaid job, several nights of passion between a young couple in love could result in what would be called a gift from God.

Laide didn't want to go through the mother-struggling-to-further-her-education phase in her life. If it were avoidable, why go through it? The unseen biological clock would still be on her side if she focused on her education first. It only took a few more years, not eternity. The culture where the family decides the trajectory of a member's life should end with you.

Laide, just before you updated your husband on the whole situation on a long call, opened up about the talks she had with her God and how she trusted him with the next

phase of her life. She reminded you, in the most vulnerable conversation with you ever, of how years ago, you had called her to a quiet place. You told her not to ever go to a dark place with a boy. You had told her that boys were not good. She was eleven, Nigerian, and had no business dating a cute boy while she hit puberty. You do not remember, but she does and had declared how influential your words were to her in the presence of your in-laws.

You would miss your opinionated daughter who challenged the culture and egged you to do so. Laide would always be your daughter anyway, even when she turned forty and already has those children she doesn't want to have now. You would be the mother eagle, tucking her and her children under your wings. You hope you have fewer arguments then, but team up to do things even while embracing the positive side of culture.

Then, you walk away from the park without waving her goodbye. You'd be waiting for her return, while watching over your other daughters, hoping her strong will had not been broken by the influx of ideologies and mindsets out there.

SET A PACE



Liza Chuma Akunyili
@iamlizachuma

Now that you have decided where you want to publish your content, it is important for you to set your pace.

I have heard of people posting three times a day on Instagram, twice a week on YouTube, Once a day on TikTok and LinkedIn and every thirty minutes on Twitter.

The question is if that is realistic for you. Remember you are publishing and not just posting content.

When aiming for visibility, you need to determine what your goals are. For example, in 2024, I am publishing to correlate my professional work with individuals with my digital content.

That makes it easier for me to

refer a potential client having doubts about my expertise to materials where they can see the ingenuity of my approach.

That is a different plan from publishing to go viral online. The former requires detailed articles that may run in series while the latter requires bytes of content people can quote on the move.

To set your publishing pace, you need to juxtapose your goals with your availability.

How many hours can you dedicate to this without losing steam in the long run?

What even is the long run to you?

For this first quarter, the long

run is having ninety powerful articles that feels like a reader is reading my book. I could aim for three hundred and sixty-five (I considered it) but I knew that sounded fancier than it was functional - my schedule could be compressed for ninety days but I do not have control of the next ninety.

If you are honest enough with yourself about your availability, you will be able to create a schedule that honours your craft, your readers and yourself that allows for consistency.

How to ensure consistency

Think long-term: a few years back, I was in a coaching program and one of our assign-

ments was to divide our area of specialization into five key themes and then write out twenty topics under that theme that we would like to publish.

I still carry out that exercise frequently and what it has done is ensure I never lack topics but it has also ensured that my mind notices tiny details that other people would miss.

A few weeks back, I wrote an article on submission (to the subordinate) detailing why they should be conscious about why and how they submit their autonomy. When I got to the end, I realized I said nothing about how subordinates can be abusive so I wrote another called Abused Bosses. Upon exhausting that thought, I noticed I had written to the subordinate twice but not once to the boss who could be abusive.

It's easier for me to spot cracks that need filling when I write because I think of each subject matter with the lens of its implication and long-term usage.

Maybe you keep running to create content every day because you only create based on trends so when the trend

passes, the piece loses context.

It's okay if you write for trends only - a portfolio full of that will be fantastic but it means you cannot miss the pace of the trends as well.

Bulk creation: I know you can churn out six thousand words in six hours but I also know there are days when two thousand words take six hours and days when a haiku takes you two days to complete.

The trick is thus to write as many multiple drafts when your creative juice is bubbling. There are days when ideas are a dime a dozen - you should spend every dime on such days.

I have one offline notepad (for my quiet off the internet days) and two online notepads that are automatically backed up (I had lost a hundred thousand unpublished words once - story for another day). I keep these notepads just for capturing my random thoughts.

You could be in the market and there's a story right there begging to be told - the problem is thus not a lack of inspiration but an indiscipline

with inspiration.

If you're going to write daily, weekly or biweekly, you still need a steady flow of ideas.

We say you cannot edit an empty page but many times act like we always have words to fill empty pages when we do not.

One reason writer's block keeps ruining your consistency is that you have no bank of stories and ideas that reminds you of the process.

Write out the tiny ideas you have mastery in and write out the ideas that terrify you. The former gives you where you can start today and the latter tells you what you have capacity for tomorrow.

I have not done research writing in years but my diaries are full of research topics and in recent times, I have started to gravitate back home to it because the ideas were captured and I kept looking and thinking about them.

Where is your idea bank? Physically, that would be a journal and electronically, I recommend a notepad that has cloud backup so you do not lose things.

Set your pace: you have really great ideas and you have fifty ideas, you have fully developed weekly does not mean you should publish fifty contents weekly.

Too much heavy content is very distracting.

I podcast as well and I have found out the last episode when you take a break always gets the most listen. At first, I wondered why people would miss the amount of work put in, then I realized newer content pushes older ones backwards meaning people rarely know what else is available. Also, the newer content is mostly advertised meaning everyone forgets the old content.

Give your audience time to chew and digest. Create conversations around what you've created already. When you do publish again, reference old pieces.

Too much speed puts you under pressure

Publishing fifty articles this week means you are under pressure to publish fifty next week to appear consistent - that is unnecessary pressure on your creativity.

One reason content creators

are publishing sham content is that their newer content is receiving less creation and processing time than their older content. Do not do that - do not give your audience sham.

The music industry has taught us time and again that people will wait for your content if it delivers the promise. Yes, people are getting on charts every week but then, some people come out of hibernation and get on charts for months.

Pace your creation does not mean go and sleep, it means to create with quality and not let the pressure get to you. So, if you have more content, spread out what you publish so you have time to create new ones with ease.

Schedule: almost everything has scheduler these days - websites to courses, to social media to blogging platforms - every thing has a scheduler.

I know breaks sound strange to you as a writer but you do need breaks - times when you are not interfacing with any content online or offline (if possible). That's the period you allow yourself to be present in nature and just soak inspiration.

Automate your processes: blogging platforms have done a fantastic job with this. With my 90-post challenge for example, my primary content distribution platform is LinkedIn but I create and publish with Medium.

The moment I am done, Medium allows me to post to LinkedIn and all linked accounts such that I rarely spend more than ten minutes to distribute.

You want to ensure your distribution channels are easily accessible and connected so it does not frustrate the pace you are setting.

Create a margin for failure: if you cannot post within the timeline set, do you have a recovery plan?

For example, I have 90 post challenges instead of 90-day challenges which means whatever happens, I must get 90 posts at the end. If I miss a day or two, I have the margin to cover up.

You do not have full control of all your activities so make room for spillovers from other areas of your life.

I love writing to you dear affluent Author and I cannot wait to get your feedback.



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REVIEW

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CHIWETALU**

WINNER, WAKINI KURIA PRIZE FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE



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THEY THOUGHT SHE NEVER GOT HUNGRY

A Children's Literature by Mugabe Christopher, Uganda



Reviewer

Benita Magopane
(Botswana)

“This love got her children an illusion.”

It is widely thought that children are blissfully oblivious and innocently ignorant of many things. Perhaps, it is not wrong to think that children too, are gullible, and easily impressionable, as conveyed by the poet, even by something as pure as a mother's love. The illusion of that love is the unvarnished truth to our child-like eyes. Yet, it is the unvarnished truth, but an illusion as well. It's an illusion that serves to protect, but at the same time it doesn't. It serves to provide, but at the same time takes away. It wins and loses simultaneously.

Mugabe Christopher's poem portrays love in a complicated sense and straightforward attitude. According to him, love is simple from a mother's per-

spective, you shouldn't have to ask her if she'd love her children selflessly. But it becomes complicated for the children, if the selflessness costs them who they love. It gets even more complicated for the children when they blame themselves for their mother's selfless love. When they wish they had been smarter and seen past the illusion, although how could they go head to head in a game of wits with their birth giver, and outwit her. The illusion always wins, because the mother has to do what she has to do out of love.

This is a powerful poem that depicts the reality of many households. But also the power of a mother's love. It isn't an illusion as it might feel, it is deeply authentic since it's willing to self-sacrifice. A wonderful poem.

THE TEACUP'S BANTER

A Poem by Edwin Mamman, Nigeria

Reviewer
Fatima Ajida
(Zimbabwe)



The teacups banter is a model for a supposed sequence of events. It impends with a satirical pitch of serenade performed below an unrequited window of a loved one. The poet Edwin Mammon begins his piece by choosing the word “Yesterday”, so as to give a notion of a past memory that is being lived again, thus consuming feelings of nostalgia from the readers.

He successfully denotes such a tone to rebuke the consequences of an unrequited love. He continues to portray the grief in a threatening manner by justly depicting how the past has risen to torment the protagonist. This is carefully evidenced by “Violating the dawn with a slow violence”.

Edwin employs teachable sayings in his creation. Though these lessons are noted to be wise, they carry an insensitive and demeaning nature to those victimized by unrequited love. The poet effectively differentiates a love which is real from its illusory counterpart.

He purposefully navigates his piece by clarifying how time aids in initiating love’s emotional and mental anguish. The perfect contradiction of how time can also be an advantage in sprouting love, metaphorically explains the confused and doubtful actions caused by love.

BOOM

A Short Story by Damian Jeremiah, Nigeria

Reviewer

Anthony N Onyeador
(Nigeria)



This eccentric story captures many themes that spotlights life threatening outcomes and expectations in today's relationships and multifaceted trends of society. It is about the characters - Egbon and Rosemary's accounts of relationships in bitter-sweet episodes; highlighting scenes including rejection and confusion.

Egbon, a silver spoon child tangles in an intimate relationship with Rosemary, a Mass Communication undergraduate who abuses hard drugs, loses her focus in academics, and eventually becomes pregnant.

As a result of this development, Egbon's parents are caused to disown him pub-

licly, forcing him to settling down. Egbon resorts to working at a site, where he meets Baba Saura- a traditionalist whom he eventually gets intimate with, but not before his relationship with Rosemary deteriorates drastically.

The story showcases various themes of juvenile exuberances, sacrifice, and misplaced love expectations from Rosemary, infidelity, peer influences and societal ethics. The author encapsulates several lessons from the above mentioned trends and imageries neatly woven to extend the audience's mood as well as expressions in this story.

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