

WRITERS SPACE

# AFRICA

FEBRUARY 2025 EDITION

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<https://www.writersspace.net>



# writersspace.net

The best of African Literature

## AWARDS

- **Best African Writer Promotion platform 2024**  
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- **Monthly Digital Literary Magazine of the Year - 2022/2023**  
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(Global Business Awards 2022)
- **Writer Promotion platform of the Year - 2021**  
(The Corporate LiveWire Global Awards 2021/22)
- **Best African Literary Magazine - 2021**  
(MEA Business Awards 2021)

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**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
M a g a z i n e

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# Welcome

Within the twinkle of an eye, February, popularly known as the month of love, has arrived. Writers around the globe have fully prepared their harps, trumpets, and pianos to serenade readers worldwide and to display their literary arsenals with the aim of highlighting the importance of love.

This step is truly commendable, especially in today's world. Everyone is striving to make the world a better place and showing love and kindness is at the heart of this effort. It is a beautiful way to bring people together. By doing so, we can create a brighter future for all.

In the midst of celebrating love, the 98th Edition of Writers Space Africa magazine takes a bold step. This issue dares to expose

the unspoken truths of love, delving into the fragile and often overlooked aspects of human vulnerability. African writers were challenged to peel back the layers of love, revealing the raw emotions and tender moments that often lie hidden. The result is a thought-provoking exploration of love's complexities.

As you embark on this journey through this edition, get ready to navigate the uncharted territories of the human heart. The waters may be calm on the surface, but beneath the waves, a torrent of emotions awaits. With each turn of the page, you'll encounter the rugged landscapes



of love, vulnerability, and self-discovery. So, fasten your seatbelts, don your helmet, and dive into the unknown. The ride ahead promises to be a thrilling exploration of the human experience.

*Happy reading!*

*Happy Valentine's Day!*

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*Comfort Naana Adwoa  
Okyere*

*Chief Editor,*

*Writers Space Africa  
Magazine.*



**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Empowering African Writers

## ***Call for Submissions*** ***THEME: HUMOUR***

Writers Space Africa (WSA) is accepting submissions for its 100th edition (April 2025 Edition).

We accept Children's Literature, Creative Non-Fiction, Flash Fiction, Poetry, and Short Stories

***DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 15, 2025***

*To Submit*  
[www.writersspace.net](http://www.writersspace.net)



# THE WEAK WICK OF GLOW WHITE

**Author:** Rebecca Eduah

**Country:** Ghana

CHILDREN'S  
LITERATURE

Long time ago, all the candles in the universe lived in a land called Candleland. The different colours living in Candleland made it colourful. There was a beautiful scenery of Royal Palm avenue, flowers and green hills. Each house was painted to match the candle colour living in it and families were named according to their colours. There were the White, Red, Yellow, Green, Magenta, Blue, Purple, Peach and Orange families. Candleland was indeed a beautiful city.

In spite of this beauty, Darkness and Fire were their two enemies who always tried to invade their land. These two were friends and they moved hand in hand. History had it that, whenever Darkness appeared in Candleland, Fire would sneak in with one mission, to melt

state. Due to their destructive nature, they were nicknamed “the dreadful duo”. To save Candleland from their hands, the candles devised a plan. After every sunset, one family would go out, light their wicks and stand at vantage points to keep the whole land bright. As long as they kept this tradition, Darkness and Fire stayed far from their land.

However, the White family had a weakness which made them incapable of guarding the land like the other families.

“Grandpa, why don’t we go out at night to light our wicks like every other family? I thought you said it’s a survival technique. Why are we never given that opportunity?” Little white candle asked.

“My dear, it’s true I said that but, we have

a weakness as a family. All white candles have a weak wick. This makes us unable to keep our lights on for long. You know what it means if our lights go off at night, right? Darkness and Fire will invade our land and destroy all of us." He explained.

"So, is it going to be like this for the rest of our lives? I think there should be a way out!" said Little candle hopefully.

"I pray so. " he replied as they retired to bed.

Early the next morning, all family heads were summoned by the King.

"My people, I have received distressing news. I've been reliably informed that a strong wind will be blowing over our land tomorrow. You all gathered here know the implication of this; our lights could go off and the dreadful duo could visit our land. We must therefore come together to fight for our lives and land." He said.

This news got the whole land very worried.

Each family head prepared

their members for that night.

When the dreaded night came, all the candles moved out at the command of their heads. They stood at vantage points for the biggest task of their lives.

By midnight, the wind started blowing. It blew harder with every passing second. As expected, White candles were the first to go off. The others fought hard to keep their lights on but the strength of the wind was too great. When the light of the last family went off, the whole land cried in agony. As they were weeping, a light started shining. Everyone turned their attention towards it. To their disbelief, the light was coming from the White family. They were all glowing with much brilliance; an ability they never knew they had. The absence of the candlelight had revealed their inherent light.

"So, we're not useless after all!" their family head exclaimed.

"What's going on? Why are we shining? Can someone explain to us?" Asked some

of them.

"We don't have enough time to answer all your questions. Hurry, move into their midst and keep the land bright" Their family head said.

Every Dick, Tom and Harry hastened to do it while the other families looked on in utter confusion. At that same time, Fire was closing in on them. Fortunately, by the time he got to the hills of Candleland, the whole place was bright. The glow of the White family had driven out Darkness. Fire had no option than to angrily turn back. As he turned back, the whole land shouted for joy. They had been saved from destruction. This is how the weak wick family of White candles saved Candleland and earned the name *Glow White*.



# Ice Cold

**Author:** Bassegy Martins  
**Country:** Nigeria



FLASH  
FICTION

She didn't belong here. Clean, classy, swaying like she was caught between two worlds. Her eyes? Lost, Frozen-Ice.

The bike man's hand dangled too close to her breast. His smirk dared me to care. "How much?" I asked, throwing cash at him.

She barely blinked, just looked at me—like she didn't care or didn't know better.

"Let's go," I said. She didn't argue.

At the pharmacy: water, painkillers. Bare minimum. She clutched my arm as we walked, her heels scraping dirt, a queen on broken glass. She didn't belong here—not in the trenches or my one-room apartment that stank of sweat and regret.

She collapsed onto my bed, fragile, beautiful. My gaze lingered too long, hands itching. I'd been clean for over a year but temptation was a cruel whisper and she was its perfect voice.

When she woke, her eyes darted and panicked. "Where am I?"

"You almost fell off the bike," I said. "God loves you."

She snorted bitterly. "God left me!"

She reached under her blouse pulling out a stash of ice.

"Take it," she said flatly like handing me candy.

My breath hitched. My demons stirred. She didn't know I was a recovering addict clawing back from ruin.

"You don't belong here," she said. "I'll help you. GRA Ikeja. My dad owns a company."

I wanted to laugh. Rich girls didn't save men like me.

I call you."

And she was gone, leaving the stash behind.

Temptation in my palm. One hit. Just one.

The power cut plunged the room into darkness. I opened the window and hurled the stash into the night.

Her words lingered. "You don't belong here."

But maybe I did.

Creative  
**SPOTLIGHT**

*Sumaiyah Muhammad*





*In this edition, Lise interviews Sumaiyah Muhammad, a 16-year-old law student, spoken word artist, and award-winning young author. Sumaiyah shares her journey of resilience, creativity, and determination, discussing her passion for writing, the challenges she faces as a young writer, and the impact of winning the 2024 African Teens Award on her literary career.*

***Lise: Greetings, Sumaiyah. Kindly introduce yourself to our beloved audience***

***Sumaiyah Muhammad:*** My name is Sumaiyah Muhammad Salisu. I'm a 16 year old and 100 level student of Philomath University. I'm currently studying law. I'm a spoken word artist, poetry enthusiast, and a story writer. I'm a young published author of two novels titled 'THE MURDER AT SCHOOL ' and 'UNBROKEN: A HEALING ODYSSEY '. I love reading during my free time. Last year I was awarded the 'Most Valuable Contestant' at the Hadiza Ibrahim Aliyu Schools Festival (HIASFEST). I was also shortlisted for the Sevhave Eugenia Abu prize out of

460 entries from everywhere around the world with various adults who participated. Now, my main aim is to focus on publishing my collection of short stories by the end of this year. As well as participating in a few spoken word slams. And delving into a bit of poetry.

***Lise: Wow. That's impressive.***

***Sumaiyah Muhammad:*** Thank you

***Lise: May I know what sparked your love for writing? Was there a specific book, author, or experience that ignited your passion?***

***Sumaiyah Muhammad:*** I grew up in a household where everyone was either

reading or writing. When I was little, my dad would buy me story books and I'd read them. Books like (the diaries of a wimpy kid and mostly Disney and other animated books). Afterwards, we moved to a larger house and dad got us a huge shelf where he bought so many books and kept them in. We were literally having a mini library at home. We still do. He bought me cute little journals and asked me to write anything I wanted in it. And by the way, reading was already helping with my vocabulary, so that was how I started writing since when I was little. I proceeded to read more books: non-fiction books like " THINK BIG" by Ben Carson and it opened my

eyes to the possibilities of myself becoming a writer. That was how my dream of becoming a writer evolved. From then, I knew I'd become a writer, but then HOW? WHEN? I imagined I could only become a writer when I'm an adult like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Anyways I wrote my first mini story book when I was 12.

At the end of day, I can't really point out one author who inspired me. Because every single book I read moulded me into who I am today, in a different way. My parents' hard work and support as well has been very helpful. These are the collective experiences that ignited my passion for writing.

*Lise: Sure, I agree with you. So many people inspire us along the way and it is really hard to choose one who specifically "influenced" us the most. I'm glad your parents supported you from a young age*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad: I'm glad too. Thank you*

*Lise: Where do you draw inspiration? Is it from personal experiences, dreams, or other sources?*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad: I draw my inspiration mostly from personal experiences and also from what is happening around the society in general. For example, my book 'Unbroken: a healing odyssey' was inspired from the alarming frequency of rape cases reported in Nigeria. I knew I just had to write something about this particular topic.*

I wouldn't really say I draw my inspiration from anywhere else.

*Lise: Hahahah I get it. I personally draw inspiration from situations around me as well. Now tell me, what challenges have you faced as a young writer? How did you overcome them?*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad: Well, I don't have many challenges. My only challenge right now is I have to keep squeezing through busy school schedules, house chores, assignments, my mini business, my podcasts, content creation and writing. It is very stressful because it ends up giving me sleepless nights and eye bags. I've not really overcome the challenge but I created a little solution myself, which is, I only read and write during my holidays. It has been a bit helpful, even though I don't like the idea of being far away from my creative world. I also wish there'd be more platforms for young writers like me to put out their works out there. Because there's a lot of talent around the world but only informed people get access to the platforms available.*

*Lise: I understand. Busy schedules often force us to abandon some things or put them aside. By the way, what are your long-term aspirations as a writer? Do you dream of exploring other forms of creative expression?*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad: My aspirations are to expand my writing career, publish more books and explore new genres of course. As*

I mentioned in the introduction, I'd love to delve into poetry writing and spoken word performances this year. I'd love to perform at large events and use my voice to inspire and educate. I also want to use my skills to inspire young writers and advocate for literacy in my society, especially among the female gender.

*Lise: Wishing you luck with that.*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad:* Thank you

*Lise: Now let's talk about the African Teens Award. Describe the moment you learned you had won the African Teens Award. What were your initial thoughts and feelings?*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad:* To be honest, I saw the WIN coming, even though I wasn't being over confident about it. Because I participated last year and I didn't make it (not even in the longlist) and I was determined to participate again and win. I couldn't make it to Rwanda, so I watched the program online and when it was time for Mr Anthony to make the announcements, I left the room and told my mum to hear it alone because I was super anxious. What if after all the hard work and prayers, I still don't make it. What if my work wasn't good enough? The anxiety was building. I became impatient, and got back to the room and continued listening to the announcements with my mom. Suddenly, my name was announced and I was so excited that there was a possibility that my

heart could rupture through my chest. My mum embraced me tightly, she kissed me on my cheeks and told me that she was so proud of me. All I did was screen record the announcement and save it. Then I sent it to my supportive friends and family. Posted it on my WhatsApp and Instagram status and all the congratulations were flowing. It was a beautiful feeling because this is not just a Nigerian competition, this is the whole of Africa and out of all the countries, my story made it. It felt like a dream come true! We still talk about the African teen writers awards till today, with my family members.

*Lise: Wow! I can feel that in my bones too. The anxiety, the excitement, everything.*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad:* Thank you for that. It felt like a movie

*Lise: I can imagine for real. Anyway, how has winning this award impacted your confidence as a writer? Has it opened any new doors or opportunities for you?*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad:* Of course! Winning this award has impacted my literary journey because several people made blog posts about my achievement on Twitter and Facebook. I would send you the links later. And these blog posts got a lot of engagements, my parents were also receiving messages from other people that "oh we've seen what your daughter has achieved" kind of messages. I also posted it on my Nigerian prize for teen authors WhatsApp group and it opened op-

portunities for me, I got congratulated by renowned writers.

*Lise: How lovely! Congratulations once again*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad:* Thank you so much

*Lise: You are welcome. You were awarded \$100. How did you choose to use this prize money if you can tell me? Did it help you in any way with your writing journey?*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad:* No, not really. I used the money to secure my international passport. It was my father's decision by the way and it was a good one because I initially would have wanted to buy more books but then I already have a lot of brand new un-

read books.

*Lise: Wow! I'm glad your dad made you decide well. We just got to the end of our interview. Is there anything else you would like to say?*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad:* No, I think I've said it all! It was an honour being on this interview

*Lise: Thank you so much. I wish you luck in your future endeavours.*

*Sumaiyah Muhammad:* Thank you.



# POETICAFRICA



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# Naked



**Author:** Fiyinfoluwa Phillips  
**Country:** Nigeria

This isn't about clothes or nudity  
It's me in my most vulnerable state  
The me that lays bare in my real skin  
With no makeup present  
The one that has fears that frightens her and makes her sweat  
The one that has secrets no one would ever hear about  
The one with the esteem issues always feeling inadequate  
Praying and hoping she will fit in somewhere and someday  
I'm bare and naked with nothing left to hide  
Standing in front of the mirror with nowhere to run to  
The scars, the hurt, the pain are all clear now  
You can see it even in the dark  
I'm reduced to the smallest one  
My fears and insecurities have come out to play  
Here's a girl standing before the world with nothing left to tell.



# Feebleness



**Author:** Abdullatif Khalid

**Country:** Uganda

To the cities, I came in disorder,  
Ruled by hunger and despair.  
I joined their rebellion, trembling,  
Weakness cloaked in defiance.

I ate with shaking hands,  
Lay among whispers of violence.  
I turned from love, too fragile,  
And ignored the beauty of nature.

The streets led to despairing swamps,  
My frail words betrayed me.  
Still, I hoped my small defiance  
Might trouble those who ruled.

Our forces were brittle and few,  
Dreams far beyond reach.  
Yet, even in frailty, I reached —  
A trembling hand toward hope.

To you who rise from these depths,  
Do not scorn our weakness.  
We endured the flood of despair  
So, you could walk on solid ground.

# Our Fragile Hold



**Author:** Vivian Jerop

**Country:** Kenya

POETRY

In love, there lies a tender break,  
A fragile thread we dare not shake.  
It trembles soft within the heart,  
A whispered doubt, a flickered spark.

A tenderness in tender grace,  
That shows our most vulnerable place.  
Not in the strength of love we stand,  
But in the trembling of our hand.

It is the fear when silence falls,  
The weight of words we dare not call.  
The ache of holding love too tight,  
Afraid to lose it in the night.

It is the doubt that creeps within,  
The moment love may start to thin.  
Yet in this fragility, we find,  
A bond that's deeper, intertwined.

For love's true power lies not in might,  
But in the courage to face the night.  
In softness, love is made more pure,  
A quiet strength, uncertain, sure.

# Many Vices



**Author:** Victory Sigalla

**Country:** Cameroon

POETRY

Mine is a minuscule painting,  
One so perfectly vanished on canvas  
With impeccable natural lighting.

Something I often forget  
When painting a second, a day, a year.  
I collect so much moisture and dust,  
All I see most times are cracks and warps.

I fail to see these custom frames  
That make me so lucky, that hold me together.  
So I let the mold set in in-season  
And ensure fragility.  
Painting over the moisture,  
Dust and mold is defeating me.

So I will use a soft brush and adjust  
The temperature when I can,  
And hold tight to these frames  
For as long as they let me.

# Three Close Calls

**Author:** Bokang Moshoeshoe  
**Country:** Lesotho

POETRY

My problems pregnant with each other  
like a Russian doll  
Solve them all, I could not, Dead end, I thought-  
For, further I could not go-  
Met the mother of them all  
Dear ole Mrs Alcohol  
That almost took my fickle soul  
A pursuit that went up in smoke.  
A blind bloke broke the yoke;  
Hope for breath to a breath of hope  
Not remotely enough-to cure the pain.  
The smoky puff of Mrs Mary Jane;  
Last we spoke, she let me choke  
In my grave of fume, dancing with doom.  
Not addicted- I would be proving  
Only to suckle on Mrs Ibuprofen  
'It is just a way to heal...It is just a little pill'  
And another one and another one  
Down my throat until I was almost done  
The three calls were not fun.  
Find better ways under the sun  
Open letter to my teenage son.

# Broken by Fallacies

**Author:** Leatile King Baaitse

**Country:** Botswana

As the shadows cast their darkest spells,  
A soul cries out, trapped within its shell.  
Once hailed a prodigy, now plagued by strife,  
A tender heart beats amidst the knife.

Betrayed by those who claimed to care,  
Lies and whispers fill the air.  
Accusations fly like daggers sharp,  
Piercing through, leaving deep scars.

The hands that held him close now push away,  
His one true love swept into disarray.  
Her doubts and fears fueled by deceit,  
He stands alone, his heartbeat incomplete.

Panic grips him, muscles locked in fear,  
Each day brings fresh torments clear.  
Food tainted, nearly robbed of life,  
Surviving despite relentless strife.

Alone in darkness, seeking solace sweet,  
Yet never finding respite at his feet.  
Mother's blows bring tears and blood,  
Reality crashing down like flood.

Oh wretched fate, cruel twist of hand,  
To bear such weight upon fragile shoulders grand.  
How long until despair consumes his light,  
Leaving naught but echoes soft and slight?

# Weakness: The Baggage of Us

POETRY



**Author:** Steve Otieno Oyugi

**Country:** Kenya

To the homes we've left behind,  
little did we realize  
how long our shadows would stretch.

we heard the homes' whispers,  
and wondered how telepathic we were  
to those still residing in them.

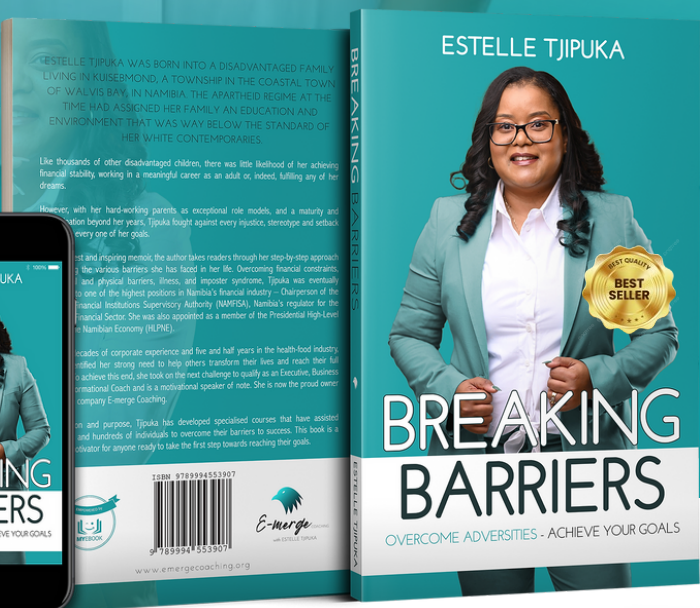
and when we met others in our paths,  
they strangely found shade in our shadow's patches  
unknowing how far they went,

either we couldn't let go of where we came from,  
or from whence we came, couldn't let go of us,  
until unable to pull or be pulled any more,  
we went back or brought the homes down with us.



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# Dear Father in Heaven, Over



**Author:** Victor Adetomiwa

**Country:** Nigeria

SHORT  
STORY



Over the noise of the grinding machine, I hear my sister scream to her little girl to get her some water. Their raucous conversation is what wakes me from my sleep. I am not surprised to find, after the past few months, that my rest is no longer disturbed by the engine's cacophonous whirring. I turn in my bed and hiss when the wall clock shows its

quarter-past-seven face. I had overslept in a very short night; I try to remember when I dozed off—I can't—so I put it at some minutes past four, since I remember hearing the Fajr prayer call before falling asleep. Despite having returned from school so tired and going to bed on an empty stomach, I was alert for most of the night before. I had attempted



to sleep early primarily to announce to my grumbling belly that I had nothing to fill it with, and to rest my fatigued body, but I was woken by my stomach's relentless protest and the noise from the other room, where my twelve-month-old nephew was wailing loud enough for his cries to bury his mother's midnight vigil prayer, that alone would normally wake me up. She'd often pray with the same fervour in her voice as our late mother did before the sickness took her away. They'd both pray with loud cries that caused their voices to shake, creating inhuman vibrations that were an entirely different language from the Igbo they prayed in. For some mysterious reason, the polyphonous sound only made more sense. I concluded last night that if I were God, I'd answer her prayers so I and the neighbours could rest.

I'd sometimes try to join her in prayer from my own room, but I'd often fall into the same pray-worry-mumble-doze-off pattern most times I tried. I'd always start fervently, of course, and then as I screamed each prayer at God, I'd start to worry about every single item I prayed about—from my unpaid fees to the now-tattered school uniform I'd been wearing since SS1 and to the circumstances surrounding my sister's business. From there on, I'd start to feel dizzy as my ears became accustomed to the dissonant noises in the gentle night, and eventually, I'd fall asleep just in time to wake up for school without enough rest.

One morning, on our way to school, I talked

to Kunle, my best friend, about my praying condition. He had recently rediscovered his faith a few weeks ago when his uncle, a pastor in Canada, finally bought him the PlayStation 4 he had been nagging for.

"See, I used to find it difficult to pray too, until recently when I found out what the problem was," he'd said.

I humoured him, knowing fully well what his problem used to be. "Oh, what was it?"

"The problem was that I kept talking to God like He wasn't listening!"

"How do you mean?"

"Every time I knelt to pray, what followed was more of a monologue than a prayer."

"Okay, and how has your style changed, enyi m?" I said, rolling my eyes.

"You see, now, when I talk to God, I pray like it's a conversation with a friend—a comrade, even." He laughed.

"Oh boy, you're just confusing me o!"

"You know those American soldier films we watch, abi?"

I nodded with a slight grimace, unsure where our conversation was heading.

"You know how they talk to each other on this their war phone?" I nodded again, knowing he meant 'walkie-talkie.'

"That's how I pray now. Rather than shouting and shouting like we do in church, I just

speak and say 'over' so I am reminded I am speaking to someone in the first place." He spread his arms like he had just revealed an epiphany.

I looked at Kunle's face to see if he meant what he was saying and if he had more words to add to the delirium he had just expressed. The ignorant boy was smiling blissfully. I concluded he was still high on the ecstasy of the gift his uncle had just gotten him.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Kunle asked.

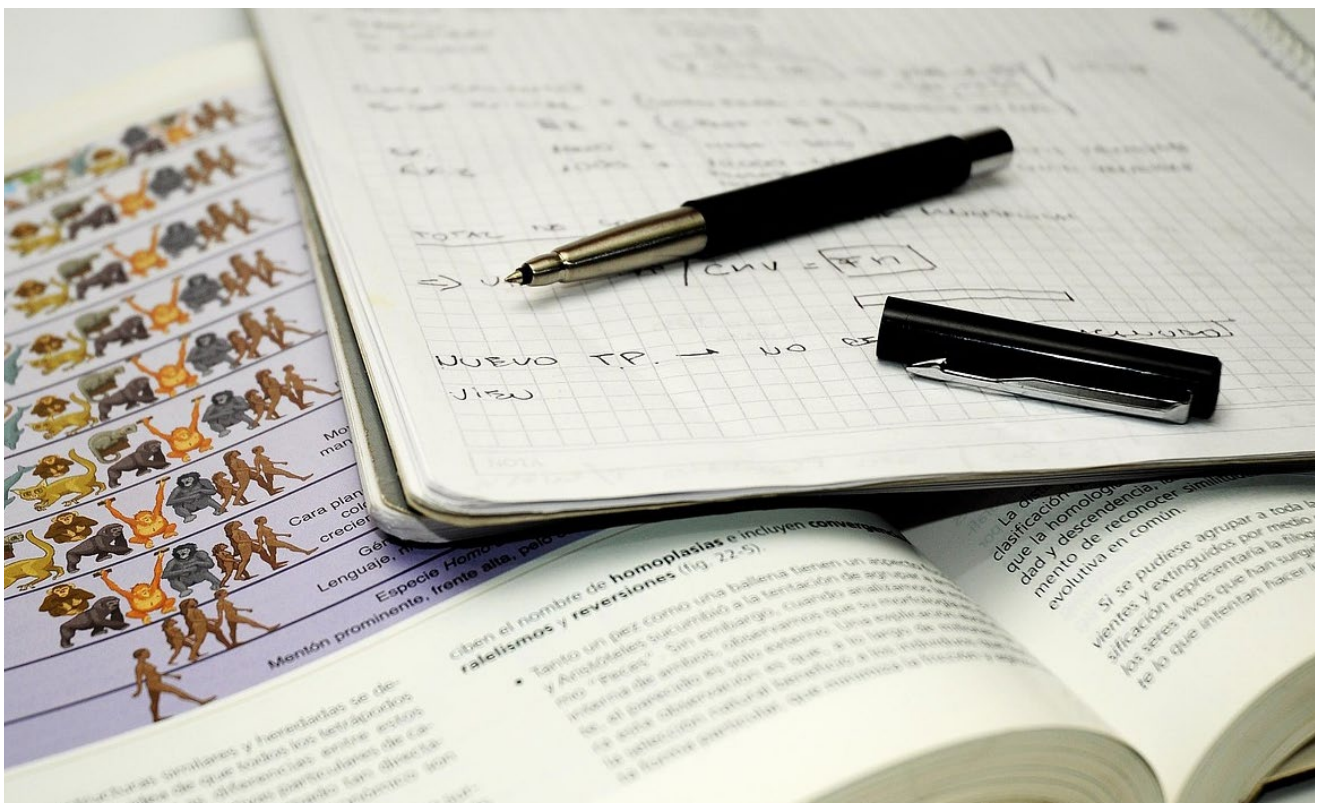
"Nothing o!" I said as contempt pulled the edges of my lips downward.

"I know it sounds crazy, but try it one of these days and see how it works for you."

"I've heard you," I replied.

Now, in my bed, already late for school, I reach for my physics notes to skim through them one last time in preparation for today's exam. The letters are blurry, and I think to myself that finally all that garri has completely ruined my eyes. Just as I am about to believe my statement, I remember I do not have my glasses on. I hiss and drop the notes. I sigh and get on my knees.

"Dear Father in Heaven, over."



# A Fight for Freedom



**Author:** Sylvan Heideman

**Country:** South Africa

SHORT  
STORY

Langa was the heart of the struggle, a neighbourhood in the Western Cape where the scent of freedom mingled with the smell of oppression. It was 1989, a year before Nelson Mandela would be released from prison, and the Apartheid government was still very much in power. The streets were alive with whispers of revolution and the sounds of protest.

Sizwe was 17, a young man with a fire in his heart and the weight of his community's hopes on his shoulders. He was the leader of the School Representative Council (SRC) at Langa High School. To his friends and family, he wasn't just a student leader—he was a symbol of resistance. His school, like many others across South Africa, was a battleground for young people who dreamed of a different future, one where they would no longer be shackled by the laws of Apartheid.

Sizwe had grown up in a family that had known struggle. His father, a man of few words but deep convictions, worked as a laborer on a farm just outside the township. His mother, a teacher at a local primary school, often stayed up late into the night, grading papers and reading books about liberation movements around the world. They were both strong pillars in his life, instilling in him the belief that education was the key to freedom, but also that one couldn't wait for a change—it had to be fought for.

The first time Sizwe truly understood the weight of the fight for freedom was when he was just 10 years old. He remembered the day vividly: it was the day the police had raided their home in the middle of the night. His father had been active in the UDF, the United Democratic Front, a political movement that

had been banned by the Apartheid government. They had come looking for evidence of his father's involvement, but his parents had hidden the UDF literature and protest flyers in the walls of their house.

Sizwe's father had never been arrested, but the memory of that night, the sound of the police boots thumping on their doorstep, stayed with him. It was then that he vowed to fight for a future where his children wouldn't have to live in fear, where the authorities couldn't come knocking in the middle of the night to shatter their peace.

At Langa High, things were tense. The school was a place where ideas of resistance were not just whispered, but shouted from the rooftops. As leader of the SRC, Sizwe was at the center of the action. He had helped organize protests and marches, his voice echoing with demands for justice. The teachers, many of whom were also secretly aligned with the UDF, supported the students, but there was always the risk of betrayal. Informants were everywhere, and the Apartheid government had eyes everywhere, especially in schools.

One afternoon, just after school had ended, Sizwe met with the other SRC leaders under the large tree at the school yard, a spot they'd chosen because it felt safe, away from the prying eyes of the teachers and the police.

"Sizwe, we need to take this to the next level," said Thando, one of his closest allies. "The protests are getting bigger, but we need action, real action. We can't keep marching

and chanting—we need to strike at their power."

Sizwe looked around at his friends. They were all young, but there was a fierce determination in their eyes. He knew they were ready for whatever came next. The anger that had built up over the years, the anger over the violence and humiliation they had endured under Apartheid, was now channelled into something powerful. The time for talk was over.

"I agree," Sizwe said, his voice steady but filled with emotion. "We need to make them feel our strength. If we do this right, they'll have no choice but to listen."

The plan was risky. The group would sabotage the electricity supply to a government building in the heart of Cape Town, disrupting the flow of power and sending a clear message to the Apartheid regime. It was an act of rebellion, but for Sizwe and his friends, it felt like the only way to make their voices heard.

On the night of the mission, Sizwe's heart pounded in his chest. He and his group of comrades, all of them wearing dark clothes to blend into the shadows, crept through the streets of Langa, their eyes scanning for any sign of danger. The operation was successful. They managed to disable the power to the building for several hours. It was a small victory, but it sent a message: the youth of Langa were not afraid. They were willing to fight for their future.



The following weeks were a blur. The police increased their presence in Langa, and the government tightened its grip on the townships. Fear hung in the air like smoke, but so did hope. Sizwe continued to lead the protests, his face a symbol of defiance against the cruelty of Apartheid. But the price of resistance was high. One night, as Sizwe returned home from a meeting with his comrades, he found his house surrounded by police cars. His father had been arrested, accused of being part of a conspiracy against the state. The police raided their home again, tearing apart their belongings, looking for evidence of resistance. Sizwe's mother stood in the doorway, her face pale, but her eyes burning with fury.

"They're trying to break us," she said, her

voice shaking. "But we will not break."

That night, Sizwe realized just how high the stakes were. His family was paying the price for his activism, and there was no guarantee that they would come out of it unscathed. But Sizwe couldn't stop. He couldn't back down. Not now, not when so many were depending on him.

The months dragged on. The protests grew fiercer, but so did the government's crackdown. Sizwe was forced to go underground for a while, hiding in the homes of comrades when the police came looking for him. He knew his life was at risk, but there was no turning back.

Then, in February 1990, something happened that shook the country to its core: Nel-

son Mandela was released from prison.

The news spread like wildfire through the streets of Langa. People poured into the streets, singing, dancing, and crying. Sizwe stood among them, his heart filled with a mixture of joy and disbelief. The man who had been the symbol of the struggle for so many years was free. It was a victory, but it was also a reminder of just how far the struggle had come—and how far it still had to go.

In the years that followed, the struggle for freedom would continue, but there was a sense of hope now, a sense that the impossible had become possible. Sizwe eventually returned to school, completing his studies and pursuing a career in education, knowing that the fight was not over. His work in the SRC had laid the foundation for something bigger—a new future for South Africa, a future where freedom and democracy were no longer just dreams, but realities.

His father, though scarred by years of persecution, was eventually released from prison, and his family was able to rebuild their lives. Sizwe's younger siblings, who had grown up under the shadow of Apartheid, would grow up in a country that was changing, a country that was finally ready to move forward.

When Nelson Mandela was elected president in 1994, Sizwe was there to cast his vote for the first time, a symbol of the victory that had taken so many lives, but that would change the course of history. The struggle

had been long, and the scars would never fully fade, but Sizwe knew that the fight for freedom had been worth it.

As he stood at the polls, a thought ran through his mind. It wasn't just his fight. It had been the fight of his parents, his comrades, and the countless others who had given everything for the cause. The freedom they had won wasn't just for them—it was for everyone. And in that moment, Sizwe knew that the victory had been worth every sacrifice.

The long road to freedom had finally led them home.

# Moments of Bleakness

SHORT  
STORY



**Author:** Esther Nnaemeka

**Country:** Nigeria



They would like to think that I do not know myself. That the madness has completely taken over my senses, my ego and my being.

I sit in a corner now, beside my favourite sofa in the living room, pushing myself into the blissful softness of its caress. It's the closest thing to kindness I have felt in two months since they found two bottles of Tramadol in

my room.

They are in the room now with me, discussing me and dissecting my past, present, and possible future. Will I make it through? Will I escape? Will people forget me?

It's like I am bent in form now. Displaced from my original state. That bright, zealous child

whose brilliance relented in everything she said and did was gone. The person they see now is flimsy, a thin film of a carcass. Unable to make resonance. She is not the daughter of a lion. She is a bastard.

Who will tell them that I merely slipped? That for a moment I closed my eyes and let them take me. Not because I wanted to, but because in that moment, I was not a fortitude of morals but a pack of cards. I was not a paragon but a parasite, latching on the pills for identity.

I planned to stay for a while, to let myself be consumed so I can say that I was once able to be consumed wholly. I did not plan to make it my niche. I thought I could only be a visitor; make my residence temporary. But

my feet wouldn't move, and my hands were stuck to my sides. They were feeding me. I promise I was not the one with the spoon.

But now I am hating myself. I am still in the process. So most times I cry, because it is hard to see myself go. The loss hasn't gotten to the point where I am unfeeling. My senses are still with me.

So, no. I am not mad. Not yet. You can tell when you look at me. I can still respond. Please don't punish me so harshly. It was a moment that bred moments. I still want to be a pillar. I still want to be remembered.





# Roll With It Or Drop It

SHORT  
STORY



**Author:** Neema Busolo

**Country:** Kenya

I watch darkness approach as the clock ticks. Tick tock, tick tock, tick... A chill breeze passes through, causing my body to shudder. My eyes were fixed at the door. For a moment, the ticking disappeared, and silence hung, and then footsteps approached. The door swings open, and a figure appeared. John was home.

He often came home at seven in the night, exactly at seven; a time master. He once said that time management was a life lesson and everyone should subscribe to it, including Nathan and me. He was organized and detailed, to eat, sleep, go to work, have fun, marry, and have children. My parents and friends liked him. Jules, my best friend, didn't.

"What type of a man has a schedule for everything? So, he is going to organize his way into your life or what? Trust me, you don't want that because he is a red flag!" Jules said.

I told her that he was a good man and I had nothing to worry about. She looked at me like I had said something that could cause her to have a heart attack. "Compared to all your previous dates, he is way worse. He is a control freak! He doesn't seem to be honest either. Honestly, you'd rather be with one of your previous dates. Yes, they had multiple affairs but who doesn't? It's the new norm nowadays. You either roll with it or drop it," she argued.

I told her not to worry. John had a schedule for me and Nathan, our son. Whenever I needed to do something different from my schedule, I told him first. Nathan did the same. He didn't like it when we did something to disappoint him. He got angry and then he would discipline us. His classic leather belt was his favorite. If he was extremely angry, he hit us

so much that he regretted it afterwards and apologized. One day, I found Nathan on the living room floor. He had passed out. His body was bruised. His barely opened eyes were covered in tears. John was nowhere in sight. A half-filled bottle of beer was on the table.

A surge of anger began to rise in me. I clenched my fists and grit my teeth. My body shook and I let out a scream. I screamed so much that I thought I felt the ground shaking beneath my feet. Before I knew it, there were loud chatters outside our door. A loud thud was heard and the neighbours let themselves in. When they saw Nathan, they attended to him and tried to calm me down. They asked me where John was but my mind was not on John. It was on Nathan. One of them called an ambulance and I went with him to the hospital.

When the doctor asked what happened to him, I told him he had fallen. He looked at me suspiciously and for a moment, I almost told him the truth. John heard what happened and came to the hospital. He told Nathan that he would be fine and soon, he'd be home.

"I'm so sorry, my son. I'm so sorry. I did not mean to hit you like that. When you do something wrong, I get angry and I don't like it at all. Please don't disappoint me again, okay?" he said, sorrowfully.

Nathan agreed and promised not to disappoint him. When I looked at John, his sad

eyes were a different colour from his cold and sharp eyes.

John worked as an engineer for Royal Steel Limited. He was considered a model employee at his job. His boss loved him and his colleagues envied him. When he was out, people loved him. He was generous. He helped people with their problems. It didn't matter who they were. He believed in helping people, even when they stole from him. He believed that they deserved a second chance in life. During the weekends, the house was always full of visitors. I woke up in the morning to find them at the door, waiting to be let in. I always told Maria, the house help, not to let them in before I was ready. When they entered the house, they headed straight to the dining table waiting to be fed. John always ensured there was plenty of food for them. He warned us not to cook it for ourselves, him included. He said it was for those who were in need.

Maria and I prepared food from morning till late at night. The kitchen was hot because of the constant fire burning. By the time we were done, our bodies would be screaming in pain. Nathan stuck around early in the morning to welcome the visitors, then later, he went to his room to study. John always insisted he followed his schedule. He supervised him from time to time. Nathan studied for three hours, took a short break and then went back to study. John had set specific subjects. He planned his courses and tests. John wanted Nathan to be an engineer like him.

Nathan, however, was interested in football, but wouldn't tell his father. He knew he would disappoint him if he did. John said football was not a career but a hobby. All sports, according to him, were hobbies. He said real men studied important courses like science or law.

His playtime was scheduled at four in the evening when very few children were outside to play with. Nathan went outside to bask in the sun if it was there or take a breather if he could. That was his life. He said the kids at school were surprised at his life, especially his day-to-day schedule that he strictly followed. They asked him why he always rushed home after school instead of spending time with them for a while. Nathan told them that his father needed him because there was a lot to do. When they asked him what was "a lot", he had no answer.

At the church or the market, people told me how happy they were after my husband helped them. They told me how lucky I was to have him as my husband. I would smile and tell them how grateful I was for him.

When I found out he was having an extra-marital affair, I wasn't surprised or angry. I acted as if everything was okay. He did the same too. When the woman got pregnant, I did not confront him. He did not mention it. When she showed up at our door with the child, I welcomed her and embraced her. I fed her and prepared a room for her and her child to rest. When John told me to arrange

for some clothes for her child, I bought new ones from a renowned shop in town. I didn't go to the local market to buy them like I did for Nathan. I treated her as if she were my blood sister.

When she moved in, I didn't object. It was important for the child to be close to his father. When my in-laws suggested that John marry her, I did not oppose. A traditional marriage was arranged, and she took up his surname. She became Mrs. Majimbo. She was referred to as "Madam" by the house staff. She was introduced as "my wife" by John and "our wife" by his relatives. When she suggested that she should move into our room, I hesitated at first, but John agreed. He said he would create a schedule like he always did. That schedule was never made. I found myself in an extra room on my own. John never looked at me or talked to me. The only time he needed me was when he needed something from me. He referred to me by my first name.

I didn't mind because I was still his wife. We were his family, and we would do right by him. It was just as Jules said. A man having multiple partners was the new norm and I decided to either roll with it or drop it. I chose to roll with it.



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# UTOMBA

## THE SPIRIT DANCER

A Children's Literature by  
Mary Uduma, Nigeria

**Reviewer**

Funmi Richards  
(Nigeria)



The story of Chikaima and her grandmother's tale of Utomba captivates readers with its rich and vivid language, deeply rooted in oral storytelling traditions. Words like "Omalicha" and "Chukwuabiama" preserve the cultural authenticity of Igbo heritage, while the descriptive imagery evokes a mystical tone that draws young readers into its enchanting world.

At the heart of the narrative are relatable and compelling characters. Chikaima, with her curiosity and empathy, serves as a mirror for the audience, while Grandma embodies wisdom and the enduring oral tradition of storytelling. Utomba, the enchanting yet flawed figure, reflects themes of vanity and the consequences of hubris, making her both mystical and cautionary.

The narrative's simplicity and accessibility make it developmentally appropriate for children, as its magical elements balance wonder with meaningful moral lessons. By weaving complex ideas such as humility and obedience into an engaging tale, the story invites children to explore deeper meanings while enjoying an adventure.


Embedded within the story is a powerful didactic message about humility, respect for divine wisdom, and the value of curiosity. Through Utomba's downfall and Chikaima's persistent questions, readers are reminded of the importance of moral integrity, cultural heritage, and the pursuit of understanding.

These lessons are intertwined with sub-themes of cultural preservation, spirituality, and the mysteries of consequence. The Iyi Nzu River and the python embody a harmonious relationship between nature and spirituality, while Utomba's disappearance underscores the unforeseen outcomes of human actions.

Echoing the tradition of African folktales like Chinua Achebe's *Chike and the River* and Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, this narrative enriches the literary tapestry of stories that blend morality, mysticism, and cultural pride. It offers an engaging and instructional tale that encourages young readers to reflect and celebrate their heritage.

# DOTS FROM THE RAIN

A Flash Fiction by  
John Akeh, Nigeria



**Reviewer**  
Bohlokoa Lephoi  
(Lesotho)

This piece offers an amusing exploration of the creative process, specifically the frustrating experience of writer's block. Through a light-hearted narrative and a clever dream sequence, the story delves into the lengths to which a writer's mind might go to overcome this challenge. The conversational and intimate narrative voice immediately draws the reader into the narrator's world. Phrases like "Whoops!" and "Yeah, cool my nerves, I thought" create a sense of immediacy and relatability, as though the narrator is confiding in a close friend. This informal tone, paired with short, declarative sentences, ensures brisk pacing, mirroring the rapid flow of ideas within the dream.

The primary setting—the narrator's room—is a familiar space for any writer. It represents both frustration, through "the scattered papers," and potential inspiration. The literal and figurative intrusion of the wind disrupts the initial calm, setting the stage for the narrator's desperate attempt to cure their writer's block. The mention of a documentary about overcoming the block with "one's mind, two plates of pie, and fruit juice" injects humour, highlighting the often-absurd measures writers might consider in their quest for inspiration.

The dream sequence is the story's heart. It offers a temporary escape from the frustrations of reality, allowing the narrator to experience the uninhibited flow of creativity. The plot becoming "clearer than crystal" captures the exhilarating clarity that accompanies a creative breakthrough. However, the abrupt awakening—brought on by rain and a gust of cold wind—brings the narrator crashing back to reality.

The story's cleverness lies in its ending. The raindrops leaving "dots" on the previously blank pages provide an ironic twist. While the dream itself was not real, it resulted in a tangible change. The blank pages now bear marks of the rain, a physical representation of the dream's impact. This conclusion suggests that even seemingly unproductive experiences, such as dreams, can unexpectedly contribute to the creative process.

This flash fiction is a charming and insightful exploration of creativity. Its light-hearted tone, relatable theme, and clever conclusion make it an engaging and enjoyable read.

# OFF WITH THE OLD PAGES

A Poem by  
Lamaro Lindah Angel, Uganda

Reviewer  
John Adeh  
(Nigeria)



Lindah illustrates the daily struggle to survive and live as akin to turning the pages of one's life. She likens living to writing on fresh pages, even when life is marked by pangs, pain, or progress. She expresses the challenges of continuing this effort with phrases such as "...my tight shell" and conveys how waking up the next day may seem herculean. Yet, rather than surrender, she chooses to "throw punches at fear's ugly face."

In the latter lines, the fresh pages represent the new life awaiting everyone who still breathes. Regardless of past struggles, new choices and decisions—such as those of love, longing, and sweet experiences like choco-

late—remain possible.

The piece concludes with a subtle yet profound piece of advice: to rip off the past—old memories or actions that may impede the process of filling one's fresh pages with new and fulfilling choices.

# FRESH PAGE

## FRESH START

A Short Story by  
Asatu Jalloh, Liberia

**Reviewer**

Wangari Kinyanjui  
(Kenya)



The pain and pangs of heartbreak, coupled with acquired fantasies, fetishes, and cravings, push human beings to create façades to mask their true struggles.

The author uses tangible evidence, seemingly in jest, to illustrate the painstaking lengths the protagonist goes to in hiding her reality. She dons dark sunglasses to conceal the pain in her eyes and develops a love for vegetables to sculpt a slim figure in a bid to win back her lost lover.

The protagonist's home becomes a reflection of her inner turmoil, with doors always shut and thick curtains drawn to ward off intrusions into her secret world of pain and loneliness.

The central theme of the story is relationships, intricately woven with sub-themes of betrayal, heartbreak, binge eating, an-

ger, and resentment. The protagonist mistakenly inscribes her pain on her wall—a constant, visual reminder that hampers her healing process.

Her journey to restitution begins with an unexpected conversation at a shopping mall, described as a place “with little secrets to keep.” This moment marks her realisation that it is time to move forward. She symbolically cleans her walls with detergent, journals her pain, and destroys each painful page.

In retrospect, the protagonist recalls the beautiful Psalms her mother taught her when she was a sickly young girl. Her journal transforms from a chronicle of pain to a celebration of self-acceptance and a newfound love for greens and vegetables.



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