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YOUTH SHADES



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Call for Submission

Art, Righting Wry Things

Our world is rapidly changing, new discoveries and technological advancements making the world a global village. Amidst these changes are certain chains, which shackle men against nature, and the media against the future; the advancement adversely welcomed. Technology brings with it its own world, and no one seems to be lonely, but everyone is becoming lonelier with the retrogressive level of interrelation between humans and the immediate environment. A thirst seems not treated; a need not met. Man's insatiability pushes him where he finds himself today.

These are turbulent times, no doubt. We wake up *de die in diem* to fresh stenchy realities of our world – the inferno of racism, the curse of xenophobia, the dehumanizing system of female marginalization and demoralizing stink of sexual violence, the feminist excesses, the normalizing abnormalities in moral decadence, the natural disasters, the environmental degradation, the global warming, the global economic meltdown, the religious crises, the barbaric militancy with its unending proliferations, the hope-sapping poverty, the frustrating systems of government, the parasitic corruption... Indeed, there is no easy end to the list, which now seems the universe is plotting 'one-day-one-trouble'.

Now, everyman battles the fear of the unknown as uncertainties stare in every next second awaiting man. Of these odd realities, if one screams, alone he hears it. Should another be around to hear that one scream, only that one shall hear it. Worse, if that one screams of problems that make him scream. Of what use then cries he, when his cry but promotes the same curse that makes him cry? Our world needs urgent pills to heal these wry-things.

In the wake of these realities, keeping quiet is a grave disaster to the universe. Moreover, that would be adding to the list, another bane. Echoing the rhythm of desired system appears to be a resolution; "we shall shout it till their deaf ears hear it and their *pharaohed* hearts accept it." How shall this be done? – Art! Art seems to have ample veritable pills to heal our world. The days of art for art long gone, it is the reign of art for function sake. Plato banished writers from his republic because the society was one of tranquillity and the writers had nothing to right, which to Plato was a wry thing. They wrote for art sake, the aesthetic

undertone of art, appraisal art. Should Plato be alive today, he would retract his statement about art. For today, the world is crowded with writers who have writings that put wry things right – the voices of Plato, Aristotle, Socrates and Longinus of the Classical times, William Shakespeare of the English Renaissance, Jon Donne of the Metaphysical period, Mary Wollstonecraft of the British Feminism, Frederick Douglas of the abolitionist movement, Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, Simone de Beauvoir of the feminist movement, Chinua Achebe of Nigeria, Ngugi wa Thiong’O of Kenya, Ayi Kwei Armah of Ghana, Dennis Brutus of South Africa, ... cannot be forgotten for their prints through righting writings against wry things.

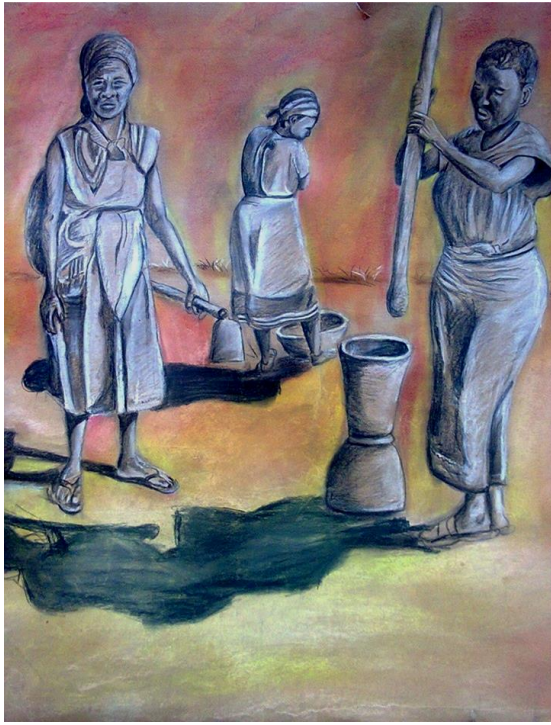
Away from writings, art has produced paintings, designs, and creations that have influenced the people. Art is known for its power to influence, instigate, ‘compel’, and change perspectives. Some paintings could be so emotional. These are turbulent times, and people are voicing artistically from different spheres of the world. However, it seems the ancient ‘cocks’ are still the ones crowing; the younger artists seems not heard, the old who have got convenient platforms for themselves seem to have the audience whereas the younger generations are plighted with new plights alienated to the oldies.

The reason for the birth of this platform, Youth Shades Online Magazine – one poised to provide the young writers to access the world audience their messages are meant for – an opportunity to be heard. All that fortune at no cost at all. Youth Shades Online Magazine has come to stay by working with great minds, and YOU, our ardent reader. It is our maiden edition, yet we already see the world not able to exhaust our treasury. We are stopping at nothing to dispense rightly and timely pills our world needs, having at heart its different shades.

Good looking out for YOU! Welcome to OUR world. Be our guest. It promises to be a life-changing adventure.

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Artist: Ithali Khoza, South Africa

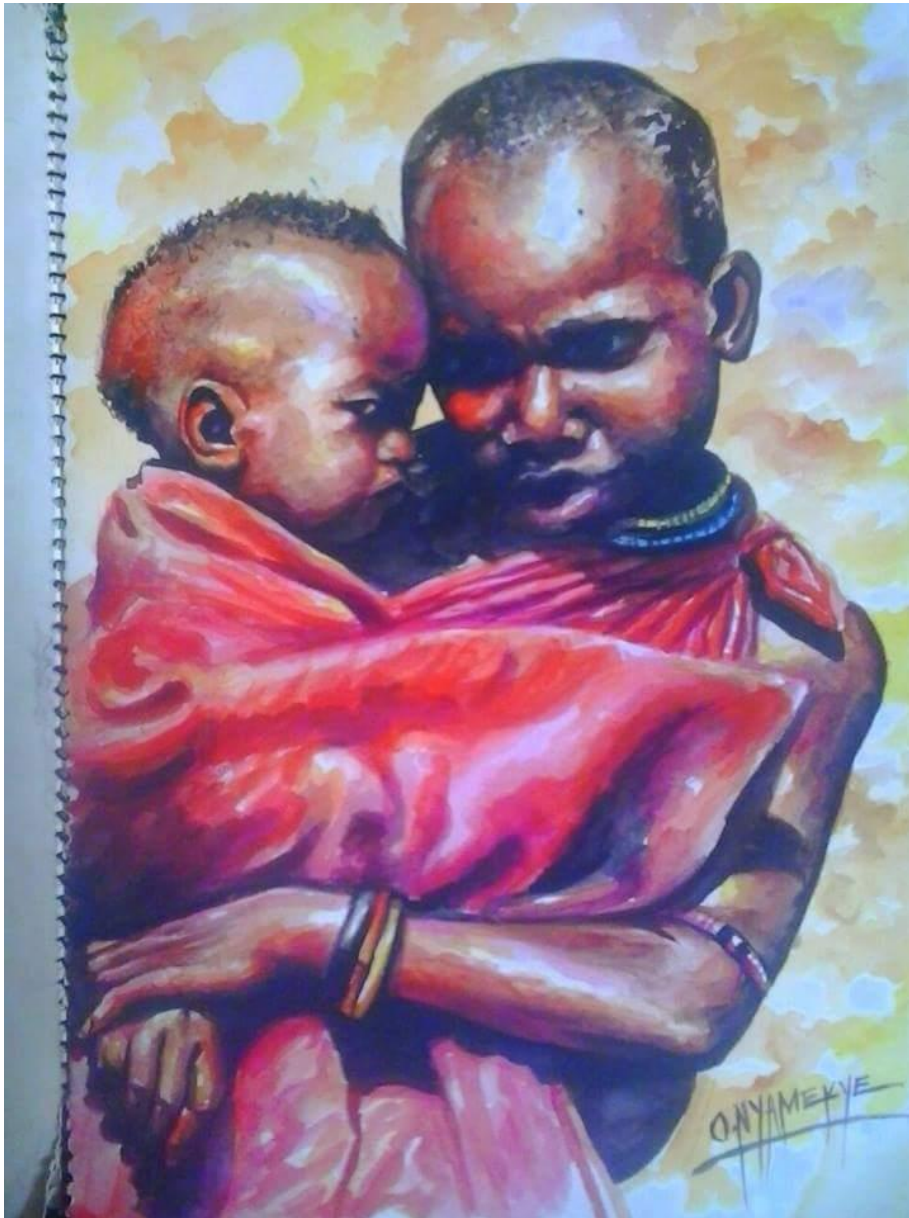
Octobias Obie – South Africa world builders

They say the girl's place is
The kitchen and her slim
Arms, the family must serve.

The boys, we watch go to
School every morning
In special shirts and shoes;

They say we're good for nothing:
Sometimes we receive spits for
Our sweat in the kitchen...

To us, they say school is taboo
But not for men - they are
The builders of this world.



Artist: Odei Nyamekye, Ghana

Amos Joshua – Nigeria
the beast

Anger, a purge,
A poisonous vermin,
Fostered by selfish urge,
Sheltered by pride:

Epimetheusly, it raises hands
And lays curses
Rather than calm the grudge
By walking away.

He stood right there
As though grottoed,
His hands shaking,
His body trembling,

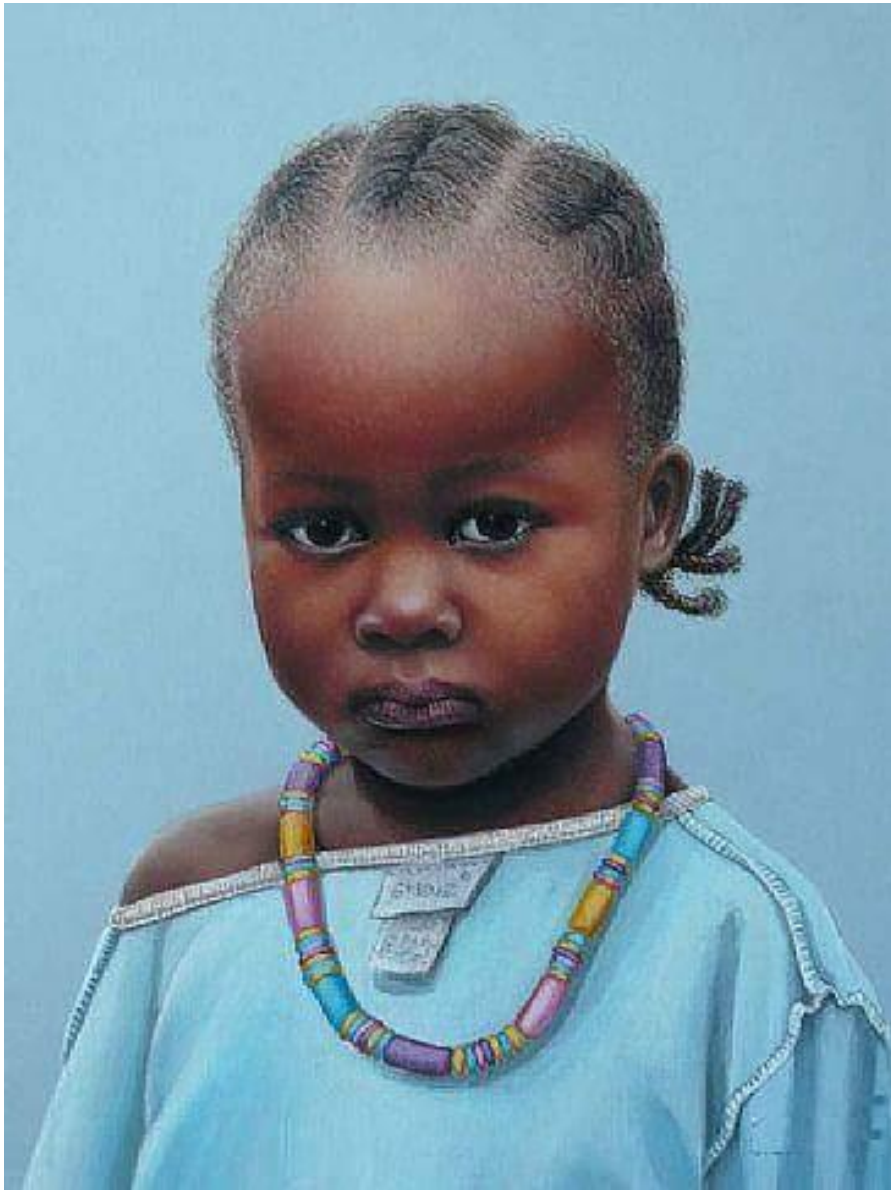
He'd started to go numb
"Did I really do this?"
Before him, a motionless body,
On the floor in accusing blood.

The little kids were crying
"Daddy what have you done!"
"Mummy wake up!"
"Mummy daddy has muted."

Daddy had become a stammerer.
"Daddy, wake mummy up!"
Their accusing voices called.

Neighbours came in a rush,
He stood still to the spot,
Wishing it were all a dream.

The beast had won again;
Another broken home, broken dream...
Restlessly searching is he,
I hope he doesn't find YOU.



Artist: Odei Nyamekye, Ghana

Octobias Obie – South Africa on albinos

We watched their love grow
From the core of their hearts,
They were like finger and nail,
They were on every lips.

A love like theirs tied
The love seen in movies,

Friends wished wishes of
Jealousy. Yet, they shone still.

One day, a child was born;
A child that brought hatred -
A gift from God caused strife -
It ends, they parted ways.

The child's differently skinned!
For his skin, their love sank...
Don't we say God created us all?
Why hate we, the albinos?

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Low Pressure



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Photographer: Henry Victor, Canada

**Chatterbox – South Africa
my reverence**

When will you lighten up Africa,
So this image you may see clear?
That while you turn a blind eye,
Another soul, this hour dies.
At groceries with pistols snared,
They slit humans to fend for supper,
Wake up to this Clarion, Africa!

You're a corpse, yet breathing,
Two bulging open eyes, sleeping,
You're glued while the earth is shifting,
Watching your portions stalled,
Getting stained with foetal blood,
Teenage suicide increasing like flood,
Teenage pregnancy and fraud.

Rebels think they're different,
They say facts are half true
And life's not an asset
Because we have it too,
And more, for we still care
Though Africa you're not fair.

Life is a breeze, everywhere.
Why here fight we, for fresh air?
You wouldn't know where,
For you haven't been there.
For these, your reverence I air.



Artist: Odei Nyamekye, Ghana

**Karen King – U.K
new beginnings?**

Tribes battling over power and money,
All sides think they are right;
"Join our group!"
They promise power, money and sex,
Just what lost young men want.
Innocent people,
Suffer.

Starving, thirsty, cold,
No fuel,
Dark daylights,
Innocent people
Suffer.

More unrest,
Draught of smiles,
More deaths,
Innocent people
Suffer.

All lost in themselves,
No guidelines.
Who is the enemy?
Where is refuge?
Innocent people
Suffer.

Against the Mystic's words:
The fighting, the error, the death...
His peace piecesed
In ever increasing plights.
Innocent people
Suffer.

O that the powers be powerful
To save while there's breathe.
Or shall all yet beclouded be
By the bedevilling seed?
How long shall it reign?
Innocent people
Suffer.

We seek the maze's route,
From this tunnel be free;
Reshuffling calls -
New beginnings are needed-
Let all again be babies, so no
Innocent people
Suffer.



Photographer: Henry Victor, Canada

Monsif Beroual – Morocco
hello world

The birthplace,
It was like kissing life.
Hello world, glad to be here,
And looking to the life,
It's looking so beautiful,
As if I will live so long.

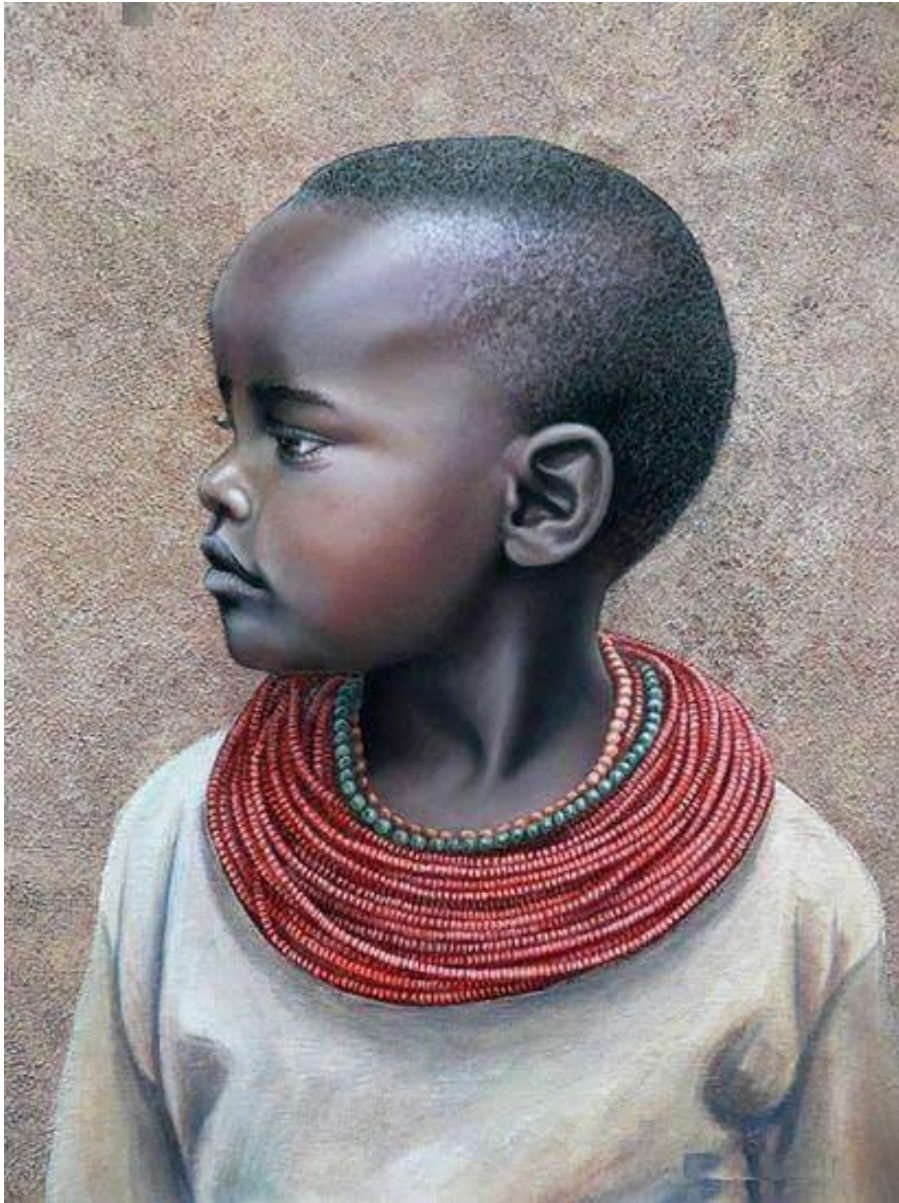
Hello world,
I'm here for many reasons,
Not for death, but for life,

Not pains to offload.
I'm glad to be here and
To be one of the world's all.

To love all with no sight
Of religious fences,
Or the hard shell of race.
Smiling as i go,
In heart and mind, One.



Photographer: Karen King, U.K



Artist: Odei Nyamekye, Ghana

Martins Ekong - Nigeria
once we were blacks

Once, we were blacks and brazen,
Like moon peeping into night's shrines,
With soft songs of love,
Dropping from the lips of guava tree.

Once we were blacks and broad,
With wide laps like the Congo River,
Swaying to the rhythm of palms,
And our chests, mounded cliffs.

Once we were blacks and bold,
Kith hopes climbing the Kilimanjaro,
Reaching for the orgasm of its tip
To pluck fruits for our lingering hunger.

Once we were blacks and beautiful,
Before black became darkness
Dressed in fear and evil
That chase our eyes and souls.

Once we were blacks,
Before we became blank.
Now, black is everything,
Except us.



Photographer: Henry Victor, Canada

**Rosy Roses – South Africa
if only i could kill a word**

Hate...

If you didn't exist,
There would be huge
Peace and harmony.

Hate...

If you didn't exist,
The world would be better;
Only love would matter,

The world would be better.

Hate...

I would kick you,
Break your arms and feet,
I would twist your neck.

Hate...

I would torture you,
I would stab you in the heart,
Burn you into ashes.

All and more I shall do
Not for the death you'd die
But, to give you a second life,
To learn, and be love.

If only I could kill a word
From lips, hearts and pages,
It would be
Hate, the word I hate.



Photographer: Henry Victor, Canada

Kukogho Iruesiri Samson - Nigeria
don't look for God

God lives not in Bible pages,
He counts not rosaries, nor habits images.
No, He, the Qur'an cannot house;
Clanging bells and murdered cocks only arouse
The keeper of the shrine -
The pastor, imam and prophet to shine -
Who sell 'god' for the coin in your pocket,

Caging souls in verbal lockets,
Blinding you to the God in you;
That voice, whispering deep inside
Quietly, when you do and refuse to do...
He is God, the true God you already denied!



Photographer: Henry Victor, Canada

Rosy Roses – South Africa
mirror mirror

Mirror, only you
Knows the real me,
The naked me
Without makeup

Or patch ups.

Mirror, mirror

My confidant;

You hold my secret,

My deepest fears,

You reflect my thoughts.

Mirror, mirror

Without words,

You scream the truth

Through pores beyond ears.

Mirror, mirror

You are true

No other truth compares.



Artist: Ithali Khoza, South Africa

Ndianabasi Ekong – Nigeria

behind the scene

The story behind the scene is too scary for me, so, I would love to share it with you. I went through a Medical School during my early twenties; it wasn't easy and neither was it cheap. I ended up working odd jobs at the hospital, in an attempt to make ends meet. Most of them weren't so bad; mostly, they involved a lot of cleaning and receptionist work.

However, there was the morgue and I didn't like working down towards it. Frankly, I don't know many people who thought of working there, but the pay was

good for relatively little work. All I had to do was clean and watch over everything if there were no doctors present, which only happened late at night.

Occasionally I'd have to help move a body, but it wasn't something I couldn't handle. I spent my nights down there, three or four times a week. I'd clean up and sit to study, making sure everything remained ship-shape, as the Reverend Father liked to say.

It wasn't a hard job, but I didn't like it. The morgue was so isolated from the other wards and it was down a bushy path with dim lighting. You might think that working in a morgue would remind you of death, well, you may be right; that wasn't all. The whole place felt like death, aside from the dead bodies it regularly housed, and was just never right for me.

I thought I was paranoid until one night proved to me that it was more than that. I can still remember it vividly - it was a Friday. I don't know why that sticks out so much on my mind, but it does. The night had been rather uneventful, with only one body brought in. The doctor who brought in the corpse had seemed a little on edge. When I asked why, he said:

"When this guy came in, he was perfectly fine, but he wouldn't stop shouting about how he was going to die. We thought he was having some kind of mental breakdown. When we were about to sedate him, everything in his body suddenly shut down. He died in few minutes and we couldn't resuscitate him. No one has any idea what killed him."

My heart twanged as I helped him put the corpse on the table. The hospital was stretched a little thin that day, so nobody was going to attend to the poor corpse until the next morning - which meant that I'd be with a corpse the whole night.

Well, that didn't bother me much; sure, it was a little creepy, but I had dealt with worst situations before. Once the doctor left, I pulled out my books and buried my head in them, hoping to dispel some of the tension that had fallen over the morgue.

I found myself wishing that I had something, anything at all to clean, but, the whole place was spotless. I tried to lose myself in the complicated medical terminologies in my textbooks, but for whatever reason that night, I found it difficult. Maybe it was a man's intuition, or maybe an animalistic intuition. Either way, I could sense that something strange was going to happen in that morgue.

It started with power failure at midnight. The only warning I had was a momentary flickering of lights before everything shut down. The silence that followed was broken by the chirping of crickets. What now? I had been sitting at the work desk where the attending physicians filled out their paperwork after the autopsies. I let my hands drift over the surface and down through the drawers, searching for my torch light.

I tried not to think about the corpse waiting there in the dark. Jesus! It's just a corpse, it can't hurt you. Suck it up! I was searching the third drawer by my right when power came back. Surprisingly, I spotted something strange out of the corner of my right eye. Breath hitched in my throat because somewhere in the back of my mind, I had seen enough to know what it was. Nonetheless, the rest of me was clueless. Fighting this internal battle, I turned slowly towards the table. Behold, the corpse was sitting up.

My first thought, of course, was that it wasn't a corpse at all. The doctor did say that he'd just dropped dead; they must have made some mistakes. Something kept me from rushing over to find out if the young man was okay. He wasn't breathing; his body could have been a statue for how still it was. I told myself that he was most certainly breathing, I just couldn't see it from there, but I wasn't convinced. I tried to force myself to walk over to him, but I couldn't.

Suddenly, his head snapped towards me. I didn't see it happen; I blinked and the position of his head had changed. To make matters worse, it should have been impossible because I was diagonally behind him. Heads do not turn that far back, unless they're broken or severely damaged; but here he was, his eyes trained on me. That was when I noticed the eyes - they were gone.

There were just two empty, meaty sockets staring back at me. I was positive that the corpse had eyes when it was brought in here. It didn't matter, because they were gone now. I blinked. This time, the corpse was sitting up, its legs dangling off the side of the table. They swung there like the legs of a baby on a swing, and it was in their terrible motion that I found my voice. I screamed and ran for the door.

Do you remember those bushy paths I told you about? The dark ones I had to walk through to get to the morgue? They were lined with bodies. They were still, breathless and noticeably dead. And absolutely, none of them had eyes, but they all stared at me. That almost froze me right there, because it felt like being trapped between two deaths. I was absurdly terrified that if I stepped out into the bush path, they'd swarm on me like demonic birds and take out my eyes so I'd

look just like them. Meanwhile, somewhere at the back of my mind, I knew that the other corpse was fast approaching.

I made a mistake just then; I turned around. It was standing less than a foot behind me. Those sockets still bore into me as its mouth hung, unhinged. A deep vibration emanated from its body and, slowly, a tiny trickle of blood dripped out of the side of its mouth. My body made my decision for me; I ran. I ran and ran and ran until I burst out of the hospital. The nurses on call tried to stop me but they couldn't. I ran to the few blocks that separated the hospital from our hostel. I got inside and collapsed on the floor, frightening the life out of Reverend Father Paul, who happened to be monitoring the door that night.

Father Paul was strict, but he was also kind. He knew I was supposed to be at the morgue up to four in the morning, therefore he was ready to give me hell until he saw my face. I don't know exactly what he read in my expression, but he didn't chastise me. He didn't ask me what happened, either. He simply placed a call to the hospital to notify them that they needed to replace me. By the time he got off the phone, I was sobbing, the terror finding vent in my tears. He placed his arms around me and whispered, "Son, it's okay, you don't have to go back there." And I didn't. In my years as a Doctor, never once have I gone back to that morgue, or any other morgue. I'm no stranger to death, I'm no stranger to pain; these things don't scare me. No, it's what happens in those few hours after death that I don't want to know about.



Artist: Ithali Khoza, South Africa

Rose Akpabio – Nigeria

golden veil – Part 1

California, U.S.A

I sat in the library for hours studying intently; I had to pass this exam in order to practice as a professional here. I wasn't only glad that my financial situation was going to change, but coming here was an escape from memories that were permanently trapped in my brain. Each night I heard the voices, I saw the flash of pain on their little faces and the angry glare of our afflicters urging us to be 'strong'. You may wonder why I'm not particularly concerned about my family; well, they betrayed me, especially my own mother.

Ruka Salatu smiled at the picture she held as she recalled her childhood with her younger sister and 'mischief maker'. Oh, how fast kids grow! Umaima had grown into a beautiful woman. She shuddered as the trapped memories returned; she remembered everything vividly. It all started when she was just a blossoming teenager; she didn't know she was a woman and had to be made one. She had to find a way to bring her sister, Umaima, over to the States. This was why she studied so hard, in order to create a perfect life here for both of them. Her heart squeezed when she stared at the picture again, and tears slipped from her eyes.

Duku, Nigeria

'Umaima' the woman called; she was tired of the girl's lazy attitude. She hardly stayed home to do chores, but she was always studying with her friends. She feared for her daughter who was fast becoming wild; an untamed rabbit. This had worried her for some time now since she spotted Umaima with a young boy. When she confronted Umaima, she claimed he was just a friend; the woman shook her head disapprovingly 'Allah forbids I raise an infidel'. 'Who do you whisper to, child'?

The woman jerked out of her thoughts, 'Mamatu, I fear for Umy', the older woman shook her head as she took a seat near the hearth, to warm herself from the fearless harmattan, she chewed bits of kola and spat them into the fire, 'I understand your fears. I warned you earlier but you never listened to me, you felt you were wiser aha! The grey hairs on my head have proved you wrong once again,' the woman smirked. Her daughter had failed her once; she would not give her the opportunity to do that again.

‘Mamatu, but you cannot blame me, I am a widow just as you are; how do I tame stubborn children?’ Expecting sympathy, Mamatu rose to add more logs to the fire. ‘I raised you Aishat, I raised you alone with my iron fist, I never failed Allah in my duties as a mother, but by god! You raise infidels, unchaste women, not pure, they need to be sanctified.’ She rubbed her forehead and picked up her kettle for prayers. ‘You failed me once, you won’t again.’

As the older woman took slow steps towards the mosque, Aishat recalled what happened some years back. It was not that she was against her tradition as she had passed through the rites, but it hurt her as she heard the cries of little Ruka - she cried as she understood the pains and she felt the pains too. However, Mamatu was right, Umaima had to be tamed. Ruka had eloped weeks later with one of her boyfriends and was nowhere to be found, people scorned their family and mocked them for raising such a wayward girl who ran off with a man after her sanctification ritual.

‘When will the Dasra hold’? Umaima inquired from the trio, who had just returned from evening lessons at school. ‘I hear ending of this month’, Iman replied, ‘do you guys really have to go through all that’? Umaima sighed as she explained to Jennifer, her other friend about the ritual of sanctification. She had heard it was a girl’s most beautiful experience, where she would dance around in a beaded gown and boys would cheer loudly. After the dance, one would choose her for a bride and she would be taken for the ritual. ‘It sounds nice’, Jennifer added.

They walked on happily before Umaima waved them goodbye and ran home, she had forgotten to wear her imar. She knew that would bring rounds of chastising from her mother and sneers from Mamatu; but, she wasn’t moved by that, she

was more worried about other things. Her mother had told her she would not further her education because she was getting married after the ritual which coincided with her final secondary school exams. She sighed as she felt the pain of bearing this alone. She missed Ruka, her elder sister, who had taught her to be a dreamer regardless of her gender, but Ruka had eloped with a man, which left her very confused. As a result, she didn't know the right path to follow.

'Lelelele!', Mamatu screamed. Umaima quickly rushed inside as the woman had spotted her bare head. 'Kazomana, you can hide from me, but not Allah, whom we worship. You, my grandchild, is really becoming an infidel'. Umaima came out slowly from the house and knelt before Mamatu. 'Aishat!' the old woman screamed atop her voice. 'Umy, where is your head cover? Did you go out this way'? Umaima bowed her head silently as she was being rebuked. 'By god, I have to meet the town chiefs. The Dasra has to be arranged faster, before you become like Rukaya'. Umaima burst into tears as she remembered fond memories of her only sister and sibling. 'Mamatu, you didn't have to bring her into this. I promise to be of good behaviour till the ritual is over'. The old woman ignored her and departed.

The next few days before the Dasra ritual were not easy for Umaima. She wasn't allowed to leave the house for days, all what occupied her thoughts were the notes piled up for her. Her mother had designed her hands and feet with 'lalle' and she was being beautified with Khol to outline her already big eyes. She sat patiently praying for all these to be over soon. She was asked to shave her underarms and her pubic in full preparation. The festival usually began at twilight and ended at the sight of the dawn - she was going to become a woman.

'Kiyaye!' she screamed as she awoke. The dreams were getting worse each day, they were almost real. Ruka cried as she rolled back under the blankets. She dreamt of that dreaded festival each night and remembered how they had lied to her. She thought the Dasra was for choosing of brides alone, but a darker secret lay at midnight. She now understood the full meaning of 'dasra' in their Fula dialect - to cut or cutting. She shivered as she remembered the way the knife had glistened under the moonlight, and how it tore her skin between her legs. It felt like she was bleeding anew, she felt her face, but they were just tears from a broken woman.

She had to warn Umy, but she didn't know how. She believed she still had about two months to plan, as the Dasra was never rushed. She had to find a way to stop her sister, little Umy from passing through hell. An idea came to her; she remembered the name of Umy's secondary school, she would write a letter to Umy via the school. However, what she didn't see were the drumbeats that had already called out people from their homes. She also failed to see the rising of smoke from the fire and the knives that were again sharpened for the cutting.

(to be continued)



Artist: Odei Nyamekye, Ghana

Mercy Solomon – Nigeria

the unborn - Part 1

MEG: I am in the doctor's office, looking pale and visibly shaken. I'm having second thoughts about this. Why am I here?

It was a Thursday afternoon when I found out I was pregnant. I had finally mustered up boldness to visit a pharmacy after weeks of counting my menstrual cycle over and over again. I had not seen my period in a month and seven days, I had browsed on the early signs of pregnancy and they clearly matched what I was going through; tender and swollen breasts, dizziness. The pharmacist tells me to pee on the pregnancy stick; this is supposed to detect the level of HCG - a hormone that is high during pregnancy in the body. The test shows positive. This wasn't the best of news. Hell, this was terrible news even.

I am a second year Law student at the University of Uyo and 22 years old. I am a beneficiary of the Shell Petroleum Development Company scholarship, as my community, Bonny, is one of the oil rich communities in Rivers state. I am dating a 400 level student in the Department of Civil Engineering, his name is Toby. My love for him is something else. He is always there for me, as I have no real female friends. He listens to my woes on troubled days and knows just what to say to ease the pain. Sex was not part of the plan when I started dating Toby, we agreed on this; but as time went on, the level of our proximity drew increasingly close and lust set in.

Toby introduced me to some birth control pills and told me how efficient they were, but I'm lost as to how I took in when I'm pretty sure I was on pills. God, Examinations start in few weeks, and I can't afford to lose focus; not now. I packed my books into my handbag and headed for the hostel.

HER:

It wasn't until today that my mom found out about my existence. I know she is excited. I am too, mommy. Some people would probably say I am not a real

person yet, but I am, just as a crumb of bread is yet still bread. Does she know I am a girl?; Probably not. I can't wait to see you mommy.

MEG:

I feel sick. I didn't sleep well last night. I tossed and turned on my bed till morning. Anytime I fell asleep, the nightmares wouldn't let me be. I saw myself begging at the traffic, dirty and wretched with two little girls by my feet. I woke up bathed in sweat. Toby called last night and I told him I needed to see him urgently. He said he'd meet me by 7pm. He asked if all was well and I told him I just missed him, that was all.

"Meg, you no wan go school abi? You don big." That's my roommate Udy. She's nice, always trying to reach out to me. Well, I give her an A for effort. "Sidy, no school today o. I no well," I replied.

"Eyaa, get well soonest. No sick abeg," she replied.

I was left alone in the room, and for the first time in a long while, I broke down and wept.

I met Toby at 7:49pm; he immediately noticed something was wrong from my appearance.

"Babe, what is the matter? You look unwell," he said.

"I'm fine. It's nothing, really."

"We both know you are hiding something, common, tell me."

At that point, I became confused because I was at war with myself. Nonetheless, I knew the load was too heavy for me. I had to let loose; after all, what could go wrong? I had my favourite person in the world by my side. "Bae, I'm pregnant," I managed to utter amidst sobs. He pulled me closer and hugged me tight.

"How sure are you?" he asked?

"I went for a test yesterday and it was confirmed." I answered.

We sat for a while in silence.

"So, when....when are you going to do something about it?" he stammered, while stroking my hair with his left hand. I slowly raised my head from his shoulders.

"What do you mean?"

"Babe," he said with a sigh, "we're both at a crucial point in our lives. We can't afford to let this thing set us back. Think about us, our education."

"Thing, Toby? Thing? This is a living person..."

"...who is not fully developed," he cut in angrily. "Stop being sentimental here. If you're not planning on doing anything about it, then I'm sorry babe, count me out."

I couldn't believe my ears.

"Oh well, seeing you was obviously a waste of time. How did I ever think I could rely on you?" I walked away to the hostel in tears to the amazement of passers-by.

HER:

I am growing a bit every day. I can't wait for my arms and legs to begin taking shape. I know I will have to wait a long time before those little legs will lead me to my father's embrace or those little arms will help out my mommy in the kitchen. I don't mind waiting.

.....

(to be continued)



Photographer: Henry Victor, Canada

the parcel

(Illustration by Chevelin Pierre/ Chevelin Illustration)

(Story by Chim Uguru, Nigeria)



Awena's excitement tapered off as they approached the cabin that was to be her new home. Her new mistress seemed anything but pleased to have her and as her late father's friend, Mr. Duda left, the little girl was uncertain of what lay ahead for her.



After a tour of the compound, Awena was shown to her sleeping area-- a neglected outbuilding that housed old property and was so dark and musty-smelling that the thought of spending the night there terrified her. Worse still, she could make out the sounds and movements of rats on the floor.



Awena had not one but two mistresses. Chikana was the older sister who received her and the younger was Kinika, who proved with time to be a sworn thorn on Awena's flesh. When she had friends over, one of her ways of entertaining them was to make a mess of Awena's work and have her repeat it.



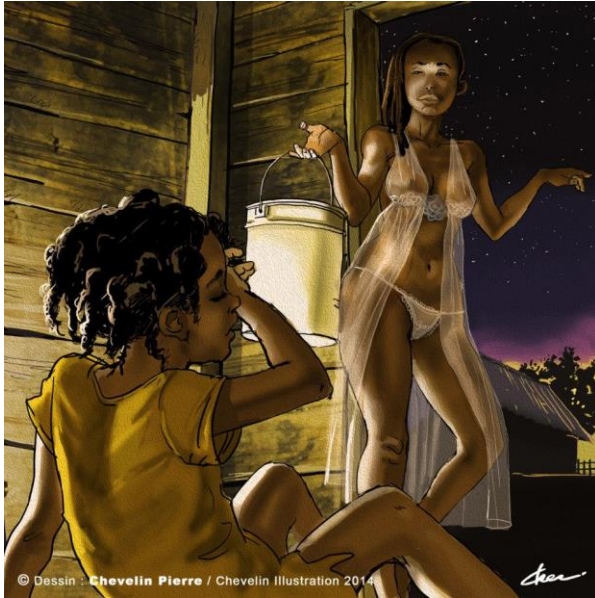
Kinika knew there was no one to oppose her, so she seized every opportunity to frustrate the girl.



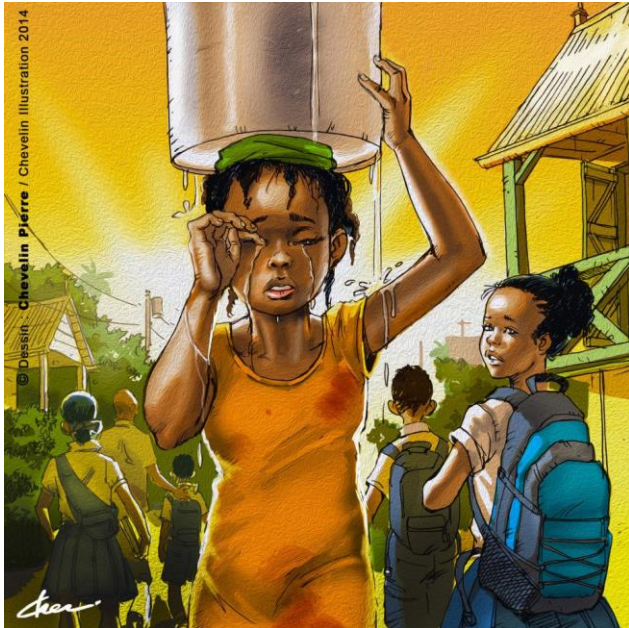
The work to be done was enormous, evidence that none of the sisters had a domestic bone in her. Not when Chikana got on a nauseated look at the sight of dirty dishes and Kinika was more interested in beautifying herself and enjoying the attention of the opposite sex.



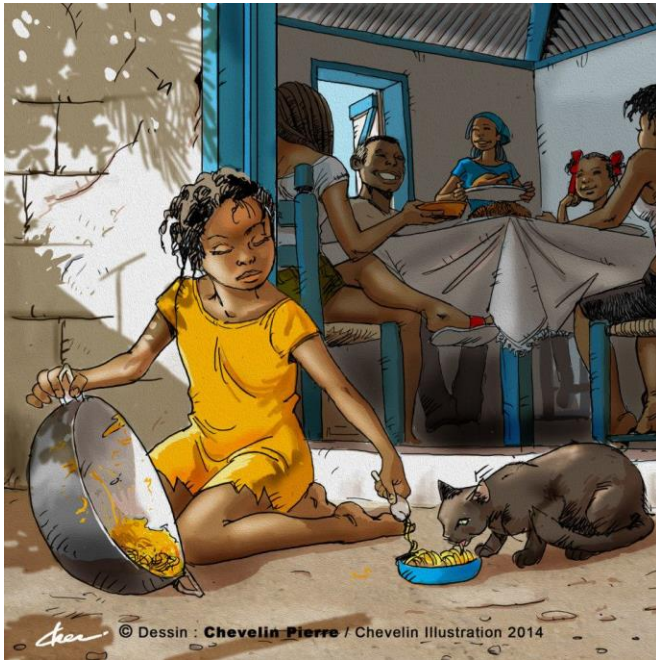
At the end of her first day, which was already a few hours into the next day, Awena was so exhausted that she didn't mind the condition of her sleeping area provided she could lay her head down and get some sleep...



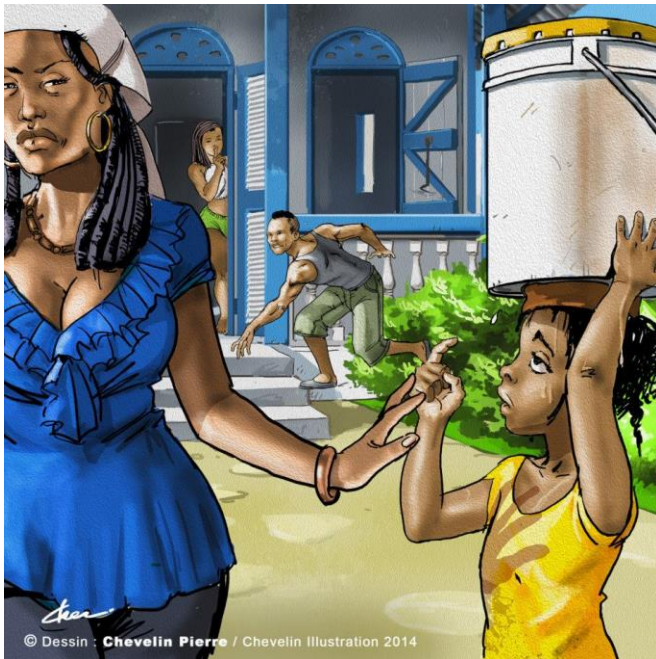
...but barely two hours later, the kick of Kinika's foot jolted her out of sleep and she listened drowsily as a sparingly clad Kinika dished out orders on the day's chores.



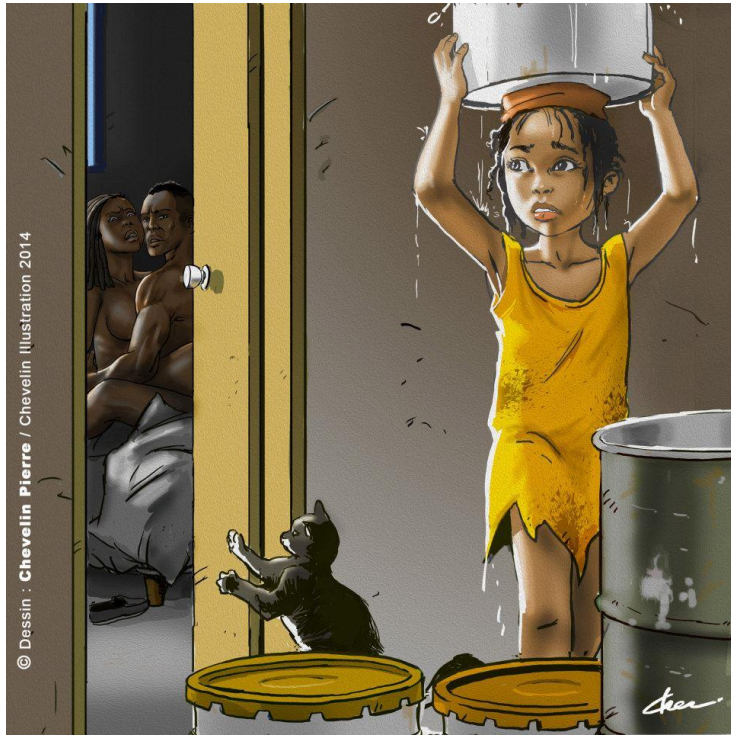
As Awena made the round trips of fetching water from a tap a few streets away, she thought of how different city life was from what she had imagined. Mr. Duda had said it would be just like a holiday; what a laugh. By daybreak when she began to pass kids her age going to school, she wept painfully. She probably wouldn't go to school again. Life in the village hadn't been luxurious--far from it even, as her poor mother could barely feed her and her seven siblings--but she had attended school, had her friends and had been happy. She missed it dearly.



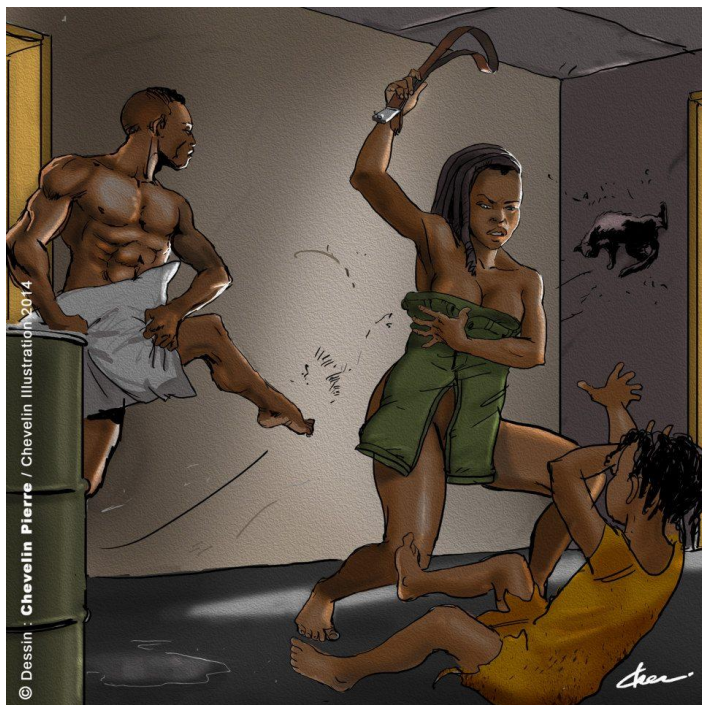
Overtime, things didn't change for the better so Awena got used to the unpleasantness of her new life. At least, she had found a loyal friend in a little stray black cat.



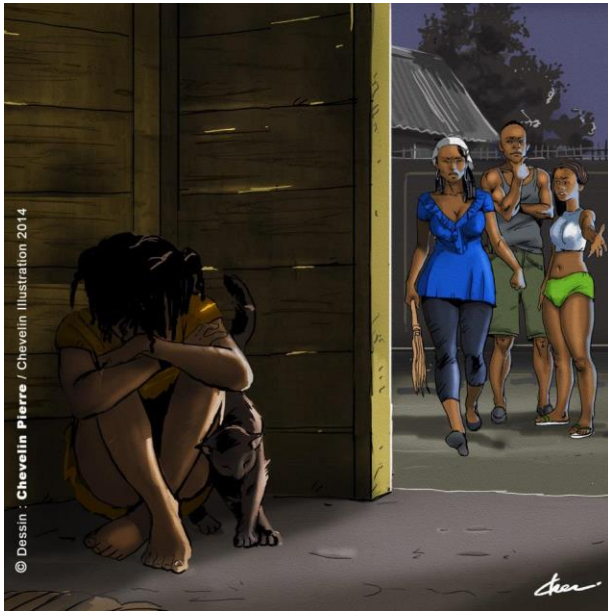
However, the way Jumenu--their next door neighbor who Awena had learnt was Ms Chikana's fiancé -- usually snuck in to meet Ms Kinika was something Awena thought her older mistress should know but Chikana, in her usual indifferent manner, would not give her audience as she left the house one morning.



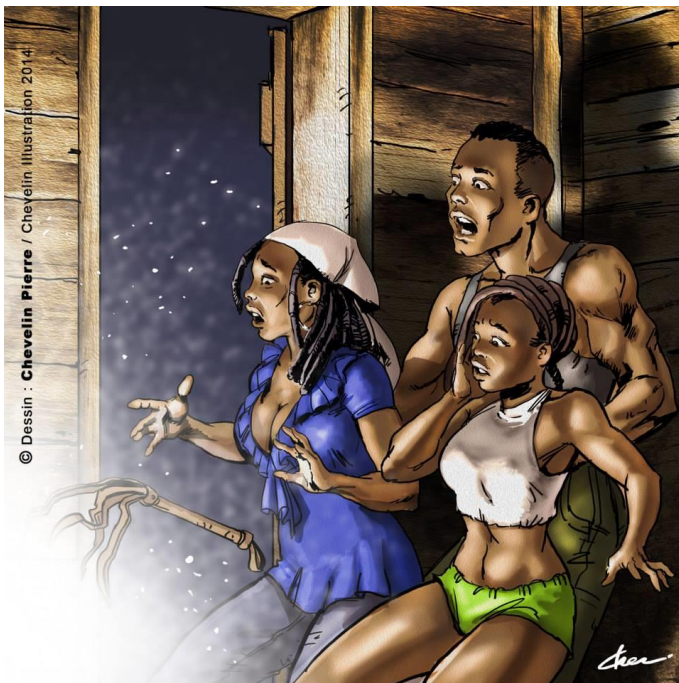
Later that afternoon, Awena mistakenly barged in on Kinika and Jumenu in their unholy act...



...and Kinika gave her a thorough beating, in the process spilling the water the girl had fetched all over the floor, while Jumenu took out his frustration on the cat that was Awena's companion.



Chikana returned in the evening and, inflamed by the sight of the messy house as well as the lies Kinika and Jumenu had fabricated against Awena, stormed to the outbuilding where Awena was nursing her pain, to beat the girl some more. As their angry footsteps neared, Awena remembered her mother's words, "You're special Awena." She had never understood but she could really do with some special miracle right about now.



Instantly, a blinding light exploded in their faces...



...and out of it stepped a radiant and beautiful woman, whose identity they quickly realized--the goddess of fortune.



It was too late when they made sense of it all, that they had all along lived with the goddess of fortune hidden in a poor little girl; that by mistreating Awena, they had missed out on their blessings and that by implication of the goddess' unhappy departure, they would soon be plunged into abject penury.



The next day, Mr. Duda and Awena were at another home, in another country. This family seemed nice and the goddess of fortune watched to see if it would be they to receive her parcel. But who knew? Time would tell. There's a benefit (parcel) attached to every act of kindness shown to even those who may not be in the position to repay.



Artist: Gintali Victor, Canada



Photographer: Victor Etekamba, Nigeria



Photographer: Victor Etekemba, Nigeria



Photographer: Victor Etekemba, Nigeria



Photographer: Victor Etekamba, Nigeria



Photographer: Victor Ettekamba, Nigeria

INSPIRATION WITH HANNAH

(www.inspirationwithhannah.com)

LOOK INWARDLY

I have an older friend, with whom I attend school. She took a liking to me; I guess I could say I found favour in her sight. She is one whom God has blessed a lot and she gives me presents. At first, I had asked myself “Does anything about me says I need these gifts”? I later came to the conclusion that I am a giver so I am bound to receive. I also began to reciprocate in my own little way.

Two weeks ago, we were in class and my friend was using her phone whilst we were being taught; she has always done it but at a periphery level. Our teacher asked her to please put the phone down but she didn’t listen. Thereafter, the teacher asked her to either go out of the class or switch off her phone. She looked at me for some sort of approval that what she was doing was right, but I told her gently that she was being disrespectful.

Oh Christ! Her face changed; she stood up and left the class. After some time, she came back into the class, but kept a straight face. I smiled and thought, “If you think that because you give

me gifts, I will support your wrong doing, you are joking”. She came to me after class to explain the call was important. I gently told her, I understood, but she should receive it outside next time.

Do you support evil over good because you feel the person that speaks good is not rich enough, so whatever they say is not relevant? You look down on people because you feel they have not achieved as much as you have? This is common amongst the youths, two of your friends have a disagreement, but you support the one at fault over the one who hasn't done anything wrong. I will tell you the truth - if this does not have an impact on you, it will on your children.

Be careful how you treat people, be careful what and who you support. Do not allow people's status, orientation or religious beliefs make you support them when they have done wrong. Let us make this world a better place and it starts from you and me.

Dasharath Naik – India

mother to daughter on valentine's day



Photographer: Victor Etekamba, Nigeria

Don't insist my love, to go alone or your fortified land and precious treasures may be explored and plundered forcibly by flesh mongers, who are hungrier than wolves and hyenas, waiting for their prey.

Don't insist on playing your passion, have more patience, be sensible because feelings and emotions are not enough; let the bud first take its full form. Be careful when meeting friends outside home, because intentionally, your tender bosom may be snatched by vultures, leading to bleeding and trauma.

Remember dear, you are growing up. Stay away from cheats who are good at betraying innocence. Too much acquaintance may ruin you, let wisdom be your companion and be reminded that relationship is only a privilege. Wayward adolescents get spoiled and they lament when they realise the truth - I mean the big nothingness in what the youth call "GAME".

Advice and warnings may seem rude and taste bitter to you because you crave the luxury of free movements at your sweet will and whim; it's very obvious my dear, that this is infatuation. Don't insist on flying by the suggestion of your hormones. Freedom without moral discipline is not always for one's good. Do not misunderstand me; protector I am, your safety and dignity is my priority, nothing else.



Charles Fordjour – Ghana

some men of God and their relationship with the poor

A Ghanaian proverb says "If a child has a wound on his leg, and you treat it with warm water, it is painful; but, when you leave the child because of the pain, the leg gets bad".

As KODA in his music said, "Today, the sheep is being slain by the shepherd". The shepherd instead of feeding the sheep, has rather turned around, killing them for food. Jesus said He knows His sheep and that as a result of being the shepherd, He laid down His life for the sheep. David defended his father's sheep on the desert by killing lions and bears. It is rather unfortunate that the reverse is the case in this era, as some men of God have taken the advantage of members' ignorance and are kill them spiritually.

When one is not well to do in the society, vital positions in the church are not given to such people. Did God choose the rich people for His ministry when He was here on earth? Being rich is not evil, but the problem occurs when we make it the standard for electing leaders into positions in the church. During the days of apostles, leaders were selected based on the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives and honourable behaviour. What happened to the gospel preached by the apostles?

In churches, some men of God have ill relationships with the poor. When a rich person falls sick and calls for the pastor, the pastor leaves whatever he is doing and visits. Upon arrival, he prays for him and of course visits regularly until he gets better. When a poor person falls sick, he also calls this same man of God. To that, the pastor answers, "I will come later to see how you are doing". Two days later, the man of God still doesn't pay him the visit. The poor man calls again, but the man of God intentionally refuses to answer.

Some men of God only pay rich people visits because when they are about to leave, they are given envelopes. This is not the case with poor people, because the men of God know that they will rather ask for money to eat food from them. What astonishes me the most is the fact that some pastors give out Bibles to the poor without even caring if they have eaten food that will give them the energy to read the Bible.

"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled', but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead". (James 2:14-17)

It is vital that we think of both the spiritual and physical wellbeing of people. Should you give a poor man a Bible to read and he has no energy, how can he do that? Jesus, after seeing the crowd, he had compassion on them, for they wandered as people without a leader; he fed them.

A man of God sees a crowd today, and the only thing he thinks of is how to squeeze money out of them. Strange times we are in, things have really changed for the worst. The amount you give determines the miracle you receive. Was that what Christ Jesus left us with? Some men of God have become tricksters, looking for means to extort money from their followers and when you are not able to give, you are not on the special list of prayers.

When huge funds are raised, rich people who donate are prayed for with seriousness and when the poor come out with their little, the kind of prayer that is offered is like throwing stone to hit the thigh of an elephant; it carries no weight. Jesus at the temple appreciated the widow's money the most. We have rather made everything to be money; when you give little (without considering the heart that gave out), some men of God think you are stingy. And when they have that perception about you, they react by being stingy in their prayers and affection.

When the rich has a funeral, this same pastor who had no time to attend the poor's funeral will definitely make out time to be present in the present from the beginning to the end. What happened that changed bereavement with people in pain? The trend now is 'weep with the rich, but leave the poor to weep alone'.

Men of God should give equal treatment to the rich and the poor; God is no respecter of persons. The person you give the necessary attention today might not have things going on well later, while the poor man you discarded might be doing well. Treat everyone in the same way as God is the changer of times and seasons.



Photographer: Henry Victor, Canada

CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Deadline for submission of Stories, Poetry, Articles, Arts & Skills for October Issue of Youth Shades Magazine is 10th September, 2016.

Visit www.youthshades.com for our submission guidelines.

Enquires should be sent to info@youthshades.com

Peace and Love,

Youth Shades Team.