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## **EDITORIAL**



### **AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND FOOD CRISIS**

Agriculture has been man's oldest occupation from which hundreds of generation have immensely benefitted and survived; this present and even the future generation, is not exempted. Agricultural production is the production of vegetables and animals made available for

human consumption and animal feeds. Agricultural production comprises of crop and animal production.

Global Rural and Urban Mapping Project (GRUMP) latest estimate indicates that approximately 3% of global land surface is covered by urban areas. 29.9% of the

planet's surface area is covered by land, though a significant 10-12% is uninhabitable which leaves about 17% for agriculture and human use. Farming claims almost half of the earth's land.

In Africa, farming is an integral part of every family, but it's largely done on a subsistent level mainly cultivating crops that are relevant to the region. Greater part of the land mass is fertile and suitable for varieties of crops both cash and perennial. Regions with greater rainfall cultivate more of perennial crops like the oil palm, cocoa, bananas and some native vegetables.

Animal production has a considerable quantum of importance in agriculture. Rearing of farm animals has been an age long practice in Africa and

the world at large. Most homes in rural areas keep animals like goat, sheep, fowl, etc and make adequate provision for their food, shelter and in some cases, medication. So, we can conveniently say that agricultural production is not a scholar's idea but a natural field of human endeavor which deals with the provision of food and meat for man's consumption.

Food crisis affects over three billion people with fractions of these spread across all continents of the world. Food shortages and prices of food have sky rocketed due to rising fuel price, poor infrastructure, inadequate funding, unbalanced agricultural policies, natural disaster and inequitable trade.

The world has the resources and capacity to combat food crisis. We have the man power, sufficient farming space and soil enrichment compound popularly called fertilizer to replenish worn out farm land with necessary nutrients in order to bring forth healthy yield in crops. Livestock is also a beneficiary of man's resourceful nature through cross-breeding to improve their respective species.

Sadly but true, our generation doesn't attach much importance to

farming. We'd rather have white collar jobs and fancy lifestyle. Few of us who venture into farming are quickly hit by the inconsistencies of the market, so we try out another lines of businesses that look promising. Funds need to be injected into agriculture, procurement of machineries, fertilizers, silos, etc. Accessible roads should be the governments' fulcrum to ensure a better turn-out of agricultural production.

## **POETRY**



### **Dhee Sylvester – Nigeria**

#### **the belly dancer**

She mocked poetry with her hips  
Her art was an enthralling heresy  
A fiery Fennec in fair fitting velvet  
She glides like a dice on levelled ice  
Swift, sleek, the twist was exquisite

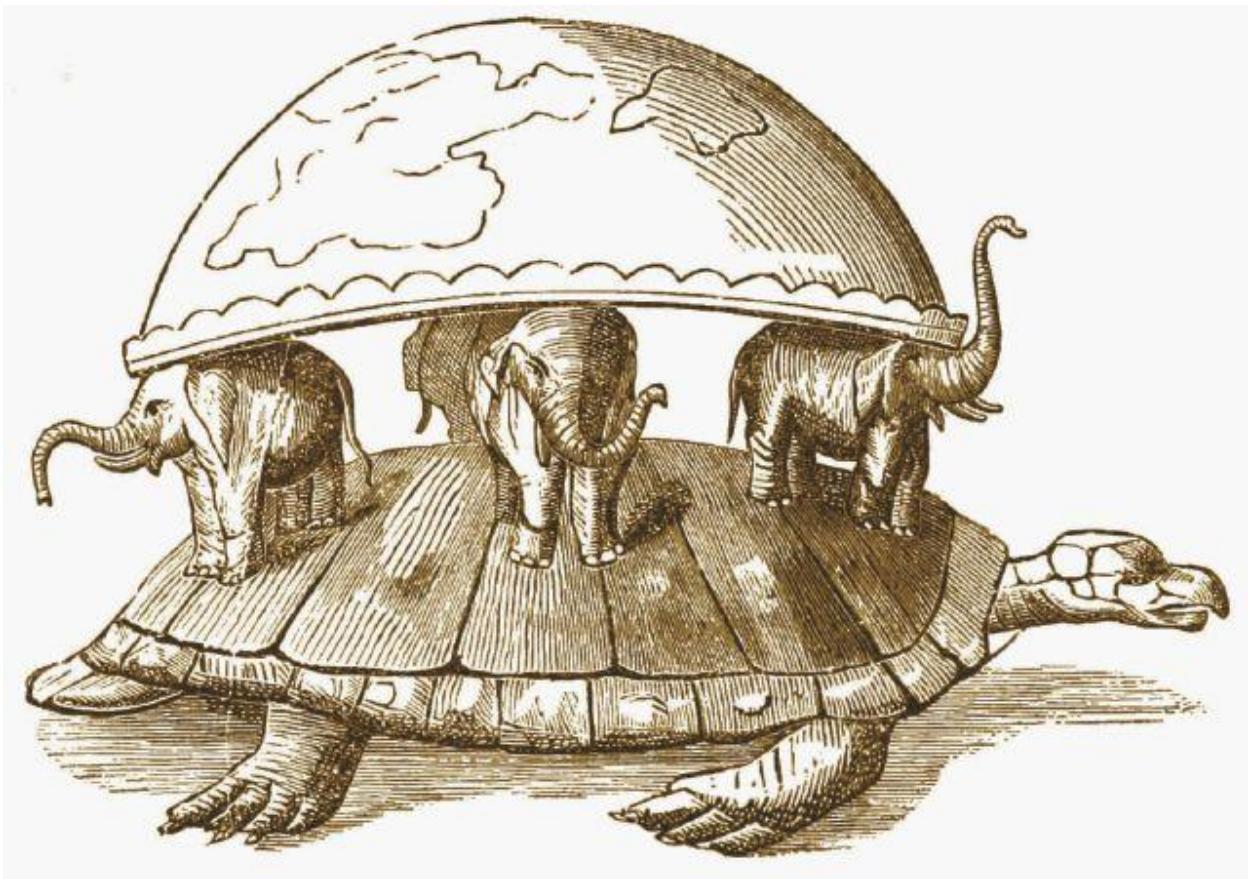
The turn was nirvana sculpt in flesh  
A rhyme unspoken, an aesthetic elixir  
The beauty was perfection on steroids  
Holy Book screaming: this is  
forbidden!

Yet the performance was my baptism  
A pious orgasm; a slick, sexy,  
sacrilege

The pleasure was in its very  
appreciation

Applause, she bows; kisses, and she  
waves

But may her face remain behind the  
veil!



**Claudia Piccinno - Italy**

### **a false theorem**

They are concentric circles

the true friends; let's call "bread  
the bread "and not sell for  
friendship

the metastasis of something else.  
You were not parallel lines, they  
can reflect each other and they are  
able to tend to infinity for the  
dormant meeting.

You were maybe two catheti  
Squared that give as result the  
hypotenuse and it's shadow.  
And she thought about  
perpendicular lines... about

honest crosses to share with you  
for years. And she tried to see you  
again

in the chaste embraces of right  
angles, in the IP greek of a circle.  
What remains to her of a false  
theorem?

Broken diagonals, acute angles of  
suffering, obtuse angles of  
dementia.



## **Michael Marrotti - Pittsburgh, PA**

### **'the best poem of all time'**

The best poem of all time is right in front of you pulsing like an erratic heartbeat growing older with each passing second cloaked in darkness ignored because of race or gender it's all about cosmetics maybe I need a makeover

Or should I surf this site me and my hidden intentions leaving a few superficial comments on other

people's poems in the hope of reciprocation

We all have feelings to express and we all think we're oh so clever but I guarantee mine are better than yours because I'm self-assured biased and pretentious

Learn from the master if you're running low on inspiration bite your tongue or the moderator will take it

nothing is free but this work of art  
I bestow it upon you no one would  
purchase it here you can have it

I know what you're thinking I've felt  
what you're feeling

This is the best poem of all time you're  
overwhelmed by the joy of stumbling  
upon this Immaculate Conception



**Marian Finch – United Kingdom**  
**charlie**

Sleeping on a park bench...  
could be anyplace

A young boy is sleeping, his  
arms across his face

As the small hours are  
approaching, he`s aching  
from the cold..

He`s run from home. He`s so  
vulnerable. And  
only ten years old.

Beaten by his mother, `fell` once  
too often down  
the stairs..

His mother`s now in prison and  
Charlie is in care.

He`s had so many foster homes,  
he`s been  
hostile detached and wild.. The  
social workers  
had to face the fact ...he`s a  
damaged child.

They put him in a children`s

home when he  
kicked off yesterday..

He waited until the house was  
silent and quietly  
ran away.

He`s built a shell around him..  
nobody can get in..

Being alone though freezing cold  
is preferable to  
him.

Charlie should be counselled, but  
they just don`t  
have the funds ~  
So they`ll just return him to the  
place he hates  
and at the first opening he will  
run.



**Valentine Mbagu – Nigeria**  
**my arabian goddess**

Honour to thee, thou goddess of succulent scrumptious beauty,  
Before thee, I freeze to admire thy spotless enticing beauty;  
At the aroma of thy fragrance, I breathe an immense sagacity,  
My Arabian goddess, thy prowess I honor with my whole creativity.

Thy beauty have ne'er been seen on the face of any woman  
Neither the origin of thy irresistible smiles traced to any human,  
The radiance of thy smiles outshines the shining pride of the sun;  
Thy refin'd personality a rare gem causes every imagination to

run.

A fountain of beauty upon whose elegance the sun refuses to shine,  
There can ne'er be found any symbol of priceless beauty aside thee;  
Of a truth, thou art a rare treasure for whose heart I'll go extra mile;  
My Arabian goddess, for thy sake I'll forsake the world to be with thee.

Thy beauty is second to none for thou art more beautiful than the universe,  
I'll treasure thee until the ocean dries up, for with thee I'll grow old;  
My Arabian goddess, for thy smiles I'll cause time to make a reverse,  
Until my dying breathe, I'll

treasure thy person, till the ocean folds.

Thou art so precious a treasure, whose beauty glows with honour and pride,  
An epitome of beauty, whose beauty is without comparison a rare Berry,  
Thy rhythmic voice a sonorous lyric makes me glued to thy side  
For thou art sweeter than honey and more succulent than berry.

My Arabian goddess, until the end of time, I'll forever love you best,  
I'll love thee, till the river jumps over the mountains, with thee I'll boast my Pride;  
Ne'er will I stop loving thee, for I'll be sure to love thee to thy taste,

Of a truth, thy beauty glitters  
more than gold, with thee I'll

make my  
Bride.



### **Akinlabi Ololade – Nigeria**

#### **Death**

We need not to write your  
Stories in pen cause in your  
Hands lie the ink to terminate life  
No one sees the end of your story  
Who dares to?

The invisible visible spirit  
Farther-nearer to the breathing  
being  
The supreme god of impromptu  
Powerful than a nap

Giving eyes an eternal dictatorial  
order

To be shut...

Who fears you?

Who doesn't dread you?

Can't submerge you

Have no mercy for pleads

Hear no pleads from peace.

What is the wailing for?

You have shut eyes again...

The unavoidable termination to  
breaths.



**Patrick Amaefule – Nigeria**

**pushing through the miles**

pushing across the miles;  
behold the next is Nile,

I can take on that future,  
challenges made like culture;

It's part of life and nature if this  
moment is right,  
I will move me thru' many  
tributaries;  
not feared if I smell an ocean by  
my feet;  
Godly mettle strapped about me  
with feat,  
against the hikers, two more  
steps ahead;  
I saw in the beginning, there are  
the ridges,  
interlinked to the opulent  
bridges, to start to this road,  
I won't dare to quail; because it is  
to fail;  
staring on the sunny side of the  
East;  
yet another hope of a friendly  
feast,  
there is some wonder; in  
everything I ponder;

as overture, I brought the  
adventure to the Maker to help  
me walk this road;  
and not to grope; yet I resist to  
mope;  
despite how the eying world ;  
deduced with precision,  
there I took my decision ,  
I'm sure the time is right;  
though the moment seems too  
tight;  
And I'm pushing thru' everything  
that comes the way ,  
I will get over it, but just one  
day;  
I will be overwhelmed by His  
might,  
the fate is what I decide thru' my  
dreams,  
It's neither a fairy nor fantasy; so  
strongly I believe in it.



**Alicia Minjarez Ramírez – Morocco**

**it rains**

A longing breeze  
tries to show itself,  
like nostalgia  
migrating  
up in the air.

Water permeates  
my body.  
Your breath  
fills in  
the context.

Longing secrets  
that the wind  
shakes up in the offing,  
then nothingness.

I walk behind  
upon the moisture  
left by the drops  
under the branches.

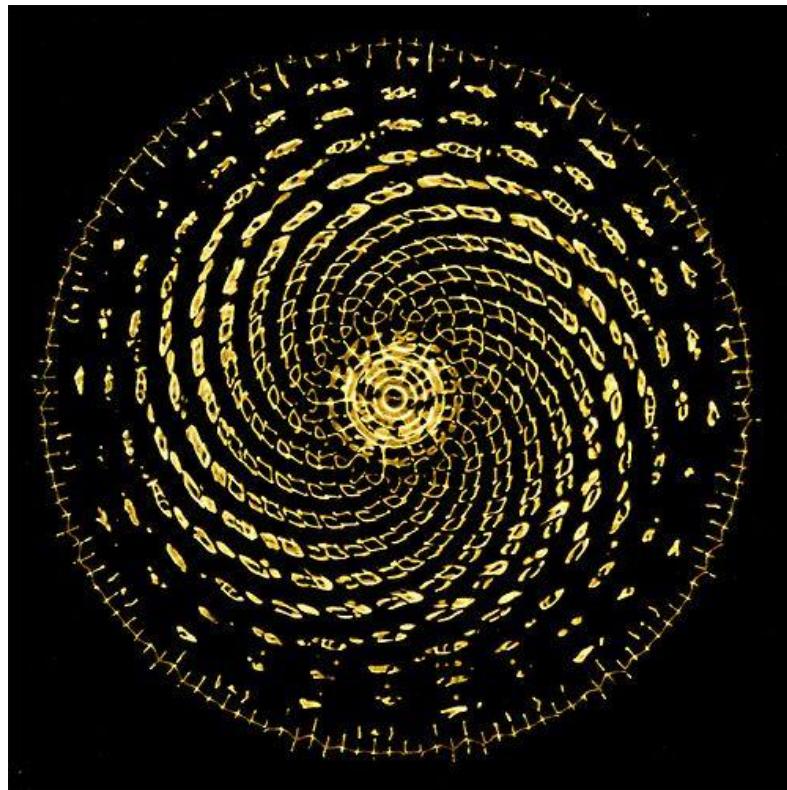
Birds get detached  
from their nests,

looking for  
the promised shelter.

Church bells ring,  
outside  
the night  
interrupts.

I long to dry off  
the rain,  
like those birds

besetting  
park trees  
in the evening.  
  
The stillness of your eyes  
invades me...  
  
Ecstatic wings,  
paralyzing their flight.  
At my silence's feet.



**Fernando José Martínez Alderete – Mexico**  
**love geometry**

Beautiful little one, powerful  
energy triangle of hidden magic,  
From tip to base, perfect  
manifestation of the divine  
symmetry,  
If we turn the summit into the  
land it becomes a gestation  
period of female life,

Love, bold spark of joy in  
resurrecting the lost past.  
Sublime diva walking and  
seduces from the beginning of  
the fog until the day.  
We met in an indestructible cast  
circle,

There is no tomorrow, we are dissolved on a cosmic dimension and perennial,  
Idylls in our tongues sprout growing quietly so as not finished, perpetual melodies,

We are a silver ring pierced by fire, impossible to separate.  
We united in one angry power, Together we form the mystical hidden spiral,  
Preserving the secrets of the wise, knowing the birth, passion and death of all that exists,

Only those whose love transcends creation,  
Then more I live in you, love you more, there is a maze constantly revealed  
And all the charm invariably appears to understand.  
Mutual attraction is similar to the morphology of the square,  
It spreads to the four corners of the earth,  
Although cyclones erased the traces of lovers,  
The stars, the tides and sand intertwined our spirits wherever they are.



## **Patrick Michael - Washington**

### **The Epitome of Childhood**

The epitome of childhood is pure  
innocence  
  
crawling  
  
cuddling  
  
with Mother and Father, while  
feeling ambivalent  
  
messing  
  
causing  
  
mischief to have fun, not  
understanding synthesis  
  
tricking

using  
jokes on mom, dad, brothers and  
sisters, with reticence  
  
fooling  
  
spinning  
  
on the ground, having fun in  
spite of rules, frivolous  
  
learning  
  
yearning  
  
for a new toy, sticking by it with  
sheer diligence  
  
scribbling

choosing	laughing
different colors based on an immature vividness	grinning
growing	from ear to ear, being cute, while acting abhorrent
walking	coming
while hanging onto furniture, falling imminence	going
falling	on vacations with mom and dad, in an argument
picking	talking
yourself up, crying mommy, loss of independence	singing
sensing	kids tunes, saying are we there yet, like a tournament
gaining	running
insight into basic skills, being more insolent	playing
learning	to get sense of the neighborhood, feeling affluent
yearning	posing
for a new toy, sticking by it, being diligent	role
moaning	playing to get a sense of what adults do, well spent
groaning	schooling
when mom or dad give orders, being impertinent	ruling
	the playground, king of the

mountain, being the highlight  
salivating  
matriculating  
from grade school, climbing the  
ladder of life, dynamite  
failing  
succeeding  
in learning hard lessons, getting a  
sense of delight  
searching  
hoping  
for things you have not earned,  
gaining a better insight  
reeling  
showing

off to your friends, high on  
yourself, giving them a fright  
smiling  
pretending  
you are not hurt, others see  
through your capricious plight  
dating  
getting  
teased about your choices, the  
dog always takes a bite  
enduring  
feeling  
a loss of innocence, feeling sad,  
seeing the light.

## ARTICLES



**Paul Preye – Nigeria**

### **the dignity of labour among teachers and students today (II)**

Teachers are God's special instruments for recreating a better and godly society. If you have made yourselves available for this great task, may God give you the grace to accomplish it and may He also crown your good efforts with success.

Some teachers have however failed in inculcating true moral

values into their personal lives and that of the students. For instance, some might have lost the sense of duty and priority. They don't have zeal for their jobs anymore, but they want the government to be very faithful in paying salaries.

Moreso, punctuality and enthusiasm for academic

excellence are out of their dictionaries. Some are very smart in updating their office files overnight or few days before the arrival of inspectors or higher authority. They are always punctual at their office attendance register, but in reality they are not. What a pity!

They lack the virtue of honesty. Some even receive illegal money

from students just to pass exams. This nonchalant attitude has created a lot of "miracle centers" in our schools. Many students, as a result of this, don't see the need to work extra hard anymore. They seek favour without labour and would rather not say "there is dignity in labour" but would prefer saying, "there is dignity in favour".



## **Natasha – United Kingdom about my Father's business**

What does it mean to be ‘about your father’s business’?

With the pressures and stresses of life, it can seem overwhelming for some to focus on what God is telling them. The way you juggle things is different for everyone; some can manage with outstanding pressure whereas, some crumble at the first sign of trouble. But what to remember is

that God has given you a purpose, ask God to reveal what that purpose is and how to go about fulfilling it.

Now, it's one thing asking God to reveal what your purpose is and another thing living within your purpose. Recently, I have been encouraging others and supporting those who are seriously pursuing their purpose.

Many Christians lack the support and encouragement from others which already prevents them from starting something that God has stirred within them. I'm not saying that we need to be praising every Tom, Dick and Harry about doing what they are supposed to be doing but, a little 'well done' here and 'congratulations' there wouldn't go amiss.

Just as Ecclesiastes 4:9 states that "two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour, for if they fall, one will uplift his companion". This is what we should be experiencing, being able to uplift each other instead of looking out for number 1.

When you are living within your purpose, you will find that people in your life start to disappear like Casper the ghost. DO NOT BE ALARMED NOW. People who God knows can't be part of your walk, He will remove them from your life for a reason. He knows that where he is taking you, these people cannot go because they are not spiritually or mentally ready. The thing you have to remember is that you cannot reopen a door that God has already closed. When you have surrendered everything to God and are walking in your purpose, you will find that God will bring people in your life that you just know are heaven sent. These people will tend to bring you great news or offer you opportunities that go against your

wildest dreams. Then, you just know it is God.

God can and will use anyone and everyone. Do not be afraid to tell people of the wonders of God and all that he has done for you. John 15:16 says that “you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you”.

You, yeah you, did not choose God moreover, God chose you.

He knows that you are special and that what he sees in you, you will prosper and flourish.

We should go out and walk in our purpose so evidently that we begin to plant seeds of God everywhere we go, and the fruits will grow beautifully so that when we ask God of things, he may give us what our heart desires.

How can you begin to be about your father’s business?

## STORIES



### Onyinyechi Mbam - Nigeria

#### Grandpa

‘Nenye, greet your father for me oh! Safe journey,’ Grandma is saying. I hug and bid her bye.

‘Nenye, are you going?’ Aunty Nkechi asks. Aunty Nkechi is a neighbour to grandma. I had spent most of my playtimes with Lola and Kemi, her children; playing over the heap of sand in front of

grandma’s balcony. She would feed me alongside her children in the evenings when grandma stayed late in the market where she sold food wares – tomatoes, peppers and crayfish.

‘Sweety, come let’s be going,’ mum says. I turn to follow her. Then my eyes drift to grandpa’s

grave. I drop the bag I'm holding and walk to the grave. I feel goose flesh.

It was five years ago, I was five. Grandpa had been sick and dad and mum had taken him to the Federal Medical Centre. When my brothers and I visited him in the hospital, he was in a good state. He had promised to take us fishing when we go to Umuahia the next holiday. Kelechi was barely two, he jumped in excitement. He had never gone fishing with grandpa; it would be his first time.

In Umuahia, there was a big river two kilometers away from grandpa's house. Every weekend, most fishermen took their children there to help them do the baiting and to carry the fishes home. It was fun, especially

during the holidays when so many children came with their parents, some with their grandparents. I always enjoyed the fish pepper soup grandma prepared when we returned.

Weeks later after the hospital, mum came back from work, and started packing our cloths into a bag. I asked if we were traveling and she told me we were going to grandma's house. 'Is it to grandma Ikwo's house?' I asked.

'No. To Umuahia, pack please.' Emeka and Kelechi who had sat quiet all the while jumped at the mention of grandma Umuahia.

Kelechi said; 'Hurray! I will go fishing with grandpa. I will catch big fishes for grandma to cook soup. I will give Nenye but I will

not give you Emeka.' He sneered at Emeka.

'Yes, don't give me. You think I will not catch my own fish?'

It was a long vacation, I was equally happy because I would spend lots of time with Aunty Uche learning how to knit with wool and join grandpa and my brothers in fishing. I would secretly go swimming with Uncle Pat. It would really be fun filled, I couldn't wait. I looked at mum's eyes and they were teary. A drop was beginning to trickle down her cheek when she brushed it off with her thumb. I wanted to ask but I remembered that the day before she had warned me about asking too many questions.

I liked asking questions about everything. Whenever dad's friends came, I would sit on the side stool close to the center table in the sitting room and ask them questions about buildings and constructions. Mum would come into the sitting room and drag me by my ears to the bedroom. I was chubby and our neighbours always called me *Orobo*. They said my eyes were like those of a pussy.

On the Saturday grandpa was buried, it drizzled in the morning and the village was a little foggy. Mum came into the room where my siblings and I slept and jerked me up.

'Get up! Get up! And remove your clothes for a bath.' Emeka had woken on hearing mum's voice.

‘Mum is today church?’ We are used to waking early on Sunday mornings to prepare for the Sundays service.

“No, today is not church.”

“Why are we bathing early if today is not church? We have not seen grandpa since yesterday we arrived. I hope he still remembers our fishing?”

‘Emeka, remove your cloths and stop asking unnecessary questions!’

‘Yes mum.’

Just then we heard a wail across the corridor. It was grandma’s voice, but why would she be wailing this early morning? Mum rushed out immediately while I helped my brothers remove their pyjamas. She came back and off to the bathroom we went.

‘Bestheart, have the children eaten?’ dad was asking. The previous day we had rarely caught a glimpse of him before we went to bed.

‘Yes dear.’

‘Then arrange a bath for me.’ Emeka went to dad and he lifted him and put on his lap. He was just a year younger than me.

‘Dad, why is grandma Umuahia crying?’ Dad was about answering when there was another wail. He put him down and went to grandma’s room; I tiptoed behind to know what was happening.

‘Take her away from the bed,’ Dad said to aunty. I stood by the door and peeped through a crack on the lintel. I saw grandpa lying on the bed, dressed on his white

*agbada*, white socks on his legs and his walking staff in his right hand. I became confused, grandpa was sleeping, why was grandma crying, to disturb his sleep? Why was he sleeping in his church cloths?

“Nenye, aren’t you supposed to be with your brothers? Now run along and stay with them.’ I had been so engrossed in my thoughts that didn’t know when Dad opened the door.

“Yes, Dad,” I said. I rushed to the room where I had left my brothers. On entering the room, kelechi ran to me and said; ‘Nenye, I saw it! I saw it! I saw uncle pat caring a big box to grandpa’s room; a big box, bigger than the one mum puts her wrappers in. I will ask grandpa

Umuahia if I can put my cloths in his big box.’

‘Me too,’ Emeka said.

I grabbed both their hands and led the way to the single cushion in the room I learnt had belonged to Mum when she was still living with grandma and grandpa. The wall of the room had a worn out yellow painting – pictures of mum when she was young were all over the wall. The floor had a pink carpet and the curtains yellow to match the colorful wall paper above the wall shelve.

While I sat on the cushion, so many thoughts raced through my mind. I couldn’t figure out the reason for grandma’s wails. Mum’s teary eyes, Uncle Pats gloomy face, Aunty Uche’s

constant sobs and most of all,  
Dad's less attention to us.

I turn from the grave and walk  
back to the balcony. Mum is  
exchanging pleasantries with  
Aunty Nkechi.

“Oh, mama Nkechi, don't worry,  
they will come with Nenye on  
her next visit to Umuahia.’.

‘Nenye, make sure you are not  
forgetting anything.”

“Yes mum, everything is ready  
inside the bag.”

“Let's be going then or we won't  
catch the next bus to Abakaliki.”

“Mama Nenye, safe trip! Greet  
your husband and your children,’  
Aunty Nkechi says as we leave  
the compound. We board a bike  
to the motor park where mum  
buys two tickets. It takes so long  
for the bus to move on the

journey back to Abakaliki. The  
driver shouts Abakaliki!

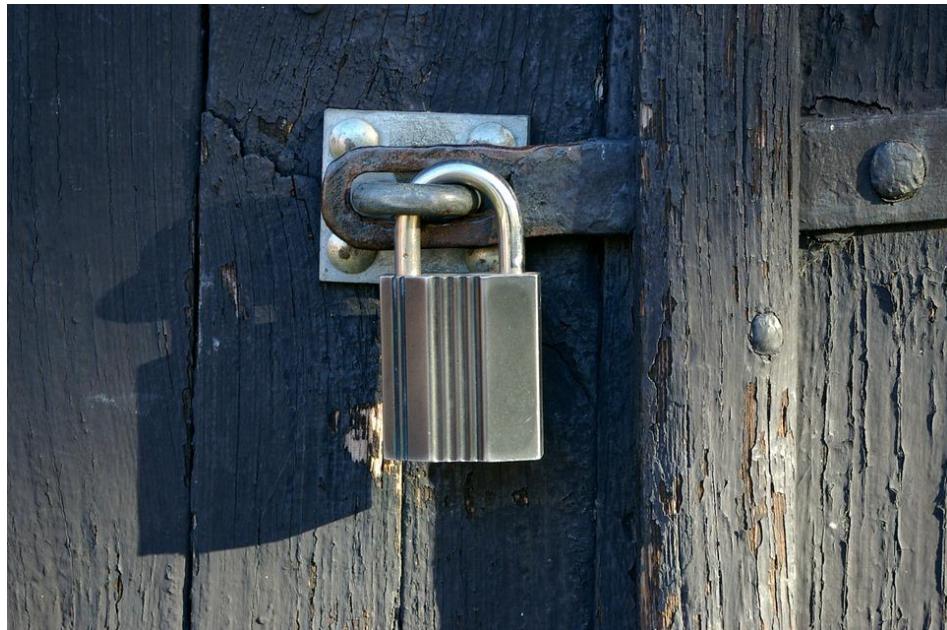
Abakaliki! to attract passengers.

We are finally leaving the  
MotorPark, I allow my mind drift  
to Aunty Nkechi. Everyone likes  
her because she is so friendly. I  
think of grandpa. It seems like a  
century I saw him last. I miss  
him. I missed the tales of his  
wrestling days; grandpa had a  
huge body, with large chest, his  
fellows used to dread wrestling  
with him because he would  
always leave them with wounds  
after the wrestling. Grandpa  
loved telling stories – he told us a  
lot of them in the nights. I  
enjoyed fishing with him during  
the long vacations. He would  
refuse to take my brothers  
because they were too small.  
Whenever his friends came, after

serving them palm wine, when they left, he would secretly call me and give me the little he remained in his cup.

Whenever he visited Abakaliki, he would buy so many things for my brothers and I. Sometimes he would bring smoked fish. It was

always fun staying with him. Now that he is no more, I can understand the reason for all grandma's cries during the burial. I wish he never died, I wish he is still alive, I would have shown him the new table cloth I made.



## Morakinyo Israel - Nigeria

### **MY RAPED LOCK (1)**

The fate of empty treasury my children make me suffer now, did

not recently start, but as far back as I got my lock raped by the

aliens. If not, in tranquillity and sanity will my children have looked after the affairs of my ornaments with no rift. Just like the story of a young beautiful damsel, Belinda, guarded by sylphs whose lock was raped by Lord Baron. things never returned to normalcy as that act kick started her fallen Empire.

Such was my fate. I got my lock-raped by aliens too who sneaked into my house, were allowed with their sugar-coated mouths as they claimed they were "bringers of peace". Not too long did their mischief spread across board. Not only was my lock raped but my neck, hands and legs were also beautifully dressed in shackles. All my ornaments were being controlled and used and I was treated with disgust and

outstanding contempt. I became masochistic that there was nothing I could do to salvage myself.

In pain spiced with joy, suffering garnished with smiling and lack fertilized with plenteous did I birth some of my children. They grew up with oceans of wisdom. They rapidly understood not only my plight, but also my worries and travails as a mother.

"When will these aliens leave our mother alone?" They thought in one of their gatherings.

Earlier before 1957, one of my youngest brilliant sons, Anthony, proposed my being liberated to the aliens; all he got in return was battering. This second to none cracked the wall of schism and made it quite easy again for

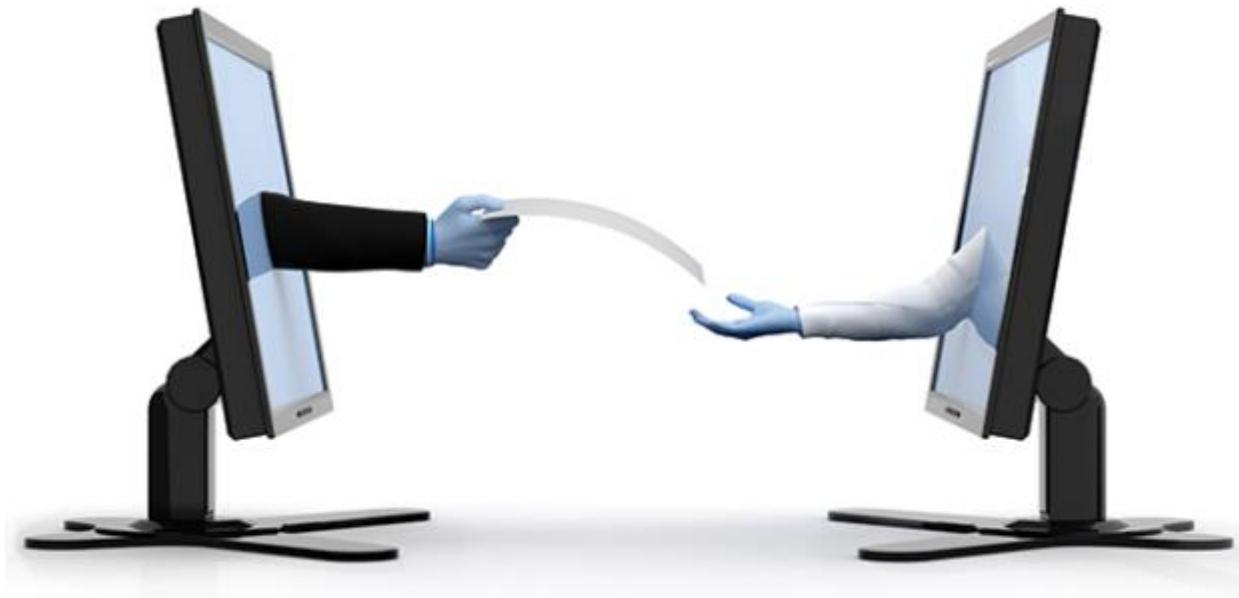
the aliens to establish their ruse by plotting successfully the rift among my children. My ornaments were not too squandered as I deliberately hid far away the most special ornament in preservation for my upcoming children.

Joyful was the day I got the chains off my neck, hands and legs. It was a beautiful first day of the tenth month in the year

1960 that I was told my children could look after me and my ornaments. What a joyful day it was! I was oblivious of the portentous danger that lies ahead.

My joy knew no bound as I thought, "at last, this is what my children had been waiting for." My freedom was celebrated in a grandiose style. I could not have wished better than that.

(to be continued...)



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