



Author Africa
2006

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Fiction Stories
2006

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Counting Down the Hours

By Blessing Musariri
(Zimbabwe)

Vuso's soft belly is pressing against my back. His face in sleep is ugly to me. His quiet snoring is a soft tune that keeps me company in the long hours that challenge my sanity at night.

What would Marita say if she knew? Probably, "Don't let me down. I know you'll do the right thing." Marita knows nothing. She's in the UK working as a nurse - left home when it was still free and easy to go that route. Now you have to pay to do the course and getting a visa is no walk in the park. Then there's Tawona. As big brothers go, I sometimes think he's a figment of my imagination. He left when the money started coming in and mama and baba could proudly send their son off to college in the States full tuition paid. It's been three years and they don't even know that he dropped out of college to pursue his hip-hop dream. He calls himself Z3, "Coz that's what I'm fina buy when I strike gold baby girl, coz Z stands for my country in the motherland, gotta keep it real ya kno'."

He says it's a shame that no one speaks his mother-tongue over there because, "I done forgot my words," he says, "Can't speak that shit no mo'."

It's only been four years since he left but he's managed to completely disappear into the echoes of rap lyrics. I never asked him what the significance was of 'three'.

A dog barks outside and I think of Buster, at home. Did mukoma Givie remember to feed him? One day that dog will die of neglect. Sisi Marian doesn't seem to care. These are people who were left to look after me but their indifference to life in general has made them dependent on me. If I'm not there, nothing gets done. I'm too young for all that responsibility and I'm tired of it. Perhaps I won't go back. Ever. That house that swallows me up with its silences.

I was eating ice-cream as I walked back home from the shops when Vuso stopped the car. He thought I needed a ride. I let him think it. I'd met him several times before. He's married to mama's friend Virginia so it was okay to catch a ride with him. Even if I hadn't known him, I might have got in anyway. I invited him in for a drink - it was hot outside and he stayed a bit and talked. As he walked back to his car I stared at the roll of flesh at the back of his head and I wanted to take it between my fingers and pinch it. The thought made me giggle and he turned back and looked at me with a question. I just smiled at him with my secret thought glinting from my eyes.

"So, what are doing over half-term? Are you going to the farm to see your old man?"

I shook my head.

"Is your mother coming home from Namibia?"

She couldn't get away from work, there was a big conference going on so there

Author Notes

Nyankami Atandi

Nyankami is 39 years of age. Academically, he is a paralegal, having finished a two-year diploma course in 1996. Prior to that, Nyankami sat for the Ordinary Level Examinations in 1987. Thereafter, he threw myself into sports and communal activities till 1992, and in 1994 enrolled for the said paralegal course.

Chielo Eze

Chielo Eze is a Nigerian and teaches English, Postcolonial and African Literature at Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago.

Ehichoya Ekozilen

Ehichoya Ekozilen lives in Lagos. He has been writing fiction and non-fiction stories for some time. He likes to experiment with different styles of writing and his stories cover various subjects, but are more concerned with the challenges of getting things done. He won the Preservation Foundation General Non-fiction Contest for 2004. He has published a book on typing office and literary documents and has a lot of experience in this area as well as spelling and grammar editing. He is currently working on two books.

Okey Ojimba Ekwemoha

Okey Ojimba Ekwemoha was born in Nigeria in 1962. After the completion of high school in 1979, he proceeded in 1981 to the United States where he studied journalism. Upon his return in 1992 to Nigeria, he met a country in ruins; the dictator, General Ibrahim Babangida, was in power. Any journalistic endeavour was not advisable. So in 1993, he left Nigeria again for Switzerland. Meanwhile, he am in the process of publishing his first novel.

Ken N. Kamoche

Ken N. Kamoche was born and raised in Kenya. After completing a degree in business at the University of Nairobi, he won a Rhodes scholarship to pursue further studies at Oxford. He currently lives in Hong Kong. Ken has published four books in management, and over thirty academic journal articles. His fiction has been published in journals like 'New York Stories', 'Wasafiri' and 'Kunapipi'.

Matano Lipuka

Kenyan born Matano Lipuka has been an avid fan of creativity since high school and still is. He once belonged to a theatre group run by M.Y.S.A (an N.G.O.) but is now focussed on his Engineering job and part time freelance journalism, submitting to the local dailies. His Fictional works can be found at Authorme.com and sage of consciousness magazine.

He's currently undertaking a creative writing course hosted by British Council's crossing borders' programme.

The URL is www.crossingborders-africanwriting.org
He enjoys relaxing under the palm trees while holding a good book as the soft breeze from the sea washes over his face, with water lapping at his feet. He likes to develop new talent and watch it grow and hopes to develop a reading culture among his people in Kenya and definitely around the world.

Patrick Midzi

Patrick Midzi, of Zimbabwe, has published in various magazines and the two national Sunday papers, The Sunday Mail & Sunday Times.

Blessing Musariri

Blessing Musariri is a thirty-two year old Zimbabwean woman who has decided that it's worth it to give up most luxuries to pursue a career in writing. She gave up working full time in the year 2000 and the struggle continues. She has been published by Longman Zimbabwe and went on to win two national awards for the children's story entitled "Rufaro's Day." She is working hard to raise the hopes and profiles of other Zimbabwean writers who have felt for a long time that they are alone in their struggle. Blessing calls herself a literary activist when she is not wearing her writer's hat.

Sammy Mwiti

Sammy Mwiti is a career journalist. After graduating from the University of Nairobi's School of Journalism in 1996, he worked as a feature writer and humor colum-

nist with The Standard, a daily Kenyan newspaper. In 1999 he joined the United Nations, working as an international volunteer specialist in East Timor. He was later deployed as a professional UN Information Officer in the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) where he remained until August 2004 when he took a scholarship offered by the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, of the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, USA. He graduates in May 2006 with a Masters degree in Peace Studies. Mwitwa was born in Kenya on 11 October 1970.

Rudolf Ogoo Okonkwo

Rudolf Ogoo Okonkwo is a syndicated columnist. He writes about Nigerian politics and other weird happenings.

Okonkwo is from Nnobi in Anambra State, Nigeria. He began his career as a Reporter for Classique Magazine in 1991. He later moved to the Daily Mail of Lagos where he became the Energy Correspondent.

In June of 1993, Okonkwo moved to the United Kingdom where he became a correspondent of THE JOURNAL OF NIGERIAN AFFAIRS. He relocated to the United States in 1995 and has been living there ever since.

Okonkwo's column appears in tens of journals including Vanguard, Daily Independent, Champion, Nigeriavillagesquare.com, kwenu.com etc. etc. His first book, Children of A Retired God, will be published by Iroko Productions.

He lives in Bay Shore, New York, with his wife, Edna, and daughter, Ijeamaka.

Cheluchi Onyemelukwe

Cheluchi Onyemelukwe is a lawyer licensed to practice in Nigeria. She graduated from the University of Nigeria and the Nigerian Law School. She holds a masters degree in law from Dalhousie University, Canada, where she was a Killam Scholar. She is currently an intern with Health Canada in Ottawa, Canada.

Uche Peter Umez

Uche Peter Umez, award winning Nigerian poet, and short story writer, is widely published on the Internet, and author of *Dark through the Delta* (poems), *Tears in her Eyes* (stories), and *Aridity of Feelings* (chapbook published by tmpoetry.com). His stories have been broadcast on IBC FM station and published in anthologies.

Valentine Umelo

Valentine Ukachukwu Umelo is a Pharmacist. He was trained at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Apart from short stories, Mr Umelo writes radio plays. In 2003, his radio play, 'Knight in Shining Armour', was joint third place winner of the BBC's yearly playwright's competition, 'African Performance.' Mr Umelo also writes for young people. Some of his novels for young people are presently under consideration for publication by a major publishing company in the U.K. Mr Umelo kicked off his writing career in 1998 by send-

ing weekly contributions (about 300 words) to 'Last Word', a BBC's three minutes commentary read at the end of the weekends 'Focus on Africa' news bulletin. Mr Umelo who considers his wife his greatest asset as a writer (she is his in-house critic and editor). Umelo has three children: (Michael, 10 years; Karen, 5 years; and Macedonia, 5 months. Umelo is now self employed, which allows him more time for reflection and less time for writing, something that worries him.

Chika Onuoha

Chika Onuoha is one of Africa's budding writers. He was educated at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In 2001 while at the university, he published his first novel, THE BLACK GOLD which formed part of the students' reading texts for the Use of English course of the university for about three years. He is currently working on his latest novel, TENTOES ON THISTLES which will be published by next spring.

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