

# Dear Ex

And Other Stories

**FURAHA PHEDELES**

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**ISBN-13: 9798448360077**

Printed by **Elong'o Publishers**

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# Acknowledgement

I dedicate this book to my mum, Henrietta Fedha, for her ever-unwavering support, love and trust. To my father, Ferdinand Matara, for always encouraging me through this. To my brothers: Isaac, Davy, Alvin, Caleb, Brite and Roy and sisters: Ingrid, Neema, Fadhili and Favour. To the Matara and Fedha families and to friends for every bit of support.

To Onesmus, Paul and Bernard, for being very instrumental through and through.

In a special way I thank my mentors: Professor Austine Bukenya, Dr. David Mulwa, Dr. Timothy Arege, Dr. Hamisi Babusa, Dr. Mark Chetambe and Dr. J. K. S Makokha, for the guidance, motivation and constructive criticism.

To Elong'o publishers and all who made this a success, you hold a special place in my heart.





## Dear Ex

Yes! I finally fell in love. I finally found a man for me. The feeling I had is indescribable. I started regaining my confidence. For a moment I believed I was pretty, at least pretty enough to have a man for myself. Looking back, I'd had a few relationships just for convenience and to show everyone that I was normal as well. I had had relationships for the sake of having them. I can't say I really loved anyone as much as I did this time. I had several occasions when I thought that I was loveless or maybe that I just wasn't worth it. I thought sometimes that these love matters are not meant for everyone. My friends were happy, at least because they had people for themselves. I loved to see happy lovers, I still do, but when alone I'd look at myself in the mirror and wonder just why I couldn't attract a man, just one in the several billions there are. I would try things that were not even close to what I liked. I don't hate makeup but I sort of feel people like me were not made with that wire. I like to look good, elegant in fact, but I'd never kill myself for that. If I was to describe briefly, I am a very relaxed person. I hate pressure from things I can do without. For some reason I never liked the pressure that comes with spending a whole or two hours of my life seated on a chair in front of a mirror erasing and drawing back brows. I mean, I'd rather sleep. I am the kind of person who would never be found busy looking for something to put on. All my clothes are

easy. A pair of jeans, a t-shirt, a pair of sneakers and am out. That has been my signature look for ages and even now.

I had given up on love because love seemed to only find those who were out there looking for it. Again, I am not that kind of a girl. I leave my house when I really have to. If it's not school or an emergency, I'd be coiled in my bed all day, surfing and sleeping, in alternation. I know I am a boring person but this is the real me. In my spree to find love, I once joined my hyped friend to a party. This has to be the worst decision I've ever made, for love. While everyone was busy drinking and dancing, I was sitting there feeling so lonely. I was dressed in my usual, maybe I felt comfortable that way. My friends were dressed to kill, anyone would know they were in a party. I was staring in one corner. I felt ashamed on behalf of my friends who were drunk and fully lost in the drunkenness. I was all sober, again bad for a person in such a company. I drink, but just water and milk. I'm weird, or was made to think so. I'd been lonely for so long already and I just wanted to feel loved. I wanted to have something to say when my friends talked about relationships. I wanted to experience relationship problems. I heard they experience cheating and break up. I didn't know what it was. I was hoping to one time get someone for me. I didn't care that they said I'd be heartbroken. In fact, I wanted to know what a heartbreak felt like. I was desperate. After trying makeup and going out, which obviously made nothing better, I opted for a halt. I thought over it and decided to let those wired with love and the relationship gene to do their thing. As for me, I focused on my books, movies and songs. My life was boring but that was me. I was tired of faking it.

On 15th of April, I was just in bed at a friend's. I was on my phone and a message came in. It was from a friend from back in high school. She had posted a photo of me on her whatsapp status icon and apparently someone got interested. I like to believe that she posted me to make me feel nice. I hate to imagine that she posted me to help me get a man. I knew my situation was bad but, it has never been a matter of life and death you know. Has anyone ever been diagnosed with a disease called single for too long? I guess not. Paul got interested to know me better. I wasn't comfortable

with it because I am not that kind of a girl. I have failed to get someone in my spree, I'd never believe online could work. I mean, I had several people around me. No one seemed interested, why would I believe someone would like me? Maybe I looked better in the soft copy. Well, I gave it a shot and yeah, like every other girl, I spoiled it. He asked if I was taken and I obviously, without a second thought said I was. All that while am dating my imaginary boyfriend. Paul was a straightforward guy. He clearly stated his intentions. I can't remember the exact words but I definitely remember how it sounded.

"Hello Furaha, my name is Paul, I have seen a photo of you somewhere and I am sure your friend has told you about me already. I like you and I was hoping to find my significant other in you."

Once I said I was taken, he apologized for interrupting my space and was good to go. Deep inside I wanted to know him better. I knew I was acting up but still, I wasn't going to just make it easy for him because I wasn't desperate, or was I? Looking at his messages, he was the type of guy who would mean the bye. I had to do something. I had to save the situation. I asked him if we could be friends and thankfully, he was open to the idea. In about a week I was over the moon. I was deeply in love with him. My life had taken a whole turn. I wasn't sulking any more. I was smiling more often and it was so noticeable. I couldn't hide it. This guy had stolen my heart and I was done. Time went by; a week, two, three, two months. We planned a meet up. Of course this was going to be one of my best moments as a lover. I was going to finally meet my man. I was excited yet scared. I was nervous. I wasn't sure I wanted to do this. I liked him, I wanted more with him but he's a guy I met online. There was this fear in me. I wanted to meet him somewhere safe. I wanted to go meet him with my friends. But again, I found consolation in the fact that I'd met him through one of my trusted friends. I somewhat thought he couldn't be harmful. Each moment I had doubts so I decided I'd meet him at a friend's place. He was okay with it, very like Paul, straight forward.

The day came and he travelled four hours to come to me. I was delighted a man could do so much for me. I felt happy. I was having the time of my

life. He arrived. I went to meet him and wow! He was the same guy in the whatsapp photos. He was handsome. That was what I noticed first. He was my ideal type of man. I loved him. I wanted to be with him all day, but what if he would turn into a crow at night? I was worried. In today's world you just may never know. We went to my friend's house. We had good time the rest of the evening. At Least I felt the security of my friend. I was more easy on myself. They say don't do it on day one but I did. The ninety-day rule was too much for such cuteness. I wanted to wait but my whole body went on strike. I am glad I don't regret a thing up until now. It was one of the best feelings I had had in a long time. I felt like a woman I was. He stayed four or five hours away from the city. I lived in the city because I was in the university, a top university in the country to be specific. I had all these ambitions in life. I wanted to achieve lots of things. I had been numb all that time but in my second year I found light. Paul made me feel whole. No words can explain how he made me feel. It was as if I'd lost a part of me long ago and I'd finally found it. My whole life had been a lie. I was pretty, i was beautiful enough to attract a man. I was worthy of a man's commitment. I was and am enough.

He was committed to making our relationship work. I was sure it would work because I received back the same energy, I invested in it. Everything was perfect. Paul made sure my life does not stop for any reason. He made sure I was fine. He did not have so much but whatever he had was for both of us. He tried. I can't complain, I got gifts and I went out once in a while which was fine for a girl my type. I hated social places. I love my privacy. I love to be all by myself. I love to be comfortable in my space. Easily, one can tell I enjoyed it when he said he had postponed some of the dates when he had not gathered enough money for the same. I was excited when it was time for just the two of us in a room. Having deep talks was my favorite. Paul would make me think. He would make me see life after today. He was this kind of man who had this much focus. He knew exactly what he wanted in life. He knew how he wanted his life to be. He had goals. He knew how he wanted to achieve each. He was always ahead of me, always composed and I can't remember a time he lost his focus. Well, now I think

he was a little uptight. He had fixed his life too hard. He had rules for everything and was determined to achieve them each day. He did, not all but most. He loved a simple but cool life. He wanted his everything to go his way, not that his ways were bad but he was too tight about it. He would be so disappointed easily on little things. Things like saying I'll be there at nine and late by a half an hour. Things like little lies annoyed him too much and his way of responding was a little off. I remember I would have to apologize about a thousand and three times before he totally stopped reminding me of any fault. . He would be so shaken on things as little as a male friend calling me. He cared nothing about why the person called. The very idea that another man could call me freaked him out so much. He would lose it. I tried my best to understand him but I wondered why he made no effort to understand me. I loved this guy. I wanted a life with him. I was all his. Even if he wanted to marry me then, I was so ready. I had nothing in me but love. I wanted him and given options I'd choose him over and over. Paul never fully trusted my love for him. Perhaps he thought I was too good for him. The insecurities he had had me thinking too hard. I had done nothing. Mere calls and messages from friends I had known before I knew him. Someone would like to think I was cheating. As a matter of fact I'd never cheat on that guy because I loved him enough not to do it. I had no space for anyone else in my heart. My friends knew I was with him. They knew I was taken and they were so happy for me. The thought that these friends were the ones who would break my relationship was so hurtful. I mean, he was all I had. Why couldn't he just see that? I slept with him in mind and woke up to him in my mind still. I had even forgotten about myself. I cared so much about him but it seemed the only way to prove that to him was to do away with all my male friends, or perhaps just save each of them with a feminine name. That was a little creepy. I hated lies; I still do. Am an honest lover. I say when I am hurt, I say when I am happy. I say when I feel like something is not fair. Paul wasn't like me. He was honest but again he always believed he was right. In his mind, no one could reason better than him. Even if he listened to me, he didn't really buy most of the things I had to say. This made me feel bad

about myself. My definition of cheating wasn't exactly going out with someone to have body contact with them. To me, cheating was in little things like changing my friends' names to a feminine name just to make Paul happy. I would give him the conversations to read for him to trust me, i would receive calls on loud just to make him believe me. These too never worked. He still wasn't fine with it. It is a bad disease to always think your opinion is right. Sometimes trying to see things in other people's perspective is also a win.

We broke up. I called for it but later realised I wasn't ready. Paul meant life to me. I couldn't live without him. He literally was a part of me. He had made me love him too much but I had to let him go. I cried myself to sleep each day. I wasn't myself. I could drink so hard, well, I began drinking because of him, to make myself forget him. Each time I sobered, he was the first thing on my mind. I still loved him but going back to that life was not a thing I wanted. I knew it was okay to love someone so much but still be strong enough to let them go. Truth is, I needed him more but I hated the torture my mind had to bear. Sometimes life jokes. Leaving him hurt me more than the torture I had with him. In short, I wasn't happy with or without him. I didn't know what to do with myself. Quitting came to him as a shock. He didn't see any valid reasons for me to leave. Again, he thought I was being hard on him. He knew he was the fairest guy on earth. He knew he was perfect; he knew to himself he was the best. My grievances were nothing because I did not know how these things went, well, according to him. He made me cry for weeks, months. Every day I hoped things would cool down and be better. I wanted nothing much. I just wanted to forget him, I couldn't. It was as if I was being punished for hurting him. Well, I know I deserved better.

I lost weight and developed ulcer complications. I was in and out of the hospital and my life just lost direction. I contemplated death a couple of times. I just felt tired of everything. It affected school and at that point I knew things were just terrible for me. I had tried everything I thought would help but nothing seemed to work. I remember several times praying to God and crying, asking him to heal my heart. I asked God to help me

forget Paul. You've never been in love if you've never had to go down on your knees to pray to forget someone. I tried every youtube suggestion on how to get over an ex or relationship. How to forget an ex you still love was all over on my tabs on the phone and computer. I was desperate. I stopped thinking and decided to just do life. I moved on while still hurting. I got a great guy. I knew from the first day that I was rebounding. I even told him I did not want anything serious because I had just left a relationship and I wasn't over it. He did not mind. He was fine with so much that I failed to understand why. He was way older than Paul, he was way way older than me. He was at the age where he wanted something really serious. He wanted to date for marriage. To him, I was a perfect woman. He was a yes man, he agreed to anything I said. I only needed him for distraction, I could not forget that. But again, I wasn't guilty because it was the first thing we discussed. I was still in school. The whole of my third year I was with this new guy, Ben. Ben was an awesome man. He was these people you meet and wonder why life is so unfair. He was well behaved. He loved for real. He reasoned with me. He would listen to me. He never hurt me. He was always just perfect. Ben gave me everything I needed. He took me out on expensive dates. He sacrificed everything to please me. I had hiccups with my schooling. He was there for me. I remember this one time when I had to call off a semester and he came through. He wanted to pay my school fee which wasn't a few coins. My fee was on the high end. He never minded. He did not want me to call off. He knew I loved school and I always wanted to achieve my dreams. He supported me fully. He asked me for my account number. He wanted to deposit a thousand dollars in there for me to sort out my fees and all. I was so hesitant; I could not let him. Ben was a calm guy. Calling him a guy feels a little inappropriate, he was a calm man. He wanted the best for us. He did everything he could to make me happy. He even wanted me to meet his parents which I did. He had proved in every way that he was the best man for me. I hate lies. I hate to live a lie. Even after all that, I still could not love him enough to want a life with him. My mind was a little distracted but Paul was somewhere in there. I could still relapse. I wanted Paul. It got

so bad that even on very intimate occasions, I had to have Paul's image in my mind in order to enjoy. It was so bad that I couldn't love Ben half as much as he did me. I honestly wished I could find the spot for him. I wanted to belong to him. I wanted to make him happy but clearly, I could not. He knew I wasn't fully into him. It hurt him but each day he purposed to do things to make me happy. I never lacked when I was with Ben. I never wished for anything. Whatever it was, he would get it for me. He did everything possible but the heart wanted what it wanted. I again went back to God. This time I wasn't praying to forget someone. I wanted God to at least let me love Ben. I prayed that God would help me find something in him to love, just half as much as he loved me and to want him in my life just half the way he wanted me. Half would make so many things right. Half would bring so much great change. I wanted to put a smile on his face. This guy deserved to be happy. That's the time I realised the heart is a boss in the kingdom of love. I just couldn't. Maybe my prayers never reached God. I continued with this life for some time and no doubt, time came and I was worn out. I couldn't try harder. I had money. Ben gave me so much, much more than I needed. I bought everything I liked. I love shoes. I bought very many pairs of shoes. At some point I used to buy new shoes every day. Shoes made me happy. Apparently, they made me happier than Ben did. Poor man! Shoes could make me smile. Ben couldn't. I would avoid him because my mind wasn't with him. I knew I was being unfair but remembered I had warned him from day one. I decided to put an end to that. It was beginning to feel like I was taking advantage of his situation. I felt bad but it was for the best of us all. I would save him the burden of always trying. I would save myself from daily pretence. I let him go. He did not want me to but I left anyway. I did not know how to explain to him that I just couldn't love him. I went my way and life just became worse for me. Paul was my daily song. At this point, I had tried several times to reach him in vain. He had developed hate, real hate for me. I hurt him, I know, but why couldn't he see it from my perspective? He never forgave me, I still loved him anyway. I wondered what I had done to deserve so much hurt. I was only trying to be fair to everyone but the result was more

hurting. I regretted my decision a couple of times. I could hate in the morning but still cry myself to sleep and pray to get him back. None of my prayers were answered. I lost faith, I lost everything. I wanted nothing to do with love. I had hurt myself enough, this heartbreak that I had wished for one some time back. I made a decision to accept everything and live my life solely. I felt happier. I would watch movies and sleep. I focused more on school. I just lived like a normal person. I didn't want so much. I just loved to look okay, go to school and come back to watch and sleep. At this point I'd stopped eating. One light meal was enough for a day. I cut so much weight. I looked like a high school kid. I wasn't happy. I avoided the company of friends. I became a loner. I loved my family. Whenever I could, I went home. It was therapeutic being with family. My little brothers made me love myself a little. Whenever I went back to school, the story was the same. I hated life. I wanted nothing. I was feeling useless. I felt weightless whenever I walked. I felt so light. I was empty. I downlooked myself. I stopped believing in myself and I completely hated love. I decided to be celibate. I lost my will to live. I would find myself thinking of death. I wanted death so bad. I wanted to be done with everything. I didn't know why each day God breathed life in me. I am a writer. I write a whole range of things. I can write a novel, a novella, short stories, kid stories. I can write approximately anything. I can write about anything. I am gifted in this and I am also extremely wordy. Everytime I take a pen and a book, I exceed what I was to write, my diary is a witness. I always have the words to explain everything. Writing is my resort when a lot of things fall out of place. Writing keeps me busy and makes me forget about the little troubles in my life. Writing is like food for me. I can write anytime and anywhere. Just like nature walks, writing is equally therapeutic for me. In this dark moment. I resorted to writing. I picked up new projects and started working on them. It was the best decision ever. I got busy in meetings with other well-known authors. I was up and about most of the time. Since my country was introducing a new education system, there was so much change. More books were needed and yes, I was in the books project, only this time I was doing projects for grade four and five English

course books. I was super excited to be a part of such a wonderful movement. I was proud of myself. I was so taken up that I even forgot I once was troubled. I didn't have enough time to eat, I definitely had no time for stress. I used to get to my house late in the evening and was so tired. I would just freshen and fall into a deep sleep. In the morning I'd wake up, go to school and find time to go do my writing projects which went as far as taking up all my time. I missed classes on several occasions trying to beat the deadlines by the government. This was one of the most interesting things I've ever done.

One such day, after classes, I was heading to the campus gate to find my way to the publishing house I was working for. As I walked, all alone and dressed in my usual, with a slight improvement of boots and a leather jacket, a guy approached. He was looking at me. I put on glasses normally, which sometimes helps me look so focused hence many people fear me or that sort of thing. The guy is looking at me so hard he can't let me be. I am a very shy person but I totally know how to control it. Many people who know me would never agree that I am a shy person. In reality, I am one of the very shy fellows. I looked at the guy and for some reason he didn't look so new to my eyes. I had seen this guy somewhere; I just couldn't remember where. He was these medium sized guys with great looks. All the while I am just wondering why he's so glued. When I get a little closer, he says hi to me. My heart beats and I respond kindly. I hate to make people feel ignored. I usually try to make people feel comfortable around me. Apparently, this guy has seen me in class before. I later learnt he'd not seen me once or twice. He sort of knew me and had seen me a couple of other times away from class. Well, that was interesting because I am weird. I go to class alone, sit alone in a corner. I write my notes quietly and am among the first people to leave when class is done with. While others are busy hugging and laughing or making friends, whatever they do after class, I usually am halfway to my house or on my way to the publishing house. A guy like this telling me he's seen me severally sounded more amusing.

I wasn't sure what his intentions were so I was fine with the conversation going on. I was headed in the same direction as he so I couldn't excuse

myself just to walk by myself. Sometimes I miss this kind of company. We walked and the connection we had was magical. He asked what I do and when I mentioned writing he was thrilled. He loved writing and wanted to learn more about writing from me, which until now he hasn't bothered to ask a question about. As he was talking, I was looking at him closely and very indiscriminately. I looked everywhere. He was a very fine guy. If I was to describe I'd say perfect. He was a chilled guy; his looks were obviously the first thing someone would notice. He had this poise that's rare with campus guys. He was all composed and seemed to know what he wanted in this life. I have a thing about these composed men. He had had a very nice haircut and you can imagine how good he was looking. He was dressed in casual wear, a pair of jeans, a t-shirt with Chinese colors and a laptop bag hanging on one of his shoulders. He had on some sneakers and all in my favorite colours, shades of blue and white. He looked amazing. Just before I could become stupid again, I remember I am a focused girl with many projects to work on. I remember I need to guard my still healing heart. I remembered I was celibate and shut the evil-like thoughts racing across my mind. After a few minutes, it is time to part ways and the guy does the honors, he asks for my contact information which I gladly give to my new friend as I wait for the day when I'll be doing the honors of teaching him more about writing, a day that never came. Part of my heart likes this guy but the stronger one fights back. I want nothing to do with relationships of any kind. I want to be alone and am always designed to be alone. There is so much comfort in being all alone and doing things one's way. I enjoyed my company more. I loved life that way. Part of me was waiting for his call, part of me wasn't. On the evening of that day, nothing happened. The next day, the following, three, five, nine days, he never reached me and I totally forgot about his damn existence. Who does he think he is to keep me anxious all that while? In fact, I didn't need a man. Wait, as a matter of fact, I wasn't even waiting for his call that much! To hell with men.

Three weeks later, schools closed, I never saw the guy even on the streets of school. Students went home. I went home too for a short while before

coming back for the next semester. While at home, I had already forgotten about this guy but he resurrects from nowhere and sends me a text message explaining who he was. Well, I knew who he was because I had saved his mobile number when we first met. I just wouldn't call because I am told ladies don't make the first move, I don't know why. What if you really like the guy? What's wrong with being the first one to tell someone you like them? I mean, what's the worst that could happen? Anyway, we had a chat and it was so beautiful. He is a guy of his honors. He explained everything and why he was not able to reach me out all that time. I wanted to make him feel my pain but after such an explanation, I honestly had no words to suggest so. He wins all the time. We talked for several weeks and met for the first time as friends. I had the opportunity to hug him and feel his chest. I had the chance to feel his beard as he hugged me. I smelled his cologne and heard his deep voice right beside me. It was all beautiful and I hated myself for being so silly. How could I? I liked this guy. I don't want to say so much but he had a great personality which I really loved. Seems like he knew I liked him. He just wasn't sure because I was sending all the mixed reactions. I can't be cheap. Whenever he held my hands to tell me something deep, I froze. I couldn't maintain eye contact, looking at his lips made mine move, his watery eyes, I couldn't. Every single part of my body was reacting and betraying me at the same time. I am a strong girl who cares nothing about men, remember? Infact I can live without men and I want nothing to do with them. I am a superwoman, what a man can do a woman can do better and I was that woman. How come all this was happening to me? The problem is I associated every love story with heartbreaks. I had gotten my fair share and honestly, I wasn't in for another. I wanted friendship but was worried about how long it would last before it's destroyed again. I had to make it clear to him that we could be nothing more than friends, when he asked. He was again so fine with that. He was in for friendship but all the while his eyes were piercing through mine as though he was looking right into my brain. I liked him but there was so much to hold me back. I didn't want to be so vulnerable. I did not want to

be in a relationship. I mean, I wouldn't mind evening walks and coffee dates here and there but being in a relationship was a no.

Being the gentleman he was, he accepted and life carried on. He would meet me, at least twice a week. He was this intelligent guy who would well capture my attention when he talked. He would describe things in a beautiful way with lots of twists here and there. He was humorous as well, but this type who say something really funny but don't laugh themselves. Anytime I'd walk around with him, I was mostly in stitches for his artistic humorous self. I loved his choice of words. Well, I guess this guy really liked me. It was fine at first but that time I felt like this agreement wasn't supposed to be. When I said we could only be friends, I don't know if he understood but I meant, like we could, you know hang out, laugh, some little nothings. Anyway, it was my deal and if anything, I was the one to blame. He was faithful to his word. This guy talked a lot of sense to me. He was an optimistic person. He saw the best in everything. I opened up about my life and he was so calm. He made it look as if he already knew it and this made me have so many guesses. He would find a way each time we met to make me feel like I still matter. He made me feel that I wasn't all that useless after all. He stuck to the fact that a writer is always a great person. I never quite believed in myself and that writing thing but he made me start loving it. I started healing of the ulcers I had. Normally, I would have to take relcer gel every day because the ulcers would hurt at least once a day. It slowly went away. I started being happy. I started loving myself, I could eat better. I had lost my appetite for so long and I remember we could fight because of that. He always made sure I have two meals a day unlike before when I could just sip some juice and a slice of bread and be done for the day, which was equally bad for the ulcers. A lot changed in me. I became more responsible and even slowed down on drinking. He didn't force me to do anything, he just made sure he checked on me to make sure my mental state was fine. He knew it all. He knew the reason why I was pushing him away was because I had been hurt. He knew it and that's why he was taking it slow on me. I became what I can call a better version of me. I couldn't believe my eyes. I was positive about life and I started

feeling strong. I felt able enough to chase my dreams. I had this amazing support system and yes, life was worth living.

This guy reminded me of someone I knew. His kind of focus and straightforwardness reminded me of a person I knew. Sometimes he would explain something and use the exact words Paul would use back then. I don't know if I am making any sense at all but this guy is very like Paul only this time, with a twist of humour, listens and values my opinion. Well, sometimes he would just buy my ideas to make me happy and even help me implement them. When they backfired on me, he would then explain why I should have done things the other way. He made me believe in him. He never forced me to like him, it came automatically. I started being a little uncomfortable. Every day we would meet, this guy was so much into the friend's thing and it was all fine before but now it was becoming a problem. I was all along wondering why he wouldn't touch me before leaving. It had been fine before but don't you think he was being too uptight? On one of the days, we had very amazing conversations, I was all happy. We had a good time and I was beginning to think I liked him. I wanted him to try kissing me so that we could argue on how he's not being strict with the rules. I was feeling crazy. I wanted his touch then rant thereafter of how in disbelief I was. In the evening, he hugged me as usual and said bye. Once he was out of my house I literally cried. Why wasn't he trying to kiss me, or touch me at the least? Then I remembered I was the one who set the rules. I didn't want those rules any more. But how would I tell him that? I am a lady, I can never make the first move, I mean, I respect that but...

On the second occasion, we also had this great conversation and he was so happy. He was showing so much improvement from the past few days. He seemed to really like me. He would even sit closer than before. I knew this was the day. This guy was going to try to touch me. I was so ready, honestly. I wanted it and when evening came, a hug and a bye as usual. Now at this point this was no longer fun. I was so sure I didn't like it. I started having questions, was he seeing someone else? Was he just going to be purely friends with me? He was my best friend and all but, what is

my problem? Wasn't I beautiful enough to make him want to kiss me at least? What is wrong with me? What had always been okay started feeling really bad. I didn't want so much, I just wanted him to try. A day came, all was beautiful and everything just sounded romantic. It was so right that he took my hand, made me stand up. He held me as I had wanted. His head was right on mine. Our faces touched. He was literally speaking in my face. The environment was very conducive. Everything in nature was fighting for me. There was rain, we could see it through the window. The music was playing and the current song was a beautiful love song. Every little thing was in for this moment. It felt so right. He moved me closer, he held me tight, he spoke to me softly, softer than usual. His words were each fading at the end. His voice was so calming. He moved his beard down my neck, making his lips constantly touch mine. He held me so tight I couldn't feel my body anymore. His left hand was behind me, making the movements wherever he loved best. He was breathing hard yet softly. I was there not believing it finally came. I started losing breath and my breathing pattern changed. A few unusual sounds here and there. He held me, close enough to be in me.

"Onnes... Onnes!"

"Say my name babe."

Yes! I finally found love.



## Rejected

For a long time, I wanted to write this, to tell you my deepest sorrows, my failures, my regrets and above all, the miseries I've had to grow up in for being who I am. It is my hope that no one else will ever have to go through this kind of pain again.

My name is Jean. I am twenty-five years old. The reason why I have taken so long to write this sad story is partly for the very reason that it is sad and partly for the fact that I know no one cares to know a thing anyway.

When my mother conceived me, her very first reaction was annoyance. She was only twenty years old. Of course, she was too young to have a child and yet again too young to take the responsibility of a mother. I was then rejected by my own mother. My father, the man who was supposed to be my hero, on hearing about the pregnancy, he was furious. He was only twenty-one years old, again, too young to either be a father or take any responsibility that comes with being a father. Right there I was, rejected by the only two people who should have been my greatest pillars. Thankfully, I was only a clot of blood then. I didn't feel anything. My father and mother agreed to have me aborted. All that while I was there, coiled in blood and listening. My life was all tough already, yet I wasn't even out in the world. My father bought abortion pills, many of those he was told were

the very best, the very effective. He wanted no errors. He really wanted me out. I was listening. My mother, without a second thought, took them. I saw them coming directly at me. I was only but a clot of blood, yet unwanted already. None of the pills were able to send me out of the womb. I was firmly attached. I tried to hold on, but now I wish I didn't.

After several attempts, my mother gave up. I heard a doctor tell her that it was unsafe to try abortion so many times. I wonder why she had to put in so much effort. I wonder why it was so bad for a person like me to be given a chance to live. A foetus needs its mother's permission to be a child. Unlike many of your cases, my own mother worked so hard each day, to deny me the chance to live. I was devastated but fought on. My father fled when I was almost getting to the world. My mother was left all alone, to fight for a kid she did not get all alone. I was there, every day, listening. It is probably why I don't speak as much, even today. All I do is listen.

The day came, my big day. I came to this world. I wasn't as happy as the other children, I was sad. I felt unwanted already. My mother held me. It was the first time I saw her face and she had tears all over. I like to believe that she was happy and that those were tears of joy. I like to believe that she was regretting why she wanted to abort such a beautiful child. I like to believe that, maybe, she was asking me for forgiveness. Well, I now know she was only annoyed, more annoyed than before. She looked at me, an innocent child. She carelessly put me on the bed beside her. She was not pleased at all. I was the imperfect child. I wasn't what she wanted. I was never enough in her eyes from the very beginning. Other kids had all their bodies intact. My right eye was sick. I could only see using one eye, the doctors said. My frustrated mother became even more angry. She would look at me in awe and for the second time I knew I was never safe in her hands. What would I do? I was helpless, desperate in my own mother's hands. This was the person who was supposed to fight for me, to love me or at least accept me the way that I was. This was the person I was to rely on my entire life, yet she was upset by the very fact that I was there. I wish

I didn't hold on too long. I would never have had to see her annoyed face every day. I'd rather have died as a clot. Here I was, human and suffering in innocence. I didn't choose to be born this way. I would have wanted to be whole like everyone else, the perfect humans.

As a young child, I fought for attention. I fought for even the things which other kids are given without asking. I had to fight to be fed. I was young, but always in tears. I wished I didn't have to rely on my mother for so long. I was a burden to her. She says I looked exactly like my father. Well, when I look at his photos, the only thing I can call a father, I see the resemblance. I look just like him, except both his eyes could see. I was ugly, my mother would say. She hated me, she humiliated me. She even denied me food sometimes. I can't count the number of times her hand was raised at me. Her voice, which made me feel tiny and horrified. I can't count the number of times I felt cold but could not ask for a sweater because my mother would raise her voice at me and shut me before I could say anything. I was nothing in her eyes. I was just but a baby, I am sure I deserved better.

Growing up was my worst part. I could finally speak. I could communicate with the people around me. I came to learn that I was staying in my grandmother's house. I wasn't the only grandchild there. There were three of us, of the same age. I tried to be a good child. I did what I could to please anyone. My mother was still very disgusted. She hated everything I did. She hated when I could ask for her help when I couldn't see clearly. She hated talking to me. She hated my very presence. I didn't have her permission to be alive.

In my grandmother's house, all the other kids were treated differently. They would play. They were bought for toys. They could be held in the arms. They went out for nature walks, they ate the very best of everything that there was in the house. Having learnt and known my position in that house, I would never touch food unless I was asked to. I would never use the toys unless I was allowed to. I could not go out of the house unless my mother

asked me to. I was a lonely kid. I only waited for commands to do anything. I always had my face in my hands. I wondered. Why was I so much unwanted?

Whenever visitors would come around, I was always locked in the bedroom. I was never to be seen by people. I was a disgrace. I deserved to be hidden. I was old enough to realize that I was the only one who's hidden when visitors came. At some point I had so much mastered this that I would automatically run to the bedroom when a new person came around. I was a shame, an embarrassment. I still am. I would hide there all the hours that the visitor would stay. Sometimes when the visitor was spending a night there, I had to pretend to be unwell. I would sleep or pretend to be asleep until the visitor left. I felt sad, I would cry for so long. I would question myself at so young an age. I was never given a chance to be a child. I had to grow up already, and behave like older people.

My cousins were the better children. They were given the first priority in everything. They got everything when it was at its best. As for clothes, I never got to wear new clothes. I would be given the old ones from my cousins whenever new ones were bought for them. My one eye was my biggest undoing. Maybe if I was normal like everyone else, just maybe then I'd be accepted. Time came for school and as always, I was ready and really looked forward to that. I wanted to have a chance to go away from the compound. I wanted to know how it felt like to leave the house and interact with other people out there. I wanted to know if I would be accepted anywhere else. I craved attention. I craved love. I just wanted to know how it felt to be a child.

When I got to school, everyone was looking at me. Teachers kept me waiting. My mother hated that. I was admitted to the school last yet I had arrived earlier than most people. The other kids looked at me, horrified. They looked at me as though I was a scarecrow. I was happy to finally come out of the house but that very moment I started wishing otherwise.

The other kids were held by the hand by their parents. They looked so happy. I was there, with my mother, who was trying all she could to make it look like I wasn't with her. I understood. I was old enough. I gave her space. I sat a little far away from her. I was literally all alone. I felt worthless. I felt abused. I just didn't know what to do. I had so long gotten used to just being on my own. I couldn't ask my mother to buy me sweets like the other kids. Her anger filled eyes, the roar in her voice and her strong hand which would always raise to fight me, I could not. All I saw in her eyes was rage. I wanted my peace, it was only in my silence. In body, I must have been the tiniest child in the school. My blind eye always had tears coming out of it. My handkerchief was pinned on my sweater and I'd struggle all I knew to fix myself, something that I now know a mother is supposed to help her child do but I wasn't adequate. Anyway, I had done it for as long as I can remember. My teachers treated me as if I was some kind of an outcast. The kids feared me. When they walked in pairs, I was ever alone. I played alone. I was this tiny, lonely kid who didn't know why the world had to be so cruel. I was useless, clearly from what I had seen through all that time.

The teachers concentrated on the bright kids and those who were all intact. I cannot remember any of my teachers asking me whether I had understood a concept but I definitely remember the many times I was asked out of the class. I remember the many times I had to be the kid who emptied the dirty class dustbin. I remember so well. I can vividly remember how the other kids would laugh at me. I was always embarrassed. I felt ugly. Thankfully, I had gotten used to that treatment from back at home. I would be the kid to erase the board. I was always the one to clean the teacher's desk. I knew my roles and I was punctual to do them before anyone asked. I was used many times as a bad example. I can never forget this one time when a teacher used me as an example of what a monkey looked like. I was that ugly, everyone laughed at me. I was hurt. I would cry but no one cared. Even in class, I was the only kid who sat all by myself. The other kids gave

me a distance so that I could not share their books or touch their anything lest they became blind like me.

I grew bigger. I learned to fight for myself. I would offer to do so many of the house chores, to get validation from my mother, the ultimate authority. All I was asking for was a little acceptance. All I needed was a little sympathy. I could wake so early. My mother never had to wake me to go to school. I took a bath all by myself, so that I could be used as a good example, at least once. It never happened. I was told good kids help their parents in cleaning the table after eating. I did all you can want to imagine. None of these things made me good enough. I wasn't asking to be the best, I was only asking for acceptance. I wanted to be part of the family. I wanted just one person to be proud of me, my mother. Like always, she was more and more disgusted by my very existence. The world is cruel for those who don't have a mother but it is even more cruel when you have one who always regrets having you in her life.

My mother got married. She wanted to leave me at my grandmother's place. My grandmother said she had enough burden already, which easily translates to, I was another burden. I had to go with my mother. I remember, one day when she told me that she had contemplated throwing me into the river on her way to her new home. I cried then but now I wish she did. My mother never changed. When we got there, my step father was the only person who thought I deserved something. He is the only person I remember who made me feel as if I was enough, as if I mattered. It was short lived but I am grateful I got to feel that way. When my mother got another child, I became the bug itself. Everyone wanted to step on me. I was nothing. I meant nothing to everyone.

I would be made to do a lot of things that other kids my age didn't have to. I was the one taking care of the home. I would be left alone at times, to do all the chores including cooking. I struggled with my one eye. I never got approval. I was the empty kid throughout and all over. The new school was

even worse than the other one. I was the school outcast, known by everyone. I was always the last one to be given food even in school. My life was the same everywhere.

My childhood deformed me. Like every other victim of abuse, I never stopped hoping for some kind of forgiveness. I wanted to be forgiven, for the huge mistake I had done. I wanted to be human. I feared everyone. I was this little thing, worthless. I was a burden to everyone. All I needed was a little kindness, a little love, a little encouragement and a little friendliness. Unfortunately, I was never fit for this.

The words people said about me would hurt so deep. They had no feelings, no emotions. I had to endure all that shame. I was constantly ashamed and it soon became a part of me. I felt powerless in front of my own mother, the person who was supposed to be my protector and source of strength. Her hateful words, the insults, the mistreatment and the curses she hurled at me, i felt little. I finally accepted my life but even in that, these things had done me so much incalculable inner harm. I knew no peace.

As I became a big girl, I suffered from the trauma I had undergone as a child. I felt small, embarrassed at my mother's sight. The huge woman, my mother, my ultimate authority had made me hate my existence. I hated everything about me. Every day I woke up crying. I was helpless. I had no friends. I was all I had. My siblings grew and repeated everything I had already gone through. No one wanted to be associated with me. My mother would on occasions introduce me to her friends as her distant cousin. My mother was in fact so happy that finally I was getting out of her sight. I was going to be away and on my own, in college. I was worried. In college, I never had enough but I had no one to ask. People called home whenever they needed more money for making their hair, buying food and all that. I was feeble, I had so little yet I couldn't call. Well, I would have wanted to try, I did. My mother did not pick any of my calls for the rest of that semester. I got used to it. My phone was as useless as that. No one called

me. No one cared to know how I was doing. I was always in my own small world; tortured, broken, bruised and scotched by life. I did not and even now, I do not understand why I have had to go through all these. I was told that church was where I could find acceptance. I tried but came out more broken than I already was. No one wanted to sit with me. I don't know if my eye smelled but at that point I could not help but think it did. I sat all alone. Every new person was introduced on the pulpit except for me. They looked at me as if I was some kind of horror movie. The church did not accept me, which easily translated as, God too had rejected me. I was lonely. I had no life. I just wanted to lose it all. It was a hundredth time I contemplated killing myself. What good would I ever amount to?

Dear mother, I am sorry for causing you all this pain and shame. If it was in my power, I would have chosen to be a perfect child. I don't understand why you let me go through all this by myself. I didn't do anything to deserve this kind of hate from you. You were never there for me, even the times that I needed you the most. I needed you to help me be a girl. I needed you to help me learn those basic things. I wish i was fit for your attention. I can't help but remember the day I started my menses. This is the only time I thought you would find a place to forgive me and be there for me, you didn't. I struggled with my naivety, learning things by myself. I asked google whenever I needed to learn something a mother should have taught me. YouTube mothered me. I cried amidst all that, all the while wishing I could be worth your love for a second. I never met your expectations as a child. I never will as an adult. Whenever I walked with you to school, you would always ask me to walk behind you. I did, because that is where I belong, behind. My grades deteriorated because no one cared to know how I was doing in school. Whenever parents were asked to come to school, you found all reasons not to. You were ashamed of me. I was the only child who was always looking desperate. The teachers took advantage and handled me the worst way possible. I wish you would fight for me. I wish you would stand there by my side. I wish you were my strength. Just then, maybe my teachers would have treated me like everyone else. I wish

teachers knew their place in a student's life. I wish they knew what their words mean to someone for many years to come. I wish they knew the impact their words and acts of hate have had on me. I wish i wasn't insulted by my own teacher. I just wish everything was different. I was too demotivated to even try.

Dear mother, whenever you were serving food. You always served me last, after everyone had had their best portion. I was that useless to you. You never looked at me as a deserving being. You never cared about the amount of hate and pain you inflicted on me. I lived, under your mercy. I suffered under your mighty self. I remember how I would correct you whenever you called me blind. I would cry out and tell you that I can see. I would even go ahead to point at things; this is a cup, it's green in colour. This is a tree, it has leaves, this is a chair, it is blue in colour. Mother, all I was doing was to show you that I wasn't blind after all. In my mind I thought, if I showed and named everything right, you would notice that I wasn't blind and start loving me like you did my siblings. You never embraced me. For all I know, you wanted me dead from the very first day. I hope that by the time you get to read this, your heart will be at ease. I hope that you will be happier in life without me. I am glad that you will never have to suffer because of me. I am old enough to live my life. It would have been easier if I was a total orphan, except I was.



## **The cry of Kafria**

In the middle of the two mountains, lay a beautiful region called Duena. I must say it was one of the most gorgeous regions of the world. The immense beauty of this land attracted lots of people from all over the world. To begin with, the beautiful scenery; this place was between two huge mountains. Each of the mountains had a waterfall and so, from Duena, the clear unpolluted sky allowed for this amazing view. On the other side of the other mountain, there was a huge animal park. All types of animals amongst them the rarest of species. It was a very attractive scene for both internal and external tourists.

Duena was a peaceful place. People loved one another and would treat each person like family, after all, that is what they were. They had among them this sense of brotherhood that was a big plus for Duena. Be a brother's keeper, was the order of the day. Unlike all the other nations of the world, Duena was ruled by Were, the god of the sky. Political rivalries was a vocabulary they had never encountered except in stories. Were, was in charge of everything; water, food, healing, security and all human needs. Were, was their overall in all things. It was peaceful. When one looked up in the sky, there was a Mkango, the arrow of power. It was hanging down right from the sky. The person who held the Mkango was believed to be supreme and in power. This person assumed control of Duena. Since it was hanging from the sky, it was only to mean that Were, was in power of

Duena. The people of Duena were calm and collected about this. They never complained because it was the fairest that there ever could be. News of the other nations fighting for power sounded like a mystery, a nightmare they all dreaded, or so they thought. They never understood why someone would think they could be in place to rule better than god. To them, this was ridiculous and they did not approve of it so they never let anyone take the mkango to rule. No one would be interested even so, or so the majority thought. When they needed food or water, it was just simple, you go where the mkango, arrow is, kneel down with hands raised, offer a sacrifice and send your prayer. If the smoke went up straight, your prayer was accepted by Were and when you got home, there you would find all foods ready in the shamba. Duena was also a communal type of place. Nobody owned anything. The shamba belonged to Were just like every other thing. When food was ready in a place, anyone was free to harvest some for their families. There were no rules and individual ownership. It was communal working on the farms, communal food, community fruits, community water and so on. They were happy and satisfied with their lives.

One day, some visitors came and were surprised with the remoteness and backwardness of the people of Duena. All the peace, love and harmony in Duena they termed as backward. A god ruling such a beautiful land was ridiculous. The visitors tried to initiate conversations to lure the people of Duena into the system of human leadership but the people disagreed in unison. They were a very united people and no one was ready to betray Were and the people of Duena. The visitors took away one of the people and talked him into accepting the 'cult'. They had chosen the one who looked greedy and easy to lure. He agreed to betray the land at a fee. He would be the first one to ever own a modern house made of stone and cement. He would be the first one to use a car, the wheeled house as was known by the people of Duena. He would also be given clothes for him and his family, modern foodstuffs and someone to teach him and his family a different language so that they could clearly communicate with the external people. He was also introduced to money and how it works magic. Msango was a selfish guy and he always wanted to look like the people

from the outside world. He could not afford to miss this opportunity that he had for a long time been waiting for. However, he was scared to do it for the rejection, hostility and ridicule that he would face from his people. The visitors took care of that. They taught him how to use a gun. They then gave him a whole chain of ammunition and a gun to use if the people decided to fight him. He was pleased and ready to betray his people. He assembled all the people and told them what he was about to do.

The people made a lot of noise to disagree. They told him that anyone who betrays his people is an enemy and a threat to the people plus he was to automatically be seen as an outcast. They asked him to leave and never to come back. He used the gun to fire in the air. The whole multitude fell down for the shock; they had never heard something so scary before. He asked them all to listen to him. He pardoned his ambition to rule Duena and asked anyone who was opposing him still to go to the front. All the people were afraid, no one wanted to oppose but clearly, they were not for his opinion. One of the oldest men who apparently was his grandfather, stood and headed to the front. He was given a chance to talk himself out on behalf of his people. He explained to Msango the customs, beliefs and traditions of the people of Duena. He told him the disadvantages of having a human ruler. Msango was too blinded by the offers to see the point of the old man. As he went back to the crowd, the people cheered him for the courage to speak for them. One young man also got the courage and went to the front, he raised his voice and said;

“Dear old men and women of Duena, our fathers and mothers, brother and sisters, I must say that am very much disappointed in my brother, Msango . During our circumcision ceremonies, these are the very things that we were warned against; being used by anyone to ruin our own community. It is a taboo, unheard of. I knew people could be unreasonable sometimes but Msango this is beyond. I am even ashamed to call you a brother. You do not deserve to be living among us. You have decided your fate and therefore you must leave the land or else someone will have to shed blood. We cannot demolish what we have built for ages just in a flash of a second because one person, one irrational person who decided to empty his head.It

is no wonder you were named Msango; trouble maker.” He said as he walked towards the crowd.

“Empty head you said?” Asked Msango, rage boiling within him and his voice tense.

Msango fired the gun. He shot the young man’s leg. He fell down. All the people were in total shock and despair. They could not believe their eyes. It was a taboo for a kinsman to attack his fellow kinsman. They did not understand what had become of Msango. He had always been a good boy. These things were too hard to believe. It was the nightmare of the day. Most of them gave up on Msango because they didn’t want to die. They resolved to let him do as he pleased. Some others thought of the harm it would cause all of them and decided to fight Msango. That fight ended in Msango winning. It was a battle of the weak against the strong one. Fighting with stones against a bullet was too much desperate a measure. They let him be and hoped he regretted that decision all his life. He took the mkango and suddenly things started changing. A very loud thunder hit the ground, the people got really scared. It had never in life happened, thunder and lightning in broad day? The gay sky became unclear, as though it was misty. From Duena, the two water falls could no longer be seen. The sky was dirty. A strong wind came, howling so hard that people got scared and, on their knees, crying. It soon calmed, but it had damaged Msango's shirt. It split his shirt into two, his chest was all out. It was over! His trousers split too, strong modern trousers indeed. To his disbelief, none of the villagers' local garments made from the so-called backward animal skin, fur and sisal by the so-called backward sewers was touched. They were still dressed unlike him, his manhood all over.

After many years of him being in power, a lot changed. People became selfish in all aspects. There was no love any more. Greed was the second name to most people. The communal ownership of Duena was no more. The visitors had come in in large numbers like never before. They had taken away land from the people of Duena leaving many of them homeless and helpless. For the very first time in life the people of Duena knew what hunger was. They missed the old days. They had to work so hard on the

'visitors' lands' in order to get at least a meal to keep their families going. It was bad. They worked under the hot sun, hotter than had ever been. They worked under strict supervision, it was bend! bend! Anyone who stood upright was whipped regardless of age, gender or physical abilities. They were all treated as beggars, that is all they were anyway, courtesy of the trouble maker. Beggars on their own land!

One time after being whipped on the fields, an old man decided to take his life away. He was tired of being hopeful, hopeful that one day things would change and Duena go back to how it used to be. Hopeful that reason would hit Msango hard and let him stop his 'madness'. Before he threw himself down the water fall, he lamented.

"Oh Were, the god of the sky, why have you abandoned us? What much did we do to deserve such punishment. Oh Were, my lord. Look at your people, all toiling in pain to get food, something you gave us all for free. Our land has changed for the worst. Msango has killed us. We are no longer the Duena we used to be. No humanity. People now treat dogs better than fellow humans. Who bewitched Msango! They said our ways were backward, is this the frontness they presumed? They started with the schools. They teach a different language than the one we speak here, they say their's is classy. Then I asked myself, isn't the purpose of any human language just one, communication? Is it that we were not communicating enough? Then they brought these gadgets. They walk around feeling as if they are all knowing , in the name of weather forecasting. Who said we did not know how to predict weather? Our land had people who could predict weather throughout the year without going wrong a single time. We even had rainmakers like myself. In the morning they say sunlight is expected then moments later it is raining all over. Is this the frontness they meant? All my years I only knew traditional foods. We only had two things, it was either food or poison. It either made you strong or killed you. There was not this in-between kind of thing. They have brought their foods with lots of in-betweenness. If you eat too much of this, it is dangerous for your health. If you get too little of this, it will affect you. I miss my women's foods. I miss the way my ninth wife would sway her hips around as she

brought me the deliciously made traditional cassava and a guard of milk. The food they call sweet to me is a horrible punishment. It doesn't hold the stomach. I feel hungry even while eating. Some of us have developed complications from such foods, we do not even know how to explain what we are suffering from, strange illnesses. What bothers me more is that they came with medicines, medicines which fail to treat some of the illnesses they created themselves. They call our medicines quack, but whose is more quack? Our herbs cured all the diseases that there existed here. Our women can no longer keep a marriage because they emulate the ways of the new people, how they talk and carry themselves. They no longer know how to address their men. I hear young men say there are no women to marry while there are actually more women than men on this land. Our women say they upgraded, I can no longer identify my granddaughters by face. They have mixed flour with other things and put on their faces. Yesterday they looked like soil, today they look like white tea and who knows tomorrow they might be milk itself. The short skimpy skirts they wear, thighs hanging all over. There is a reason why good wine is kept in a closed bottle and bad wine exposed to the air. Their lips, you don't want to know. They suddenly became blood lickers. Oh my daughters! My sons too forgot who they are. They have been obsessed with the love of power forgetting the power of love. They now meet over these drinks that taste nothing like our local brew, busaa. The new one smells like donkey urine. It tastes like tears. Duena men can now do approximately anything to get to power, even if it means killing everyone else. Mysterious deaths, people disappearing for life and such, things old Duena never knew. The freedom of speech is simply a theory, in practice it is a crime. Do I really have to eat pizza if what I want is a whole calabash of porridge? What hurts me most is the new god they brought. Who said we never had a god? Didn't we use to pray on the mountains and offer sacrifices to Were for good will of our people? What is different about this new god? Isn't he the same one who created us? A rich man takes money to church leaving his very poor neighbour begging on the streets. Is it too backward when I choose to help the beggar first, save a life then pray later? It is the fight between religion

and humanity. To the best of my knowledge and experience, humanity is the best religion and that will live on.

We can no longer welcome a tired stranger into our homes. They are the most dangerous people existing today. There is no longer trust, because we welcomed and now we are reaping the fruits of such lost kindness. The tears I am shedding; the fruits of kindness. We should have known better to treat a stranger. All these things would not be happening. Old men like myself only cried when a child was named after them. Now we cry all the time. What kind of curse was bestowed upon us? The air is no longer as fresh, the land is no longer as compound and beautiful as it used to be. It is big holes and depressions all over. Trees are now just a bunch, our animals suddenly fear humans. We used to walk past lions and hyenas very peacefully. The elephant was one of the best friends to humans. It is no longer, because they have seen humans kill them. They then called them wild animals. I do not agree, they were never wild until the wildness was instilled in them. They are fed with things that make them rapid their growth. How do you expect normalcy when you interrupt the normal? Those who know how to read, write and speak the visitor's language are regarded the most important people in the society. The grand mothers and fathers who instilled morals are now called illiterate and useless. The little the poor have is taken away and given to the rich, the law itself is corrupt. Who have I to fight for me? Were, was, is and still will be the best ruler, " Kafria spoke with finality and threw himself in the water. A black Friday.



## **Transverse Through Nairobi**

Every time I look at myself in the mirror I wonder, what is life? What will I ever amount to? This has been one of the saddest sentences to come out of my mouth this year. 2021, I am grown, at 25 years of age, I feel like I need so much more. I automatically feel the urge, the need to be successful. When I look back home, the first born of six, all eyes are on me. They have high hopes in the daughter they have educated for so long. My brothers and sisters look at me and they see hope. They live deep in the heart of the village but even in there lies a hope that one time their sister, yours truly, will one day be able to help them become better in life. It breaks my heart every single day in the city. I have been in Nairobi for a long time. I came to Nairobi because of school but it eventually became home, unwillingly. I have been in Nairobi since 2016 and the lessons here are immense. There's a lot to celebrate yet a lot more to cry about. I have been in all the dark corners of this city life and I would understand how a person finds themselves in the streets, homeless. Nairobi is a big name. To the villagers at home, anyone in Nairobi is automatically successful. Needless to say, the expectations rise as long as you still live in Nairobi. A normal day in the city is waking up worried, someone would ask why. In the city, we wake up worried about everything. First, you get out of bed and check the mobile phone to see whether anyone called to check up on you, whether someone mistakenly sent some money to your mobile wallet. You then

wake up, disappointed at getting none of those. You get out of bed to check the electricity, it will be a lucky day to find the units still in shape. You proceed to check the water. Maybe or maybe not, it is a lucky day for you. There's water, electricity and maybe, just maybe some food for you to take. In Nairobi, we don't choose what or what not to eat. In Nairobi we eat what's available. This is however the common mwananchi in question. I hear some people in the same city eat with a bigger spoon. That to me would mean I finish my food faster. After munching on whatever you found, it is time to worry about what the day will look like. You have to be cautious of how you'll walk around in town to be safe and avoid being robbed because overtime theft in the city is also a career. You get worried about the boda boda man who will carry you to the bus stop. You have no slightest idea of who he is, whether or not he is safe for you. You are constantly in suspicion of everyone and everything that seems to look at you. Luckily, he gets you safe to the bus stop. You pay him and it is a good day as he accepts the fifty shillings you gave for the ride. On a bad day, he'd ask for more because when it's raining or chilly, the motor bike consumes more fuel, presumably. The bus comes, you are among the first to board and immediately start worrying about where to sit. You want to make sure you get the best seat to be safe. Seats near the window are not always the best as they attract too much phone theft. Seats at the back could also not be the best as they are mostly the worst when it's time to drop down the matatus. In Nairobi, we don't alight, we jump out of a moving bus so in case you didn't know, be flexible or else you'll never board another bus. If you sat at the back, you start your math and algebra calculations to make sure by the time the bus seems to halt you'll be dropping down already. That is normal math in Nairobi. Other than that, there is also the need to be constantly checking your mobile phone throughout the journey just to be sure you'll still be the owner by day end. The person seated next to you is always a potential thief. In Nairobi, thieves are dressed more smartly, it is very hard to tell whether they are going to the office or they are already at their offices. The struggle continues. As you make it happily out of the matatu, you want to be sure

the conductor gives you your balance in time. It has to be the biggest challenge any person faces in the city. The conductors will ask for the bus fare but giving back balance will continue to be the hardest thing on earth. This is even more sad when you have given him your biggest note. A thousand shillings in this economy and day is too much money. All the way, that's all you will think about. Your head blocks every other crucial thought in order to make time for this one. Once the conductor gives your balance, and in full, it is another lucky moment. It is time to get to the sidewalks and meet all kinds of people. Some have no idea where they are headed, some are there to steal, some are mourning the loss of their phones and purses, some are not disturbed at all by anything. They walk slowly, some too fast as though they are going to save a life. The city life is messed up. Some scream but a real nairobiian will never dare to look in that direction. In Nairobi we mind our own businesses. When we see someone being kidnapped or being stolen from, we run away to avoid being a victim. The tricks people use to steal are advanced in both plan and strategy. The thieves are not the common illiterate people we knew. The thieves are learned and they are even sometimes the people we trust the most, for example, the preachers. In Nairobi, i will pardon, everyone is questionable. Genuine is rare and when need be, it is safer to trust no one at all. In fact, that's the biggest lesson I've learnt so far, trust only yourself. After successfully alighting at the bus stop, you confidently walk to the office where you saw a job advertisement. You are looking for a job and have not the slightest idea of how things will turn out to be. In the city, hope is a must have. We still hope. Getting to the gates is a problem as the gatesman wants something for his stomach. The poor you, of course well dressed for the first impression's sake, lifts some coins and buys him tea. He lets you in and there you meet a very ugly looking receptionist. She looks as though she has been fighting all night. She is rude and angry at you as though you know each other from the days of way back. She is supposed to make you feel relaxed and set for the interview but she's the one who makes you question your doubts more. She leads you, unwillingly, to the secretary for more directions. The secretary is thrice as bad as the receptionist. This is a

hell of a day already. She handles you like the little piece of shit that you are. She sees nothing in you. She already knows your future and is sure you'll amount to nothing at all. She sends you almost crying to the office of the manager and there you are. Another disappointment awaits. The manager looks at your curriculum vitae while on a very important call. He talks to his wife or dear ex, they chat how, when and where they will meet next while he goes through your curriculum vitae. When he hangs up, he sips on his coffee and tells you that he has seen your CV and will get back to you on call. Remember, in the city we hope amidst every impossibility. You walk away rather tired and unsure of things. You have to go back to your house and see what will become of you. In your mind, your family is all eyes on you. They have a hope that you will make it. Your making it is important for them because you are the only connection they have. They have no idea of how much pain you go through every day in the hope of making it for them. They said school was the key to success. After school, most of the padlocks changed their keys and now there you are, afraid, frail and in constant heart attacks of what is next for you. You stand at the Archives for a little longer to wait until the bus fare goes down. You then board and the bus leaves. Everyone in the bus is quiet. They are mostly absent minded. Nairobi people are drained. They are always in deep thoughts. The question is always, how will i make it? It is not uncommon to talk to the person next to you and they don't hear a thing. It is not uncommon to tap on someone and they shoot up as though from a huge slumber. Some are thinking about the rent that is due, some are thinking about their children who've been sent out of school for fees. Some are headed to the morgue, to see their dead relatives who need to be transported to the village for burial. Some of them have not eaten in days. No one will tell you this on a bus ride. We all have to look good and pretend as if all is well. Deep down there's rage, suffering, tears and uncertainty. Nairobi is draining. The life of a normal Nairobi young person is hard. It is hard to make it if you are not in crime or any other shady deals. This is the absurd truth of life in the city. I hope one day, the narrative changes, dear Nairobi.