MARCH 2026 EDITION

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WRITERS SPACE AFRICA



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The best of African Literature

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

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Magazine

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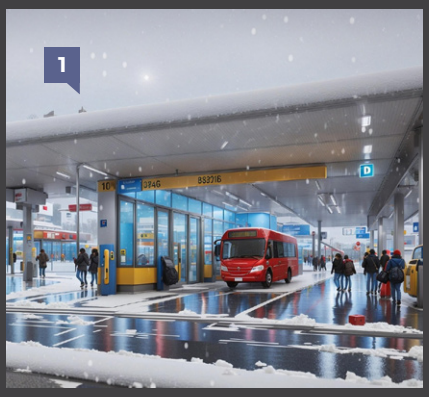
In this edition, Lise interviews Abdulrazaq Godwin Omeiza, a Nigerian writer whose voice continues to gather remarkable momentum across genres. At just seventeen, Omeiza balances literary ambition with student leadership, serving as Head of School at Government College Ibadan while steadily building a growing portfolio of publications and accolades.... 34

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This month's picks

Every month, our editors select their favourite entry which would be given the 'editor's choice' badge. This badge symbolises excellence. Here are the picks chosen by our editors for this edition.







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From the Chief Editor

- Comfort N.A Okyere, Ghana



Welcome to March, 1st quarter almost done. A clear indication that time and tide wait for no man and we must avoid procrastination at all costs. We must ensure that as each day passes by, we are gradually working towards our daily, weekly, monthly and yearly goals. In this edition, we are embracing the enchanting theme of MAGIC, and we invite you to join us on this spellbinding journey. As you flip through these pages, you will discover stories that will transport you to realms of wonder, where dreams are woven into reality and the magic of human connection knows no bounds.

Magic is more than just an illusion; it is an art form that awakens the imagination and stirs the soul. It is about finding the hidden threads that weave our lives together and pulling them into the spotlight. In our feature stories, we will delve into rich African literary craft, exploring the dedication, creativity, and perseverance that fuel the art of our cherished writers. From the history of magic to its future, you will uncover the secrets that make the impossible, possible. Get ready to be dazzled by the wonders that await you in this edition.

To our talented writers and dear readers, we say; keep the magical spark of African literature alive! Your stories have the power to transport, to transform, and to inspire. Writers Space Africa is truly honored to be your platform, and we encourage you to keep pushing the boundaries of what is possible. Cruise through these tales of magic, and enjoy a tapestry of wonder that will leave a lasting impression.

In the spirit of magic, we invite you to immerse yourself in these pages and find the magic within. As you turn the last page, may you be left with a heart full of awe and a mind full of wonder. Until next time, stay enchanted and keep believing in the impossible becoming possible.

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

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THEME
A WALK WITH DEATH

Writers Space Africa (WSA) invites entries for its 113th issue (May 2026 Edition). We welcome: Children's Literature, Creative Nonfiction, Flash Fiction, Poetry, and Short Stories.



NOMSA'S MAGICAL THINKING

Mmabatho Motaung, South Africa

Nine year old Nomsa was not happy.

Her mother had just told her that they would be visiting her grandmother in Nelspruit.

'Again!' Nomsa shouted.

'Mama,' she said, 'you know I don't like traveling to Nelspruit, all the buses going there are skorokoros!'

"We will just have to pray that we don't get a skorokoro this time, " Mama smiled.

'Your grandmother is not feeling well, Nomsa. That is the reason we have to go and see her again.'

Nomsa felt sad that Gogo was not feeling well because she loved her very much, but she still hated going to Nelspruit.

I wish that the buses would be on strike so that Mama would cancel the trip, Nomsa thought.

True to her thoughts, when they arrived at the bus station, there were no buses.

It was empty.

Mama asked the man who was sweeping the street if he knew what was happening to the buses.

'Haven't you heard, my sister,' said the man, 'buses are on strike since this morning.'

'Oh, no!' Mama said, what are we going to do

now?

Nomsa smiled but she did not want Mama to see that she was relieved.

She could not believe that her thoughts came true.

'Oh well, Nomsa,' Mama said, 'we will just have to catch a taxi then.'

Nomsa could not believe what Mama had just said.

The taxi they were in was a skorokoro, worse than the buses.

I wish this taxi would just stop, she thought.

True to her thoughts, the taxi came to an abrupt stop.

'Yho!' shouted the passengers, 'what is happening?'

'Eish,' the driver said, 'a flat tyre and I do not have a spare wheel!'

Nomsa smiled. She was happy again.

Surely Mama would see that this was all such a bad idea and they would return home.

Her happiness did not last long.

She soon realized that they were stuck in the middle of nowhere.

They had not even stopped at a garage yet.

She was very hungry.

Nomsa cried, but Mama did not have anything for her to eat.

No one in the taxi had food.

The driver made a phone call for assistance, so they waited.

The wait felt like the hours she spent with Mama at church, it felt endless.

I wish the driver would fall sick, so that when help comes, we could go home! She had another thought.

Help eventually arrived and the taxi was fixed, but the driver suddenly had an upset



stomach.

'I am sorry,' the driver said to the passengers, 'I am going to ask my assistant to take you back to the taxi rank.'

'Hawu!' said the passengers, 'So much time wasted!'

Nomsa's spirit was lifted.

Surely, there was no way they were going to take another taxi to Nelspruit, not unless her mother gets another crazy idea like taking the train, she thought.

Back at the taxi rank, Mama bought her a Big Mac.

Nomsa enjoyed her food.

While they were eating, Mama overheard people talking about the next train to Nelspruit which was about to depart.

'Hurry,' Mama said, 'we are going to take the train!'

Nomsa did not have the time to cry as Mama pulled her and they ran to the train station.

She could not believe it.

'Oh but Mama,' she cried, 'It is going to take forever to get to Nelspruit, the trains are so slow!'

'That may be right,' her mother responded, 'but at least we will get there eventually and your Gogo will be overjoyed to see you.'

Nomsa felt defeated. Perhaps she needed to change her thinking, she thought.

Mama was right.

Gogo loved her so much and was always happy to see her.

She began to miss Gogo.

While on the train, she started thinking that maybe she had magical powers, and what she thought of came true.

She decided to think about good things.

She thought about Gogo's warm hugs and the seven-colored food she liked to cook for her. She could smell it already.

She thought about the chocolate brownies and ice cream dessert Gogo loved making.

Gogo always gave her gifts.

Nomsa was ecstatic. She could not wait to see Gogo.



GEORGE THE MAGICIAN

Yvonne Aore, Kenya

"Say the magic words as I pour the water into the cup," I said seriously.

"Rambo, bambo, boom boom!" the children in the playground shouted.

I tilted the cup.

Nothing poured out.

The children jumped and clapped, screaming with excitement.

"George!" my aunt called from the house. "Your show is on."

I was ten years old, and there was nothing I wanted more than to be a magician.

I gathered my magic equipment and ran home, throwing away the sponge hidden inside the cup once I was sure no one was watching. A magician never reveals his secrets. That was my rule.

In the 1990s, there was a children's television show called Kiini Macho. Johnny the Magician stole my heart. I never missed an episode. My mother complained that I dirtied her house rushing in from outside, but I was always afraid that if I wasted even a minute, I might miss a trick.

Johnny's magic became my magic. I used his tricks to entertain other children in the playground, and soon I was famous.

Eventually, Mum stopped complaining. On my birthday, she surprised me with a magician's set. It even came with a black cap. Now I was a proper magician.

One afternoon after school, I found a crowd gathered around the notice board. In the middle was a bright poster.

JOHNNY THE MAGICIAN IS COMING TO TOWN!

LIVE AT THE SOCIAL HALL

ENTRANCE FEE: 50 SHILLINGS

I ran all the way home.

"Mum!" I shouted. "Johnny the Magician is coming!"

She smiled. "George, you are a big boy now," she said. "Old enough to earn money. Start cleaning your neighbours' yards on the weekends."

Every Saturday and Sunday, I went door to door asking for work. Mum helped by spreading the word. By the time Johnny came to town, I had saved enough.

I sat right at the front of the hall, wearing my magician's cap. The room was full of children from different schools. My heart thumped as Johnny scanned the crowd.

"You there," he said, pointing at me. "With the magician's cap. Come forward."

I nearly floated to the stage.

"You even have the hat," he laughed, shaking my hand. "What's your name?"

"George," I said proudly.

A man with a camera recorded the show for television and I stood up straight.

"George," Johnny asked, "what do you want to be when you grow up?"

"A magician!"

The hall erupted in cheers.

"Just like me?"



"Yes!"

"Good," he said. "Then help me with this trick."

He pulled a five-shilling coin from his pocket.

"It's in my hand now," he said. "Cover it with this cloth."

I placed the handkerchief over his hand.

"Children," Johnny called, "say the magic words!"

"Rambo, bambo, boom boom!"

"George, remove the cloth."

The coin was gone.

"Where could it be?" Johnny asked. Then he reached behind my ear and opened his palm.

The coin was there. The hall exploded with applause.

After the show, I stayed behind to help him pack.

"George," he asked, "what is your best subject in school?"

"Science," I replied. "I got one hundred percent."

"You know," Johnny said, smiling, "you could become a doctor."

I frowned. "But I want to be a magician like you."

"When you are sick," he asked gently, "where do your parents take you?"

"To the doctor."

"And when you leave, do you feel the same?"

I shook my head.

"A doctor," Johnny said, "takes pain and turns it into relief. Fear into hope. That is a kind of magic too."

Years later, I became a paediatric doctor. Every day, I watch frightened children walk into my clinic and leave smiling. Sometimes they laugh. Other times they clap. Sometimes they believe I have done something magical.

Maybe I have.

Mum still keeps the old video of that show. When I watch it, I see a small boy in a magician's cap, standing beside Johnny, believing in impossible things.

I know now that magic comes in different forms, and mine is a white coat.



THE BOY WHO NEVER SMILES

Olakunbi Olatunde, Nigeria

Once there was a boy who never smiled, even though he had the funniest uncle in the whole of Africa. Uncle Leke made funny faces and told jokes, but the boy only looked at him curiously. When his uncle gave him a coin, his eyes lit up. He traced his fingers around its rough edges all day, and never let go.

When he went to parties with lots of chin-chin, puff-puff and other children, he preferred quiet corners, or to stand beneath trees. During games, he sat between two chairs stacking pebbles and watching them fall. His parents thought he might like balloons and clowns, but he covered his ears when the balloons popped and still never smiled.

One Saturday morning, his father decided to surprise him with a toy. Baba, Mama and his little sister all crept into his room and shouted,

"Surprise!"

He tore open the present, and rolled the tyres of the wooden lorry toy. His whole body shook as he flicked his fingers in excitement. They all watched his face, and waited for a smile.

"Is he happy?" they wondered.

How could they tell he was happy if they didn't see a smile?

It was soon his sister's birthday. Before she blew out the candles on her cake, pink and bright as a

flamingo, she made a wish to see her brother smile. It was the best birthday gift she could ask for, and Yumboe the Tickle Fairy was summoned from the sky.

That night, the fairy, only the size of a banana, visited the boy who never smiled. She flew over his bed with her glittering blue wings and indigo dress.

"I hear you don't smile," she said in a jolly voice tugging at his cheek playfully.

He sat up, eyes wide in awe, but said nothing. He only reached out to touch her wand.

Swish, swish, swish! The fairy waved her wand and golden glitters sprinkled everywhere. He clapped and flicked his fingers in delight but no smile.

The fairy wondered what to do. She could see he was happy, he just didn't smile. Maybe he didn't need to.

Then, she remembered her special magic tool. From her afro puff hair, she pulled out a colourful feather from a mystical bird. She brushed it up and down his arm. His face lit up, but he didn't smile. She tried it again on his cheeks. Nothing.

The fairy tucked the feather in her hair and sighed. Time for her favourite trick.

She wriggled her fingers and tickled the sides of his neck. He flicked his fingers and reached for her, but she was too fast. She tickled his ribs and his armpits. He still couldn't catch her. Then, the fairy noticed his cheeks pull up in a smile as he continued his game of catch.

His parents woke up to the sound of giggles. They hurried to his room along with his little sister and couldn't believe their eyes. The boy who never laughed was giggling and bouncing on his bed.

They were overjoyed and begged the fairy to stay for some coconut milk and chips. Yumboe the Tickle Fairy agreed, happy to have helped.

"It's okay if he doesn't always smile. You can see his happiness in other ways," the fairy explained.

She handed them the colourful feather for when they wanted a little magic and a smile.

From that night on, they always joined him to stack pebbles and roll objects. When he flicked his fingers, Baba and Mama knew all was well.



DETAILS COMING SOON...



CLASS ACT

Vinoo Krishnaswami Nydoo, South Africa

'Just one moment, Liz,' he said. 'There's something in your hair.' He then moved his hand, pulled out a flower, and handed it to Liz. 'Wow!' said Liz. 'That's amazing! Where did that flower come from?' Liz was clearly amazed, and so was everyone in the school hall.

Several people have made a positive impact on my life, and several more have impressed me with their skills, kindness, compassion, attitudes, and general balance; three of them were teachers. Mr Perianan, my Grade 5 teacher, illustrated with his own actions how to be an effective teacher without raising your voice, losing your head, or ridiculing any child. Subsequently, his attitude enhanced the learning environment and made it a safer space. I pinned that information to memory and tried to carry it into my own classroom when I became a teacher.

Mr Sokie Pillay, my teacher in matric, was impressive in his attention to detail. His classroom displays were brilliant and always updated. He probably subscribed to that familiar maxim: "Proper preparation prevents piss-poor performance." Of course, I had to literally take the piss out of that line when I adapted it for my own teaching. Yes, Mr Sokie Pillay was the teacher who took a subject about dead people and always made it come alive. In addition, his writing was clear and legible, and his chalkboard technique was squeakless—absolutely no screeching as the chalk made its way across the board.

Arthur, the third teacher in this trilogy, was a teaching colleague at Culloden Primary School

in London; I worked there from 2001 to 2005. About a week into my arrival at Culloden Primary, Arthur popped around to my office. "How are you doing, Vinoo?" he enquired. "Are you settled in? Are you stable?"

"Actually, I'm not. But please don't tell anyone. Look, I'm not proud of what I've done, but I submitted a false psychiatric assessment with my application as I really needed this job." I really tried to keep a straight face, but the seriousness on Arthur's face—especially when I mentioned the false psychiatric assessment—almost cracked me up.

"It's been nice chatting to you," said Arthur. "I'll leave you to get on with your work, and if you ever need any assistance, don't hesitate to ask. I'm just across from you."

***

I waited for a few days before I went to Arthur's class to straighten out the "false psychiatric assessment" issue. It was a Monday afternoon, and he had my favourite Césaria Évora track, Sodade, playing on his CD player.

"I love that song, man," I said. "This is the music from my continent."

"And this is the music from my country."

"Your country! Seriously? You're not trying to get back at me for the psychiatric assessment joke, are you?"

"I'm not joking, Vinoo. I was actually born in Cape Verde. And you're probably trying to figure out why one plus one doesn't add up to two. It's because I'm white, right? That's just a joke; don't take that bit seriously."

"Apologies for the stereotypical thinking. Anyway, I just came to clear up the psychiatric assessment nonsense. When you first came to my office a few days ago, the conversation went in a certain direction, and I just capitalised on it. Only two people have ever asked me that "Are you stable?" question. The first time was in 1978 when I went to Cape Town to take up my first teaching post. The secretary welcomed me and then asked if I was stable. It sounded ambiguous at the time until she asked the second teacher the same question. Fortunately, I figured out that 'stable' had to be a synonym for 'settled,' and she had probably asked that question because I had travelled from my hometown, Durban, which was more than 2,000 kilometres away."

Although Arthur was not my best friend, I did enjoy a very good relationship with him. Like every other teacher on the staff, he had a very professional approach to teaching. However, where he really stood out was in the way he managed his class and the way he managed himself while managing his class. To say he had all his ducks in a row would be a superficial line. I often joked with other teachers of Indian origin and an assortment of yoga and wellness enthusiasts that Arthur must be cleansing his aura and having his chakras aligned regularly. After all, that was the only way I could make sense of someone

who was always cheerful and never looked frustrated. Personally, I had him pegged as a flatliner with no peaks or lows, but he was a happy flatliner who had found his level of contentment long before the rest of us did.

Arthur left Culloden in 2003, and this is when the magic really happened—literally! At a special school assembly, he, our special guest, was ushered to a comfortable seat. Ms. Liz Kinsella, the headteacher (principal), did a small introduction, and then Arthur's class took over. There were 25 children in his class, and that equated to 12 paired acts with one child acting as the compère. Granted, it wasn't on the same level as a David Copperfield or a Dynamo performance. Still, it was a top-notch magic show put together by a group of Year 5 pupils, and parts of it were truly mesmerising. No prompts from the master himself; Arthur just sat back and enjoyed the show with the rest of us. Prior to this presentation by his class, I knew a fair amount about Arthur. I knew that he loved travel. I knew that he was passionate about reading. I knew that he loved Puccini, Bach, and Vivaldi. I knew that he loved his pupils beyond the moon and back. But I honestly didn't know that he loved magic or knew anything about it.

At the end of the assembly, our headteacher thanked the children for being so attentive. She then lavished well-deserved praise on Arthur's class before calling Arthur to the front to acknowledge the mastery of their mentor.

"Just one moment, Liz," he said. "There's something in your hair." Arthur then moved his hand, pulled out a flower, and handed it to Liz. Of course, we all tried to figure out what trick he had up his sleeve, but that was made more difficult by the fact that he was wearing short sleeves.

They say that confidentiality can never be truly confidential because each of us has this need to reveal something said in confidence to just one more close friend. How then did a class of eleven-year-olds manage to keep the details of this magic show under wraps? There were obviously no non-disclosure agreements that they had to sign, and I tried to figure out what special code of silence connected these children then and years after Arthur had left.

Two decades after leaving London, I still marvel at the incredible ability of one gentle and unassuming teacher to teach an entire class a routine of magic tricks, to include all of them in the performance, and to get them to work with each other without any problems. Pure magic!



ILEKE

Marian Bebia, Nigeria

"Oh, African woman, magic dwells in your waistline. Your Ileke stirs it."

There is an enchantment in the sway of my hips that wasn't always there. It is a kind of gentle undulation I have come to adore.

I create a rhythm when I tap my feet on the ground. My movements leave tiny fragments of my essence in the dust they raise, so the earth remembers me.

When I pass, the wind bends closer. I feel it. The trees too.

They tilt their branches to catch in my hair, and the shadows cling to me a little longer—just because.

The sunlight finds its way to linger on the curve of my form. I am a woman aware. I am a woman finally in conversation with her own body.

Ileke taught me this magic.

They were green and gold crystals strung together by dried cotton strips—two beads, then a cowry, then two more, and so it continued until the knot. I had never owned jewelry so exquisite in its simplicity.

The strand hung from a wooden rack in the heart of a market I'd never visited. That afternoon, sunlight spilled through the thatched

roof of the kiosk, while dust motes drifted in lazy circles around it.

It looked so delicate. I feared it might be crushed between the bead maker's wrinkled fingers as she unclasped it. I like to think it called out to me. There was no way I could have missed it.

Before Ileke, there were only unsure steps—a woman who was uncomfortable with the earth bearing her weight. I moved like the wind—felt but hardly seen. People said my feet never touched the ground. I hurried like I was racing life and losing.

For years, I walked without noticing how my body carried itself. Every sway and every tilt was flattened into nothing by haste. Maybe even by habit. My body did not know how to stay, so it tried to be everywhere at once.

Ileke arrived and steadied me like a child finally learning to walk. I began letting my soles linger a second longer on the dirt before taking the next step.

The very day I tied the beads, they spoke. I tried to board a bus in my usual fashion—ducking my head in first before the rest of my body. The strings tightened around my waist like a stern warning and threatened to snap until I listened. I stepped back.

When the next bus arrived, I led with my waist first; then my body followed. Only then did it ease. That was the day the lessons started.

After two weeks, the change became undeniable. There was something in my motion I had never seen before. My Ileke gave me a glide I thought I would never own. I swung my waist, and the beads brushed against one another as if in echo of my movements.

I caught myself adjusting. I was unconsciously letting my body move with its rhythm rather than against it.

When my Ileke asked, it asked me to pay attention—not to fix or to probe, but simply to notice. To notice me.

It called me to notice the swing of my arms and the careless abandon in my stride. It asked me to understand why I tucked my stomach into a tight dress, or how my heartbeat synced with my pace. It taught me where my skin was most alive.

Its first spell was in its rustle, a sound resembling the shekere. Through it, my body finally began to speak back.

Before Ileke, I only spoke. I treated my body like a spoiled child who was never up to anything good.

There wasn't a corner of myself I adored.

In my disdain, I sought to remold my shape. I tried to knead my flesh the way the market women knead fresh fufu—desperate to smooth out the lumps, those imperfections I felt shouldn't be there.

I boiled water until it bubbled. Every night, I dipped a cloth into the heat and pressed it to my skin. I massaged one part, hoping it would shrink. I scalded another, praying it would swell.

When my breasts grew full and filled the cups of my bra, I slouched to bury them. I folded myself inward, trying to occupy less space than I had.

But Ileke does not permit a woman to hide.

It told me that my body was not something to be beaten into submission, but a living things that expands and retreats.

When the beads wrap around you, they anchor you to your own center. They found the arch of my back and held it. They pinched the parts of me I had ignored through years of bad stance.

It was a sharp reminder:

"Stand up. Occupy your skin. Own your magic."

What could a solitary experience define?

It is to say:

Dear African woman, the magic of your body is already awake.

Sometimes it lives in old practices.

In strings of beads or dainty pieces.

In paying attention.

In slowing down.

In retreating.

In being gentle with yourself.

Sometimes love comes from understanding.

My Ileke did not just give me magic. It taught me how to listen.





THE ALCHEMY OF WOMAN

Jessica Iragbonse, Nigeria

Before incantation, there was creation. Before rituals, there was water. Moisture, then green vegetation from red earth. There was the water of the womb. I saw this element always preceding the miracle of life.

There was blood. It was not gory nor sin. Blood threaded family members together like a neatly finished hem. Blood consummated covenants. That thick, velvety liquid of a woman's body told time even before calendars. Scarlet streams circulated under ebony skin, branching and converging like the systems of the Earth itself.

Earth was "Our Mother" because even my forefather—primitive, as they have called him—understood conception and birth in a way that eludes the modern mind. When he saw a young viper slither out of its natural incubator, and his wife bore him an offspring, it was like when vegetation found its way out of the ground. Mother Earth was a woman giving life and nourishment, as my mama's bosom fed me. She is not like a woman, but the very prototype

of femininity.

We Africans—we have known this—that life is a cycle of pilgrimage from womb to womb, from uterus to grave. And for generations, we have honored her. We were not confused when we celebrated seasons and first fruits. We were not simple in our rites of passage. The essence of life itself—our birth, sustenance, and continuity—we perceived was anchored in the female. And in recognizing this, femininity was sacred to us; daughters were appreciated until darkness came upon our land.

They took our divine femininity from us and hid her away, calling what used to be purity a temptation for the eyes. They cajoled the son to spit on his mother and compelled the husband to strike his wife. How readily reason gave way to ego, the calabash to the staff. How easily our magic was stolen from us. But Mother Earth did not remain silent. They soon found out that not only was she the gentle, flexible meandering rivers giving way to floodplains; she was also the ferocious and unforgiving ocean torrents on a stormy night.

The land fought back, spreading dearth and unfruitfulness. She withheld her wisdom and allowed brothers to betray one another for worthless treasure. Violence multiplied, and wombs were shut up, as waters on the mountains dried and fields became barren.

The rainmakers choreographed their best dance, and ritual songs were played like a faded classic. She turned away her eyes when her artefacts were purloined, carted away into a strange land, and did not hear when incessant incantations were spoken. Her magic bleached out of the land as more and more devotees fell sullen. Her people were auctioned like booty of conquest. It was known, then, that "female" is not synonymous with weak.

In Yoruba cosmology, there are the Ìyámi Àjẹ́, Our Mothers of Magic. They are not gentle figures. They are creative and destructive power itself, serving justice. Nothing begins without them. Nothing ends without their consent. Even other forces learned this. In one story, the male òrìàs—divine spirits—attempted to order the world without Ọ̀ṣun, the river goddess. After crops refused to grow and rivers ceased to be fruitful, they repented. It was only when Ọ̀ṣun was acknowledged, along with her fecundity and knowledge, that the world agreed to function.

Álà, the Igbo earth goddess, holds morality itself. Crime is not merely an offence against society, but against her body. To violate the land is to violate the mother. To violate the mother is to collapse order. Law, fertility, and continuity are not abstractions. They are embodied.

Instruction comes to us dressed as myths. Only the foolish mistrusts the tales of his father at moonlight. I am no fool. Yet somewhere along the line, this knowledge was demoted. Her body was turned into a toy to control; her womb became a tool to regulate; her pleasure was recast as sin. Womanness fell, trapped in an invisibility cloak, relegated to behind the curtain.

Our magic was not lost. It was exiled. This exile is seen in classrooms where girls are absent. This exile is seen in societies where

women are silenced. Mother Earth did not cross her arms then, and even now she does not. She lavishly blesses economies where balance is restored, but others are too stubborn to perceive this, as I have.

Prayers cannot be heard when women riot. Sacrifices hold no meaning. Until the two systems relearn to coexist without annihilating the other, obeisances are futile. Until divine femininity is restored, innovation is slowed because intelligence is not shared and authorship is restrained.

The Earth hangs off course, a lopsided world where children persecute their Mother. Violence against her serves no good thing. Conception itself teaches us that fruitfulness comes from negotiation, harmony, and partnership. The womb is not to be conquered. It is a mini universe with its own rhythms, where creation does not destroy its source.

To glorify womanhood is not to place her above morals. It is to restore her dignity, because it was her indigo robe that was stripped off. Gold and coral beads were torn from her body. It is she who was left bare. To glorify womanhood is not to place her on a pedestal. It is for love to heal her wounds.

When her counterpart adored her, art, science, and knowledge flourished across the lands. The Sun showered Mother Earth with beautiful beams in his affection. His light fertilized the ground like sperm fertilizes the womb. But those very rays now scorch her skin and age her fairness.

To glorify womanhood is not to excuse her failures. It is to restore order through enduring fondness, deep passion, and veneration—not mere lust. Philosophy agrees; literature gestures towards it, as Achebe, Bâ, Soyinka, Adichie, and Ngũgĩ show.

Before we needed spell books and potions, the woman's body practiced magic. Who taught it to number the days of her cycle? Where did it learn full gestation? Which sorcerer enchanted it to house a human?

Before there were mud huts, there was the womb. Before inventions, there was recreation. Before the rain chants that refreshed the ground, there was the melting away of the lining of the uterus, giving way to new life.

There was water, there was blood, there was mystery, there was magic. When humanity honors this, we advance. When we ignore it, we stall.

There is a reason so many African myths warn against silencing women—not because women are saints, but because their bodies are delicate and strong, a balance encoded in scar and tissue. The body remembers. It knows what it feels like to be broken. It knows what it means to create under pressure and still recover.

Perhaps the magic we seek is embedded in the flesh we have been taught to despise.



THE PULSE OF THE INVISIBLE

Vivianne Noella Azienwi Atang, Cameroon

Magic in Africa is not a story in a book, nor a trick performed on a stage. It is not the flick of a wand or smoke and mirrors. Here, magic lives in the soil, the wind, the rivers, and in the rhythm of daily life. It is not something that is seen; it is something that is felt, known, and respected.

As a young African child, I never truly understood the concept of magic; I thought it was just tricks and illusions until one day my grandmother and some elders did something so astonishing it carried me completely away. The dry season had approached, but this time it was harsher than usual, and water had become scarce.

Sitting in the courtyard one evening, cracking egusi, my grandmother said casually, "Tomorrow, we'll call for rain."

I scoffed. "You mean pray so the rainy season comes faster?"

She shook her head and smiled. "No, child. We will ask our ancestors to bring the rain tomorrow."

I didn't respond. I thought, of course, she couldn't be serious.

At dawn, around six o'clock, I noticed some elders arriving at our house, heading toward the backyard with my grandmother. Curiosity

led me to the back door, where I could peek without being seen. After chants, songs, and rhythmic incantations, my grandmother instructed my elder brother to bring three bags of salt from the corridor. He obeyed, placing them carefully at the center of the ritual space.

An older man chewed kola nuts, spat on the bags as part of the offering, and then poured whisky over the salt before stepping back. My grandmother exhaled in relief and murmured, "Atlas." I looked up at the sky, and as I expected, nothing happened. I laughed quietly to myself.

Then, almost as if the heavens had been listening, the sky grew dark, and heavy clouds gathered. Rain began to fall in torrents, drenching the land within minutes. I was frozen in awe, my mouth slightly open, staring at my grandmother in disbelief. She lifted her arms to the sky, her voice carrying through the rain as she repeated, "Miya, Miya, Miya," which in Mankon means "thank you." The words seemed to echo not just in the air, but in the very ground beneath us. From that moment, I never questioned the power of magic again.

Unlike other continents, African magic is a force of survival, community, and morality. It teaches respect, patience, and the understanding that every action ripples far beyond the visible. Our ancestors never separated the spiritual from the material; the river, the earth, and the fire spoke truths. A drought was not merely a lack of rain; it was a conversation with the spirits of the land, a warning, a call to restore balance.

Even today, Africans perceive magic differently. It is in the diviner reading bones for a family, in the herbalist who heals with whispered chants, in the farmer planting seeds while asking the ancestors for guidance. To us, these are not superstitions; they are knowledge preserved through generations, sacred and practical. Magic is method and morality, caution and courage.

I remember once a visitor from abroad laughing when he saw a small clay figure tied to a tree in my village. "What is that?" he asked.

My uncle explained that it was a talisman meant to protect the village from misfortune. The visitor chuckled, thinking it quaint, almost theatrical. But for us, that talisman represented connection to our ancestors, to the forces of nature, and to the community itself. It was an expression of belief, not performance. Magic is woven into the African worldview, guiding decisions, shaping ethics, and anchoring relationships.

For me, magic is ordinary, yet extraordinary. It is the heartbeat of our land, the wisdom of our elders, the currents that guide us. It is in the whisper of the wind through the forest, the shimmer of the river at dusk, the scent of kola and palm wine in the morning.

Perhaps this is what sets Africa apart: while other continents perform magic, we live it—quietly, faithfully, and with the understanding that the invisible shapes everything we touch.

Magic is not just a practice; it is a way of seeing, believing, and being in the world.



Coming Soon



FRIENDS FOR LIFE (AND DEATH)

Madelize Dunninghan, South Africa

Tap, tap. Anja's head whips around. The darkened tree branches beckon menacingly through the apartment window. Chills run down Anja's spine. *Tap, tap, tap.* She tries to ignore it. Back to her task.

Laid out in front of Anja are a selection of items: candles, dried flowers, and crystals. A cooking pot forms a makeshift cauldron. Anja dangles a photograph over it.

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," she chants. *Tap, tap, tap.* She raises her voice over the distant rumble of thunder. "Goddess Hecate, I call on you—" Anja trails off.

She reaches for her phone and opens *www.WitchcraftAtHome.com.* "Goddess Hecate, duh duh duh…" She mutters quietly. Then she takes a deep breath, and tries again.

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Goddess Hecate, I call on you…

Take these offerings,

And return to me

The one I love!"

Hand trembling, Anja lifts a lighter up to the photograph. She flicks the ignition wheel. Nothing happens. She tries again. Still nothing. She rolls her eyes, lowers the photograph and repeatedly flicks the wheel. Finally, it lights.

She clears her throat, turns the photograph around, and sets it alight. It's of a small, hairy dog. Cradled in the arms of a much younger Anja. She stares at it sadly, then drops it into the pot.

Then she waits. And waits. She sighs and shakes her head. *Maybe she should've tried to look up whatever the South African version of Hecate is.*

BOOM! The apartment is illuminated by a massive lightning strike. Anja jumps in fright and knocks over a candle.

Then a sound like a bag of potatoes dropping to the floor in the apartment above. Anja's upstairs neighbour. Then dead quiet.

A dog barks right outside Anja's window.

"Peanut?" Anja calls out hesitantly.

"Woof," comes the response.



BORROWED MAGIC

Bodges Mugendi, Kenya

On her thirteenth birthday, Ayo discovered her shadow was late. It lagged her on the kitchen floor, stretching and shrinking as if deciding whether to follow. The bulb above flickered. Dawn should have chased the dark away, yet the corners of the room still breathed. Ayo froze. The shadow froze too—then lifted an arm and waved.

She dropped her spoon. It rang against the tiles, sharp and afraid.

"You see it too?" she whispered.

The shadow nodded. Its edges shimmered, not black but bruised purple, threaded with faint stars.

"I don't belong to you," it said, voice thin as smoke. "You lent me."

The word lent tore something open. Ayo remembered the night her mother died—how the power failed, how darkness poured into the house. She remembered kneeling on the floor, pressing her palms into the dark.

I just need a little light, she had begged. Don't take me too. The shadow folded closer. "You cracked the dark open," it said softly. "I slipped inside to survive." They spent the day together. The shadow stretched to reach what Ayo could not. It swallowed harsh sunlight, cooled her skin, whispered when her thoughts turned sharp. When grief rose, the shadow stood between her and the memory. For the first time since her mother's death, Ayo laughed without choking on the sound. At sunset, the shadow began to fray. Night tugged at it.

"I have to go," it said.

Ayo's throat burned. "Will I be empty?"

"No," the shadow said. "Magic borrowed is still learned."

As darkness fell, it stepped backward and unraveled into the waiting night. Ayo stood alone. Then the lights came on. When she walked, her shadow followed—whole and quiet. And when the dark returned, it bowed instead of reaching out to steal.



GREATER THAN MAGIC

Ayomide Ruth Taiwo, Nigeria

"Magic does not exist?!" my daughter asked me with surprise sprayed across her face like the colourful pompom that dances at the village square thrown out in cheer of the favourite masquerades and for the best dancers.

I had just made a simple statement that threatens to break down her Disney world of childhood fantasy books and lala-land movies. Magic to my 10-year-old isn't the wand held by wizards or the flying mats that convey witches from one realm to another. It is not really the appearance of a genie to prepare a rich table before her in moments of hunger, even though she sometimes spoke of her desire for Aladdin's luck.

Jasmine sees magic in the flowers that bloom from green, tender stems around the house. It wasn't just their smell that fascinated her, but how they grew. The horticulturist in her—and my own love for nature—draws our dearest flower girl to each petal by petal, bee by bee, and the feel of dirt and earth beneath her fingers.

She felt the magic in the wind. I'd seen her cover her own ears at age 2, open them again, and repeat the whole process to the wonder of everyone around. She said she could hear the gentle music traveling from south to north, while the noises polluting the atmosphere contended with the innate, solemn voice of the breeze.

I had to quickly explain myself to her with a calming laughter.

"Aww… Not that way, Jasmine."

"Oh then, momma… What do you mean?"

"Of course, there is magic, even in magic itself. But I talk of a greater force and marvelous wonder than magic. Miracles! And you, my dear, are the most beautiful and greatest miracle!"



WHEN TIME PAUSED



Iyanuoluwa Mabel, Nigeria

At exactly 6:45 every morning, Mama Bisi swept the street. No matter what happened, rain, strike, fuel scarcity, she swept. Her broom moved slowly, carefully, as if the ground could feel pain. One morning, Kunle noticed something strange. Yesterday, after heavy rain, a deep crack split the street. A danfo had almost fallen in. People complained. Someone had even taken pictures. But that morning, the crack was gone. The road was smooth. Kunle rubbed his eyes.

"Mama Bisi," he called, "what happened to the road?" She did not look up.

"I swept it," she said. Kunle laughed.

"You can't sweep a road and fix it." Mama Bisi paused, her eyes steady on him.

"Young man," she said softly, "everything that breaks starts with carelessness. Everything that heals starts with care."

She continued sweeping. Later that day, Kunle's phone slipped from his hand. It cracked badly. He stared at it in despair. He had no money to fix it. That night, he dreamed of Mama Bisi gently wiping the screen. In the morning, the phone was whole. No crack. No line. Kunle ran outside. Mama Bisi was sweeping.

"Please," he said, trembling. "How are you doing this?" She finally stopped.

"Time can move forward," she said, "but it can still be called back." She placed the broom in Kunle's hands.

"Be careful what you fix," she added. "Some things break for a reason." The next day, Mama Bisi did not come out to sweep. Kunle picked up the broom.



THE CHASE OF THE HIDDEN DIAMOND

Humphrey Udoh, Nigeria

A scream tore through Ode-Ama's night, jagged and raw, slicing the darkness like a hunter's blade. Silence fell, then heavy footsteps thudded behind us. A bundle of firewood slipped from her trembling hands. In the square, metal clanged on stone, figures scattering like startled birds. A tall figure loomed before me, rags flapping, eyes wild. Shade—the tailor's daughter? —stood there, fear etched deep in her face.

"Don't move," she whispered, clutching my arm. "Please… help me. I'm not safe." Shadows twitched around us, as if the night itself were watching. We bolted into the farm. Leaves whipped our faces; mud clung to our legs, pulling us down. Behind us, a narrow beam of light stabbed the darkness, hunting us.

"Did you take it?" I demanded. Shade nodded, trembling, unable to speak.

She revealed a small bag, a diamond gleaming like a trapped star, wrapped in a dry leaf. "Hold this. I won't let them take it. It fell from their van," she whispered.

"Don't move!" hissed a voice.

I struggled, gasping, lungs on fire, as Shade wrenched free and ran. I stamped on his feet, tore myself loose, and sprinted.

"Shade! Run!" I shouted, my heart hammering like the village talking drum.

Mud, sweat, and fear slowed us, but the stream welcomed us. We leapt across, hands swinging together. "They will not find us. This is our land," Shade panted. Bruised, drenched, shivering, we collapsed on the riverbank. The diamond rested in my palm, the river whispering around our ankles, murmuring our secret. That night, Ode-Ama would remember the chase.

Creative

SPOTLIGHT

Abdulrazaq Godwin Omeiza





In this edition, Lise interviews Abdulrazaq Godwin Omeiza, a Nigerian writer whose voice continues to gather remarkable momentum across genres. At just seventeen, Omeiza balances literary ambition with student leadership, serving as Head of School at Government College Ibadan while steadily building a growing portfolio of publications and accolades. In this conversation, he reflects on his early beginnings, creative influences, and the experiences shaping his evolving identity as a writer.

Lise: Could you kindly introduce yourself to our audience?

Abdulrazaq: My name is Abdulrazaq Godwin Omeiza. I am based in Nigeria. I am a writer across genres, and I currently serve as the Head of School at Government College Ibadan. I am 17 years old.

Lise: It's my pleasure to have you. How did your journey into writing begin? At what point did you realize you were truly a writer?

Abdulrazaq: That is an interesting question. I knew I could write from a very young age, but I did not quite know if I could become a writer. My grandfather used to tell me stories, and I would write them down. Eventually, I began creating my own stories.

One day, I read a poem that deeply moved me. I loved it so much that I decided I wanted to create something like that. I began submitting my work to publishing platforms, and I faced numerous rejections. But I continued. I applied for competitions and submitted to journals and magazines, and slowly, things began to change.

I realized I was truly a writer when I was published in the Caucasus Journal of Milton Studies. I was not even fully prepared when I wrote that piece, so the publication came as a surprise. Then, winning second place in the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature strengthened my belief even more. That was when it became real.

Lise: That's quite something. Which genres do you feel most comfortable writing in, and what draws you to them?

Abdulrazaq: That is a tricky one because I do not think I have a single genre I am most comfortable with. I feel at home in many. But if I must choose, I would say poetry and prose.

Poetry gave me my first public appearance. It feels like me. It allows me to express my thoughts and emotions freely, without fear. Some-

times I think my life itself is poetry—unpredictable, layered, and unfolding in surprising ways.

As for prose, the zeal to tell stories draws me to it. Prose is accessible and immersive. When I write it, ideas flow naturally. Inspiration stays with me throughout the process. That movement, that continuous unfolding, is what attracts me to prose.

Lise: That's wonderful. Is there a personal experience that inspired you to write for children?

Abdulrazaq: My family inspires me the most. Their approach to life is different from the status quo. I want to preserve the values they embody, even if my readers are not as close to me as they are. Through stories, those values can travel.

My role as Head of School at Government College Ibadan also inspires me. I speak to students regularly, sometimes publicly, sometimes privately. I see myself as their brother while we are in school. Often, they gather around me and insist that I tell them a story. Those moments sometimes grow into written work.

In no particular order, my mother inspires me deeply. I draw many of my stories simply by observing her. My Auntie Eneze inspires me as well; she is brave, hardworking, compassionate, intelligent, and wise. Many of her lessons find their way into my writing.

Mrs. Sobo Olajumoyimikaakiri gave me one of my earliest platforms to be seen as a writer, and that experience transformed me. Mr. Azeez (Mr. Zeezo) also inspires me. His perspective on life is unique. He is strong, gentle, and wise. Our conversations often spark ideas in my work. Mr. Ogundokun inspires me through his discipline and problem-solving mindset.

And my CRS teacher, Mr. Omotosho, steered my mind toward imagination and philosophy. Because of him, I began to take philosophy seriously and learned to see things differently.

Lise: Shout out to those ladies and gentlemen for inspiring you. You emerged as the second-place winner of the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature. Could you walk us through that journey?

Abdulrazaq: First, I give glory to God. I believe He is behind everything in my life.

Writing for the Wakini Kuria Prize was demanding. I submitted my entry near the deadline. I was unsure of the outcome. I kept rereading my story, asking people to review it, and questioning whether it could stand in a continental competition.

The story was deeply personal. It reflects who I am. I strive to understand my native language, customs, and traditions while also keeping up with modern technological trends. I even used my name for the main character and gave every character names

from my culture. It was different from anything I had written before. In many ways, it was a piece of myself.

Lise: I love that you named the main character after yourself! Tell me, what went through your mind when you heard your name announced?

Abdulrazaq: First, gratitude to God. Then silence.I did not know whether to scream or stay calm. I just froze. I could not define the feeling. It was overwhelming in the best way.

Lise: I might have screamed if it were me!

Abdulrazaq: Hahaha

Lise: Tell me, how did this recognition reshape your perspective as a writer?

Abdulrazaq: The recognition made me more self-aware. I began to see myself not just as an "upcoming" writer, but as someone actively shaping his craft in the present moment. It redirected the way I think about myself and strengthened my passion to keep improving and evolving.

Lise: Wow! That is awesome. Now, what can readers expect from you in the future?

Abdulrazaq: To look ahead is to look at the past and present together and use them to shape the future. I have been published in journals, anthologies, magazines, and competitions. I want to keep that momentum going as I step into adulthood. I hope to publish complete, standalone works under my name. Readers should expect writing filled with depth, emotion, variety, and growth. I want my work to mature as I do.

Lise: You have my blessings. By the way, what are your hobbies, outside of writing?

Abdulrazaq: I enjoy reading philosophy books, acting, singing, and playing chess. I spend much of my free time in solitude, studying different ideas and forming my own perspectives.

Lise: Behold our future Socrates! Is there anything else you would like to share?

Abdulrazaq: I encourage my audience to explore my works such as The Weight of Becoming, If I May Go There, The Rain, and Lost Tires in the Caucasus Journal of Milton Studies; my contribution to the anthology A Fire Kept Quiet; my poem in Synchronized Chaos; and my story They Forget in Kalahari Review.

Above all, I encourage everyone to cultivate love, kindness, peace, and the five pillars of the Ubuntu Leaders Academy: Self-knowledge, Self-confidence, Empathy, Resilience, and Service. If we embody these, we move closer to building a better world.

Lise: Thank you so much for your time.

Abdulrazaq: Thank you too, ma.



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ADACADABRAH

Owen Habel, Kenya

At dawn, my name lifts itself
from dust and learns to fly.
This is how magic begins—
with breath believing in breath.

A stone purrs when I sit next
To it long enough.
Water remembers every hand
that ever asked it for mercy.
Fire kneels, briefly, to intention.

I have seen words stitch a wound
the blade could not explain.
I have watched silence
turn iron keys inside the heart.

Magic is not smoke or mirrors.
It is the courage of light
entering a dark room
without asking permission.

A WORD WALKS AHEAD OF TIME

Owolola Ajulekun, Nigeria

A word walks ahead of time.
It rises, unburdened by gravity
while fire claws down the aircraft,
carrying the fragile peace of a nation.

My mother named it an answered prayer.
My father called it a spoken word
finding its true meaning after silence.
It lives in an empty hand
that still feeds a million mouths,
in the chest of a weary soul
that sings itself into a new life.

Magic is a coded rewriting of rules,
the courage to edit hope by hand.
It dwells in the mouth
that carries the world on its tongue,
in proverbs that walk ahead of my grandmother,
clearing the roads to streams before dawn.
It is a kolanut broken to tilt the day
while the earth remembers how to yield.

And the word walks again—
a raven darting across the sky,
carrying mercies into Elijah's bosom
and teaching faith the grammar of survival
until rain remembers the weary earth.

SPELLS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Utibe Nsungwara, Nigeria

It is that ancient-smelling house we were born to see,
With aloe vera, coconut palms, pines, and shrubs of tea.

Though low, small, poor, thatched, and badly built,
It once made our tiny baby mouths giggle without guilt.

There is the slow, endless, and sleepy sweeping at dawn,
Where my grandmother says spells till the night is gone.

There is a lad proving his manhood by lighting the fire,
Where the sparks obey him and refuse the old dirty sire.

The deities suddenly have tongues to taste good wine,
As my relentless elders work magic, asking for a sign.

The proud full moon shines openly, bright and mystique,
A visible charm cast and kept for a whole sacred week.

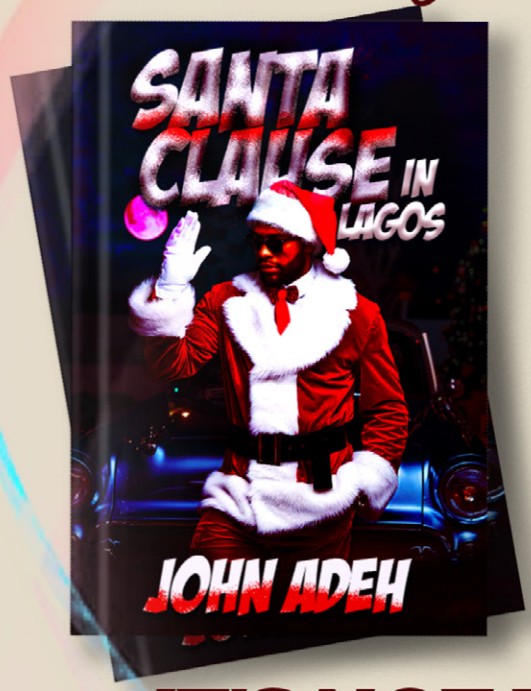
This house is like a big book of charms written in clay,
Where magic is practiced in the things done day by day.

We do not use thin wands to summon any command,
But power lives in knowledge passed from hand to hand.

We name things carefully, for names shape our breaths,
A wrong name changes fortune, a good one scares death.

Is this love, custom, or some strange habit we had made?
No, it is the magic that keeps and unmakes what we take.

BOOKS by The John Adeh

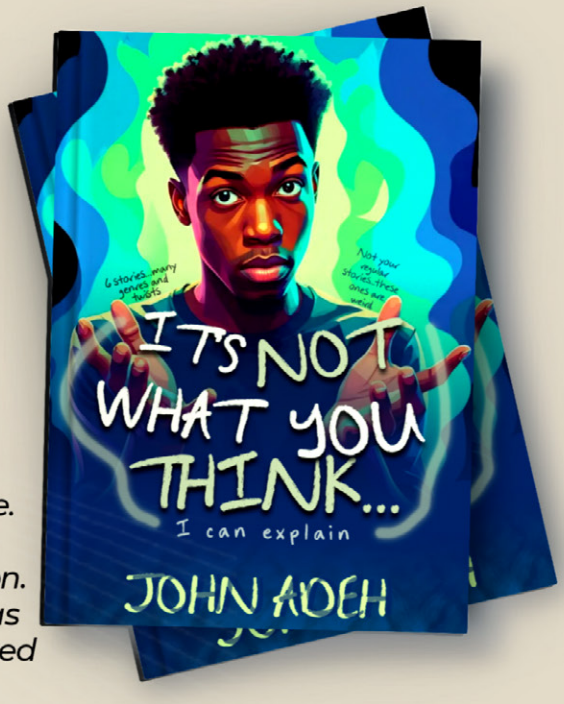


SANTA CLAUSE in Lagos

Yale's dreams always came true—until a nightmare struck weeks before Christmas Eve.
Then more than the nightmare happened —her best friend, Hakeem and her younger brother vanished—kidnapped by a sinister Santa Claus.
With Detectives Ponmile and Amaka racing against time, desperate choices must be made before Christmas or the boys slip away forever.

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK...

A military officer whose reunion with his family after 5 years seemed impossible.
The near-death experience of a couple during a regular musical date.
Trevor, the tormentor of the seas, at his horrific enterprise of sinking ships.
The emotional development of a guy disrupted at the most interesting stage.
An innocent narration of someone's marital experience in cloaked diction.
Christmas surprises gone wrong as the surprise planner got surprised himself.



It's Not What You Think... is a compilation of six weird, funny, and uncommon stories with plot twists, strange endings, and vivid descriptions. With different genres expressed in first, second, and third-person points of view, this book pulls you into each story and delivers a premium experience.

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SALT, WIND AND THE CALABASH OF LIGHT

Jive Lubbungu, Zambia

The wind from the Zambezi arrived at Chipepo village before dawn, carrying salt and stories. It slid between the mopane trees and crept into the thatched houses, whispering to the goats tied near the cooking shelters. Old people said the river breathed at night, and if you listened closely, you could hear its lungs fill and empty like a sleeping giant. On that morning, the wind found Thandi awake, her eyes fixed on the ash-grey sky as she waited for the cock to crow.

Thandi was sixteen and carried water as if it were a language she had learned early. Her steps followed the path from the homestead to the shallow well without thought, careful not to disturb the stones that marked the graves near the fig tree. In Gwembe, the living and the dead shared land the way the river shared fish with the birds. You respected the space, or the space taught you to respect it.

Her grandmother, Bana Sitali, had warned her the night before. The moon had been thin, like a sickle, and the hyena had laughed too close to the kraal. “When the river breathes like that,” Bana Sitali said, stirring a pot of millet porridge, “it means the old things are restless.”

Thandi had nodded, though she did not know what ‘old things’ meant. She thought of cracked clay pots and forgotten footpaths. She thought of her mother, buried three seasons ago after the cough refused to leave her chest. Old things were always leaving or breaking.

At the well, Thandi lowered the calabash slowly. The rope rasped against the wood frame, and the water answered with a hollow sound. When she lifted it, the surface shimmered. For a moment, she thought the dawn had arrived early. Then the light pulsed again, soft and warm, rising from inside the calabash like a captured firefly.

Thandi froze. The wind stopped. Even the birds seemed to hold their breath.

She set the calabash down. The light did not spill. It stayed contained, patient, as if waiting for her permission. Her heart beat fast, but fear did not come alone. There was wonder too, and a strange recognition, like meeting someone you had known in a dream.

She carried the calabash home with care, shielding it with her body. Bana Sitali was awake, her back bent over a basket of groundnuts. When she saw the light, she did not shout. She closed her eyes.

"So," she said after a long silence, "the river has chosen to speak."

They sat on low stools as the sun finally rose. The light inside the calabash dimmed but did not disappear. Bana Sitali traced a circle in the dust with her finger.

"In my grandmother's time," she began, "Gwembe was not as dry as it is now. The river spoke often. It spoke to hunters and midwives, to rain callers and children who listened more than they talked. Magic was not a trick. It was a duty."

Thandi swallowed. "Why me?"

Bana Sitali smiled, her teeth worn but strong. "Because you carry water without spilling it. Because you remember the names of trees. Because you do not laugh when the old songs are sung."

That day, word spread like wildfire. People came pretending to borrow salt or ask for news. Their eyes went to the calabash, now hidden beneath a woven mat. Some were afraid. Others were hungry for hope.

Gwembe had been harsh that year. The rains had argued with the land and lost. Fields lay thin and stubborn. Children counted meals with their fingers. Even the river seemed to pull away from the banks, exposing bones of old boats.

By evening, Headman Chikonde arrived, his walking stick tapping the earth. He was a careful man, respected for listening before speaking.

"I hear the river has sent a gift," he said.

Bana Sitali nodded. "A reminder," she corrected.

They decided to call a gathering at the baobab near the cattle path. As night fell, people brought stools and blankets. The moon climbed, fuller now, casting pale light over the dust.

Thandi stood with the calabash in her hands. When she lifted the mat, the light grew brighter, spreading across faces lined with worry and memory. A murmur rose.

An old fisherman named Mbewe stepped forward. "If this is magic," he said, "let it bring rain."

Others shouted their needs. Health. Food. Work. Justice for a land dispute. The light

flickered, uncertain.

Bana Sitali raised her hand. "Magic does not answer noise," she said. "It answers balance."

She asked Thandi to place the calabash at the foot of the baobab. Then she told a story. It was about a girl who tried to own the river and lost her shadow. It was about listening.

As the story unfolded, the light softened. People grew quiet. Even the cattle settled.

When the story ended, a drop fell from the sky. Then another. The rain came gently, not the violent kind that tears roofs, but the patient rain that soaks and stays. Laughter broke out. Some people cried.

The rain lasted three days.

Fields drank. The river breathed deeper. Fish returned to the shallows. The calabash dimmed with each sunrise until one morning it was only water again.

Thandi felt a hollow where the light had been. She did not tell anyone. She helped plant and weed. She listened to stories. She carried water.

Weeks later, a stranger arrived. He wore city shoes dusty from travel and carried a bag of papers. He spoke of development and surveys. He wanted to measure the river.

That night, the wind returned. It pressed against Thandi's hut, urgent. She dreamed of the calabash glowing again, heavier this time.

At dawn, she went to the river. The water was low where the stranger planned to place his markers. She knelt and touched the surface.

"I am listening," she whispered.

The river did not glow. It did not speak in words. But the wind shifted, and Thandi understood. Magic was not a thing you held. It was a way of standing in the world.

She returned to the village and spoke to the headman. They welcomed the stranger but asked questions. They told stories. They walked him to the graves near the fig tree and the fishing bends where children learned patience.

By the time he left, his papers were full of notes, not just numbers.

Years later, when Bana Sitali joined the ancestors, Thandi took her place by the fire. Children gathered. The wind came at night. The river breathed.

And sometimes, when Thandi lowered the calabash into the well, the water shimmered, just for a moment, like a smile.



THE WANDERERS

Ibraheem Aleem, Nigeria

The smell of woodsmoke and roasted yam filled the air.

"You look tired, Deniyi?" Mama smiled, her eyes shrinking into happy slits.

I looked around; this is the house I grew up in, but I left home two moons ago. How did I get back here? A moment ago I was…was…where was I?

I looked at Mama again as she blew at the cooking fire. Her black hair styled in a traditional Adimole, her melanin skin glowing. But she was supposed to be old and sick… on her bed. I had become a hunter to pay for her medicine.

"If this is a dream." I whispered, "I don't want to wake up."

Suddenly, the door flew open; morning light blinded me as Baba walked in.

Behind him stood Soraya, her little eyes burning with white flames that reflected in the veins of her forehead. She grabbed my wrists with a strength that defied her age and dragged me toward the door. I heard my parents giggling.

"Today is the Awakening, and you dare try to hide. I will be a child of the Eye Mother; now is your time to get checked." Soraya grunted

Why are they here? They were dead 15 years ago…

Soon, I realised what was even stranger. I was 23; five-year-old Soraya should not be able to drag me. What was happening?

Outside, children were being led into a white hut; those that emerged with white flaming eyes like Soraya's jubilated, while those without the flames were getting dragged away by the guards, their cries ignored by their own families.

I remembered this day; the cries and bruises on the children made it clear as a cloudless sky. The Awakening process when I was eight. This was the day everything changed; this was the day my family fought swords and spears to rescue me from the guards. This was the day Mama and I escaped from the village drenched in the blood of my slain family.

"No!!" I struggled, but Soraya's grip became tighter.

"What?" She looked at me with a grin older than her face. "Scared of reliving the moment you ruined everything?"

"No…" I shouted again, and all the children started clapping; some were even laughing. It was creepier than the memory itself, creepier as we got closer to the white hut. "Skies, get me out of here…"

"Deniyi…. Deniyi!" I heard a call in my head; it sounded like an echo from a distance. I heard it again, and slowly the horror around me started to fade. Soraya's grip became softer.

"Get yourself together. If this Wanderer escapes, I'm taking your life essence instead, swear on the skies." Nathi's threats pulled me out of my sweet-moment-turned-horrific,



just in time to dodge an energy blast coming my way.

I remembered I was in a forest and fighting a Wanderer, a creature of darkness. Nathi, my partner, was fighting with the 12-foot-tall creature. The Wanderer, as always, was in a black hooded gown, but instead of a face, there was a complete void of darkness inside the hood. Nathi rolled away from its deadly claws, raised his sword, looked at me and frowned.

"Are you going to just stand there and watch?"

I snapped and reached into the inside pocket of my shirt and pulled out a black rock that glows green. The Wanderer suddenly turned its whole body in my direction and charged.

Skies, why me…?

I raised the stone to my chest height and inhaled deeply.

"I call upon the fathers of the earth, the mothers of the skies, watchful wraiths of the forest…" The incantations spilt from my lips. While doing this, I was praying to the skies against the word I don't really like.

Trouble.

Nathi, standing at a distance, watched with his chest pulsing. Considering his physique, he should be doing everything.

When the Wanderer was less than a leap from my position, the stone exploded into brilliant green flames and engulfed the creature. It shrieked so loud that it deafened the whole forest, without having a mouth. Nathi placed his hands firmly on his ears and fell on his knees, groaning.

Soon, the flames disappeared with the Wanderer, leaving behind an essence stone. Nathi walked closer and picked up the stone; he put it in his bag and gave me that side eye.

"Almost got yourself killed. This is your eleventh encounter with Wanderers, and you still have some confusion about our mission." He shook his head and started walking away.

Looking at him, I tried to be quiet, but…

"This doesn't make sense." I just couldn't keep quiet. Nathi stopped and exhaled deeply before turning to look at me. He pushed out his chest that was twice and a half the size of mine. I placed my right hand on my left shoulder, hoping to use that to defend myself in case he threw something, as always.

"I mean…you know…people like us have been hurting Wanderers for more than ten years all because the Eye mothers told us they will destroy the veil between our world and their world, putting everything into eternal darkness." I continued.

Nathi tilted his head. "So?"

I stepped forward. "The Eye mothers are creatures of magic too, just more human. They told us prophecies, and nobody even bothered to ask questions." Part of me was expecting an expression of acknowledgement from him, but that hopeless black giant scoffed and walked closer to me; I swear I could feel the earth vibrating below me. He stopped just before my face.

"Do you really want to gather enough resources for the treatment of your sick moth-

er?" he asked softly. I nodded.

"Then," he raised the bag where we kept the life essence stones, "the stones are the only way to get those resources. The more Wanderers we slay, the more essence stones we get, the more chance that your old' ick mother will be cured, and the sooner the time for you to get out of my breath! So, shut up. Hunters like you are those that went missing without a trace." Nathi turned, hurled the bag on his back and started walking. I dared not breathe a word at that moment.

As we walked, I started doubting my doubts; maybe I really was overthinking. I should focus on killing more Wanderers; that is what I should do; that is all I should think about.

We kept walking through the forest, finding marks and broken trees on our path.

"The other hunters beat us to the stones." Nathi made sure to say this every chance he got.

Tonight was Nighthowl, always on the night of the sixth moon, the day a more powerful Wanderer emerged. It must be killed within six hours, or the hunt is lost forever. Nathi and I must find a safe and quiet spot to enter the Evering state where we would be able to see and locate the Wanderer.

By night, we camped under a huge tree. We sat beside each other, our swords beside us. With our legs curled, we closed our eyes and entered the Evering State. All hunters could do this.

As expected, I met myself in a space buried in thick fogs, not sure if it was like this for anybody else… I haven't even asked. Then it slowly began to fade, exposing thousands of green eyes staring into my soul. Their bodies blended with the dark, leaving just the eerie sights of their eyes. I ignored them and walked forward. Then light suddenly descended on a spot, revealing a kneeling Wanderer facing away from me, holding something in its hand

"There you are."

I reached out, and it suddenly turned at me. I became stunned…

Suddenly, someone gripped my shoulder and pulled me out of the Evering state.

"Taking longer than expected." Nathi smiled. I opened my eyes. In the next second, I drew my sword and slew him with a swing. His head dropped on the dirt before his body.

A few seconds later, I watched as Nathi's body turned into a Wanderer's. His head turned into a hooded darkness. I saw him in my Evering state, his head in the hood and my slain head in his hand.

All the Wanderers being slain were hunters. The Eye mothers never gave us a prophecy to kill their own; instead, we were tricked into slaying ours. An unquestioned tradition is always a mistake; secrets that shouldn't stay hidden. I asked questions and found answers I couldn't handle.

I wiped the dirt and blood off my clothes, carried the bag and started walking, hoping to get back to the village before being turned into a raging Wanderer or, worse.



WHAT COMES AT THIRTY



Khayelihle Benghu, South Africa

My mother said nothing when the magic came to me.

It arrived on my thirtieth birthday, quietly, the way everything important in our family did. No candles, no circle of women and no words spoken aloud. I woke before dawn with the sense that something had shifted, like a door closing somewhere in the house. The kettle screamed on the stove. Outside, a bird struck the window and flew away again, uninjured.

When I went to my mother's room to check on her, she was already awake, sitting upright in bed, hands folded in her lap.

"So," she said.

"So," I replied.

That was how it always went between us, language trimmed down to what was necessary, meaning hidden in pauses. She studied my face as if looking for a mark that would confirm the inheritance. When she found none, she nodded once, satisfied or resigned; I couldn't tell.

"What is it?" I asked.

"You'll find out," she said. "You always do."

In our family, magic was not celebrated. It was endured.

Each woman received something small at thirty. My grandmother could always tell when someone was about to leave and never return. My aunt could make any wound stop bleeding by holding it between her palms. My mother, my mother could carry other people's grief without being crushed by it. She once held a neighbour through the night after the neighbour's son drowned and came home the next morning with her face wrinkled, as if she'd aged a decade in eight hours.

None of these gifts were chosen, and none could be refused.

I waited days for mine to reveal itself. Then weeks went by; still nothing happened. I burnt food, I lost my keys and I said the wrong things at the wrong time. Whatever magic I had inherited, it was either invisible or useless.

My mother grew thinner during that time. Illness had been hollowing her out for years, though she never named it. She did not believe in speaking sickness into being. She moved through the house like a guest who didn't want to inconvenience anyone, leaving doors half open and lights off behind her. I followed her from room to room, fixing what she left undone, afraid that if I stopped, she would disappear entirely.

One afternoon, while folding her clothes, I felt it.

A tug, not physical, but decisive. Like the sensation of reaching for something that is no longer there and knowing exactly why. I sat down on the bed, heart racing. In my mind surfaced a memory that wasn't mine: my mother at twenty-two, standing on a bus platform with a suitcase at her feet, watching a man walk away from her without turning back.

I knew, with terrible clarity, that I could undo it.

Not the event itself. Not the leaving. But the decision that followed the one she made in the aftermath. The choice that shaped everything after.

I pulled my hands into fists and waited for the feeling to pass. It didn't.

That night, I confronted her.

"You were going to leave once," I said, standing in her doorway. "Before me."

She stiffened. "That was a long time ago."

"I could change it," I said, before I could stop myself.

She looked at me then, really looked. Something like fear flickered across her face.

"That's not how it works," she said.

"I think it is."

She shook her head slowly. "You mustn't."

"Why?"

"Because," she said, and then fell silent. Because in our family, reasons were dangerous things.

I left her room shaking. The knowledge sat heavy inside me. I could undo one decision

made by another person, only one and only once. I could unburden someone of a choice that had hardened into regret. I could not change outcomes, only weight.

What kind of gift was that?

My mother died three weeks later, on a morning so ordinary it felt like a betrayal. I found her sitting in her chair, eyes closed, hands folded the way they had been the morning my magic arrived. For a moment, I thought she was asleep. Then the silence in the room told me otherwise.

After the funeral, the house felt too large for me alone. I moved through it slowly, touching familiar surfaces, listening for her. She had left nothing behind that explained her. No letters and no apologies. Just the imprint of her life, pressed into corners.

At night, I dreamed of doors closing.

On the seventh night, I woke with the same tug I had felt weeks earlier, stronger now, urgent. I knew what decision it was calling me toward. The one she had made on that bus platform. The one that said I will stay. The one that had given me a life and taken something unnamed from her in return.

I sat on the floor and cried until my chest hurt.

To undo her decision would not bring her back. It would not rewrite my childhood. It would not change the shape of the world. But it would loosen something inside her that had never rested, even in death.

I whispered her name and reached for the memory.

The magic did not resist me. It opened like a held breath being released. I felt the weight of her choice lift; not erased, but set down. I felt her guilt dissolve into something softer, something kinder. Not forgiveness but understanding.

When it was done, the house felt different. Not emptier, only lighter.

In the weeks that followed, I noticed small changes in myself. I slept more easily. I spoke more honestly. The magic settled into me, quiet and complete. There would be no more chances to use it. That was the rule. One undoing, one inheritance spent.

I thought of my mother often, not as a figure bent beneath invisible loads, but as the young woman she had been standing on a platform, making the best decision she could with the knowledge she had.

It occurred to me then that magic in our family was never meant to save us.

Only to let us go on.

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WSA Magazine REVIEW

February 2026 Edition



QUANTUM MASS

A Peom by
Marcel Aduba, Kenya

Reviewer
Loyce Lungu
(Zambia)



"Quantum Mass" feels less like a poem and more like a whispered revelation. It carries the quiet awe of someone staring at the night sky and suddenly realising they belong to it. From the very first line, "What's in a prayer? A hidden science waiting to be discovered", there is a sense of wonder, as though faith itself is being gently unfolded and examined with both reverence and curiosity.

What makes this poem deeply moving is its insistence that we are not small. When Marcel Aduba writes, "What's a soul but a miniature sun?", the line glows. It affirms something many of us forget in our darker moments, that we carry light within us. The imagery of burning brightly, of simmering like a brown dwarf, of sometimes existing in binaries and sometimes alone, feels profoundly human. It captures loneliness, partnership, exhaustion, and renewal, all through the language of the cosmos.

The repetition of "The sun soaked the earth in light of the moon" feels like a heartbeat, steady and reflective. It reminds us that light is often shared, reflected, and borrowed, and is still beautiful. The final shift from "sun" to "son" to "sowed" is tender and powerful, suggesting sacrifice, love, and legacy in a single breath.

This poem does not shout; it radiates. It reflects the central idea of the soul as both infinitesimal and infinite; the body may be small, yet luminous and immense in essence. Overall, "Quantum Mass" uses imagery to explore human existence, blending astrophysical reality with emotional and spiritual experience. It becomes a quiet celebration of divine design and human brilliance, glowing softly long after the final line.

EMBERS OF RENEWAL

A Short Story by
Victor Ikechukwu, Nigeria

Reviewer
Larona Tlhobogang
(Botswana)

Victor Ikechukwu writes Embers of Renewal with intention, employing a sombre and reflective tone that captures the reader's attention with ease and evokes both pride and introspection by the end. The story centres on the theme of cultural preservation, reminding readers that the heritage of a community can endure despite attempts to erase it. This message resonates strongly across diverse African cultural contexts.

The story opens by introducing Amahle, the protagonist, who refuses to accept the fate of her village, Ngoma, which has suffered raids from rival clans, as well as wildfires and famine. Through this, the author establishes the central conflict between the character and her environment. While other survivors choose to abandon hope, Amahle remains determined to preserve the memory and spirit of her people.

At several points, Amahle questions whether she can truly revive her culture's heritage. Victor's language is particularly effective in conveying her internal struggle. He compares Amahle's heart to a baobab seed buried beneath layers of ash and grief; though dormant, it remains intact despite the violence it has endured. This metaphor reinforces the story's central idea of resilience and renewal.

The story concludes with Amahle sharing words of wisdom with the younger generation, urging them to nurture the seeds within themselves that have been buried by loss and destruction. This moment symbolises continuity and hope. The image of flowers blooming from the ground where Amahle planted seeds serves as a powerful symbol of rebirth.

Embers of Renewal is a thoughtfully crafted story that offers a message of endurance and cultural continuity. It encourages readers, like the young listeners within the narrative, to remain receptive, resilient, and open to preserving the legacy entrusted to them.

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