

**FAREWELL AUNTIE ESTHER**  
**A TRIBUTE BY**  
**ARAFUA APALOO ANING**

Auntie Esther was my friend rather than a mom. We started our relationship on a rocky footing but the good Lord in his mercies brought us together and we became more than a mother and daughter. Instead, we became very close friends.

Auntie Esther was my big sister who listened to my problems and advised me. She was generous with her time for me and we shared confidences together. Auntie Esther was a traveler, adventurer and a dare devil. I remember our travels to go visit my sister Adzo in Hong Kong, while Auntie Esther was there also visiting Adzo. We would take the public transport and take off by ourselves to go shopping and generally exploring Hong Kong. My Sister Adzo organized a day trip for us to Macao an old Portuguese colony off the coast of the China Sea. Of course, as soon as we landed from the boat ride from Hong Kong, Auntie Esther and I were off to explore the sleepy gambling town which revived at night, buying stuff and sharing confidences. My sister Adzo also organized a trip to main land China for us two since she could not accompany us because of work. Auntie Esther could not speak many words of Mandarin neither could I but we learnt a few survival words to assist us in our shopping trips. Oguayaa, pandilaa, pandi suusu. Which translated loosely meant: how much is this, it is a lot, reduce it a bit.

Bearing in mind that we both spoke no Chinese dialect, my sister had organized accommodations at the Crown Plaza Hotel hoping that we would be more comfortable and luckily find an interpreter to help negotiate our stay in this posh hotel in Beijing. After a day of shopping and enjoying Beijing, we got home very tired but well satisfied gorging on roadside foods especially lychees bursting with flavourful juices, which were in season and other delicious Chinese street foods. Unfortunately, I developed a migraine headache which took Auntie Esther the better part of an hour to communicate my headache to the hotel in order to get me some headache medicine! She patiently explained what she wanted and needed but nothing seemed to work, then she started miming! It was a sight to see.

The trip to the forbidden City in Beijing was another adventure which landed us in hot waters. Again, my faithful Auntie Esther came to the rescue. We had lost our tour group somehow so we were walking around the entrance hoping the agents at the gate would understand that we had lost our tour group. There was no communication at all and before we knew it we were both surrounded by a Chinese tour group which I presumed had come into Beijing to tour the Forbidden City as well. Needless to say these villagers had never encountered black people before in their entire lives not even



on TV

They stood around talking animatedly all at once. Finally, curiosity overwhelmed someone who spat in the hand and was about to rob the sputum on my arm I suppose to see if my brown color would come off or not.

I saw the Chinese in my peripheral view and I was about to give him some choice words in Ga when Auntie Esther saw my intention on my body language and quickly stepped between the Chinaman and me explaining as best as she could that these

are villagers from the bush who never saw a black person before. So please forgive and not take offense. She was in this instance very patient and placating.

Another day we travelled to the Great Wall of China. Auntie Esther was so enthusiastic to climb the wall and experience the thrill of being there. I, of course, was handicapped because of the mountain fever I get at high altitudes, which precipitate the migraine headaches. I was hanging back because of headaches of which of course she was oblivious. She walked spritely as a teenager happily moving forward without me. This was all happening I believe in 1996 or thereabouts. There were no mobile phones to communicate easily. It got to a point when I just could not walk anymore but my Auntie Esther was marching along nonchalantly only to realize some minutes later there was no chatter responding to her comments. Turning around she realized she was all alone so she doubled back and found me in so much pain and took me back to the gate to get me some relief.

My exploits with my older sister could fill a book but I must end here! Our adventures in New York, New Jersey and California would have to be remembered and savored by me alone.

Auntie Esther, you have been a big sister to me and loving grandmother to my children and adoring friend to my husband, Paa Kweku. Thank you for having been part of our lives. Your life has sometimes not been a terribly happy one because of the vagaries of life but you have dealt with it admirably and stoically.

Dear Auntie Esther, may the good Lord keep you till we meet again in Paradise. You have gone but never to be forgotten.

Yaa wo ojogbang!