TEXT 1. TONA

I fell in love with a girl named Tona. She waited until I came out of the classroom, and we snatched a few minutes' conversation. I don't know what we talked about. I know that on the days I didn't see her I was restless and miserable. Every Saturday I asked permission to go to the Mission for confession, and every Sunday evening I said I was going to benediction. Instead of going I sat in the fork of a tree near the chapel, and Tona swung on the branch below, and we talked. It was from her that I received the first letter I had ever had in my life. It said, "You are the only one I think of." At the end of the year we both got the first prize for our school work, she in her class and I in mine.

We met in our tree and promised each other that we would study harder than ever. We would win scholarships, go to college, travel all over the world, come back rich, do great things and have wonderful times. We would help each other. There was nothing we could not do together. But we hadn't thought about the witch.

One night I heard my mother call out, "Look, a witch!" We saw a small dark bird that glowed with an unearthly light. The light came and went alternately in light and darkness, and then the witch- bird flew towards the other end of town. "Where is it going?" I asked my mother. "What will it do?"
"It will suck the blood of some poor soul," she said.
"It is the spirit of a witch. While her body lies asleep on her bed, her spirit in the form of a bird goes out to kill her enemy." "Who is it, mother?" I asked.
"Who knows?" she answered. "If a hunter had killed it, the witch would have been found dead on her bed, a body without a soul. But it is protected by witchcraft."

The next day Tona was not in school. She was sick. The day after that her death was announced at the morning assembly. I felt nothing but shocked disbelief at first, but during the lesson that followed I burst into tears. My teacher asked what the matter was, and I told him that I had a bad headache, and he sent me home. I went to Tona's house.

From some distance away, I could hear the women wailing. The compound was crowded with people and I slipped in without being noticed. Tona lay on her mat. They had dressed her in a more beautiful cloth than she had ever worn when she was alive. My mother saw me and took me to greet the head of the family, Tona's grandfather. The old man looked at me thoughtfully. "Koffi," he said, "he also shines at school." He turned his gaze to my mother.
"Be careful," he warned her. "Do not make enemies of those who are jealous."

Adapted from The Narrow Path,
by Francis Selormey (Ghana)

TEXT 2. BA MOUSSA AND THE STRANGERS

One day three strangers came to stay for a while at the village chief's house. A few days after their arrival they said to him: *"Great chief, please help us to solve these problems. We don't know how to answer them."*
They asked him the questions, but he could not answer them either. He sent for his sorcerers and their apprentices. It was no use. They could not answer the questions either. It was then that one of the people watching spoke of a very wise man. He was called Ba Moussa, and he would be able to help. The chief sent for him immediately. In a little while he came. He got off his mule and greeted all the people. *"I'm very happy to meet you, O great chief. What can I do for you?"* Ba Moussa asked.
"Try to answer the strangers' questions," replied the chief.

"Where is the navel of the earth?" asked the first man. Pointing his stick at his mule, Ba Moussa answered: *"There, just under the right forefoot of my mule."*
The stranger seemed not to believe it, so Ba Moussa added: "If you aren't sure, measure all around the earth. You can kill me if I'm not right." The man was surprised, but what could he do? He had to give up.

"How many stars are there in the sky?" asked the second stranger.
"As many as there are hairs on my mule," Moussa answered immediately. The stranger asked Ba Moussa to prove it.
"That's easy," Ba Moussa replied. "All you have to do is count my mule's hairs. Then you'll be sure."
"I'd never be able to count your animal's hairs. That's impossible."
"Congratulations," Ba Moussa said. "I can see that you're learning. It's also impossible to count all the stars in the sky."

"How many hairs are there in my beard?" the third stranger asked.
"Let's see," Ba Moussa replied, looking carefully at the man.
"There are just as many hairs in your beard as there are hairs in my mule's tail."
The third stranger knew that Moussa would ask him to count all the hairs in the mule's tail if he was not satisfied with the answer. He was ashamed to show that Ba Moussa had beaten him, too. However, he could think of nothing to say.

The chief was proud to have such a wise man among his people. He thanked Moussa very much and promised to have a great feast. Moussa looked at the sly strangers once again. He smiled, got on his mule and rode back to his house.

From Malian stories, Compiled by INP, Bamako

Tr. Franckson K. Siwatell

TEXT 3. DO YOU KNOW ANY SWIMOLOGY ?

Okwologu tugged at his beard thought fully and began his story: "Professor Ology was the first white man ever to set foot on our soil. His real name was Dr Jackson, but you'll soon see why he's remembered as Professor Ology. When he arrived here, there weren't many roads and bridges, so he asked a young African boy to take him across the river in a canoe. Halfway over, he asked if the boy knew any marine biology. The boy said he knew nothing of the kind. The whité man exploded into laughter and said that, without this knowledge, the boy was hardly alive. “By Jove!” he cried. 'One- fifth of your life is gone.'

Then he said to the boy: “Since you don't know any biology, do you know any geology?" The boy said no. “By Jove!” the white man exclaimed, laughing “two-fifths of your life are gone.” “Then perhaps you've read some anthropology?" The boy shook his head. The doctor laughed so loudly that people on the other side of the river wondered what the matter was. 'By Jove !' he screamed, holding his sides. 'Three- fifths of your life are gone, you know that? Surely,” he continued, “since you've not spend all your life idling, surely you've read some zoology, my boy?' The boy replied that he hadn't heard the word. The white man, unable to hold himself any longer, threw him- self on the bottom of the boat, rocking with laughter. 'By Jove!' he cried once more. “Four-fifths of your life are gone.”

He laughed and laughed till his shirt was torn and all the monkeys fled into the jungle. His helmet fell off his head and hit the side of the boat. The boat rocked and capsized. The poor African boy, well aware that only one-fifth of his life was now left, swam desperately ashore to safety. He turned round, and to his amazement saw the white man still struggling in the river and crying for him to help. The white professor couldn't swim and was drowning! Then the African young shouted from the shore: “Tell me, Professor, do you know any swimology?”

The white man cried helplessly, 'No, I don't'. 'No?' cried the young man.' Then all your life is gone'. And, jumping and laughing, he ran home to tell his story."

None of us could help laughing when Okwologu completed his story.

*From The Medics, by **Obi Egbuna**.*

TEXT 4. HAVING CHILDREN

Nyasanu, son of Chief Gbenu, has fallen in love with Agbale, a girl in his village. But she has one thing to ask him, "So now, will you, my Dosu, swear an oath to me?" He stared at her. "What thing, my Nyaun vi?" he said. "That you will not take another wife. I know! Your father has forty wives. My father has ten. And a man needs many sons and daughters to worship him when he has joined his ancestors. But when I think of another girl kissing you, sharing your sleeping mat, I would rather die. I am strange. But I'd rather give you twenty-three sons all by myself. All male

children of one mother, me. Not various women who scream at each other and who hate each other."

He stood there staring at her, stunned by what she was asking. In Africa to have one wife meant that you were almost a beggar. Girl children were wealth. The gifts a prospective son-in-law had to make to the father of the bride were one of the sources of a man's - wealth. Another was the house building and work in the fields that the young man and his age-group did for the future father-in-law. Although weddings of sons were costly to the father, the enlarged family compound compensated for it, and the children were an important source of labour. But the most important thing a son could do for a man was to give him an imposing funeral and to establish his cult as an ancestor.

So a man needed tens, twenties, even hundreds, of children, and such numbers no one woman could supply. Therefore Agbale was asking him a terrible thing which would destroy his honour, position, and his peace of mind. Of course if he became chief of the village he would have to marry a large number of women to make sure that people respected his manhood, his wealth and his social position.

Slightly adapted from The Dahomean

by **Frank Yerby**

TEXT 5. ARRESTED FOR NO REASON

One Saturday afternoon, after filing my last story for my paper, I and two friends decided to drive to Pretoria, the administrative capital of South Africa, which lies some miles north of Johannes- burg. We were visiting a German couple we knew. Our European friends had recently arrived in the country and were refusing to conform to social apartheid.

We left Johannesburg at two and arrived in Pretoria shortly after three. We stayed until nine o'clock in the evening, then decided it was time to drive back to Johannesburg. No African is allowed out in the streets after eleven o'clock in South Africa. It's curfew hour. On our way out of the apartment a white policeman and two black ones were lying in wait for us. We assumed it must be a police check. Not knowing what the matter was, but being accustom- ed to the vagaries of the South African police, we offered little protest when we were pushed into an old police-station around the corner.

In the office the air was foul with swearing and hatred as prisoners poured in. A burly policeman with a thick neck demanded to see our "passes". All Africans are required by law to carry documents saying that they live and work somewhere; these also prove that they have paid the annual tax, and also show the monthly signature of the employer. The police officer flipped through our books and finding nothing wrong seemed a little irritated.

Presently he grabbed a telephone and called up a local state prosecutor whom he briefly informed that he had arrested some Johannesburg "kaffirs" in a building where blacks were excluded. "What can I charge them with?" he casually enquired. My first reaction was to giggle. This conversation continued for a while, and our host kept nodding his head; then, suddenly, he put down the telephone and enquired dramatically: "All right, where are your permits to enter the city of Pretoria?"

The whole thing was no longer funny. We suddenly realised that we might be charged. We tried to explain that we didn't need permits if we were away from home for less than three days. The police officer insisted that we had been in Pretoria for more than three days. In spite of our protests we had to go to court.

TEXT 6. INDIANS IN KIPANGA

Kipanga was not a big town like the big city. However there was one shoe factory, and many black people earned their living there. There were many Indian shops. The Indian traders were said to be very rich. They too employed black boys whom they treated as nothing. You could never like the Indians because their customs were strange and funny. Many people felt they ought to live more like the Africans. But their shops were big and well-stocked with things. White settlers and their wives and children often came to the rich Indians and bought all they wanted.

Black people too bought things from the Indians. The Africans had not many things in their stores, and they generally charged higher prices, so that although the Indians were not liked, people generally found it wiser and more convenient to buy from them. Some people said that black people should stick together and trade only with their black brothers. And one day a poor old woman said, "Let Africans stick together. and charge very low prices. We are all black. If this is not so, then why grudge a poor woman the chance to buy from someone, white or red, who charges less money for his things? "

You did not know what to call the Indian. Some people thought he must be a white man. Others said he must have come from England. Some people who had been to Burma said that the Indians were poor in their country and were also ruled by white men. There was a man in India called Gandhi. This man was a strange prophet. He always fought for Indian freedom. He was a thin man and was always poorly dressed in calico stretched over his bony body. Walking along the street you could see his photograph in every Indian building. The Indians called him Babu, and it was said that this Babu was actually their God. He had told them not to go to war, so that while the Africans had been conscripted into the army the Indians had utterly refused and had been left alone. It was said that the white men in Kenya did not like them because they refused to fight Hitler.

From Weep not Child

by Ngugi Wa Thiongo (Kenya)

Tr. Franckson K. Siwatell