

IN-HOUSE SHORT STORY CONTEST COLLECTIONS

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This book is lovingly dedicated to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A note from the club's president.

In December 2021, all the leaders at Christian Writers and Readers Club decided to organize an in-house short story contest for all our members. Christmas was almost approaching as well as the end of the year... A lot of churches were organizing Christmas carols and almost all our members were active one way or the other with the preparations at their local churches... Because of this, we had to go for our second and last break for the year. But we didn't just want to go like that, we wanted to end the year with something for all of our members and also for our faithful readers and loyal fans on our social media handles, thus, that was how the In-House Short Story Contest came to be.

We organized it on our Facebook page and asked our readers to vote for their best stories, the ones with the highest reactions would emerge as the winner, first and second runner-up.

Before and during the contest, we were able to put out several broadcasts on Facebook, WhatsApp, Wattpad and other social media handles... By the time the contest was over, everything was successful... Praise Abraham emerged as the winner, Oremodu Bukunola was the first runner-up while Faith Ijiga was the second runner-up.

Because we are always looking for new ways to share the gospel with our contents, we mapped out a lot of plans for the club this year, and that includes the publication of this book you are currently reading.

Towards the end of October 2022, our first magazine which will contain our anthologies on the End Times will be published, watch out for it.

Eight people entered the contest, but because of some obvious reasons, we published six of them... But you can visit our Facebook page to read the entire short stories for that contest and including other works published by our members.

As you read this book, My prayer is that you will enjoy the entertainment and also that the stories will speak directly to your heart.

~Aquila Kyeng F: CWRC president.

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GREATER LOVE

By Faith Ijiga.

This story is dedicated to all the Nigerian soldiers who had lost their lives for our freedom.

--

Today was going to be a peculiar day in the life of Second lieutenant Victory Chinonso Ike and he knew it. There was no sign, just instinct.

But believing that it was one of the apprehensions that permeated the heart of any soldier going for the kind of operation he and his colleagues were currently going for, he shrugged it off as nothing more than the usual.

The soldiers had been sent to the community of Achi, Enugu state after receiving an Intel of an imminent attack by armed terrorists. Their mission was to go there and prevent the attack from happening at all costs.

Victory heard his name and tilted his head to see his best friend, 2nd lieutenant Emmanuel Chidindu Akunna calling him. The duo had met each other from their days in the Nigerian defense academy and bonded when they discovered that they were the only ones from their local government. They loved each other like Brothers and their friends and colleagues often called them twins because of their closeness.

The duo had a lot of similarities in most areas of their lives but: they couldn't have been more different in their spiritual and religious beliefs. Victory was an agnostic while Emmanuel was one of the most serious Christian Victory had ever seen.

The soldiers promptly arrived at their place of assignment and started alighting from the armored vehicles.

The moment everyone's feet touched the ground, the first gunshot rang out from a close range, followed by another, and the third hit one of the drivers and almost ripped out his face from his body. The driver was dead before he hit the ground.

The sight of their fallen comrade explained the harsh and unpleasant reality that the soldiers had unfortunately dropped into.

Instantly alert, the soldiers snapped into action.

But the terrorists had anticipated their actions and planned accordingly because without warning, a barrage of gunfire erupted from different angle, instantly killing two more soldiers.

And as clear as the night is from the day, they knew that they were ambushed.

A torrent of expletives flew out of the soldiers' mouths as they took cover and began to return sporadic gunshots into the enemy lines.

Within minutes, the casualty on both sides were enormous and still, more soldiers and terrorists continued to give up the ghost or join the badly injured comrades who were writhing and screeching in pains.

As they continued fighting, the soldiers realized that they had two problems. The first was that they were outnumbered, second was the fact that they couldn't retreat and backup wouldn't come before all this would be over.

Soldiers emptied their bullets, took cover, and ejected their spent magazines, popped in new ones and joined their fellow soldiers to eliminate their enemies. RPGs flew to and fro the enemy lines, bullets ricocheted.

By the time they finished killing the two sets of terrorists who attacked them in their hundreds, they had lost their commander and the soldiers were down to only five men who were left with just one round of ammunition in their kalashnikov to fight off the third set of terrorist who were fastly approaching.

With a look of resignation, the soldiers waited for the end to come.

Emmanuel offered a quick prayer for help on behalf of him and his friends. Knowing the fate that was about to befall them, he contemplated if he should ask them to say the prayer of salvation but with the distraught look on their faces, he knew it would be fatal.

An idea dropped in his mind and he welcomed it. Not waiting to confirm if it was the Holy Spirit or not, he gave thanks and ran off with the idea.

No words could explain the astonish expressions of the other soldiers when Emmanuel shared his idea.

Emmanuel watched as Victory's facial expression changed from shock to anger. "You dey craz oo! Hope you no say na kolo dey worry you? Guy, you don mad finish!" Victory let out a stream of diatribe at Emmanuel in Pidgin English.

Not having enough time to argue his sanity, Emmanuel began explaining to the soldiers why he should carry on with his idea.

Just when the other soldiers were beginning to understand him, Victory stood up and gave him a resounding slap.

"Stop this nonsense now!" Victory bellowed, wagging his right index finger. "I swear, I won't allow your plans to succeed, you hear me?"

Not having time to cuddle Victory's hysterics, he ordered the other soldiers to overpower and disarm him.. They complied and with a few punches and hard kicks, victory was subdued and pinned to the ground.

Emmanuel addressed the soldiers. "It is obvious that we received the wrong Intel and staying here together will make us sitting ducks. There is no way we can out run these cold blooded Killers who are fast approaching and this is more of the reasons we should carry on with my plans. I can't seem to find any other way out of this. I beg you guys not to allow them to succeed by accomplishing their goal of killing us all, go back and give the report."

By the time he was finished with his remark, victory had lost the willpower to fight, looked dazed at his friend as if intent on memorizing the outlines of his features, and sat down stoically as Emmanuel ordered the soldiers to set him up for what they called operation Samson.

Emmanuel went down quietly on his knees on the grass and prayed Samson's prayer from the book of Judges 16:28 & 30. And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

When they finished setting off explosives and arranging four helmets to lead the terrorists away from the soldiers escape route, Emmanuel immediately sent them on their way.

"God bless you." They said with lumps in their throats and began leading Victory away.

"God bless you too, and god bless the federal Republic of Nigeria." He replied solemnly.

Victory and the other soldiers barely got into one of their armored vehicles when they heard the deafening explosion that violently shook the ground, they immediately drove away from the raging inferno that it ignited.

As they drove back to their command base. The enormity of what Emmanuel had just done came up on Victory like a gigantic Rock.

Unable to hold back the dam of emotions, he slumped forward, buried his face in his palms and his shoulders shook violently as he wept unabashedly. The other soldiers gave him a much-needed space as they watched him with pain and sadness in their eyes.

On the day 2nd lieutenant Emmanuel Chidindu Akunna and the other fallen soldiers were to be buried in one of the military cemeteries, victory and a few other soldiers preceded the whipping family and friends who had come to bury their dead.

Victory had never gotten over the events that took the lives of his colleagues and his best Friend. Could he ever forget it? He didn't think so. The pain of that event still throbbed like a fresh jagged wound.

For several days and nights, when he thought no one was watching him, he often whispered to himself.

"He died for me, he died for me!" On and on he chanted it like a mantra, wishing it wasn't true, wheeling the event to go away.

But the ongoing funeral was a harsh reminder of the horrific event.

None of the bodies of the soldiers could be recovered after being blown into smithereens, thus some soldiers were sent back to the site to fetch some of the ashes to put inside the coffins...

As they marched on, Victory could hear the wailing mother of his late best friend. And the anguished cry of Emmanuel's girlfriend who he had planned to propose to. He felt for both of them, but especially the mother of his late best friend, she was a widow and had also lost her only child in the world.

The funeral at the graveside started and one of the military pastors stepped out to give the eulogy.

"Today is another sad day in the history of this country and in our lives." The pastor began. "I pray that every sacrifice our brother's, sons, friends and colleagues have made for the freedom of this country will never be forgotten in Jesus name."

The people replied to him with an, "amen", before he continued the eulogy.

"When the news of the failed operation reached my ears, I was heartbroken and torn apart, but there was a particular report about the event that made me dissolve into tears, and that was the selfless act of late second lieutenant Emmanuel Chidindu Akunna."

At the mention of her late son's name, Mrs. Akunna, who had calmed down a little, resumed another high-pitched cry, and more people rushed to her side to console her.

When everything had calmed down a little, the pastor resumed. "While I prayed and asked God for the Bible passage to use for this funeral, the Holy Spirit showed me John 15:13."

The pastor opened his Bible and read aloud... John 15:13. "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

He closed the Bible and peered into the crowd. "This Bible passage sums it up, my friends."

"This selfless act of love is what Emmanuel did for the four survivors that came home to us, for the community of Achi and Nigeria."

"While I was meditating on the scripture, the Holy Spirit showed me how the shoe fits with the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross of Calvary. Just like Emmanuel, Jesus was the only son of God who gave his life for us so that we might be saved. And he didn't just do it for a country or continent, he did it for the whole of mankind."

"This, my friends, is the greater Love. And may the sacrifice of our brother always serve as remembrance of that greater love of Jesus Christ."

When the funeral was over, and everyone had left the burial ground, Victory sat down at the edge of his friend's grave. He needed his own personal time with his friend, it wasn't like his friend was in that grave anyway.

"I'm still finding it hard to believe that we've separated from each other," Victory started.

"I don't even need to ask how you're doing because I know you are happy up there. I'm just sad that I didn't listen to you all this while you were giving me those messages of salvation, we would have gone together that day."

And that was when Victory broke down crying and repented from all his sins and welcomed Jesus into his life. When he finished, an inexplicable peace rested upon him, and he smiled for joy for the first time since his friend's death.

Instead of looking at the grave, he looked up to the sky this time around and spoke again to his friend.

"I love you, my brother. Thank you for giving me another chance in life. I know we will meet again, up there, and we will both catch up on old times: but until then, rest well, my friend. Rest in peace, my brother.

Victory got up and dusted off sand from his trousers. He gave the grave one long look before wheeling himself out of the cemetery with a new life.

The end.

About the Author

Faith Ijiga is a Christian fiction author that writes suspense, mystery and thriller. Faith resides in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

She is the author of two fiction books and five short stories. She's a blogger and a book reviewer... Faith is the founder of an online club for Christian writers. She turned Twenty-seven on the 26th of August 2022, the same day her second book, a crime fiction, was published, she's a bachelor's degree holder from the National Open University of Nigeria where she read Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution... She is an advocate for Peace and a political analyst.

Faith was diagnosed with cataracts when she was barely six months old, she had a failed surgery at the age of one which ended up making her sight condition beyond medical repair... Faith grew up with a sight impairment for over 20 years and also attended a special school for the blind... Today, she uses her experiences as a testimony to inspire others by letting them know that truly, nothing is impossible with God.

Faith loves talking about sports, she is a die-hard fan of Chelsea FC. When she is not writing or Googling New authors to obsess over, Faith enjoys learning new things, watching sports shows and updates, spending time with family and friends and ultimately the Holy Spirit who is her best friend and helper.

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THIS IS IT

By IDOWU KEHINDE ELIZABETH.

'There's a rumor that the Corona Virus started in a Chinese lab...

Conspiracy theorists have confirmed that the lab is the origin of the Covid-19 CoronaVirus outbreak.

There are two main versions of the rumor, and they have one common thread: that the CoronaVirus SARS-COV-2, originated in a level 4 (the highest biosafety level) research laboratory in Wuhan.

In one version of the rumor, the Virus was engineered in a lab by humans as a 'bioweapon.'

In another version, the Virus was being studied in a lab (after being isolated from animals) and then 'escaped' or 'leaked' because of poor safety protocol.

The Wuhan Institute of Virology is a real place and the exact origin of the novel CoronaVirus is still a mystery, with researchers racing since the outbreak began to figure it out.

But already, Virologist who've parsed the genome and infectious disease experts who study CoronaVirus are brand new and came from nature.

The emergence of the Virus in the same city as China's only level 4 biosafety lab, it turns out, appears to be pure coincidence...'

"And here's the latest scoop from yours truly, Amanda Brown from the only Conspiracy debunking TV channel."

Aria sighed as she turned off the antique TV.

She groaned into her pillow.

'So which was it?'

Being a Conspiracy Theory debunker, it's been her goal for a while now—roughly seven years—to always seek out the truth.

The real truth.

And not the bull the U.S government gave the public to make them none the wiser.

She stood and stretched, her long hair falling in waves behind her back.

She looked down at her outfit—she was in a boxer brief and blue tank top.

She looked around her apartment—it was messy.

It looked as if a bomb had exploded in it the night before.

She sighed for like the umpteenth time that day.

It was time to get cleaned.

She raced out of her small but homey apartment still struggling to put on her left shoe.

'Blast it!'

She had to catch the train to downtown, she had a reliable source waiting for her there.

She was a journalist, but she flew solo and the only reason being she hates attachments.

But the most insecure part of her knew it was because she was afraid of getting hurt, by people, so she surrounded herself with steels that were practically impenetrable.

In ten minutes, she reached her destination.

She followed religiously the coordinates sent to her and she found herself in front of an abandoned looking house.

She closed the door to the cab and immediately it zoomed off.

She looked around and saw nothing but trees.

The house looked intimidating and her doubts began to grow.

She swallowed and buried her hands deep into her pocket and headed in.

She got in.

"Hello." She called out as she walked tentatively through the house.

She was greeted with silence.

Suddenly, she felt strong arms grab her into a room.

Aria was already prepared to go 'Kung Fu Panda' on their ass, when she heard a familiar voice speak.

"Shhh."

She turned around to face her captor.

"Bryan?"

Said person pulled their hoodie to reveal a handsome face. His blue-green eyes stared into hers and her heart raced.

Aria cursed herself for allowing herself to be affected by him.

She freed herself from his hold, putting her game face on.

"What was so urgent you had to pick this crappy location?"

"Keep your voice down Aria." He told her in a whisper.

But she ignored him.

"I just got a call from Antonio. What's all this bull about 5G? Another conspiracy theory. The Corona Virus being a cover up for the death it supposedly caused?"

He walked up to her and grabbed both her arms firmly staring into her eyes.

For the very first time she got there, she noticed the pure panic and fear in them.

"Bryan?" She whispered.

"None of that matters. None of that'll matter in a few months Aria." He let her go rather harshly and she watched him confused as he paced through the fairly dark room running a shaky hand through his hair.

Aria looked around and realized the interior of the house was much worse than its exterior. Dust covered everywhere.

"Will you calm down and talk to me?"

He took several calming breaths before turning to face her.

"The breach in Wuhan, the CoronaVirus, 5G and all the other conspiracy theories are all a front for Aria."

"A distraction from an even bigger threat that could lead to the destruction of mankind as we know it." He started.

"What do you mean?" Aria was still very confused.

Aria's eyes caught briefly, the crucifix he always wore around his neck.

Ever since she'd known him, he was a devoted Christian, always wanting to do the right thing that was why he became a reporter in the first place.

And that was also what led to their break up in the first place.

Apparently, he'd wanted to wait and she had wanted to take things to the next level.

Feeling rejected, she'd broken things off with him.

He'd claimed it was against his beliefs.

She'd called Bull.

He now stood staring into her eyes and she'd never seen him look so hopeless before.

"God showed me Aria." He whispered.

Her palms began to sweat and her throat became dry.

She knew whatever he had to say would be the truth.

When she'd said he was a Christian, she'd meant he had the gifts as well, though she'd tried to tell herself otherwise.

"The Beast is here." He said.

'What?'

Aria's eyes widened.

"You don't mean—" He nodded as her voice died off.

Her hands began to tremble and in that instant, Aria vaguely recalled vaguely the dreams she'd also been having recently, about the end of the world.

The Beast, the False Prophet....

She hadn't told anyone about it.

Aria looked back up at him, feeling more scared than she'd ever been in her entire life.

Then she'd told him about her dreams, seeing how he was telling her the same truth, that must mean there was an iota of truth in what he was saying...or they could just both be going crazy...

"Take my hand Aria and I'll show you what I saw."

She took two steps back afraid.

"I don't want to." A tear fell down her cheek.

She didn't want to, her dream had been enough.

She was a reporter, there was supposed to be a rational explanation for everything, scientific explanation.

But nothing about her dream had made sense.

He held her hand and pulled her gently to him.

"I promise no harm will come to you. You have to know I can't bear this on my own. Someone else has to know."

And immediately, Aria felt warmth fill her entire being.

"Don't worry Aria...He's here."

She pulled back from his embrace and nodded looking into his eyes, her heart in her throat.

She placed her second hand in his and closed her eyes...

...

When she opened them, Aria found herself in front of a very large Castle engulfed in darkness, fire burned everywhere and the air wreaked of sulfur.

She felt fear so intense, she nearly passed out.

But her curiosity as a journalist propelled her forward.

Slowly, she made her way to the Castle and surprisingly the door opened up to her.

She saw a long table that stretched almost to the end of the impossibly big room with chairs arranged on both sides.

Aria's eyes widened and her heart almost gave out as she saw demons chatter loudly, there were scores of them.

They came in forms and sizes but they were all disgustingly hideous.

She saw several terrifying-looking demons taking their seats, they seemed to be very high ranked.

She took a step back frightened at the disturbing sight in front of her.

She felt a hand hold hers suddenly and she jumped.

"I'm right here. Don't be afraid." She saw Bryan by her side staring down at her, a determined look in his eyes.

He turned back to the scene in front of them.

"They can't see or sense us."

They both stood by a corner and watched the entire scene unfold in front of them.

She saw a man enter the room, he looked surprisingly gentle.

But right in front of her, he transformed into a giant hideous demon, much bigger than the rest of the other demons.

Then he was soon followed by another man.

Aria gasped covering her mouth.

She knew this man, he was a very popular politician.

'It was...'

She felt Bryan squeeze her hand but she didn't turn to him.

The two men turned demons sat on the two elevated thrones.

"Silence!" And everywhere was dead quiet.

"As you all know the plan has already been set in motion."

There were grunts of approval among the demons that sat at the table.

"We've successfully been able to cripple the world with the CoronaVirus pandemic."

"The world economy has crumbled to dust and the whole world is in a state of pandemonium."

"Now this is where we strike. The 5G will help us usher in a new era."

"A new world order."

"Covertly will plant our ploy into the vaccines they'll start injecting the people with and everyone will be forced to take it."

"And anyone who takes this vaccine is already right in our hands and they'll be ready specimens for the mark of the Beast, my mark."

Aria saw the hideous grin spread on their faces.

"They'll never see it coming."

And the scene blurred into smoke and they were both back in the abandoned house.

She was breathing heavily and she ran to a withered flower pot and emptied all the content of her stomach.

She heard Bryan come behind her and help hold her hair up.

She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and straightened.

She turned to face him.

Her eyes met his worried ones.

"I'm scared." She whispered and Bryan's eyes lowered in understanding.

"I know." He moved closer to her.

"I am too." He held her cheek gently.

Aria let herself be vulnerable with him even though they were broken up.

She melted at his touch and everything else seemed to fade into the background.

After a fleeting moment, she pulled back and stared into his beautiful blue-green eyes.

"We have to tell everyone." She said urgently.

He shook his head, his eyes sad.

"I tried. They all said I was crazy." He sighed, taking a few steps away from her.

"Who wouldn't? I mean, it isn't exactly a Hollywood movie you're narrating." He sighed tiredly, defeated.

She felt a pang in her chest.

She'd seen the articles he'd written and she'd even been among those that had criticized him.

Her eyes lowered, she was embarrassed.

Then she looked back up, a determination in her eyes that wasn't quite there before.

"We have to try Bryan."

She placed a comforting hand on his shoulder and he turned to her.

"It'll be okay." She held his hand tightly and gave him a shaky smile.

"I promise."

About the Author.

Idowu Kehinde Elizabeth is a passionate writer whose life's goal is to bring to her readers' consciousness the realities of the world in which they dwell. Light and darkness coexist but because of spiritual blindness, some fail to see the battles that rage all around them which threatens to swallow all.

She is a proud author of four books which are mainly of the supernatural, mystery, psychological and horror genres as well as an anthology which has been carefully compiled for the edification and enjoyment of her readers.

She's a very passionate UI/UX Designer as well as a Fish scientist currently studying at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.

She is dauntless, compassionate and it is her life's goal to bring as many people to the knowledge of Christ as possible by spreading light through her books; and that no matter how deep in darkness a life is there is an even greater light that is enough to bring that life out of that darkness.

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She loves to interact with her readers so all messages are welcome.

ÀKÀNKÉ, ỌMỌ ỌYÉ

By

Oremodu Bukunola

DEDICATION

This poem is dedicated to those who are struggling with living right. The grace of God is available for you.

Àkànké died today.

Àkànké, ọmọ ọyẹ, a child of harmattan,

As our great-grandmother would croak to the infant,

For she was born during the harsh and unstable weather of the West,

Maybe that is why rashness oozed from her.

Àkànké, ọmọ ọyẹ,

Ọmọ burúkú, ọmọ jàtijàti,

The neighbors would call her, while informing my parents

Of her escapades

Nevertheless, I always admired,

Àkànké, my sister.

Àkànké was buried today.

Àkànké ọmọ ọyé,

I would call her, teasing her in the likeness of our great-grandmother,

The memory of the slaps I received as a result,

Brought my hand to my cheek again.

Tears brimmed over, clouding my vision,

As memories of her swollen belly flood my mind,

Her child, brought into this world,

With no breath of life accompanying him.

Àkànké, ọmọ ọyé,

Ọmọ lẹpa, ọmọ tó ẹwà,

I will always love you,

Àkànké, my sister.

Àkànké rose today.

Àkànké, ọmọ ọyé,

As our parents would say,

During bouts of reminisce on our great-grandmother,

Pieces of her shattered life,

Were assembled by the Savior Himself,

With her mouth, she confessed Him as Lord,

With her heart, she accepted Him as Savior,

She identified with the Son of God,

She died, was buried with Him and rose with Him.
 Àkànké, with a smile on her face and a skip in her step,
 With eyes sparkling with tears,
 Hugged me, affection oozing from her.
 There it dawned on me,
 Àkànké, ọmọ ọyẹ was now Àkànké, ọmọ Jesu,
 The old has gone, the new is here to stay.

Àkànké, ọmọ ọyẹ,
 Ọmọ iyí, ọmọ Abba Fada,
 To the old you, I say,
 O dabọ, ká má pàdé mọ
 To the new you, I say,
 Ẹ káàbọ,
 Ẹ káàbọ, Àkànké titun,
 Ẹ káàbọ.

GLOSSARY

Àkànké – a Yorùbá oríkì name that means ‘someone that you meet and then pamper’

Ọmọ ọyẹ – a child of harmattan (that is, a child born during the harmattan season)

Ọmọ burúkú – a bad child

Ọmọ jàtijàti – a useless child

Ọmọ lẹpa – a slim child/a slim lady

Omọ tó ẹwà – a beautiful child/a beautiful lady

Omọ Jesu – a child of Jesus

Omọ iyí – a child of honour

Omọ Abba Fada – a child of Abba Father

O dabọ, ká má pàdé mọ – goodbye, let's never meet again

Ẹ káàbọ, Àkànké titun – welcome, new Àkànké

--

About the Author.

Oremodu Oluwabukunola Ruth is a barrister and solicitor of the Nigerian Bar. Writing from a young age, she honed her talent over time by writing short stories, novels and taking writing courses. A certified IMUN intern, she enjoys singing, dancing and reviewing stories. She studied law in Obafemi Awolowo University and is part of a family of six.

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AFRAH

By AnaMettle.

I dedicate this story to God Almighty, who made it possible for this story to see the light.

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Afrah looked around him in amazement. He still could not believe he was in senior high school. It seemed like it was only yesterday his mother told him the decision she had made with father, that he would be skipping JHS two so he could take the Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E). It was the exam which made it possible for a junior high school student to gain admission to the senior high school.

His mother's reason was that because final year SHS students were asked to pay a huge amount of money, skipping JHS 2 would make it possible for him to sit for the WASSCE (an exam written by SHS final year students, similar to B. E. C. E) two years before his younger brother did. They would be financially capable to cater for his brother's needs when he got to SHS 3 by then.

He felt elated he would be able to help but at the same time he was anxious. He would have to study with JHS 3 students, would he be accepted? Would registering for B.E.C.E in a different school affect him in the future? His anxiety grew with each thought but he comforted himself with the thought that he would be graduating JHS earlier.

His anxiety gave way to annoyance when he learned that the school he would be writing with did not register its students for the French Language paper. He loved French and looked forward to getting a good grade on his B.E.C.E certificate but that would not be possible now.

The exam period drew near and he got more serious with the preparation knowing this was an opportunity not everyone got and as expected, his new classmates did not warm up to him immediately and it did not help that a teacher used him frequently as a model student. He selected his four choice schools along with General Science, the course he wanted to read in SHS.

Weeks later, he was done writing the papers and was awaiting results. One Saturday, he heard over the news that the results would be released in the following week. He was not worried because he was aware he had done what he could and if the results were bad, he could always go back to school.

At Sunday school the next day, the memory verse was Philippians 4:19 which read: But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

His Sunday School madam encouraged all of them to make a prayer request with this verse and share their testimonies the following Sunday. He went home wondering what he could ask God.

The results came the next day. He downloaded his and shockingly, his course had been changed from General Science to General Arts! He was alarmed! How could that happen?

Following his father's advice, they visited the school where he gained admission to see if changes could be made but were told that the G Science class was full and he could not be admitted because he did not sit for French Language. The only G. Arts class which was not yet full was the French class. He gave up at that moment but his father had not.

His father took him and his younger brother with him to Church at night to pray into his school selection. Praying on Church premises at night with his father was not new. His father usually went to Church to pray at night because he was less tempted to sleep at Church.

His father opened his praise playlist which mostly had Nigerian songs including Princess Ifeoma's songs and gave it to him to dance to it and thank God in advance for victory, not failing to mention the Wall of Jericho in the Holy Bible. Afrah did just that but after some time he remembered the Philippians 4:19 prayer assignment he received the previous Sunday. He started praying and thanking God.

The next day his father came home and told him to get ready, they were going to the next town! On the way, his father told him what had happened. He had discussed his issue with one woman at Church and unknown to him, the woman was a matron at a Boys' High School. After listening to him, the woman told his father that she was willing to help Afrah not only gain admission but also be able to read G. Science as well.

Afrah was so surprised at the unexpected turn of events, he knew it could only be God. The God Apostle Paul had promised would supply all his needs according to His riches in glory. His mood got better, he was finally going to be able to gain admission and it was in a school he did not even pick, free of charge. He knew it could only be God. He had not expected his request to be answered so fast. He prayed silently, thanking God for His divine provision.

When he got there, one of the teachers did not make it easy for him. The teacher, after seeing the schools he chose, got annoyed. Afrah had selected three out of four schools outside the region and was now there at a school he had not selected, seeking admission. Afrah was silent, another teacher sensing his discomfort came to his rescue. He took over from the teacher and helped Afrah fill the necessary forms.

Besides the annoyed teacher, every other staff member Afrah met was kind to him. Way too kind, as if they knew him beforehand. Even the assistant headmaster gave him the dormitory he requested when he reported for school.

Though Afrah knew it was a reality, he honestly was still in awe, he really was in high school! The students helped him send his stuff to his room and almost everyone who saw him grew fond of him.

He left the dormitory to take a walk with senior Zerbert, who volunteered to be his tour guide. Zerbert advised him as they walked and gave him a brief history of the school. He would point to either a building or a tree and mention the slang name given it by the students.

Afrah also shared his testimony with senior Zerbert who got quiet after listening. He seemed to be deep in thoughts. He was amazed. He admitted that even though he was a Christian, he really did not believe God was willing to do miracles anymore but hearing Afrah's testimony, he saw the need to put faith in God's word.

Zerbert excused himself to speak with some students who appeared to be his friends. Afrah decided to walk by himself and hoped Zerbert would catch up soon. He got to the administration block and could not help reminiscing with a thankful heart. A lot had happened and when all hope was lost, that was when God made a way.

"Afrah, do you plan on sleeping here or what?" Zerbert teased with a smile. Afrah smiled back and turned without a word, he really was a senior high school student and he needed to start believing that. He looked forward to life within the four corners of Kesse Boys' Senior High School.

The two young men walked back in silence, both deep in thoughts. Afrah broke the silence with a chuckle, "And to think God gave me this because I thanked Him for what I did not yet see!"

Zerbert grinned, "And to think you threw a tantrum because you could not sit for the French paper, God is good!"

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About the Author.

Juliana Achiaa Adusei aka Ana Mettle aims to proclaim our Lord Jesus Christ through her stories.

Ana enjoys spending quality time with family, learning about human behavior and researching new ways of improving her craft as a crocheter.

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HIS PLAN

By Praise Abraham. @PeculiarPraise

Author's note: Hello lady or gentleman!

Thank you a million times for taking out of your precious time to read this short piece. I hope you enjoyed every bit of it as much as I did writing it.

All the characters, especially Claudia, have a quality we can learn from. Can you point some out? And who was your best character?

God bless you. Love you.

HIS PLAN

Claudia Salcorm smiled like a girl about to enter her dream college after being homeschooled all her life. Soon, in a few hours really, she'd discard her father's name and bear the name of the one she had fallen so crazily in love with.

As she walked to her room's balcony, drowning out the cacophonic chatter and girly giggles of her bridal train who were in the adjoining room, her glazing white, full-skirted, off-shoulder gown which was amply studded with pearls and artificial diamonds at the bodice, swished about her feet about which was strapped a low-wedge silver sandal—a compliment to her silver accessories.

Presently, she was the only one in her room. Her mom left some minutes ago to retouch her makeover because she had shed tears when she saw her only baby girded up like an angel about to fly away. Her bridesmaid and bestie since childhood (if we overlook the countless wars between them), Mabel Preshton, Maybee as Claudia fondly nicknamed her, who had helped her to dress up, style her soft brown hair into the curly mass that held the comb of the silvery veil, and applied the slight makeup that highlighted her strikingly gorgeous facial features, was humming an off-key tune under the pouring shower in the bathroom. Claudia could only hope the girl doesn't exfoliate her skin.

As the fresh 11:00am sun, mingled with breeze, hit her fair skin, Claudia sighed out loud while holding the railings and gazing at the interlocking of the compound floor. Gosh, she was going to miss home.

She was still dazed that she was getting married. It seemed to her as though time skipped so fast in a blur.

She wondered what Ben was doing right now. Was he thinking of her? Was he having a fit of nerves? Or was he as cool, handsome and collected as ever?

She didn't think she had the qualifications to date, not to talk of marrying Benjamin Reed. He was a pastor and a gifted gospel artiste on fire for the Lord, who had the connections to travel internationally for his ministries. It was on one of such occasions that he met her, a lead singer at Saints of Yahweh Tabernacle, South Berma. After six months of correspondence through emails, he met her, out of a

busy schedule, in a quaint restaurant overlooking a beach, and startled her with the most romantic proposal of all time.

She was flushed to her marrow. God had apparently kept the best for her. Without hesitation, without even praying about it which wasn't her usual style, she squealed a yes to him. The first kiss was what melted her heart completely. Surely this was God's perfect will for her, no questions asked, she had concluded.

She began to rehearse the vocals of the song she wanted to present before her vows. She had composed it herself. A love song. One this time not directed to Jesus but to the bone of her bones and the flesh of her flesh.

"Yo! Whatcha doin' girl?"

Claudia jumped, spun and held her chest simultaneously.

"Lord, Maybee! You startled me!" she gasped.

"Sorry! Didn't mean to. And for the record, it isn't right for a bride to brood on her wedding day. What if you get a high BP? Your groom will simply slaughter me," Mabel said with a sly grin.

Claudia chuckled.

"I wasn't brooding. I was thanking God for my luck. Girl, I'm getting married. I'm getting married..."

Mabel, knowing what was coming next, rolled her eyes.

"Here we go again," she whispered to herself, smiling.

"Aaaaahhhh!!" They both squealed in an high-pitched octave, hopping in glee like children gifted their favorite candies.

"Okay, since we're done, let's hurry downstairs before your people think you've been kidnapped."

"Yeah right!"

"Gurl, I'm so, so happy for you. I just pray that God will remember my plain face and give me my own prince charming." Mabel faked a dramatic half swoon.

"Just zip your lips Maybee... And I promise you, if I suffer today, I'll blame it all on you and will never forgive you," Claudia said seriously.

With a toothy grin and a shove to the bride's side, Mabel replied, "I love you too."

After settling their banter, Claudia was ushered into the decorated BMW. Maybee would have followed but she suddenly remembered at the last minute that she had forgotten the tote bag where she kept

emergency supplies like tissues, a pen and a jotter, a portable solar charged fan, flat sandals and a flask of cold water.

Since they were running out of time—the church wedding was to begin at 12:00pm—Claudia was shooed off in the car with the family driver.

As the car cruised the smooth by the busy street of Burma City, Claudia couldn't keep herself from smiling bright as she stared out the window and observed the lofty buildings as they flew past.

The thundering sound of glass shattering caused her to whip her face sharply back onto the road before her. But alas, there was no clear road before them! It was the hood of a sixteen-wheeled trailer that cruelly glared back at her.

Her eyes widened, threatening to swallow her face. Before she could belt out the scream that began its upward journey from her belly, she painfully felt metal cut through her face. She couldn't think past the pain.

Her body shut down.

Everything became blank.

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Three months later.

Benjamin Reed fiddled with the white envelope in his hands as he stood at the glass door of ICU ward 17. He knew what he had to do. But doing it was proving difficult, considering how much he had actually not expected this.

As he stepped in, the pungent scent of antiseptics assaulted his lungs and he did his best to pull a blank face. He needed it. The blank stare.

Mabel was seated on the couch adjacent to Claudia, reading a novel, even though it was evident on her face that she was stressed out. A brief scan around the room showed that Claudia's parents weren't in, which was such a relief to him. It would get the work done faster. Possibly, they went home to freshen up and grab some stuff.

The sound of the door sliding shut caused her to glance up. She thought it was the assigned nurse, one Mr Jace Gregg that had come to administer Claudia's medication and put another blood and water bag. Surprise and relief flooded her features when she saw who it was.

"Bro Benjamin! It's so good to see you here. You never showed up after her first surgery and I was beginning to get scared. Thank goodness you're here. Now I can rest, fully assured that her recovery will be faster," Mabel ranted on with a small smile.

Benjamin was beginning to feel guilt gnawing at his stomach. He shoved the feeling aside. He had to do this.

"Ehmm... Actually, I just needed to drop something with you for her," he said and glanced at the pale figure of Claudia beneath the white sheets and bandages. He cringed as he saw clearly the many scars on her neck and face. Her head was shaved bald because of the surgery. She looked anything but pretty.

"Oh!" was all Mabel could say, as her shoulder slumped.

"I came to tell her goodbye and that I am sorry but I can't do this anymore," he enunciated slowly and in a low baritone, looking at the envelope that lay in his hands.

He was greeted with silence.

A furtive glance at Mabel showed that her eyes were narrowed at him, her brows were furrowed and that she was obviously fighting her lips to not spill out obscenities at him.

"So that's it? You just run off like a brat because Claudia was in an accident? None of this was her fault. Why don't you say it in her face instead? Tell her that you never loved her!" Her tone was biting and sharp.

"Well, that's the problem exactly. I can't wait any more. She's been in a coma for close to three months. The doctor's report clearly tells us that her chances of full recovery is 50-50. Besides, her vocal cords and face have been destroyed." He ran his hand through his black hair and sighed.

"I am a minister. An international one. I can't tarnish my reputation by marrying an incapacitated woman. I was in love with her but I needed to count my cost."

When Maybee just stared at him in slack-jawed appellation, he tossed the envelope at her and shuffled out.

"You're really serious? You're a coward, Benjamin Reed. A big fat coward, I tell you!" she stood and yelled after his retreating figure.

Never in her life did she expect Claudia's knight in glimmering armor to turn into an evil villain. What happened to the better for worse part? Oh! They hadn't said the vows? What if they had? Would he be so cold hearted to do this? Did he even know God?

"Oh Claudia," she cried as she slumped into her couch and stared with teary eyes at the envelope and then her best friend,

"What in the world am I going to tell you? Please don't die on me. Oh God please..."

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Jace had finished his rounds, organized the files and was about to go home when he felt the nudging to wait back. He didn't know why, given the fact that he had some things to attend to in his house, like getting the groceries, helping his kid brother with his final project and spending time in prayer for the 5pm Bible study where he was to lead the offering section.

Even though he was relatively new in Christ, his love for God was what kept him going and he loved his job. Maybe this was God's way of drawing his attention to something urgent that was about to happen.

Without willing it to, he felt his heart drawn towards his special patient, the very one God claimed was his partner, who had been unconscious since the time she was rushed here in her wedding dress!

He walked briskly to ICU ward 17 and entered. Her best friend, who seemed to have no other dwelling place, was snoring softly on the couch.

He moved to the bed of the patient and glanced down at her face. He felt for her. Who knows what pain and trauma she had to be enduring trapped in that cocoon called a coma?

That she was breathing was a miracle because the driver of her car had died instantly. As he got to know later on, the truck driver had been inebriated in broad daylight, and he was the cause of the accident that caused this woman to be bedridden on the day she was supposed to be most joyful. Thankfully, the government enforcement agencies had apprehended him to face the music of the law.

He checked the ECG monitor beside her. Her pulse rate was slow but steady. So was the brain activity. Nothing was unusual here.

He adjusted her drip line and drew the blanket about her body more closely.

As he turned and was about to go, he felt a soft hand grip his arm weakly. Claudia, aged 25, as her file stated, was awake from her coma.

Swinging into action as her eyelashes fluttered open, Jace pressed a button to alert the doctor-in-charge. He bent close to her and spoke when he saw her trying to stand up.

"Hey, don't stress yourself. Lie back down. The doctor is on his way."

"Where... where am I?" Her voice was parched and cracked, an evidence of lack of moisture and the damage to her vocal cords. He could barely hear her. Also, she had this look of agitation written all over her face.

The doctor, beaming smiles of proud accomplishment, entered with Mrs Salcorm, Claudia's grateful mother, trailing after him.

Mabel stirred and soon sat up, though groggily, when she noticed the mini crowd that had gathered around her bestie's sick bed.

"She's awake?" Mabel asked tentatively, secretly scared that her bestie was in danger.

The doctor who was checking her vitals let out a grunt of affirmation.

Mabel was so joyous that she kept and threw herself on Claudia, laughing and crying at the same time.

"Oh girl... I've missed you so so so so much."

"Me too..." Claudia managed to croak out under the strain of Mabel's bear hug.

"Miss, you might want to give your friend breathing space. She's just recovered," the doctor pointed out.

"Oops, sorry." Mabel gave him a cheeky grin.

"Mr Gregg," the doctor said, turning his attention towards Jace, "Please get her file and the vitamins for recuperation right away. She has to get accustomed as soon as possible to her new lifestyle." Jace went out after the doctor.

Claudia's eyes darted about the room looking for a certain someone.

"Where's Ben?" she eventually asked when she couldn't bottle it in any longer.

Mabel threw a glance at Claudia's mom who simply hissed. She sighed and patted her friend's back.

Few minutes later, Jace returned to the ward, only to meet a sobbing Claudia being patted and consoled by her friend. Not wanting to intrude the private moment, he turned back and threw up a prayer to God for her.

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It had been almost six months since her dreams were shattered by an accident.

Her perfect man vanished from her life without so much as an explanation or at least a face-to-face confrontation.

The letter he left was so heart-wrenching that she'd shredded and burnt the paper after reading it once through a host of mucor and salty tears.

How could he have so easily forgotten all their wonderful moments together all because of an accident? She couldn't thank her stars enough that she didn't give him her virtue. It would have ruined her. The last she heard, he had married a hot chick and was still firing away all over the nations.

Her sonorous voice was gone. No more singing in the choir for now. She now detests going outdoors because people give her the cold shoulder because of the scars that slithered across her face.

Once, a little girl screamed in terror when she saw her taking a walk in a park. The recollection still made her sad.

Her faith was greatly shaken. If not for the fact that her friend, Mabel never left, she would have resorted to suicide. But no! Mabel was always there. Like a clam to its shell, she stuck tight.

Claudia clutched the Bible she was holding and almost flung it across the room. She had been reading Jeremiah 29:11.

For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

She let out her frustration in a scream.

"This isn't fair God! I didn't deserve this. I served you with my whole being and this is what you pay me back with?"

"My life is a mess. Nobody wants me. How is that plan good? How?"

She began to sob.

"I'm sorry Lord... I didn't mean what I said. I don't know what came over me."

It's okay, daughter.

"No, actually it's not. I think I meant most of what I said. I mean, what do I do now?"

Be still and know that I am God.

"I can't be still. My life is wasting away."

I made your life child. I know what's best for you. You were treading the path of destruction to death. I saved you.

She snorted.

"As if..."

You can be grumpy all you want. But if you can simply trust me, you'll thank me for the best package that I have in store for you.

"I hope so. Oh, I do hope so."

The door opened. It was her mom.

"Honey, you have a visitor."

"I'm not coming."

"Well, it's your nurse."

Her face brightened.

"Really? Jace is here?"

Over the time of her discharge, she had grown a bond with Jace. He was so nice and understanding, and did she mention handsome too? Sometimes, when she felt she had overburdened Mabel, he was her next bus stop to rant and cry her heart out.

Her mother chuckled. "Yes honey. He's waiting in the living room downstairs for you. Are you coming?"

"Okay," she said, trying to mask her joy and pretend as if she was still unconcerned.

Standing from the bed, she pranced to her mirror. Even though she didn't like looking at her image, she didn't want to look like a monster to her visitor. She ran her fingers through her short regrowth of hair.

She trotted downstairs and saw Jace standing with his hands shoved into his pockets.

Why in the world did she think Ben, that traitor that the Lord had demanded she forgive upon which she was still working on, was handsome? This was a Greek god standing life-and-direct before her. With his dark, hazel eyes and wavy hair, he looked like a picture from a fashion magazine.

As she felt her heart leap upon sighting him, she chided herself.

"Not again. Don't fall again. You're not his type. Who would marry you, an ugly duckling?"

Stiffening, she stood before him and stretched her hands for a polite handshake. "Hello Mr Gregg! How do you do?"

His face was a mix of surprise and confusion at her drama.

"Earth to Claudia! It's me. Jace. What's all the formality for?"

Ignoring her hand, he pulled her into an embrace. As she inhaled his warm, manly scent, she relaxed.

The Holy Spirit dropped into her heart: *I know the thoughts I think towards you. For behold, I will do a new thing and now it shall spring forth.*

She almost felt His smile and slowly, she smiled along.

About the Author.

Praise Chidinma Abraham aka PeculiarPraise is a writer passionate about unlocking the reality of the spiritual realm. In creating riveting stories that resonate with readers' souls, she aims to proclaim Christ to the nations and transform lives.

When she's not writing, tinkering with design, listening to soulful Christian music, or binge-reading yet another Christian supernatural novel, she's enjoying the height of intimacy with the Holy Spirit who she affectionately calls her bestie.

You can reach out to her on the following social media platforms through this link:-

<http://pagechap.me/PeculiarPraise>

THE TRUTH

By Idowu Taiwo.

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The room was dark.

It could easily have been called a conference room. It had everything a conference room could have—chairs arranged around the huge center table along with huge flat screen TVs lining up the wall in front of them.

But there was something ominous, almost evil about it. This wasn't a usual gathering to discuss sales or business plans, this is where the fate of the world would be discussed—in less than two minutes.

CEOs of different conglomerates of the world trooped in one by one.

Some very public figures and very wealthy men were also in attendance.

Men and women of different races sat round the table, until finally, only one seat was left.

As soon as he entered, every man and woman stood up and bowed.

They began to hail him.

"Come on Honey, it's time to go. We're leaving." Her Dad said as he helped her with her remaining luggage.

"Why do we have to go Dad? I love it here." Her dad gave her a stern look and she folded her arms and walked out the door.

Ella hated that they had to leave, California was her home.

A black Mercedes that had its windows tinted was parked out the state-of-the-art-house.

The house had everything from a home theater to a gaming room to a car garage that housed tens of cars.

She hated that they were leaving their home, but her Dad had just stepped down from being CEO of a renowned car brand worldwide.

Yeah, she was shocked too and she was his daughter.

His explanation hadn't sounded logical, at all.

But what could she do?

Ella sighed and got into the car.

About three days later, her father and her arrived at a remote island in a country she couldn't even pronounce its name. It was very remote and it was very hard to leave.

Other than a few other families, they were alone on the island.

She recognized some of them as wealthy men of American society, some were even friends with her dad.

She found it weird that a lot of his friends had stepped down too. It just didn't make any sense to her.

The house was big and secured. There were literally dozens of armed security officers on their property alone, not to talk of the rest of the island.

She'd been homeschooled all her life so it hadn't been much of an issue to relocate. Being the only daughter of a wealthy man was tough, she barely had friends and the few she had, had also mysteriously left.

What was it with rich people disappearing these days?

The house would have been very lonely but it was the smartest home she'd ever been in. Everything was automated, from the TV to the lights to the sound system even to the shower and gas. She had direct access to everything in the house.

It was like a safe house. A very dope safe house.

What she didn't know was that the world was about to change— it was the end of the world as she knew it.

"Rock steady, rock strong—the word of God, says in the book that we all belong, in his plan, take a stand, come on, rock steady!"

Ella knew she was so going off key but she never said she was a good singer, so meh.

She got out of the shower, wore her clothes, then made popcorn.

"Riri, TV." She called out to the AI and the TV immediately came on.

"Thank you."

"You're welcome Ella." The automated voice spoke.

She looked at the TV.

"Five countries have been hit by the virus in just a month, researchers have never seen anything like it...."

She'd heard of the Corona virus a few weeks back but she hadn't paid any attention to it. It seemed like any other epidemic that would eventually die out, because they always do, but Ella will find out quite late actually that this was not an ordinary disease.

As the disease began spreading from country to country as the weeks passed she began getting anxious as no news of a vaccine surfaced.

"What was going on?"

Days rolled into weeks and weeks into months and the news kept getting worse.

The whole world was in total lockdown. The media reeked of confusion and fear.

The most surprising was the closing down of the Vatican City and Mecca—something that has never happened since the holy grounds were established.

Soon Ella became scared of the violence that arose with the confusion. Even with the one trillion dollar bill that had been passed—another thing that has never occurred in history, people still complained of shortages and small businesses were soon going out of business.

Economies of countries all over the world were experiencing the highest depression, recession and inflation rate to have ever occurred throughout history.

The world had never received a more deadly blow since World War 2.

The microscopic demon brought Kings, Queens, Presidents and ministers to their knees.

The acknowledged worldwide cause of the virus had been from the ingestion of an uncooked rodent—a bat.

And although it originated from the Wuhan province of China, the virus had successfully created a domino effect throughout the world that experts have predicted would take years to recover from.

Ella exhaled, mentally drained already. This was all too much.

She turned on her computer.

So many questions and conspiracy theories arose about the origin of the disease.

People wanted to give themselves a sort of reprieve from the madness, the question was,

'Was there any truth to them?'

Ella had started a blog three weeks ago about the actual cause of the virus, it would seem she was starting a conspiracy theory of her own.

Everything seemed so shady and the Coronavirus had been so fast paced, as though it had been carefully planned for years until finally it was executed. She wasn't buying the dead bat crap.

She was anonymous on the site she'd created so as not to draw unwanted attention.

She was trying to piece together some of the information she received daily from her sources.

Daily, she would receive a bit of info supporting some of her claims. Others postulated a systematic series of events that had been well planned in secret to bring about the end of the world.

No matter how crazy it sounds, it did look like the end of the world, especially when a meteor the size of New York landed in the Atlantic a few days ago, causing a torrential tsunami so high it covered

skyscrapers in some parts of Europe and North America as well. She'd never been more grateful for moving.

Ella's site was a secret one, only slightly visible to the public and only when she wanted it.

It had no traceable link back to her. Suddenly she was grateful for attending Zuckerberg's classes.

One day, she came back from her evening jog accompanied by two of the guards as usual. Ella always ignored them, seeing as how they never listened to anything she said.

She ate dinner with her Dad that night. It wasn't lonely, she was used to it.

Mum hadn't been in the picture for a while now, since her birth really.

But most times despite being on the island, she didn't see him often.

He went away a lot. She'd overhear some of the guards talk about the secret meetings he always had weekly with some of the other rich men on the island. It was suspicious, even for her.

And when he wasn't in his meetings, he'd stay locked up in his office upstairs, most times for hours even sometimes through the night.

Even till then, she'd thought nothing of it until she got an encrypted message from an anonymous source on the site.

'Thank me later'—was all the source had attached to the file. She decoded it and found a video.

She clicked on it.

People were gathered in a room. It was dark, but it was still bright enough to make out faces, huge flat screens arranged atop each other.

The video wasn't that clear because the person recording it was moving around but she could still make out a lot of people.

"Oh my God." She saw renowned men in the public eye discussing the conquering of the world with explicit detailed plans and strategies only in par with those you'd see in a war room.

A peculiar man came into the room and everyone stood. He carried an air of power and awe around him.

He sat down at the head of the table and the only part of him that could be seen were his hands, folded on top of each other on the table.

Everyone sat staring at him in wonder, waiting for the next phase of the plan.

Suddenly the flat screens came on. They were a total of seven, hung serially on the wall. They represented the seven continents including Antarctica.

They showed charts and maps. There were places on the map marked red, some places marked yellow and some places black.

Arrows were placed at strategic points showing a progression that would lead to a final outcome.

"We execute the plan today." The man said.

"It will start here." The map was zoomed in and everyone saw a particular country and state.

It switched to surveillance mode and the Tv showed people moving about without a care in the world, going about their day to day activities.

The man at the head of the table smirked though no one could see.

"That is the place." He said.

"We have people there, stationed already to execute the first phase of the plan. Be ready, it won't be long now."

A series of affirmations were heard around the room.

"We own this world. Everyone seems to have forgotten that. This will jog their memory. We hold the power. Prepare the way of the beast!!" Hails and shouts were heard across the room.

The man looked around him, knowing he had the ace to the cards already.

He smirked.

"Checkmate."

She gasped.

Immediately the camera focused on a man, zooming in. He had blond hair with piercing blue eyes.

"Dad?" She would have fainted right there and then if she wasn't a strong person.

They talked about the virus, how it was only the first stage. They wanted a unified world, with one law, one economy, and one currency.

They caused it, they made the virus. Everything else was just an elaborate cover up.

"Oh God." She put off the computer, her heart beating way out of proportion.

She didn't know what to say, she didn't know what to think.

Ella didn't know who'd sent it, all she knew was that her father wasn't the man she thought he was. He was a murderer, along with countless others like himself who thought they owned the world.

She'd seen a dark figure at the head of the table but didn't know who he was for the life of her.

He looked like a silhouette not having any distinct form.

Was he even human? Definitely hadn't seemed like it.

She had a choice. She could either let the whole world know about this or she could destroy the file and protect her Dad, knowing she'd let the end of the world happen when she could have stopped it.

Two days later....

A MEDIA HOUSE IN NEW YORK.

".... Sorry to interrupt you CeCe, but a video just came in. It has half a billion views since yesterday. It is already making headlines across the world. I've never seen anything like it. It's causing a wide range of panic across the globe. If this video is true, the world as we know it will never remain the same and...."

THE END

About the Author.

Idowu Taiwo Deborah is a young and extremely talented woman of 23 years. Her love of writing became evident at the young age of eight when she started exploring the vast sea that is fiction. With encouragement from her family, she started writing more.

She started with the romance genre but discovered that that wasn't it for her. Several years later she met the Lord anew and gave her life to Him, and that was what started the glorious journey. Now she is the grateful author of four spirit-filled books which have gotten incredible recognition on Web Novel, a renowned Asian-based reading app. All her works are also available on Wattpad. She is a guru in her art and is greatly apt at writing Christian thrillers and mysteries. Her books include; In The Last Days, FORTIFIED, The Concession and The Fate Of A Survivor: Of Foes and Woes. She hopes to spread the word of Christ far and beyond and make everyone come to the knowledge of Christ through her works.

She is also a singer-songwriter, aquaculturist and certified Brand Identity Designer. She does this too, all for God's glory.

Social media Handle:

Facebook: Taiwo Idowu (Taiwo Lilly)

Twitter: @Taiwolilly1

Instagram: @tawolily

Wattpad: @Taiwolillyz

Webnovel: Taiwo Lilly

Email 1: idowutaiwodebbie@gmail.com/ Email 2: cometstarlight1@gmail.com.

Dear reader,
Thank you for reading our short story contest collections.

We hope you enjoyed this book? Kindly check out our individual works on our social media handles, the other places and retailers listed on our profiles. You can also check out our club on Facebook and Wattpad. Also remember our magazine that will be published towards the end of October, we are so excited and we hope you are, too.

Below are our question-and-answer sections to know more about the winner, first and second runner up, and a few information about the club.

We hope this is not the last you will be seeing from us, until we meet again, stay blessed and remember that Jesus loves you.

~Faith Ijiga, club's founder.

QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION WITH ANA METTLE.

Questions to know more about the award winners

Winner of the In-House Short Story contest.

Please tell us your full name and pen name.

Praise Chidimma Abraham, pen name is PeculiarPraise.

1. When did you start writing?

I've been writing since I was a little child and taught ABC, obviously. However, I took my pen to draft out my first official novel in 2020 during the Coronavirus lockdown period. I guess because I was out of school and I really had the free time. So, I just had to get out all those ideas dancing in my head.

2. How long have you been on Wattpad?

I joined Wattpad in July 2020 as a reader. I published my first book there in November 2020.

3. What/who inspires you generally? Why?

All of my inspiration comes from the Holy spirit. I guess that's because He is my Best friend. He reveals needs that have to be solved by my writings. His ideas are perfectly mind-blowing. Sometimes I feel so inadequate to convey them by my limited words.

4. What's something you're really proud of? Why?

I have nothing to brag of but the Cross of Jesus. That's the origin of everything I am today.

5. What is something you like and dislike about this club? How do you think this club could be better?

Christian Writers and Readers' Club has been nothing short of a blessing to me. Apart from making tangible friends and expanding my network, it has also taught me the power of responsibility, teamwork, and helped me to build my writing and graphics designing skills. I also love the way we care for one another like brothers and sisters, as well as the regular prayer meetings we hold on WhatsApp. The Christian novels, book recommendations and opportunities that the admins share are so wonderful and life transforming. I would just want us to get better in the aspect of consistency and conducting writing training.

6. What have you done to improve yourself and your writing skills in the past? Number one thing I would say that has really helped my writing journey is that I read a lot. I read the works of authors I admire with ferocious interest, with the eye of a writer not just for enjoyment. I do my very best to replicate their methods using my unique style. Joining writing masterclasses and reading books that focus on writing skills has also helped greatly.

7. Has any book(s) made you cry before? If yes, what were they?

Many books. Number one is the Bible. The works of Frank Peretti, Francine Rivers, Ted Dekker and Bill Myers also have me in tears.

8. Where and how do you get information and ideas for your books?

Like I said, the inspiration majorly comes from God. But I also try my best to research on my topic of interest. I also like to play the "What if?" game in my head.

9. What do you like to do when you're not writing?

Reading, designing, drawing, singing God's praises and anything else the Lord would have me do at that time.

10. What do you think makes a good story?

I think a good story is one that carries a deep message that resonates with the reader's spirit. This could be through a gripping plot or relatable characters.

11. What is your most recent book? The sequel to my first novel. Its title is A COLLEGE SEERESS' DIARY. It is available for free on Wattpad.

12. How do you select the names of your characters? Purely as it comes into my mind. I try my best to make sure the main character's name suits his or her personality.

13. Do you believe in writer's block?

I know I shouldn't but I've experienced bits of it; moments when I have absolutely no idea what to write next. But I find that actually picking up the pen or phone to write, after praying of course, makes it go away.

14. What advice would you give your younger writing self?

Have a complete plan before starting out your writing. (Alas, I'm still guilty about this one).

15. If you could spend a day with a popular author, whom would you choose?

Apart from the Holy Spirit? Hmm... Either Frank Peretti or Francine Rivers.

16. How do you develop your characters and plot?

I'm a pantsers so I can't say I actually develop them. They just flow to me as I write.

17. How many books have you published on Wattpad? Which was the most fun to write?

Three in total. I can't say yet which was most fun because they all have a special spot in my heart. But let me say my first work, A Pastor's Daughter's Diary, meant a lot to me.

Could you give us your contact information for those who would like to meet you?

You can contact me through any of these means:

WhatsApp number: 07049872100

Email: abrahampraise674@gmail.com

Wattpad: @PeculiarPraise

Website: www.Peculiar-Praise.blogspot.com

Questions to know more about the award winners.

First runner-up of the In-House Short Story contest.

Full name: Oremodu Oluwabukunola Ruth

Pen name: ancientwritergirl

.....

1. When did you start writing? I began writing when I was a child. Around the age of 7 years.
2. How long have you been on Wattpad? I've been on Wattpad for 6 years now. I joined in 2015.
3. What/who inspires you generally? Who? Firstly, the Holy Spirit is my inspiration. Secondly, my family and friends inspire me. Then situations I find myself in also contribute to acting as an inspiration for me.
4. What's something you're really proud of? Why? I'm really proud of how far I've come. My writing skills were pretty rusty, but now they're getting sharper. Also, I'm proud of the stories I've written. All of them have a special place in my heart, and I'm proud of the fact that I was the one who was able to pen such masterpieces down to the glory of God Almighty.
5. What is something you like and dislike about this club? How do you think this club could be better? I like how everyone treats each other as family. It makes one feel welcome. I like how kind and understanding the admins are. For now, I don't have any dislikes. I believe the club can be better by giving every member a chance to organize things at least once. Doing this will lessen the burden on the current admins and make everyone else sit up because of the responsibility handed over to them. Also, it'll help us understand what the admins are going through and make us appreciate them better.
6. What have you done to improve yourself and your writing skills in the past? I took several online writing courses during the Covid-19 lockdown to improve myself. Also, I still go back to these courses to study them whenever necessary. I read books by several renowned authors to polish my writing skills. In addition, I made use of dictionaries and thesauri to sharpen my written and spoken English. Then, I engaged in Yoruba lessons to help with my use of Yoruba language in my stories.
7. Has any book(s) made you cry before? If yes, what were they? Quite a number, actually. But I can't remember their titles now.
8. Where and how do you get information and ideas for your books? Ideas come from people I interact with, my day to day experiences and sometimes even dreams (daydreams and night dreams). I get information from the internet and I also seek out people who have a better understanding on a particular subject than I do whenever I'm writing a book; ensuring that I learn from these avenues.

9. What do you like to do when you're not writing? I like reading, swimming, singing, dancing and spending time with my loved ones.

10. What do you think makes a good story? I believe a well developed plot and characters make a good story. Also, correct use of language makes a story seamless and interesting, which in turn makes it turn out good.

11. What is your most recent book? My most recent book is titled 'The Destroyer of Death'. It is a short story about a missionary who faces persecution in a foreign land. But through God's grace, he emerges as an overcomer.

12. How do you select the names of your characters? From anywhere! Names of friends, names of families, names from online research, even from signboards. From literally anywhere.

13. Do you believe in writer's block? Yes, I do. I've suffered from it myself. But I pushed through it. Sometimes I didn't though. It all depended on how much I believed in myself at those moments.

14. What advice would you give your younger writing self? Don't be lazy. Don't give up. Always ask the Holy Spirit for His help, for He will never ignore you or push you away. Be proud of the stories you've written so far and never look down on yourself. You're God's best creation, His greatest achievement through Jesus. Your writing style is unique, so don't try to be like anyone else. Remember to stay focused, stay strong and stay cool. The Lord is always for you, so don't believe your writing is worth nothing, no matter what others say or do to you. You're definitely going to be better and greater than this, so don't despair and don't be discouraged. Love yourself, love your writing. Appreciate the gift God has given you and use it for His glory. Don't ever try to be like the world or try to please them with what you write or how you write. Don't conform to worldly standards. Rather, write about Christ and His saving grace, and He'll use you to bless people.

15. If you could spend a day with a popular author, whom would you choose? I have quite a lot, so I'm going to mention them all with the hopes that I would meet them one day. These popular authors are: Innocent Ilo, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, IbukunOluwa Oremodu, Joyce Meyer, Francine Rivers, Gary Chapman and Jerry Jenkins.

16. How do you develop your characters and plot? Once the idea forms in my mind and I decide to pursue it, I type/jot it down. Then little by little, I add to it till a story is fully developed. I also make use of a character bible to flesh out my characters, then make my plot revolve round them.

17. How many books have you published on Wattpad? Which was the most fun to write? I've published 8 books on Wattpad. However, I ended up deleting some. The most fun book I've written so far is a book titled 'Won Over'. Even till now, people compliment me for writing it and I also laugh whenever I think about it or go back to read it.

Do you mind giving us your contact information, I'm sure there are some people who would like to get in touch.

I obviously don't mind.

Thank you very much for taking time out to get to know me. God bless you.

.....

Instagram: @a_writergirl

Twitter: @a_writergirl

Facebook: Bukky Oremodu

E-mail: olaoremodu@gmail.com

Questions to know more about the award winners.

Second runner-up of the In-House Short Story Contest.

Full name: Mary Faith Ijiga.

Pen name: Faith Ijiga.

.....

1. When did you start writing?

I grew up to see myself writing, I can't really say the exact time but I know is from childhood. But I started trying my hands in novel writing in 2017. I was just writing and posting online for my readers on Facebook and Instagram, and subsequently on Wattpad in 2019, but I finally published my first book in 2021.

2. How long have you been on Wattpad?

I've been on Wattpad since 2019. I got to know about that writing platform when I wanted to complete a story I started reading. I searched for it and Google showed me that the story was published by the author and Wattpad. Prior to that time, I've never heard anything about that app nor any writing app, but since then, my previous statement about not knowing any writing app has changed significantly.

3. What/who inspires you generally? Who?

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are first my inspiration. Second and the last for now is situations, real life situations about myself and others.

4. What's something you're really proud of? Why?

I'm proud of All he has made me and where I am going to, all for the glory of God.

5. What is something you like and dislike about this club? How do you think this club could be better?

I can't really say I dislike anything about the club... Is true that we are not all perfect but I love our perfections and imperfections. As an admin and the founder, my constant desire is for the club to continue to grow to greater heights, love one another and remain United,, serv everyone equally and continue with our mandate which is sharing the gospel to the world with our contents.

6. What have you done to improve yourself and your writing skills in the past?

Several writing courses: both on and offline, constant browsing of the internet: Googling, reading newsletters from authors, blogs and writing coaches, listening to podcasts, I read, read and read. Then I write, edit and write again, the circle just continues.

7. Has any book(s) made you cry before? If yes, what were they?

Awww, a lot of them, but the most recent has got to be Long Way Home by Lyn Austin. Let me not say more because of time.

8. Where and how do you get information and ideas for your books?

Well, like I said earlier, I write about real life situations. A lot of my story ideas and information are gotten from the things I see physically, news from the media, internet and books.

9. What do you like to do when you're not writing?

I am a 100% introvert so I love locking myself up and Reading. But I am also a good conversationalist when I'm in the mood and I derive joy in laughing a lot. I make a conscious effort to laugh everyday regardless of what I am going through at the time. The most important of all is my time with the Holy Spirit.

10. What do you think makes a good story?

A good story, I believe, is the one that captures the heart of the reader. Apparently it's not everyone that reads your books that will be satisfied, but if you are doing something positive in the life of a reader, that is one thing you can count on.

11. What is your most recent book?

My most recent book is titled Never Forget. It is a terrorism, military and political thriller that speaks a lot about the state of the imbalance in Nigeria. I have published a couple chapters on Wattpad. My main purpose of writing it is to remind Nigerians of the mistakes that we have made in the past and to remember not to repeat the same mistake in the forthcoming 2023 general election.

12. How do you select the names of your characters?

Naming my characters is one of the things I enjoy the most about writing. Since childhood, I realized how much I loved names. I even used to fantasize about how I would give birth to several dozen children just so all of them could answer all my fine collections of names, but thank God my books came to my rescue. I love names that are rare and names that sound awesome in my ears. I do not like names I consider antiquated. Why would someone in this age and time answer Peter or Patrick or Sebastian or Douglas??? pun intended. Take for example, my younger brother's name is Joseph and I have and continue to tease him endlessly about it.

13. Do you believe in writer's block?

That is one thing that I have experienced so, yes, I believe in it, but there was a book I read about it that made me believe that writer's block has a lot to do with the author's state of mind and it can be shaking off.

14. What advice would you give your younger writing self?

Now, I will tell you what I always tell myself... "The earlier you complete this book, the more time you will have to lazy around all you want. "

Each time I start a new book, I always feel like I'm on fire and I can only get my rest of mind upon the completion of that book. So whenever I start becoming lazy or experiencing a writer's block I will tell myself that quote written above.

15. If you could spend a day with a popular author, whom would you choose?

I have a very long list but at the top of it is definitely Joel C. Rosenberg, an author that I have come to consider my mentor, however indirectly. I read his books religiously every week, he is one of the authors I honor and respect a lot. Next on my list in no particular order are, Frank Peretti, Ted Dekker, Don Brown - the Christian author that writes about the Navy, Francine Rivers, Lyn Austin, Melanie Dobson,, Mark Andrew Olsen, I so much love that international fiction he wrote that included Nigeria, I was totally blown away by that book and it wasn't just because my country was there. There are a lot of them on my list but let me stop here because of time and space.

16. How do you develop your characters and plot?

My characters are developed from what I need in a story, then my Story characters makeup my story plot. What I'm really saying in essence is that I have no definite ways of making up my characters and plots.

17. How many books have you published on Wattpad? Which was the most fun to write?

Currently I have four works on my Wattpad profile, 3 are completed while I am currently writing and publishing chapters of the last one which is titled Never Forget. Out of my three completed books, I have published two on Amazon, Kobo and other retailers. I can't really say which of them is the most fun for me because I took each of them personally, but one thing I can tell you is this, I like the feeling of satisfaction I get upon the completion of each novel... That feeling is the kind I would love to get over and over again.

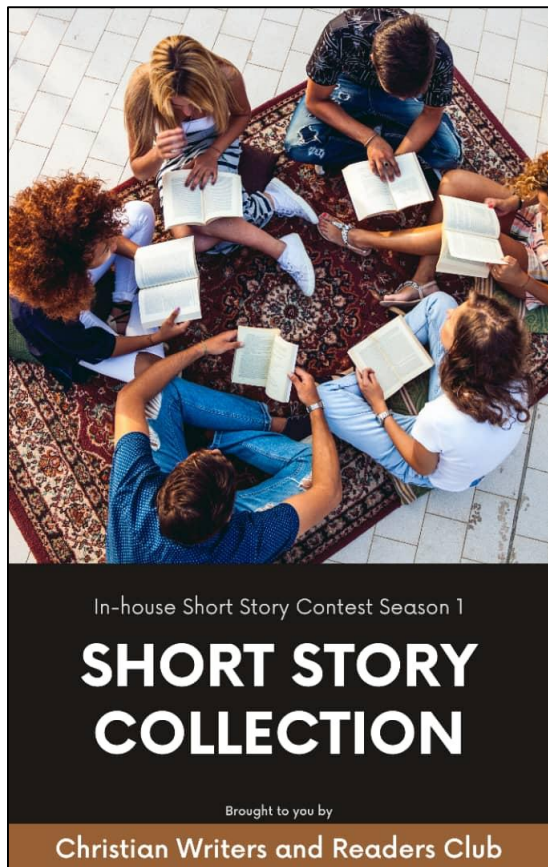
Do you mind giving us your contact information, I'm sure there are some people who would like to get in touch.

I don't mind at all, I very much appreciate that.

Kobo, Goodreads, Facebook, Bookbub, Amazon: Faith Ijiga. Twitter and Instagram: faithee_ijiga.

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ABOUT THE CLUB.



¹Christian Writers and Readers Club is an online community for Christian writers and readers who are always looking for good Christian contents to read. It was founded on January 9th 2020 by Faith Ijiga. It started out on Wattpad and has since then broken out to other writing platforms and Facebook.

Since the club's inception in 2020, the club has had members from the United States, Zambia, Kenya, India, Philippines, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Jamaica and they are still looking forward to expanding into more territories.

The club's main goal is to put out enough gospel content on the internet and make it easier for readers to access them. The next is to promote Christian authors and help them get a strong readership community/fanbase and also improve their skills on writing.

Everyone is eligible to join the club as long as they accept to abide by the rules and regulations.

You can find out more about the club and even contact them via the social media accounts below.

Facebook, Christian Writers and Readers Club.

Wattpad, WCWRC book club.

Email, at wcwrcjan2019@gmail.com.



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