

# AFRICAN SHORT STORIES

## STUDY NOTES

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## THE FALSE PROPHET

### Sembene Ousmane – Senegal

Mahmoud Fall comes from Upper Senegal. He is lazy that he doesn't want to do any work. Where he comes from people never keep cats as they say that cats eats but never work. So Mahmoud is like a cat. He changes his identity and his name to Aidra. He then travels to the southern part of Senegal where he describes himself as a Muslim scholar who had studied in Mauritania. He takes on the job of an Imam (Muslim leader) and is given all the best gifts the people can afford.

After Mahmoud (Aidra) accumulated enough wealth, he takes a journey back to the north, through the deserts, to his hometown to enjoy his booty. Leaving his pretense behind, he becomes Mahmoud Fall, the thief. He comes to a certain tree, digs the soil and hides his hoards there. Then he falls asleep. He dreams while walking in the desert and then sees somebody ransacks his wealth and removes his hair. He wakes up and finds that his hair has been cut short, so are his beards. He hears voices but doesn't see anybody. He digs where he hid his wealth and he only finds his hair there. The voices ask him to pray to God but he refuses as his wealth is gone. He thinks God will not hear him.

The setting of the story is **rural**. The people admire and respect a learned man Mahmoud. They seem to live in a less developed location with few educated people. Mahmoud loses his wealth in the desert, that is, he becomes as dry as the desert itself. The story has a third person point of view.

#### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Mahmoud Fall:** He is deceptive – he changes his name only to collect wealth from people. He is cunning – he devises a method of getting food, respect and money from people. He is dishonest – he doesn't tell the people the truth and he doesn't give back to God (Almighty). He is lazy – he doesn't want to work.

#### THEMES

**Deception (dishonesty):** Mahmoud Fall changes his identity to steal from people as he pretends as a religious and learned Muslim.

**Religion:** people in Senegal believe in Islamic religion. They have the faith and they respect men of God like Aidra (Mahmoud Fall).

**Superstition:** the way Mahmoud loses his hair and wealth is beyond human knowledge, it is mystical and superstitious.

**Transience of wealth:** Mahmoud was busy assembling wealth but he doesn't sit down and enjoy the wealth. This shows that money and wealth are but for a short time.

**Just reward of the unjust:** Mahmoud loses all the wealth he took from people in a false manner. He is rewarded for cheating people that he is educated and an imam.

## CERTAIN WINDS FROM THE SOUTH

### Ama Ata Aidoo-Ghana

M'ma Asana has a daughter called Hawa. Hawa is married to Issa. She becomes pregnant and gives birth to a child, Fusen. After the child's birth, Hawa moves to stay with her mother. However, there is hunger in the land.

Issa decides to go to the South to find employment so that he can provide for the family. However, Issa knows that Hawa will not agree to his proposal. Therefore, he goes at night to M'ma Asana's home. He meets M'ma Asana and tells her of his plans to go to the south. M'ma Asana tries at first to discourage Issa from going to the south by saying that there are only grass-cutting jobs there. She tells him that such jobs should be left to tribes that are more backward from the further north. Later, she agrees that Issa should go to the South. Issa disappears and M'ma Asana goes back to bed. She is at pain to note that most women in the north are losing their men to the south. M'ma Asana breaks the news to Hawa who becomes disappointed.

Asana also recalls how her husband (Hawa's father) died in the South while fighting in the war between the Germans and English, the Westerns forcefully recruited the black soldiers. Friends and relatives advised M'ma Asana to go to the South to claim compensation but she refused saying she was interested in her husband and not money.

The story has a rural setting – Issa moves from the rural area to look for a job in an urban area (the South). M'ma Asana also depends on Farming so are people in the area. The mood of the story is sad.

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**M'ma Asana:** The woman is not greedy and doesn't love money. She is not forgetful that she considers how her husband died. The woman is a hard worker; she works to feed her family.

**Hawa:** She is a loving woman – she loves Issa so much.

**Issa:** He is selfish and inconsiderate that he doesn't seek the wife's consent to go to the South. He is responsible and fore-sighted – he goes to the South to look for money to support his family.

## MAJOR THEMES

**Effects of poverty:** Poverty forces Issa to leave his wife and the baby home and goes to the South. It makes M'ma Asana loses her husband.

**Hardworking:** M'ma Asana works hard and feeds her family.

**Plight of women:** The women who lose their husbands experience many challenges, e.g. M'ma Asana who works in the farm to support her family.

## THE APPRENTICE

### Odun Balogun – Nigeria

Apprentice (trainee) is a story of a young man, Ogunmola, who trains to be a blacksmith. Ogunmola had the chance to go to school but he chose not to. He starts learning blacksmith at the workshop of Omotaiye. Unfortunately, Ogunmola fails to make hoes the same way Omotaiye does. Ogunmola has his own way of forging hoes, cutlasses, knives and other implements. Omotaiye expresses his dissatisfaction with Ogunmola work which doesn't reflect that of Omotaiye workshop. The boy promises a change but the more he tries to forge hoes that resembles that of Omotaiye, the more he forges hoes more different from of the workshop.

Ogunmola tries to convince his master that what matters is originality. By and by, his relationship with Omotaiye becomes worse. To make life at the workshop easy, Ogunmola recalls what his mother, who died seven years ago, told him about his family. His mother told Ogunmola that his great grandfather, the then Oba (king), was a great ruler. He ruled the area well and he was a legend. Oba was a great ruler until the time when a plague hit the area and the effects were swift and disastrous. People died in hundreds. The wise men consulted the oracles and established that the Spirit of the land was offended. The oracles advised the wise men that someone has to sacrifice himself to the spirits to end the frequent death or the whole population would be wiped out.

The king then told his subjects that he is ready to sacrifice himself to save the area. People had mixed reaction, many said that they could not afford losing such a wise ruler with others maintained that they could not continue dying. Eventually the king walked towards the Hill. A silent crowd followed him. On the way they passed bereaved mourning their beloved – people who were strong a day or hours ago. At the precipice (the top rock of a hill) he jumped into the bottomless abyss. The spirit was pacified.

Then the dead ruler's son, Ogunmola's grandfather, became the next ruler. Young Oba ruled the same way as his father. However, one day white people came and told the king that he didn't know how to rule. Due to mounting pressure, the king died prematurely. Ogunmola was dismayed that his father, the son of the disliked king, could not become the next king. Ogunmola thinks

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he couldn't either. For that Ogunmola chose not to go to school as education was brought by the same people who ousted this grandfather from the throne.

Ogunmola tries to make his work resemble that of Omotaiye but he fails. The enmity grows and finally, Omotaiye chases Ogunmola from his workshop, criticizing Ogunmola of being untrainable and non-compliant. Ogunmola leaves the workshop without a certificate that could allow him to practice as a blacksmith.

Ogunmola goes to Omotola at the other side of the river. Omotola is Omotaiye's twin brother but the two are greatest enemies in the business of blacksmith. Omotola welcomes Ogunmola very well, promises him freedom to his own forging. Life becomes meaningful again. However, after a year, Omotola tells Ogunmola that the new master (Omotola) has tried to wipe out all what Omotaiye put in Ogunmola's head. He says that it is now time that Ogunmola starts doing things the same way the master does. Ogunmola believes it is impossible to do blacksmith the way Omotola does. The boy believes in own work. However, he has to do Omotola's way to get a certificate.

The story has a gentle mood with a rural setting. The setting is rural because the people believe in oracles and sacrifices. The point of view is third person.

### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

**Ogunmola:** He is innovative – he makes hoes his own way. He is obedient – he takes the demands of his two masters patiently. He is patient – he doesn't lose his temper when Omotaiye says he fails to forge hoes but he stays only to get a certificate

**Great Grandfather:** He is a loving king that accepts to lose his life to save his people from the plague.

**Omotaiye:** He is primitive that he doesn't recognize change. He is arrogant that he doesn't accept the new way of forging hoes by Ogunmola.

**Omotola:** He is deceptive – he tells Ogunmola that the boy will have the freedom to forge hoes his own way only to make him stay as he later changes and tells the boy to forge hoes his workshop's style.

**Ogunmola's mother:** She is informative – she kept the information on how Ogunmola's grandfather was thrown from the throne.

### **THEMES**

**Sacrifice:** The king gives his life to the Spirit to save his area.

**Good leadership:** Ogunmola's great grandfather (Oba) rules the area very well and is liked by every soul.

**People hate innovation:** The two masters of Ogunmola disliked their apprentice (Ogunmola) because he is doing things his own way.

**Colonialism:** colonialists come and change the way of living in the area.

**Anger:** it is out of anger that Ogunmola chose not to go to school because his grandfather was dethroned by the same government that brought education to the area.

## THE WILL OF ALLAH

### David Owoyele – Nigeria

This is a funny story about how two thieves meet their just rewards. Dogo and Sule walk at midnight to a certain village to steal. The two are thieves and they carry knives wherever they go. Sule is tall and powerful. Dogo whose name means tall is thick, short and squat. Dogo suggests that the clouds that are above are rain clouds but Sule, who is religious, says it is wrong to say that it would rain. Sule's religion forbids prophecy. He suggests that Dogo could say "if it is the will of Allah it will rain". The two have been to prisons for robbery. Crime is Sule's and Dogo's livelihood.

In his last trial, the judge told Sule that he (Sule) is a threat to the society and life and property must be protected from people of his caliber. The judge stared at Sule and Sule returned the stern gaze. Sule never feared judges as he had seen many in his life to be intimidated, he only fears God. The judge advised Sule that crime leads to frustration, punishment and suffering. The judge added that Sule should try to earn an honest living but Sule replied that it was impossible. The judge rapped a gavel before he ordered the constable to arrest Sule and take him to jail. The judge concluded that Sule was only trying to break the law as he would end up by getting broken. "... He who attempts to shake a stump only shakes himself" (23). The judge handed him a three month jail term of which Sule answered "the will of Allah be done".

Sule believes that one's livelihood is from Allah and it is deliberate that Allah gives others a lot so that those with too little should help themselves (steal) to some of it.

Dogo have served jail sentences in all major towns. Prison is like his home. Dogo and Sule steal together because they feel it is convenient and not that there is love and friendship in their midst.

Together they cross the river. Sule washes his arms and legs and head. Dogo sharpens his sheath-knife on the stone. Dogo asks if washing at midnight is Sule's religion. Sule answers: 'Wash when you find a stream, for when you cross another one is entirely in the hands of Allah'.

The two thieves suspect each other. Their suspicion is sometimes genuine and sometimes not. Today Sule accuses Dogo of conniving with Sule's lover to sell Sule's coat and black bag for fifteen shillings and share the proceeds. Sule calls Dogo and the woman bastards for that. Sule also reveals that the woman stabbed him on the thigh. Dogo tells his companion (Sule) that to get a stab is

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their occupational hazard as they walk at night with knives. He (Dogo) advises Sule to go to the hospital but Sule says that at hospital they ask many questions.

They enter the village. There is no light. The village looks deserted. However, people have shut every hole of a window against the threatening storm (heavy rain). The pair walks for fifteen minutes as it looks for a house to rob. Finally, they reach dilapidated house that looks deserted. They agree to break into that house believing that there is no relationship between how a house looks like and what it contains.

Sule enters the house and Dogo is outside to keep watch. Sule opens the window and passes a heavy gourd to Dogo with an advice that Dogo should run to the river (stream).

At the stream Dogo wants to take some of the contents of the gourd before Sule comes. Whenever they steal, they share fifty-fifty. Today Dogo believes that Sule has taken some before handing the gourd to him. Dogo thrusts his right hand into the gourd but he gets a sharp stab on the wrist. He removes the hand and holds it with the left hand and waits for Sule's arrival. Sule approaches and asks if there is any problem and if Dogo has already opened the lid of the gourd. Dogo says no to both questions. Then Sule removes the lid and thrust his hand into the gourd. Immediately, he gets a sharp stab. He quickly removes the hand and looks at Dogo. He realizes that Dogo is holding his arm. Dogo says that Sule always demands for fifty-fifty share so he wanted Sule also to get stabbed. Together they feel the pain but Dogo stands up to go home but Sule advises him not to. They realize that they are bitten by a cobra and there is a belief that one who is bitten by a cobra must die there at the spot. There are no chances of survival for the two thieves.

Sule uses the knife to cut through the gourd and kills the cobra. Dogo laughs at this companion that their end is that of a snake bite. Sule groans noisily. The rain comes and they two get soaked in it. Finally, both of them know that their death is few minutes away from them. Sule says "the will of Allah be done".

The story has a rural setting as the village the two rob from has mud houses. The story has a third person point of view.

#### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

**Dogo:** He is uncivilized – he earns his livelihood through thievery. He is stubborn – although the judge advised him to stop stealing, he continues earning his livelihood in robbery. He is dishonest that he lies to Sule that he has not opened the gourd.

**Sule:** He is uncivilized – he earns his livelihood through thievery. He is lazy as he fails to work to earn a living. He is arrogant and stubborn that he doesn't take the judge's advice to find a better way of earning his livelihood.

## THEMES

**Evil men do leave with them-** Sule and Dogo's deaths are caused by evil deeds (stealing). The snake stabs Sule because he wants to cheat his companion, Dogo.

**Stubbornness:** the judge advises Sule to stop thievery but he turns a deaf ear and die because of stealing.

**Crookedness:** Sule accuses his girlfriend and Dogo of conniving to sell his coat and share the proceeds.

## CIVIL PEACE

### *Chinua Achebe – Nigeria*

Jonathan loses his youngest son in the war, but he chooses to be happy for three children and the wife who have survived, and his old bicycle which he digs up, greases, uses it to transport people, and makes enough money to open a palm-wine bar. When he goes to his home in Enugu, he finds his house intact in Ogui Overside. Though the house has lost some of its fittings, he is happy for the concrete and is thankful that unlike others the structure has withstood the shelling; he looks for old roofing sheets and discarded timber to fix what he can. He hires a poor carpenter to fix it.

When his ex-gratia - earned as a rebel fighter - is paid, he is glad. He keeps the money safe to avoid robbers. At his home he digs inside his house and puts the money there. At night thugs come and ask Jonathan to give them hundred pounds. Jonathan and his wife Maria shout for help but nobody comes to their rescue. He threatens the robbers that he will call the police but the robbers say they work together with the police. Later the leader of the thugs advises Jonathan to give them the money and he will be safe.

Jonathan tells the thugs that he is only having twenty pounds as egg-rasher (ex- gratia) he got as a rebel fighter. Though other thugs say it is too little, the leader, in informal English, commands Jonathan to give them the money through the window. Jonathan gives the thugs the money. The money is gone but Jonathan remains unworried. 'I count it as nothing,' he tells his sympathizers, his eyes on the rope he is tethering. 'What is egg-rasher? Did I depend on it last week? Or is it greater than other things that went with the war? I say, let egg-rasher perish in the flames! Let it go where everything else has gone. Nothing puzzles God.' [34]

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This is a man eager to rebuild his life and who would not allow any obstacle to negatively affect this determination. The war has changed everything to such an extent that the thieves who had come to rob him of his ex-gratia claimed that they do not have a predilection to violence as the war has wreaked enough of it upon the people. Though this story is a serious one, there are tinges of humour in it, especially when the thieves help their victims to call the police (knowing they are either in league with them or are afraid of them) and when the robbery becomes a negotiation. 'Ok. Time de go. Make you open dis window and bring the twenty pound. We go manage am like dat.' [33]

The geographical setting of the story is semi-urban. The story has a third person point of view.

#### **CHARACTERANALYSIS**

**Jonathan:** He is **optimistic** – he only considers the good part of a thing and doesn't worry about some sad moments such as the death of the last child and the loss of ex-gratia seriously. He is **resourceful** – he uses his bicycle to transport people and make money, and open a palm wine bar. He is **sensible** and **reasonable** – he surrenders his ex-gratia to the thieves only to save his life and those of his family.

**Robbers:** they are **heartless** – they demand Jonathan a lot of money or lose his life that they take all the ex-gratia Jonathan received from the government.

**Maria:** She is resistant - she advises her husband not to give robbers money.

#### **THEMES**

**Evils of war:** people are homeless. Jonathan loses his son in the war who is shot. There is growing robbery as the economy is disabled.

**Right choices in life:** Jonathan chooses to save his life and loses the money he has just received some hours ago.

**Resourcefulness:** Jonathan and his children use the available resources to make money to support their family. He transports people using his bicycle and also opens a palm-wine bar. The children also sell mangoes to make money.

**Optimism:** Jonathan looks at the good part of life and hopes for good things. He doesn't worry after losing a son: he has hope in the three that survived the war.

### **THE GENTLEMAN OF THE JUNGLE**

#### **Jomo Kenyatta – Kenya**

A man befriends an elephant and offers Mr. Elephant a shelter for his trunk during one heavy rainfall because the room is too small for both of them. The elephant's trunk enters the room and the elephant whiskers out the man and

takes over the house. The two argue and many animals come. Finally, the king of the jungle, the lion, asks his ministers to appoint a Commission of Enquiry to investigate the problem. The commission comprises Mr. Rhinoceros, Mr. Buffalo, Mr. Alligator, and The Right Honourable Mr. Fox as a chairman and Mr. Leopard as secretary. It doesn't include a single human being. When the man complains of the composition of the commission, the Commission members say that the man's side has no any well-educated member to understand the sophisticated law of the jungle. In short, the commission consists of only gentlemen of the jungle.

When Mr. Elephant appeared before the commission it lies that the man asked it to cover the unoccupied space in his hut to protect the house from the hurricane. When the man appears before the commission, commissioners interrupt him saying they have evidence from unbiased sources. The members of the commission eat delicious meals during the meeting, courtesy of Mr. Elephant.

The commission concludes that Mr. Elephant has fulfilled his sacred duty of protecting the man's interests as it is clearly that the space should be put to its most economic use, and as the man has not reached the stage of expansion which would enable him to fill it, the commission considers it necessary to arrange a compromise to suit both parties. Commission rules that Mr. Elephant should continue his occupation of the man's hut, but it gives the man permission to look for a site where he can build another hut. Fearing that further argument may expose him to anger (claws and teeth) of the commission, the man concedes defeat.

Every other hut that the man builds is taken over by all other animals in the same. Mr. Rhinoceros, Mr. Leopard, Mr. Hyena, Mr. Buffalo and other animals take the next huts that man builds. When all the animals thus get sheltered and the huts start decaying, the man builds a bigger and better hut. All the animals that took over his previous huts come to takeover this one leading to a fight among them. This provides the man the chance to set the hut ablaze, killing the animals altogether. The man goes home happily saying that 'Peace is costly but it's worth the expense' (39) which means that peace or independence doesn't come easily but one has to put a gallant fight to have peace all the same.

The story is about colonisation and the struggle for independence in Kenya where after a long struggle with the white government, local people gained independence.

## CHARACTERANALYSIS

**Lion, the king:** He is nepotistic as he favours fellow animal, Mr. Elephant.

**The man:** He is sensible and innovative – he comes up with a plot to punish all animals that trouble his peace. He is patient – he waits for the day he would defeat the animals patiently. He is helpless – animals abuse him by taking his huts.

**Mr. Elephant:** He is abusive – he abuses his friend, man. He is corrupt – he uses its money to influence the verdict of the commission of Enquiry.

**Commission of enquiry members:** They are corrupt – they favour Mr. Elephant because he is a member of the jungle. They are incredible and unfair – the findings of their enquiry are biased towards their fellow minister. The story has a third person point of view.  
The setting of the story is rural, particularly in the forest where animals live.

## THEMES

**Favouritism-** The commission of Enquiry fails to be impartial by favouring the side of Mr. Elephant because the members of the commission are all animals at once.

**Corruption:** the commission is corrupt that it gives a wrong verdict after being fed by Mr. Elephant.

**Racial segregation:** the animals say that they cannot incorporate people in their commission they are not well educated to understand the law of the jungle.

**Struggle for independence:** the man continues building huts although animals come and take them. At the end the man gains independence as he defeats all animals.

## THE GREEN LEAVES

*Grace Ogot – Kenya*

It is night and the whole community wakes up. Cattle thieves are in the village. The people chase the four thugs. Nyagar, who has two wives, wakes up to join the pursuers. He moves towards his gate and hides to allow the people to pass, lest they mistake him for the robbers. Nyagar joins the pursuers and together they chase the thieves towards a river. He discovers that the four men that passed his gate first are cattle thieves. The chasers are confident of capturing the robbers as it is impossible to cross the river on this direction.

The thieves try to cross but fail. The villagers round the thugs. The villagers beat the thugs mercilessly that a villager produces a knife and cut one of the thugs. One of the robbers also cut one of the pursuers. Two thugs escape; one through the thick and thorny bush and the other unbelievably swims across the river. At this point, the village beat the remaining thug. After believing that

the thief is about to die, they put green leaves on him and leave for the village. They go home only to avoid witnessing the death of a man as that is considered as bad luck in the community. They agree to come early in the morning to take the dead body and report the matter to police. The police discourages people from killing thieves themselves put the people think the police doesn't understand life.

Nyagar goes to his home. Other villagers see him opening his gate and walking into his compound. While in his room Nyagar recalls that cattle thieves always have a lot of cash made from sales of the stolen cattle. At this memory, Nyagar decides to go to the place where the robber is left to search his pocket.

Although Nyagar has money and countless heads of cattle, he goes on with the idea of going to the place. He leaves his compound and walks into the thick darkness of the night. He reaches the place where the man is covered with leaves. Nyagar hurriedly removes the green leaves and starts searching the robber's pockets. The first pocket is empty so is the second one. Then Nyagar establishes that the body is still warm. He hesitates but he gains courage and tries to continue with the searching. As Nyagar stoops on the thief, the thief hits Nyagar. Nyagar falls down and hurriedly, the thief finishes him and put all the green leaves on the body of Nyagar. The thief then ducks into the darkness.

Early in the morning, men converge at one place and the chief sends a good number of men to the council to report to government that the area has killed the cattle robber. They agree not to mention anybody as the police would arrest the killer. The rest of the community gather and are ready to go to the place where the thief was killed last night. Everyone is anxious to see the thief. Then a van from the council drives into the village and pulls up near the crowd.

The white office, policemen and the men who were sent disembark from the van. The officer asks the chief who murdered the thief but the chief maintains that all of them killed the thug. The officer warns the chief that the police are not going to leave the murders scot free but the chief tells the officer that if the police want, it can arrest the whole village.

Then the officer orders that they should go and see the dead thief first. At place of death, the people remove the leaves and to every villager's surprise, the dead body is of their fellow villager, Nyagar. The two wives of Nyagar mourn their husband together forgetting that they were not in terms all the time they have been with Nyagar at his compound. Other men fail to believe their eyes to see Nyagar lying dead as last night they saw Nyagar opening his gate and enter his compound before they proceeded to their respective houses. The chief is short of words so are many people as well as the police. Nobody is ready to tell and lead the next course of action. Nyagar;s wives mourn and mourn bitterly.

The story has a rural setting in a village where people believe in cattle farming. The story has a sad mood as the village mourns the death of Nyagar. The point of view is third person.

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Nyagar:** He is unsatisfied – he wants to take money from the thief although he is rich with many cattle, he also has two wives as if one is not enough. He is foolish – he fails to notice that the thief has gained consciousness and can harm him.

**The chief:** He is strong that the police and the government officer fail to intimidate him to reveal the name of a person who murdered the thief.

**Thieves:** they are troublesome – they trouble the peace of the area. They are cunning especially one who is covered with green leaves by pretending as if he is dead and finally escapes.

**Villagers:** they are united – they all wake up and chase the thieves. They also agree not to tell the police who really killed the thief.

**The two wives:** They are loving women that they mourn for their departed husband. They are helpless and heart-broken as they mourn Nyagar.

### THEMES

- **Greed:** Because he wants a lot of money, Nyagar is killed by the thief.
- **Robbery:** Thieves terrorize the village by stealing from villagers.
- **Communism:** The villagers live united as they wake up and chase the thieves and also agree not to tell the officers of who really killed the thief.
- **Effects mob justice:** some time mob justice can lead to the death of an innocent person. If the thief was taken to police, Nyagar could not lose his life.

### BOSSY

#### *Abdulrazak Gurnah – Tanzania*

The narrator recalls the journey he had with his friend Karim Rashid. It is Karim's letter that prompt him to reminisces the time. Rashid called himself the Bossy because he was an expert in swimming, a footballer and a left-arm bowler. Rashid kept on reminding his friend Haji that he (Rashid) had the responsibility of looking after his old mother and his sister Amina. His father was dead by then. He feared that he might go elsewhere and took up the job of a forest officer only to come back home and finds his mother dead and his sister a whore.

The two friends took a journey to Prison Island. They decided to take Yunis. Yunis was also called Wire because he was considered somehow abnormal. The narrator was once a good friend of Yunis. They spent time together. That time Haji (narrator) and Yunis started a prison -of-war club. The narrator boasted how intelligent he was at school and Yunis lied to him that his father

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had an estate in India. The truth of the matter was that Yunis' father lived in the narrator's father's house and had an almost empty shop. Yunis's father used to ask anyone who came to his shop to borrow him money.

Yunis said his father had a large estate in India but cannot find enough money to come back home. He also said that one day he would build a boat and go and take his family back home. However, Yunis did not go with Haji and Karim to Prison Island. So Karim and the narrator took the journey. The water was blue and the weather was fine. They finally reached the island.

At the island they had nothing to eat. They ate only mangos that had flies all over. Then The Bossy decided that he could swim faster and reached home earlier even if Haji was to use the boat. Haji accepted. They got into the boat and at the same time Rashid jumped into the water and started swimming. Haji struggled to control the boat on the sea as there was wind. Haji called Rashid but Rashid was already gone.

The wind changed the direction of Haji's boat that he ended up landing at Mbweni, three miles from his home town. He was beaten by men with sticks, saying it was a day Arabs like him were getting theirs (meaning they were punished). He became conscious at the beach and stopped by men with machetes and guns. The men said Haji was a soldier and they wanted to shoot him. They said the sultan (Muslim ruler) had already surrendered and Haji was supposed to die for being an Arab. They also said he got the cuts on his body at the barracks. One man suggested that they should sleep with Haji before they kill him but the other man said they should beat him with steel and should urinate at him. They beat and urinated at him and left him unconscious.

Here Haji is acting as responding to Karim's letter. He tells his friend that the time he left him in the boat he suffered a lot. It is like a letter to Rashid, the Bossy, and that is why the title is Bossy.

The setting of the story is urban, during the time of colonialism. It also goes to the Island where the two friends visit.

**Point of view:** The story has first person point of view from Haji.

### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

**Haji (narrator):** He is strong that he survives all the torture in the strange town. He is sharp-minded or witty-minded as he can recall all what happened when he took a trip with a friend to Prison Island. He is intelligent narrates that he was intelligent in class.

**Rashid (Bossy):** He is adventurous as he jumps into the water and swims home. He is multi-talented as he is an expert in swimming, a footballer and a left-arm bowler. He is carefree: he leaves his friend on the sea and swims home. He is responsible that he looks after his sister and his old mother.

**Yunis (Wire):** He is a liar that he lies to Haji that his father owns an estate in India. He is friendly that he is a good friend of the narrator.

## THEMES

**Racism:** The narrator is beaten because he is an Arab.

**Bad governance:** people are not happy with the government that they stand up against it.

**It never rains but it pours:** the narrator undergoes a serial of brutal beatings and in two occasions he becomes unconscious.

## THE SPIDER'S WEB

### **Leonard Kibera**

Ngotho works for the family of Njogu. He is worried that Mrs. Njogu can't trust him even with sugar or milk. In fact, Ngotho is wasteful and uses to eat a lot of food when Mrs. Njogu is away. He usually steals sugar by putting it in his breast pocket. Nevertheless, Ngotho is still the trusted servant of his mistress, Mrs. Njogu, only that the mistress cannot tell him as she considers it sensitive and risky. However, what Ngotho cares for his job as unemployment rate in the country is high.

Mrs. Njogu is age-mate of Ngotho's daughter and she comes from Ngotho's home. In the village, Mrs. Njogu was known as Lois. In those days, Lois remained unmarried until she finished her school and become a teacher. She was a role model in her village. Lois became a heroine when she hit a white inspector who came to her school. Lois's learners failed to answer questions and the white lady wanted to slap Lois but the inspector ended up beaten up and Lois locked in prison.

Later Lois got married to Mr. Njogu, a university graduate who secured a well-paying job in government. He came to live in the house of Mr. Knight, a white man who was returning home since colonial government was defeated. In this house, Mr. Njogu found Ngotho who worked for Knight Family for years.

Mrs. Knight abused Ngotho so much. It was a relief that the family was going home and he was to have a black boss. Ngotho expected end of exploitation in the whole country. It was so as black people were now leaders for fellow blacks. But that is not the case as people who fought for independence together are now divided and everyone cares for oneself. House servants suffer in the hands of black masters and the case of Mrs. Njogu and Ngotho is a perfect example.

Last night Ngotho dreams while dead and could hear people who are about to inter his casket into the grave. At this moment he becomes conscious and tries to break the coffin and tell people that is not dead. Then he wakes up. He

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becomes worried. He does physical exercises to remove stress. It is Sunday but he never goes to church as church depresses him so much.

He is ready to start cooking. He talks to another servant, Kego, who was employed to go on errands, cut grass and clean the compound. Kego also takes care of Wambui, the dog. Kego respects Mrs. Njogu. As Kego is busy with the chores, Ngotho uses a kitchen knife cutting a painful corn in his toe. He stops after hearing his mistress flushing the toilet

Mrs. Njogu beats Ngotho. It is the first time a woman beats Ngotho outside his mother's house. He becomes angry and goes outside and cuts a branch of tree and renters the house with the branch and a knife. Mr. Njogu, who tries to stop Ngotho from attacking Mrs. Njogu, is stabbed by the knife. Mr. Njogu locks himself in the toilet as Mrs. Njogu calls the police. Knowing that he is in trouble, Ngotho goes to his room and locks himself in.

The conflict which was there between white people and black people has now changed to bosses and leaders against servants and poor people. Mrs. Njogu slaps Ngotho, an old man whose daughter is as old as she is, for no offence the way she was slapped by a white government officer. The independent and economic transformation people wanted is not there even after colonial rule.

The setting of this story is urban, in the city where Mr. Njogu works as a government officer. The story has a third person point of view.

#### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

**Mrs. Njogu:** She is short-tempered that she beats the white lady as well as Ngotho. She is ambitious that she remains single only to achieve her goals.

**Ngotho:** He is regretful that he lost his time thinking that Mrs. Njogu would be better than Mrs. Knight. He is short-tempered that he reacts soon after his mistress beats him.

#### **THEMES**

**Change that brings nothing:** The change of government from the white minority to independence has no impacts as black leaders are also mistreating fellow blacks.

**Exploitation:** Workers are treated badly and there is no economic freedom.

**Betrayal:** Leaders promised people change when they were fighting for independence together but changed and adopted the same old style.

## **MINUTES OF GLORY**

### **Ngungi wa Thiong'o – Kenya**

Beatrice (actually Wanjiru) is a black and poor woman. She was born in a village in Niery and she leaves home in search of good job in other town. But

she doesn't find any as she doesn't have qualification for any decent job. Desperate, she finds a man that deceives her with promises of big works in Limuru, where, after sleeping with her, he deserts her. Alone, she begins her life as a barmaid. She longs for attention and concern of other people, especially men. But Beatrice is insignificant and no one realizes her presence and she knows this. Beatrice envies her colleagues in the bar, because of things like the attention that they have for the other men, assurance in life, freedom, that Beatrice thinks they have, especially one called Nyaguthii. She thinks that the supposed light of Nyaguthii switches her off.

Then she goes to Illmorog, but the other women including Nyaguthii soon come there. To try to attract attention, she uses Ambi (a skin-lightening cream) but she doesn't have enough for the whole body. After she is dismissed at the bar, she secures a job in another bar in Illmorog. There she knows a man that drives a lorry. He begins to talk and to sleep with Beatrice. In spite of the man paying for this, she thinks he cares about her. He is a man that has something in common with Beatrice, both were born poor and have the desire to be recognized as equals by people that have prestige in colonial Society (white people), but like Beatrice he is ignored by them.

Beatrice discovers that the man doesn't care about her, and she decides to throw all her rage of life in that man. She steals the money of him while he is asleep. She uses the money to buy new clothes and shoes and comes back to the bar. With a new look and money in her pocket she wins the admiration of everybody around her. Beatrice enjoys this moment. She is, finally, in glory, but this doesn't last long. The lorry's driver comes to Treetop Bar with a policeman and Beatrice is arrested. The driver gets the attention that he wants telling about the robbery and Nyaguthii is the only one who is sad about Beatrice.

The story has a colonial historical setting as Beatrice tries to obey colonial laws. Beatrice left home for the city to look for a job. The story has third person point of view.

#### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Beatrice** (Wanjiru) – a young, poor and black woman. She is admiring - she admired the life and culture of the whites. She is shy – she feels shamed of her own name. This obsession by the white culture was so strong that she used a cream that became the skin most white. Beatrice represents all black nations, and her feeling of inferiority, insecurity and shame elevated with the

colonization promoted by the whites. She represents too, the hope transformed in despair and disillusionment.

**Nyaguthii** – assure, indifferent, admired. In spite of being in the same condition of Beatrice, she appears like a strong woman. But after, the reader discovers that she is different of Beatrice because she didn't accept the Christian culture. She left home to run away of the laws and rules of her Christian family. One interest point of the story is that she waited for a moment of glory without to forget her scrupulous and always trying behaviour according to rules of the colonization. Then she realized if she remain with this behaviour she never wouldn't be what she wanted, and she gave up her scrupulous and became a thief, and only this way, she has your minutes of glory. Other irony is that the driver of the lorry, that had almost the same desire of Beatrice and having become one type of "friend" of her; he won glory of him, thanks to her misfortune. And Nyaguthii, who was envied by Beatrice, ended in the only one that cries for her.

**THEME:** The story talks about the feeling of inferiority of the colonized, in which the Christian culture (also Europe culture or white culture), was considered superior in relation to the others.

## AN INCIDENT IN THE GHOBASHI HOUSEHOLD

### Alifa Rifaat – *Egypt*

The mother, Zeinat, wakes up after the call of her cockerel in the Ghobashi house. The cockerel call is followed by the voice of muezzin from the lofty minaret of the mosque. Zeinat wakes her oldest daughter Ni'ma. The woman asks her daughter if she is fit to carry the grain to the market since it is market day. Ni'ma accepts to go to market since nobody else can go. Zeinat wakes up and walks sluggishly to a courtyard for the Morning Prayer (ablutions).

Zeinat goes where her husband, Ghobashi, stored maize in sacks before he left for work in Libya through an aero plane. She asks Lord to take care of her husband. Zeinat stoops up the grain and pours it into the basket. She tells Ni'ma that the money for the sale of the grain is to be used as wages for Hamdan who cultivated their beans garden. Ni'ma prepares tea in a teapot. Zeinat suspects something in Ni'ma: 'since when has the buffalo been with young' which means that Ni'ma seems to be pregnant. Ni'ma confirms her mother's suspicion that she has a four-month pregnant. Zeinat is worried as when Ghobashi was leaving for Libya he promised a marriage dress for the girl who looked ripe but Ni'ma is already pregnant before the return of her father the next Great Feast.

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Zeinat has to find a solution for Ni'ma's pregnancy before the return of Ghobashi. It is crucial for a girl to be pregnant in the culture of Ghobashi which encourages chastity before marriage. This is so because in Egypt a girl is supposed to get married to a man who deflowers (have first sexual intercourse with) her.

Zeinat gives Ni'ma her life savings and asks the daughter to pack her clothes and go to Cairo to live there until she gives birth. Zeinat wants to save her marriage from breaking apart. Zeinat will go to the market herself.

The story has a rural setting where farming is the main activity the people do for their livelihood. It is a Muslim community as Zeinat works up in the morning for ablutions. The sound of muezzin also indicates that it is a Muslim community. The setting suit the story as it is the discussion between Ghobashi household (people who live in Ghobashi house)

The story has a third person point of view.

### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

**Zeinat:** She is observant as she discovers that Ni'ma is pregnant. She is submissive that she takes all her husband's commands.

**Ni'ma:** she is loose as she sleeps with a man and gets pregnant before she is married. She is honest as she tells the truth about her pregnancy.

**Ghobashi:** he is responsible as he makes sure that his family has enough food before he leaves for Libya.

### **THEMES**

**Early pregnancy:** The girl Ni'ma is pregnant while she is young and before she is married

**Problem solving:** Zeinat chases her daughter to the city of Cairo only to save her marriage from breaking up. This is her solution to the problems that Ni'ma's pregnancy might bring.

**Consequences of sex before marriage:** Ni'ma is chased to the city because she slept with a man before marriage and got pregnant. If she had waited for her time, she would not be chased from her parents' home.

**Responsibility:** before going to Libya, Ghobashi makes sure that he leaves enough food for his family.

## **A HANDFUL OF DATES**

**Tayeb Salih – Sudan**

Masood had been selling his land to his neighbour anytime he married or was about to marry. And because he had married several times, he who owned large hectares of land has become almost a destitute tenant. Whatever dates he harvests on the remaining piece of land is handed over to his debtors whilst he scrounges to live.

The grandfather tells his grandson - the narrator - of his ambition to buy the remaining one-third of Masood's land; the grandson is sad and broken. When the boy sees the state Masood is in, that to Masood every piece of date counts, he cannot believe the man's passivity and his grandfather's ambition. The narrator thought that the land which his grandfather owns was his from the past, sympathizes with Masood for selling the land carelessly. Like unwanted phlegm in his throat, he runs off to vomit all Masood's date palms he had been eating.

On this day, Masood tells the grandfather that it is the day of harvesting. They go to the fields and harvest dates (a type of fruit). Although Masood's piece of land has dates, he gets nothing as he gives all his dates to debtors.

NB: the narrator is liked by his grandfather as an intelligent boy who knows what to do and when.

The story has a first person point of view from the grandson. The setting is rural as people depend on farming for their livelihood.

#### CHARCTER ANALYSIS

**Masood:** He is unreasoning that he sells the land for no proper reason. He is unsatisfied as he goes on marrying many women.

**Grandfather:** He is intelligent – he buys the land of Masood and makes Masood works in it. He is ambitious as he thinks of owning extra land.

**Narrator:** He is sympathetic that he sympathizes with Masood for losing his fertile land.

#### THEMES

**Lack of reasoning:** Masood loses his land because he sells it anyhow without thinking properly.

### A CONVERSATION FROM THE THIRD FLOOR Mohamed El- Bisatie – *Egypt*

A woman Aziza comes to visit her husband in prison but has to speak from the compound of the prison to her husband who is on the third floor room. The tensed conversation is about the work that is to be done in the household, which perhaps would have been done by the man.

After waiting for some time, the woman sees a soldier at the window of a third floor. Then Aziza hears a noise and sees a hand waving from between the bars

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of a window to the third floor. She hears her husband Ashour calling her "Aziza".

Ashour shouts to the wife that he is transferred to another prison as he indicated in his last letter. This prison is to be pulled down any day. He asks the woman why she has not come with their children Hamid and Saniyya. Ashour wants to see their baby, Shakir, and Aziza lifts it up.

Ashour asks Aziza if she pruned the two dates palm tree but Aziza answers nothing.

Ashour asks Aziza if she have built the wall and she answer no but she is to get bricks from the furnace her uncle Ahmed lighted. Ashour also tells her not to come to the prison as he is going to write her a letter informing to which prison is to be transferred. Then the husband disappears. Aziza sits down feeding the baby and then she leaves.

Setting of the story is at prison premises in an urban geographical setting. The story has a third person point of view.

### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

**Ashour:** he is caring that he cares for his children. He asks his wife why he hasn't brought the two children.

**Aziza:** she is a loving woman that she goes to prison to see her husband. She is observant that she sees many things that happen in the third floor.

### **THEMES**

Imprisonment: Ashour is in prison and has no chance of caring for his family.  
Love: Aziza goes to prison to see her husband.

Sufferings of women when men are in prison: Aziza fails to prune the dates because she is a woman and her husband who could do the work is not around.

Reality of life: one may think it is not possible to speak with someone from a third floor but it becomes a reality in Aziza and Ashour's life.

## **PAPA, SNAKE & I Luis Bernado Honwana – *Mozambique***

The story takes place at Tchembene's household in a certain township. Tchembene's family is rich and has servants. They have a housemaid Sartina and a garden boy Madunana who flirts with Sartina. Nandito, Joaozinho, Nelita, Gita and the narrator are all the children of the household. On this day, the father and the mother discover that the narrator is well ok and needs to take laxatives (pain killers). Then the two go to chicken pen where they

discover that chicken are missing and fowls are dying after being beaten. The father suggests that he will find a way of killing the snake that beats the fowl and eats the chicken. The father leaves for work. The mother advises the narrator not to take the gun and go hunting. She warns Madunana of being close to Sartina. Finally the mother leaves the home for work.

Tchembene is next to Senhor Castro's household. The two families have pointers (dogs), Toto for Tchembene and Wolf for Senhor Castro.

The narrator goes to the chicken runs and starts looking for the snake. He stops after seeing the snake. He sits somewhere watching it. Then his young brother, Nandito comes to the pens. They discuss about snakes and Nandito reveals his fear of the snake. Then the two dogs come to the pens and as Toto tries to bite the snake, the snake bites the dog several times. Later, Madunana kills the snake. The wolf goes to its master's compound but with some snake biting.

When Tchembene comes in the evening, Senhor drives in and tells Tchembene to pay him for his dog, Wolf that came from his compound barking and it's now dead. He thinks the dog was poisoned or done something that contributed to its death. Senhor threatens Tchembene of taking him to court if he fails to pay him. He drives away after Tchembene's attempt for discussion proved futile. Later the narrator tells his father that the snake bit the dogs. The narrator also tells his father that he doesn't like his parents.

The story is having an urban setting with both masters going to work. The story has a first person point of view.

#### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Tchembene:** He is calm and peace loving – this is shown from how he talks to Senhor. He is a good father who chats with children. He chats with the narrator.

**Narrator:** He is fearless that he searches for a snake in the kraal and helps Madunana killing the snake.

**Sartina:** She is loose and cheap that she allows Madunana to touch her anyhow and laughs at it. She is dutiful as she is seen busy washing.

**Madunana:** He is immoral as he touches a fellow worker's buttocks. He is fearless and helpful that he kills the snake.

**Tchembene's wife:** she is caring that she knows that the narrator is ill and needs laxatives.

**Nandito:** He is fearful that he cries and runs out of the kraal after seeing the snake.

**Senhor:** He is short-tempered that he just says Tchembene must pay him even though he doesn't know what really killed the dog. He is unfriendly –he talks to his neighbour in a rude manner.

THEMES

**Poor neighbourhood relations:** Tchembene and his neighbour are not in good relationship. The way Senhor approaches Tchembene confirms this.

**Fear:** Nandito fears the snake that he runs out of the kraal after seeing it.

**Anger:** the way Senhor comes to Tchembene's compound shows that Senhor is unhappy with the death of his dog.

## THE BRIDEGROOM

### Nadine Gordimer – *South Africa*

The young comes from Francistown and works as an overseer for a road project. He lives with Kaffirs (black) although he is an Afrikaan. His cook, Piet, is black, so are other twenty boys at the camp. In the tent he stays, the young man has an iron bed, pillow case and a big kaross (jacket) on it; canvas seat and a clothes chest with a clock and a photograph of his seventeen-year-old fiancée from Francistown. They young man leaves tomorrow for Francistown for his wedding that he is a bridegroom. He visualizes his return journey with his wife. He had problems convincing parents of the girl and now they are convinced. What remains is that the parents are worried that their daughter will be associated with blacks as it is the case with the young man.

This evening he goes out, walking round the camp and comes back at sunset. He sits outside on his fire place. At his tent there is light while at his cook, Piet, there is no light. This shows how the two are different, one being white and the other black. He calls for Piet for his meal. The cook brings the meal from his dark tent. Piet is a good cook who can even cook Koeksusters just after told how to do it by his boss.

The young man eats the meal and then he smokes. Then he thinks of how his compound will change with his wife around. He worries how he is going to stop the boys who come always to ask him questions as they are kaffirs. His wife grew up at a farm and is not used to kaffirs. He takes a bottle of brandy he brought from Francistown and drink there. He doesn't drink too much – he drinks mostly during celebrations like wedding ceremony and Christmas.

Music and cries comes from other camp tents. Then two men come to him from the dark. One has paraffin tin and the other attachment of gut and wire. The two play the instruments. Another thin yellowish man comes and sits on his haunches (the buttocks, hips and thighs together). He has a keyboard of metal tongues in its mouth. Then people come to watch. They watch the young man plays the instrument though with difficulties. He thinks of giving Piet sugar and things from the store so that he prepares beer that these people should drink when he returns from Francistown next week.

When the lyre-player starts again, he feels good that he sings inside him but later his voice becomes audible. All the people become silent. He, for a moment, forgets all his wedding preparations.

The music stops and people leave for their tents. He tells Piet to wake up early in the morning. He goes to his tent and takes a final stare at his fiancée's photograph. He puts his things in the chest ready for the journey.

The story has a rural setting in an area where there is no electricity. The point of view is third person as none of the characters is a narrator.

#### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**The young man:** he is anxious more especially his wedding. He is social and friendly that he doesn't see any problem living together with kaffirs. He also chats and sings with them (blacks).

**Piet:** he is a fast-learner who learns how to make Koeksusters just after being told how to do it by his boss. He is obedient that he takes orders from his boss.

#### THEMES

**Excitement of a bridegroom before marriage day** – the young man is so anxious about his wedding day that he keeps on looking at his fiancée's photograph.

**Racial segregation:** the girl's parents do not want their daughter to associate with kaffirs.

**Socialism:** The young man socializes with the kaffirs though he is Afrikaans.

## THE BETRAYAL

### *Ahmed Essop – South Africa*

Dr. Kamal is a physician, politician and connoisseur. He is a Muslim and goes to Mosque every Friday to genuflect in prayer. He is in dilemma due to emerging of a new political party of youth in Fordsburg. The party imposes a threat to his party, Orient Front, in which he is the president. Being the political mentor of Fordsburg youth, he fears losing his position to the new party once the new party welcomes deserters of the Youth League. He thinks of crushing the new group. He doesn't know how as he had been a support of Gandhi who was for peace. He addresses members of the Youth League. The Youth League is led by Salim Rashid. Dr. Kamal tells the Youth League members to stop the new party of Indians of the country as it will destroy the mother of the league, Orient Front. On his way back, Dr. Kamal passes

through Gandhi Hall where the new group is to hold its meeting tomorrow and he finds out that the grouping is also holding its nocturnal meeting. He goes home and he recalls the days when he joined the Orient Front and used to hold lectures to Fordsburg youths on “A Study of The Dynamics of Political Action and Political Truth’ which gained him support and later power.

Orient Front planned to disturb the Fordsburg meeting by attending it. Dr. Kamal attends the meeting so is the chairperson of the Youth League. The members of the new grouping are told to leave but they resist. Then Salim Rashid tells the people that they have insulted the Orient Front. He starts commotion and all league members follow suit. The whole is turned into a drama theatre as the stage becomes the mass of seething, pushing, wrestling, punching and shouting combatants. Dr. Kamal struggles to go out of the battle he has initiated himself though he wants to remain in the hall to see people fighting. Somebody informs the police and they come armed with guns and truncheons. Dr. Kamal, who is outside the hall, re-enters the hall to see what is to happen next. But he changes his mind and flees.

The setting of the story is in the city in Ghana as it has the hall, Gandhi Hall. The story has a third person point of view.

#### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

Dr. Kamal: he is violent as he tells the Youth League to crush the new political grouping. He is also intolerant as he fails to accept the emerging of the new political grouping.

#### **THEME**

Political intolerance: Orient Front members and their president want to crush a newly formed political grouping as they want their only party in the country.

### **PROTISTA**

#### **Dambudzo Marechera – *Zimbabwe***

The narrator is describing his exile - more of a soul and mental exile than a political one but even then the former results from the latter. It also results from adult imposition which the narrator could not bear as he sees himself transform into things to escape the dryness, the drought, the barrenness of the world. He escapes his tormentors through death and even then he is forced back to life to live this abhorrent life. He is the Protista - that unicellular organism that undergoes fragmentation to create new ones. Yet he could not escape.

His - the narrator's - creative and highly imaginative mind sharpens the torments, bringing it closer than it should be. He sees death as the only end, but it was an end which will not come. He's transformed into a tree - his freedom truncated and rooted into the soil and the only way to extricate him is to wound him. No one listens to his cries - which he does not waste time to do, for he is alone in his wilderness. Yet his suffering was prophesied to him in a dream and also through his huntress who left him one early morning; the only woman whom he spent time with in his exile - that period of time that traverses his youth and encapsulates both his fears (the worst moments in his life) and his good memories - making its excision difficult.

This is an interesting short story that will mean a lot of things to different people. It is a political oppression carried out by society. It is about someone struggling to express himself and in doing so is rejected and persecuted by society. It is about our inability to accept people who are different to us.

The story has a first person point of view. The setting is in a country where there is no freedom (land with drought) as the narrator turns into a tree.

#### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Narrator:** he is hopeless as his cries are not heard. He is also desperate in the drought season. The narrator is radical as he tries to force change

**Society:** stubborn as it doesn't listen to the narrator.

#### THEMES

**Lack of freedom:** There is no freedom as the narrator's exile is of political oppression.

**Drought:** the narrator is desperate in the drought.

Political oppression: The narrator is victimized and abused that he ends up in exile.

**Failure to accept opposing views:** the society doesn't listen to the narrator's cries and different views but sends him into exile.

## THE COFFEE-CART GIRL

*Ezekiel Mphahlele – South Africa*

The story which takes place in a rural setting starts with the main character, Zodwa - a girl who sells coffee in a cart outside Metropolitan Steel Windows Ltd witnessing a strike of workers. She sells coffee and buns to workers. On this day the workers are at the picketing line for poor salary and working conditions. Zodwa is busy selling the coffee to customers. She fails to realize the stampede of workers who come round her. One man crushes with her back as other workers fall on his cart. Before her cart overturns and the coffee is spilt on the ground, Roben Lemeko, one of the workers shouts at the people and hurriedly rides away the bicycle. He shouts "Give way you black monkeys".

The young man, Lemeko gives the cart to Zodwa but before Zodwa could ask the man's name, Lemeko is already away. She has no time to say thank you.

Workers disperse and the town is calm. It is known that the management has announced that all workers should go back to work or they are to be dismissed (signed off). Black workers have no right to strike and many are already fired.

One day while selling her coffee, Zodwa meets Roben. Roben wants to buy coffee and two buns. Zodwa remembers the man and calls him "the good uncle who saved my cart". Roben introduces himself so does Zodwa. From this day, Zodwa (Pinkie) and Roben (china) become friends. Zodwa promises free coffee any time Roben has no money for coffee.

The two strikes a friendship the next time they meet which transforms into love, though each is silent about it until China - the man - becomes jealous of Naidoo- another street trader. This jealousy resulting from an exchange of a ring (from Naidoo) for coffee (from Pinkie, the woman) almost becomes lethal. Regretting his deed, China promises not to repeat that; however, he stays from Pinkie's cart for the next three days, within which period the authorities comes to sack all black coffee traders for unsightly siting of carts. So China loses Pinkie forever, hoping that they might meet one day, and then they could exchange their life stories. At least that is what China thought.

The story has an urban setting where Pinkie sells her coffee in the city.

#### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Zodwa:** She is resourceful as she sells coffee to support life. She is grateful as she appreciates China's help when he saves his cart.

**Roben:** He is jealousy that he becomes angry when he learns that Zodwa has received a ring from Naidoo. He is helpful as he saves Pinkie's (Zodwa's) cart.

#### THEMES

- Jealousy: China is jealousy of Naidoo and Pinkie as Pinkie receives a ring from Naidoo
- Hard work: the workers work hard to earn a living but they are exploited by their bosses.
- Friendship: there is a mutual between Pinkie and China although the two fail to speak of their loving each other.
- Exploitation: workers are given little money and once they complain they are fired from work.
- Hardship of town life: People in the city struggle to get food, e.g. Naidoo who gives Pinkie a ring in exchange for food.

## **SNAPSHOT OF A WEDDING**

### **Bessie Head – South Africa**

Snapshot of a wedding is a story set in a rural area in Botswana. It is a story of the wedding day of Kegoletile and Neo. They are marrying while Neo is six months pregnant. She got pregnant after her aunt warned her of losing Kegoletile because of her bad manners. At this time, Kegoletile has two wives, Neo and Mathata but he has chosen Neo because she is educated up to **O-level** and is working as a secretary. She doesn't know how to plough herself. Men are nowadays interested in marrying women that are educated and at a salaried job and Kegoletile isn't an exceptional.

Though Neo is getting married but the society knows her as a woman without manners. She is proud because she is educated and she never greets people. Mathata, on the other hand is quite different. She is the opposite of Neo.

Mathata is illiterate but she is beautiful and always smiling. She got pregnant of Kegoletile so did Neo. When the children were born, Kegoletile said that he would marry Neo. For that court ordered Kegoletile to pay maintenance of R10.00 per month to Mathata until the child is twenty years old. However, all the time Kegoletile was preparing for his wedding; he frequently visited Mathata and brought her gifts like food, shoes, dresses and underwear. Mathata thanked Kegoletile for the gifts.

The women from the bridegroom come early in the morning to the bride's home, MmaKhudu. They are welcomed by women who ululate and dance. They bring with them an ox and some gifts. One woman describes the wedding as "modern" as no diphiri (traditional wedding breakfast) is cooked for the people as it has been the tradition.

Since Kegoletile doesn't go to church and doesn't care about the church, the ceremony is to take place at the police camp. It is a quick wedding because the woman is pregnant. At the same time, Neo's relatives want her just marry. Everyone is worried of the girl's pride.

The bride's aunts sit at one corner of the compound. Women give them all sorts of food. These aunts have a very important task to do – to hand over the bride to the bridegroom's maternal aunts that are to come at sunset. Before the sun hides from the earth, the bridegroom's aunts arrive.

Kegoletile has provided food for the day's feast. After eating, Kegoletile's maternal aunt asks the bride's side if they have agreed to the wedding or they have any reservations. Neo's aunts agree to the marriage. Then Neo's maternal aunts advise the bride Kegoletile that he must work hard in the farm to feed his wife ("... and supply us with corn each year" page 148). Kegoletile's maternal aunts advise Neo to draw water for her husband always remember

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that Kegoletile is the owner of the house (head of the family) and has the right to go to other women and can come home at any time. They say Kegoletile is free to sleep around with other women (do not mind if he stops now and then and talks to other ladies) without her being jealous.

After the counselling ceremony, the women together with the bride and his groom start to Kegoletile's compound for a second round feast. As they reach the compound, an old woman suddenly appears and chops the ground – it is only a formality. Another woman takes Neo to a smeared and decorated hut where Neo is made to sit on a Tswana animal skin. The woman wraps round a shawl and a kerchief around Neo's shoulders and head respectively to symbolize that Neo is now a married woman.

Women dance and ululate. They come forward to greet the bride. Neo laughs at women who bump at each other's buttocks while dancing.

Finally Neo's aunt who warned her about bad manners appears and with her fist pounding the ground advises Neo to "Be a good wife!" – page 149.

The story has a rural geographical setting as people still believe in farming and traditional marriages. The mood is celebratory as people eat, dance and ululate.

### **CHARACTERS**

**Neo:** She is proud – she considers herself more important than others because she is educated. She is sensible – she hears the warning her aunt gives her about the possibility of losing her fiancé. She is seductive – she tries her best to persuade Kegoletile to marry her.

**Neo's aunt:** she is advisory – she advises Neo to consider her behaviour lest she loses Kegoletile to Mathata.

**Kegoletile:** he is unsatisfied – he has two girlfriends. He is crooked – she fails to marry Mathata although she has his child. She is materialistic – he marries Neo because she is educated and employed only to have money from her salary. He is responsible – he buys gifts to Mathata although he is not married to her. He is forgiving – he goes to Mathata and buys her clothes despite the fact that Mathata took him to court and he is paying maintenance of R10.00 per month to Mathata.

**Mathata:** she is good mannered – she is admired for her good behaviour. She is unlucky – Kegoletile impregnates her and dumps her.

### **THEMES**

Moral decay: women allow sleeping with a man before marriage. Mathata is impregnated by Kegoletile.

Misinterpretations of privileges

**Traditional wedding:** Kegoletile follows traditional marriage when marrying Neo.

**Infidelity:** Kegoletile is having affairs with two women and abandons Mathata after impregnating her.

**Wrong choices:** Kegoletile is having difficulties choosing a better wife as he looks for money and not manners.

**Haste:** Mathata and Kegoletile hurried to have sex before they get married.

**Pride:** Neo is rude because she is educated and goes to work. She is proud that she is educated.

## REFLECTION IN A CELL

### *Mafika Gwala – South Africa*

The narrator, Mike is in prison after he attempted to buy gun from a certain woman illegally. He was with his friend, Dougie.

Mike's life has been all miserable. He was first sent to Mrs. Lane at Eshowe for juvenile delinquency. Later, he was also sent to a reformatory for refusing to go to school. He thought it was not a crime as he used to go to cinema to watch Fu-Manchu episode. Soon after his release from the reformatory, he stole his father's money (ten bob). He fought with his father and he ended up the next day retained and abused at May Ville police station. A police officer advised Mr. Zondi, Mike's father to send Mike to reformatory. It was at the reformatory where Mike first met Joey, a guy who escaped from the centre.

Later, Mike was released from the reformatory. Mr. Kwa-Mashu took Mike home. Mike found his parents separated. His father called him all sorts of names that he lived a dull life (the father called him a thief and a black sheep of the family). He was only comfortable when his brother came home from the university. Mike one day visited the bar and fell in love with a bar girl. Other men were jealous of him after the girl had just refused their beer. However, as he waited the girl at the gate so that they go and had an affair, mike was provoked by some Tsotsi (young men with bad manners in South Africa) and he hit one of them. He ended up serving a six month jail term. He liked the prison as prisoners were friendly unlike at the reformatory. It is here where he met Dougie for the first time. Likewise Mike, Dougie left school at JC only that Dougie was a genius and good at Mathematics and engineering. Unfortunately, Dougie hate school and called all people who were educated 'bastards' including his brother who is a doctor.

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After their release from prison, Mike and Dougie used to do gamble with other people. Later they planned to have a gun which they should use when stealing. They approached a certain woman but at the end the plan was discovered by the police. Dougie was arrested first. Then the following day, police came to Mike's home. His grandmother told him of that. Just after a day, Mike was arrested by the police and taken to police station for interrogation. He wanted to see Dougie's confession before he spoke. The officers abused in many ways to compel him to confess but he kept silent. That was yesterday. Today he is in the dark cell. Police have told him that they are keeping him until he confesses and allow them to have his statement.

In short, a serial offender, a juvenile delinquent who cut deals was arrested when he attempted to purchase a gun. He was bent on not divulging any information to the authorities. There was use of the prisoner's dilemma here. It captures the realities of most youth where rebelling against family and society, they end up with crime and jail term.

The story has a first person point of view from the protagonist, Mike. The setting of the story is urban since the narrator uses to go to clubs and shebeen.

### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

**Mike (narrator):** He is disobedient – He doesn't listen to his parents and grandmother. He is crooked and stubborn as he doesn't learn from his first stay in prison and at the reformatory. He is regretful that he wishes he is released from the cell he is.

### **THEMES**

**Effects of bad company:** Mike ends in prison for his company with Dougie as they tried to buy guns.

**Consequences of disobeying parents:** Mike is always in prison because he failed to go to school. His parents wanted him to stay in school but he disobeyed.

**Hard life in prison:** Mike is beaten and stays in darkness in prison.