

2015

ESSAYS/OPINION PIECES

1ST PLACE

My sister's keeper

Golden Nyamapfene

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I care. That is my culture. That is my pride. When an innocent Mozambican, whose only crime is that he was not born here, is dragged to his death under a police van, that threatens my human rights. For my language and my creed is of little value if I cannot be the justice for those who have been wronged and bruised unjustly.

I speak truth. That is my culture. That is my heritage. When hundreds of young girls are driven into the desert to serve the barbaric needs of warlords and extremists, that matters to me even when they are not my blood. For my sworn allegiance to the woman who bore me is contemptuous if I cannot speak up and be the strength of the meek.

I believe in equality. That is my culture. That is my pride. When tens of men are gunned down for demanding fair compensation for playing a pivotal role in the development of our nation, it disgusts my inner spirit, even when they are not my father. For if I do anything less, it would be a betrayal to the fundamental conviction that all men are born free and free they shall breathe their last.

I am committed to conservation. That is my culture. That is my heritage. When the wild is ripped of its kings, horns, and skins by greedy opportunists, that threatens the future of my children, and grandchildren. For if I forsake the sand and other creatures that walk on top of it, nothing else will tell the tale of the great men and animals that walked this earth.

I am generous. That is my culture. That is my pride. When millions of orphans go for days without food and safe drinking water, that makes my life poorer, even when their ordeal haunts them a thousand miles away from my doorstep. For if I cannot be the shoulder for those who are out of the reach of a brighter day, my hopes of a blessed future for our nation are void.

I am an African. I cannot be proud of my culture and heritage if I fail to cohabit. My hopes are senseless if I ignore the plight of the discontented. That is what African culture is about, not airbrushed folklore and enervated attempts to label some as more African than others.

2ND PLACE

Sally with a voice

Salina Ramadhin

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There really is no small act of courage. Courage is something that helps us overcome the fear that holds us back. If it fills us with doubt and scares us to death but you still find a way to face it, trust me, that is courage. Most of us do not really think of ourselves as being great or being brave but in actual fact we can be much more than that. Every single step that you take towards something that scares you, trust me, that is courage. I have not fully understood the importance of courage and resistance until things started to go from 'fresh as a daisy' to a 'nightmare in hell' in my life.

From the time I could remember I have always been a happy go lucky child filled with smiles to make anyone's day. As the years went by the love in my heart grew and my infectious positivity spread faster than any disease. I was content and happy within myself, and I had peace of mind. Little did I know that life had a big surprise for me. I believed life was all roses and sweet peaches. When I got accepted into college, I got a dose of reality. Things happened, the kind of things you would only see in movies or watch in documentaries. Those things happened to me. I was falsely accused of things I did not do and so this had a detrimental effect on my personal and mental health. I was completely shattered. I felt like an abandoned piece of bubble gum under a high school desk in the presence of company who did not acknowledge my presence. My self-esteem got damaged, and I believed that I was bad because both the accusers and the people who believed the accusations made me feel that way. I was under

their jurisdiction and never completely in control of myself and my life. I started to doubt myself and felt very uneasy in the presence of everyone around me.

I always wondered how I hid in my fear, hid in my darkness. By darkness I mean a safe place where I hid my pain from the world, I would just sleep to shut the pain, as well as everyone else, out. The answer was simple, I was depressed. I could not describe the feeling of pure emptiness and torture that lay beyond the pain. I could not fathom my sadness. Instead of taking these issues up, I let it eat away at me slowly until I could not recognise myself anymore. It is so easy to give up. It is still easy to put the blame on someone else but the easiest thing to do is nothing at all. We all have ups and downs that lead us to feel victimised. We all have our pain threshold, and some situations activate memories that overwhelm our being. If we do not get our way we make a fuss, if we tell a lie we hope it will be fully accepted, no one really likes to look anything less than perfect. To be honest there was a time when I did not want to be anything less than perfect, but I soon realised that it was impossible.

To me courage is not just bravery; it is actually understanding my deepest fears and still trying to go on when I feel petrified. It is telling the world my story instead of hiding beneath a blanket of perfectionism. It is letting my guard down no matter what I am going to face next. It is being vulnerable in the situation that frightens me. I have been picked on many times for being different, for speaking up when others did not want to, for pushing myself beyond the limit when people told me I could not achieve much and I realized that all these little acts that did not stop me from living my life, which is how I was being courageous. Courage does not have to be a heroic act or something big; it is the little things like putting your pride aside and apologizing to someone or even something

that others would not know about. My biggest critic was not a person or people, it was the little conscience inside that I listened to.

The most difficult moment I have experienced this year was when I had to fight those negative thoughts that have challenged the way I perceived myself and revealing who I really am underneath all of the negativity inside. I did that by recalling some of my positive traits and qualities as well as understanding my personality better. The bravest thing I ever did was to admit to myself that I was troubled, that I was scared and that I needed help and choosing to live every time I wanted to die. I was a very confused young lady, but I now know that coming into direct contact with and confronting those feelings that made me feel inferior, that right there is courage.

Sometimes taking a stand and having a voice you become hated, mocked and sometimes even punished but most of the time this doesn't have to be fact, it could all be in your head. I know what it is like to feel stuck and to feel like there is no other option. When people look at me, they see a happy, bubbly girl that enjoys life with no regrets. What they don't see is how many scars and cuts are behind this smile that never chooses to die. I will not let my struggle become my identity and I realised that I could thrive even when I am in this depressed state. I never gave up because much more is possible when it seems impossible and much more becomes incredible when there was seemingly no hope to begin with. But there is...

3RD PLACE

Redefining African Culture

Njabulo Nhlakanipho Shezi

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To redefine or reinterpret African culture and African history is to redefine humanity itself. Scholars, together with people around the world, would all agree that Africa is the cradle of civilization and with that being said there is a responsibility to preserve and prolong African culture and African history. To only label or associate Africa with the colour or paint which is black is incorrect, as Africa is a consciousness, Africa is all colours and Africa is all people.

Africa is a woman whose beauty is in the mountains, the valleys and trees. Her confidence echoes through the deserts making other continents jealous. Her warmth is like that which is displayed by a mother to her newborn infant. She is our mother. Africa is a continent of complex cultural diversity where the Ubuntu values of humility and hospitality form the fabric of our wonderful continent. Our dance, our rituals and our chants make us who we are. We are a people of tremendous bravery, and we are in tune with ourselves and the times in which we live. The land we occupy was and still is, in some parts of the continent, ruled by kings, chiefs and queens.

In our early developments as a continent around the late 13th century we adopted a consensus form of government, and of course with all the characteristics of democracy, individualism and freewill. As a continent we have been blessed tremendously in terms of our agricultural landscape. We have always been people who grow and maintain crops for the

purposes of feeding ourselves or for industry. Even before colonialism we were self-dependent in terms of food security, our schooling, our industries and cultures. The fabric of our continent is purely defined by our past but will continually be shaped by what we as a people do in the future.

The very identity of Africa as a continent and of Africans as a people is designed from pre-colonial history but not pre-colonial cultures. We have always owned and embraced our cultures and ethnicities. Throughout recorded history Africans have unfortunately been exploited. We as a people have been exploited during the unjust era of slavery, the continent itself has suffered at the hands of oligarchies whose sole mission was and still is to rob the continent of its minerals. Our economy is growing rapidly, second only to Asia but having said that almost half of our people are living under poverty and this for me is worrying. As Africans we own almost sixty percent of the world's productive land but ironically our continent is riddled with unemployment and poverty.

Africa continually faces a constantly changing global environment; particularly in the mid-1990s, where we saw enormous global trends emerging; one would recall the internet for example. This created a new economic landscape particularly for already emerging countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, and other north African countries. An important feature of the mid 1980s and the early 1990s was the emergence of the globalisation of the global economy. Global growth in terms of communications and technology has facilitated international trade and finance, and the constant movement of capital and industry. Unfortunately, as a continent we have urgent issues such as increasingly indebted public sectors, little cohesion between the public and private sector and also corrupt government officials. All these negative factors have influenced a decline in direct foreign

investment and as a result our economies are stagnant and are certainly growing below par.

What of our wonderful continent? The continent has hosted a number of renowned events and one which comes to mind is the FIFA world cup where we showed to the world our spirit of unity and delivered a successful tournament. With that being said most recently locals from predominantly north of the country have been involved in xenophobic attacks towards our brothers and sisters from all over the continent. Murders in Africa reflect social frustration and unrest towards the powers that be. This is embarrassing as during times of hardship here in South Africa political leaders such as the late Nelson Mandela sought refuge outside the country, and they were warmly accepted.

The continual radicalisation of Africa in the past forty years by various leaders has yielded growth in some countries but also in some countries the powers that be have certainly, from an administration point of view, run their respective countries to the ground. Even for developing countries the growth has been minimal and there have been high levels of inequality. If Africa is to play a major role in the global economy we need to define, integrate, and maintain policy which is favourable for prospective investors. There is no doubt that as a collective of countries we still have a lot of work to do. However, the future does look bright.

How does Africa find relevance in the 21st century? How do we redefine Africa so that it remains relevant not only to ourselves but also to the world? We need to reform the curriculum in our schools so that we teach the children of revolutionaries such as Steve Biko and Martin Luther King just to mention a few. We need to be at one with our churches and integrate them more into society and to continue to

embrace our cultures and traditions. We also need to work with one another whether it is economically, socially or politically. We need to continually come with our own solutions for the problems that face our beautiful continent.

The late Nadine Gordimer once said, “Perhaps the best definition of progress would be the continuing efforts of men and women to narrow the gap between the convenience of the powers that be and the unwritten charter”. This statement, for me, speaks to the future and to the youth of Africa to continually grow Africa and subsequently eradicate poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. Africa is being redefined and our story will continually be reinterpreted and will find relevance for many more years to come.

POETRY

1ST PLACE**I am not, but I create*****Nonhlanhla Mthembu****** * ***

I am an atom
I am a cell
I am a note of music
I am a root of a Marula tree
I am not, but I create

I am that stone that killed Goliath
I am a donkey Jesus rode
I am a foundation of the Mandela Bridge and seven wonders
of the world
I go by unnoticed
I am a shadow, merely recognised.
I am not, but I create.

I am a thread of cotton
I am ink, a piece of paper.
As small and little as I am, I create greatness.
I am not, but I create

I let things be
I let things flourish
I nurture beauty,
But never become part of it or IT
I am a maker, moulder and magnifier
I am a mother of all careers
A jack of all trades
Yes, I am a teacher!
Yet I am not, but I create.

2ND PLACE**While You Were Sleeping*****Paballo Ntobaki***

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While you were sleeping, I awakened my soul from its slumber.
I turned on the light towards my innermost being,
To see the scars you've inflicted on me.
My mind's eye opened to see the ugly colours with which you painted me.

Gone was the beauty which first drew you to me.
You ravaged it, like a carnivorous brute, you found no rest 'til your appetite surfeited.
I arose to see the battered face, which scarcely remembers any gentleness from your touch.
You made it familiar only with the fury of your fists,
Simply because you are a man, and I, a woman.

My darling, the wounds you inflicted on me are more than just skin-deep.
So, while you were sleeping, I decided, "Enough! No more!"
No more of your torment, of your tyranny, ever taking never giving.
I'm worth more than the bunny chow and coke with which you courted me.
In the darkness of the night, while you slept, my mind was renewed.

No more listening to the unsound wisdom from oppressed women of old,
With their beloved consolation: "Qinisola mntanami, umendo unzima"

(Persevere my child, marriage is difficult)

That is a heritage I will not take, my progeny will not suffer
the same.

The time for action is in the here and now,

For, like the title of Nardine Gordimer's book, I decided there
is 'no time like the present.'

Though the fear of blazing these trails encroached me, yet
trudge on I did

I did, while you slept, and when you awoke, I was gone....

3RD PLACE**The Slums.....My Queendom*****Anele Hlongwane***

* * *

The slums
were a place I had learnt to call home
without a care in the world I knew this was where I belonged
despite that I lived to take short breaths.

They asked: "how are you doing?"
I said: "I am breathing"...daily routines would be pursued as if
we were missing nothing
while I knew that inside, my organs were drowning...in tears
tears that I never cried.
I never did cry but proudly wore a crooked smile,
behind it a story as long as the river Nile.

The slums...my queendom
I was a queen in my own right
The law was: THE BODY IS A CANVAS
hence, each day I gracefully wore a gown of ink
on my skin.
I was a walking kaleidoscope, a two-legged gallery
I cared not for religious fanatics
as far as I was concerned God had reincarnated into me.
I was the god queen.

The slums were my turf
where I had ruled over the cluttered skwatta camps
I had lead battles of catfights and verbal disputes
and, I always rose undisputed
I wore a shining armour visible only to my eyes
I was not afraid

The slums

the place that had embraced me

before I became queen

Before I became queen, I was a woman

who unfortunately fell madly in love with another woman

she had encaptivated me with her slim waist and thick back

her white teeth and pure speech

she asked: "how are you doing?"

I said: "I am breathing.... only for you"

I loved her in all the bad, in all the good

to when I grew defiant to my African roots

I challenged the law of Moses

I was THEWOMAN... until I had been disowned

with the fear of being to death, stoned.

The slums provided to me refuge.

I had been beaten by society

lashed upon by the crippling power of a mother's tongue

and in my quest for vengeance

I stumbled upon redemption and repentance

in the form of a green plant

The plant, a new escape

the reason why I had lived to take short breaths

crush...roll...pull...puff and repeat.

A new void had been created to affiliate it, I inaugurated

myself

ruler of a land to which only prison was its freedom

I was a self-proclaimed queen

You may ask: "how are you doing?"

and you will read that I am no longer breathing

the soil now eternally hugs onto my bones

the bones of a queen, within the SLUMS....MY QUEENDOM

SHORT STORIES

1ST PLACE

The Mystery iPad (Part I)

Siphesihle Mthethwa

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Early morning just as the sun was rising, Phetha heard his mother singing in the back yard below his bedroom window. She was in high spirits and jolly. It was as though she was in her early youth. Phetha understood her mood though, as last night's party was a huge success. All his friends and neighbours came in numbers to welcome him back from school and to congratulate him for his outstanding matric results that made the front page of every newspaper in January. Phetha was indeed an excellent fellow, and it was his first time ever to leave the neighbourhood and his home town for so long.

MaMhlongo went the extra mile to make a success of her son's home coming party. She successfully managed to get all his classmates present and asked them to take control of everything and she kept an eye on things to make sure everything went accordingly. Speeches were given, songs were sung, there was dance and most of all poetry. He loved poetry and one of his former classmates, Nqobile, blessed him with a poem he could not forget, even when she was done, he still recalled the lyrics of her poem...

*Words have been spoken,
Decisions have been taken,
It has all been proven
As it had been in heaven,
Striving for excellence,
With nothing more than patience,
Well done Phetha...*

He slept like an infant and very happily too. The success of the party was what made his mom this happy. She was busy clearing the yard when Phetha approached her, “Sawubona Ma, having a good time I see” he said as he helped her clear the yard. She then told him about an iPad she found after the party. The iPad belonged to Nokuthula Dlamini, one of his former classmates. He decided to take it with him since they planned to meet in town before she left.

He got ready and headed off for town. Sundays were always down and boring, there was less activity and very few people go to town. Phetha spent almost an hour around his neighbourhood as if he was a tourist being driven around. The taxi was looking for more passengers since they couldn't leave with only a few people. For Phetha this was irritating, and he could not help but think of how it would be to be with the beautiful Nokuthula in town, plus he was a hero now that he was returning her iPad which had gone missing. He sat there in the taxi admiring the iPad in his hand and was excited that he was going to meet her; it would just be the two of them. While he was busy planning his day with Nokuthula, thinking where they might go and chill, “Botanic Garden, at the orchard...”, he smiled at his thought as the taxi reached his destination.

Phetha got off the taxi near the Early Morning Market, carrying the iPad in his hand, very eye catching and flashy with its diamond glittering case. He dialled Nokuthula to find out where she was, as he was walking passing the vendors heading towards the robot. He was still on the line with her when he saw strange faces looking directly at him on the opposite side of the road where he was heading. He looked around and found there were hardly any people around. He told Nokuthula that he had to hang up and he did. One scary

looking guy emerged behind and patted him on the shoulder, he looked at him and what he saw was the fire burning within his red fierce looking eyes, with a scar from the left eye to the corner of his mouth. He wore a stinky long coat, and he too was stinking of marijuana. He started speaking in a threatening tone, “You rich kid, your life depends on that big shiny phone of yours. Give it up and walk away. Make sure you don’t look back.”

Phetha’s stomach started to crumble, his knees turned to jelly. He looked around and saw a little crowd of people quickly fading away. The robot changed for him to cross, and his villain spoke again, “there’s nowhere to run, you see them?” he said pointing to the other guys on the other side of the road. “If you try to run away and cross the robot, they will catch you like a mouse captured in a mouse trap. Save yourself and surrender this big phone of yours and we can part in peace and you in one piece, or...” he showed him a sharp and shiny bush knife hidden under his coat, and the guys on the other end of the road did the same. “If you try to be brave, you’ll go home in pieces and in a coffin.”

Phetha felt tears burning on his cheeks. He thought of Nokuthula, how would she feel if she found out that he gave up her iPad? How would he even get the money to buy another one for her? His bursary did not give him cash and even the book allowance was not enough to cover the cost of this beautiful iPad he was about to lose. He thought. His phone rang. It was Nokuthula, and from the screen he saw in the reflection that the man was not paying attention to him but to other guys. It was now or never. The call gave him a little courage and he remembered that he was an athlete and often entered cross country competitions and he was sure these men would not catch him if he ran. He glanced at the man out the corner of his eye and he was sure of one thing.

He was running away. He pushed the man aside and started running back towards the Early Morning Market.

He heard the man calling behind him and he did not look back. He reached the robot and saw another guy who looked and wore clothes like the guys who were after him. He tried to cross the robot coming over to him from the Market, but the robot changed to red and there was a long truck crossing. Phetha shielded himself with it as he crossed opposite the truck. He kept eyes open for whoever was on his way and coming towards him. He ran for his life, for the iPad and for Nokuthula's trust. He looked back for a second and found that the men were coming. He ran without ceasing his pace and headed for Moore Road. He saw a taxi and headed for it but before he could even reach it, the men were there, so he passed the taxi and ran. The streets were almost empty and where he was now was a part of town, he didn't know but he kept running, as long as he saw the taxis, he was confident that when he has lost these men he would get to a taxi and head back to town. Later on, he was very tired and he was still running; he kept a distance from the men who never gave up. Before he knew it, he saw a billboard written Umlazi Mega City. He couldn't believe his eyes. He ran up the bridge and decided not to take the main road anymore and he was tired. He took a short local route and passed a school, he reached a little road and started searching for the taxis. From distance he saw the men emerging under the bridge.

As tired as he was, not knowing what to do now, a car passed him, and it was playing a song by Marry-Marry. The song was playing the chorus as the car passed and he sang along drawing the last bit of breath... "I just can't give up now! I've come too far from where I started from... Nobody told me, the road will be easy and I don't believe he brought me this far, to leave me..." He was only jogging now, he was dead

tired, and he started asking around for taxis and to his luck, an old woman told him where the taxis were and that during that time of the day, there were hardly any taxis coming to this side. It meant that he had a short yet very long journey to take again to the taxi stop and it was better this time because the route was steep, and he was going down. His villains were approaching nearer but they did not see him even though they were following his lead. There were many houses here and he was using them to hide himself as he was going down.

He finally reached the taxi stop, a few taxis were there but he just missed the one going to town. Another old woman approached him and said to him, if he was in a hurry, he should take the taxi that was going to Mega City; he would find a taxi there. Phetha did not hesitate but got in and chose the back seat and sat in the middle and luckily the taxi was full and departed. As it was leaving the stop, the men reached the rank and the taxi passed them. The wind blew their coats a little and the blades of their bush knives flashed but much to their disappointment, they stood for a moment and the taxi with Phetha was out of their sight. Phetha sighed with relief to himself and said in his thoughts as he looked again at the iPad, “the run was worth it, and if I were to go back to school again, I’d write an essay on the theme, the day I will never forget – The Mystery iPad.”

2ND PLACE**The Price of Free Words*****Dale Munatswa***

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She watched the sun as it sank gracefully, rolling down slowly from a crimson, sullen background to the rocky, mountainous horizon. Its rays stung the skin even more than before. Sumeya was on the thin side of the mountain range. She was in no man's land.

She jerked her feet powerlessly from left and right to stretch, for she had been lying, tied up at the back of a truck for days. Her knees were evidently giving up as her tripod punishingly pressed her from side to side in the rocky desert.

The plain got finer as the journey closed ahead and the ambiance slowly grew abuzz with the noise of brigades of flies, black and green.

Dead bodies of women and children lay everywhere. The few people that survived crawled on the bloodied sands and mourned endlessly beside their loved ones. Mama iSha, one boy shouted helplessly to wake his long-passed mother.

Sumeya could see that they were almost at the infamous torture bunker that housed Ansar Dne, a radical terrorist group that had spurred violence in Northern Egypt and slain thousands in the first fortnight of summer. The smell of the dead grew thicker and from her red ears, she could hear men shower each other with welcome. Alhan wa salhan, they greeted. She was immediately dragged into a mud house upon arrival.

Sumeya Moonsamy had travelled from the Cape flats of South Africa to tell the truths about the violent extremism that had cost the lives of innocents in Egypt. In her 90-day stay, she had penned an investigative report that revealed the government's reluctance to stamp out the horror. Her powerful real time coverage on Al Mashriq TV had drawn unprecedented global attention and praise for her bravery along with her colleagues.

At her first breath in the quarters, Sumeya was forced to her knees by a blow from the back of a hunting rifle. These were amateurs she thought. So young, but they could take a life could they not? Her life. One young man assembled the tripod, armed the camera and clutched in his hand was a script detailing Sumeya's trumped up crimes against the people of Egypt.

She had a unique bravery for the search of the truth in the darkest ends. Now Sumeya was entangled in every journalist's nightmare. She was captured and imprisoned by Ansar Dine in Cairo. Her crime was writing the truth.

Blood gushed from her upper lip as she struggled for strength on her knees. Sandals hit her face back and forth and she was without chance to breathe. Her eyes drowned in the dust and no more could she feel her hands.

This was the end, she reckoned. "The simplest freedom fundamental to any people did not exist in these walls," Sumeya had written earlier. There was neither freedom to speak the truth nor the right to speak one's mind. Her fears swelled but she could not shame herself. She knew all this would come at the price of her life.

Sumeya said her last prayer in her heart. She prayed for freedom and beseeched the Lord to fill the hearts of the hardened with sweet peace and reason. Her journey was ended. Gone simply for speaking the truth.

3RD PLACE

A Dare to Stand

Wonderful Mhuru

* * *

Daunting silence quenches the very shadow of a whisper as Nani's tears proliferate, melting the Louis Vuitton silk jersey she had received for her birthday last week. Stripped of her integrity, her most prized treasure, she weeps in a desperate attempt to end it all. "Should I, shouldn't I?", she thought to herself, her mind racing at the speed of light, unknowingly breaking all the laws of physics in an instant. She stood on a very thin line, the verge of life and death. With the wind and her weight against her, a stupid move would have easily sent her plunging to her unrelenting fate.

No longer than a week ago, a gorgeous lady in a green scarf, Nani stood tall looking her best with someone she had come to love with all her heart. She had a funny way of dressing, what others would normally call "colour blocking", she would turn into a masterpiece, a characteristic not appreciated by many. Amy, Nani's girlfriend, was a bit more gangster. Growing up on a farm with her grandparents and boy cousins, Amy developed a tough, rough boyish personality which she maintained and perfected as she grew up. Hand in hand as always, they would walk, there was no way of denying that these two were in love, or so they thought. Nani and Amy had been friends since kindergarten, they practically grew up together. Though not having a lot in common, their relationship with each other got polished and furnished by the day. Following speculations from friends and family, Nani and Amy finally confessed their love for each other was greater than friendship and that they had already started dating. This

decision was not well received, especially by their parents though no one openly rebuked them. In times past, this would have been taboo as the very thought of homosexuality would be detrimental and highly punishable.

Nani worked at a fast-food restaurant just so she could earn extra cash on top of the pocket money she would receive weekly from her parents. It was a Saturday and Nani was working the evening shift. Since she knocked off at eight o'clock, Amy would come pick her up and thereafter head to the Sawnschire cinema. It was a night unnaturally still and hot, heavy with the unseen menace of a building storm. "Ping, ping", the automatic alarm clock bell rang, indirectly conveying the "time's up" flare that most of Nani's co-workers had been waiting for the whole day. Nani lurched out into the driveway and stood in anticipation, awaiting Amy's arrival. An unprecedented smile from ear to ear unveiling a dazzling array of perfectly aligned white teeth would show whenever she saw headlights coming round the corner, turning into a gay grin as substantial amount of time elapsed.

Suddenly, a loud vibration erupted, sending shock waves down her nerve impinged spine. With an alienated giggle, she laughed, realizing that it was her I-phone ringing as she had placed it on vibration mode. "I can't come anymore, am out of gas", Amy cried, with a fitly compassionate voice lurching from the other end of the phone. Faced with this situation, Nani had to act quickly, she would either hitchhike or walk home since it was just seven blocks to her place, a walk-able distance. Since it was late and no one seemed interested to stop for her, she decided to walk home.

Along her way she ran into all kinds of different people, the so called "rulers of the night". She ignored the stares, the pointing, the whispering, the occasional catcall. Nani preferred

walking in solitary places and rarely walked in public so conspicuously because she knew this was the treatment to expect. At a distant she saw figures of well-defined men, as she drew closer, she recognized a face, Jimmy, a guy who she had rejected because of her relationship with Amy and he had despised her ever since.

Unperturbed, Nani continued her journey as she was halfway to her homestead. Tension rose when Jimmy turned to follow her and knowing the kind of person he was, Nani was not surprised. Since it was a poorly lit street, Nani held aloft a torch, which illuminated the wristwatch in her right hand and helped to define the road ahead. Jimmy stealthily pursued the girl he had once vowed to love with all he had. Nani tried to increase her pace to no avail as Jimmy was now closing in fast. “Stop lesbian”, cried Jimmy. The ground shook as Jimmy and his counterparts ran after Nani crying “Kill the lesbian”. Nani ran hell for leather, abandoning everything in her possession, rendering it useless, I guess.

As soon as Nani felt a cold, brisk hand wrap around her arm, she knew she was in trouble. Jimmy had a knife hidden in his back-pocket. With deliberate slowness, he pulled it up and placed the edge of it against her face with sinister gentleness. “Let me be”, she cried. Jimmy shrugged, a smirk visible on his face in the moonlight. An hour or two later, Nani found herself standing at the edge of the bridge, anterior to its protective bars separating land and the great Swanschire river. A resolution was at hand; either to let go thereby quenching the hope for a change in her community through her influence or dare to stand and be courageous for those who might be otherwise abused and taken advantage of in the same manner in future, because of their sexual orientation.

