

JALAD▶



Sex Ed for village boys by Alexander Ikawah

The most I had seen of sex by the time I joined secondary school was during an evening prep session back in primary eight when I dropped my eraser accidentally. I bent under my desk to find it and there, underneath the last desk on our row, Nancy Wendo was playing with my friend Mangwana's penis, Caroline had her skirt pulled all the way back on one side, laying bare her big fat thigh, and Mangwana had his hand inside her white knickers. She was lying on the desk, sleeping, but upon closer observation, I saw that her eyebrows were knitted and her lips twitched too much for a person who was asleep. Nancy on the other hand was rubbing Mangwana's erect penis languorously, her thumb grazing the very tip and flicking the foreskin up and down so that the pink base of the head flashed and disappeared like the bottom of a long turgid glowworm. A strange excitement built in the pit of my belly and my eyes met Mangwana's straight yet it seemed he didn't see me. He merely hung his head over the English book and stared out like a drunk man. I spent the rest of the term wanting to put my hand in a girl's knickers: Judy's, Sonia's, Magero's, Mercy's, Nile's, Nerea's. I wanted their hands on my penis, rubbing up and down in the back of the class at prep time.

I understood the mechanics of sex well enough. The thing in Nancy's tender fingers went into the place Mangwana was tickling then there was movement: the back and forth threshing action of the waist, called yundo, that the girls in the dudu dance troupe secretly practiced when Mr. Nyandiga wasn't looking, to everyone's great amusement. Yundo was sweet and sometimes painful. Mangwana called it *līt tō mīt*, although it was ultimately more *mīt* than *līt* because both parties apparently persisted until it culminated in *lāyo*, which also meant urination. For a time I was sure a boy's urine was a dangerous thing that could impregnate any careless girl. No wonder boys and girls slept separately, some hapless bedwetter could accidentally impregnate his sisters and then...sacrilege.

A short while after I saw Mangwana and the girls, the deputy headteacher and most dreaded disciplinarian of the staff, Mr. Oyoo, found a pornographic magazine stuffed between the branches of the tree from which the school bell hung. The school was a Seventh-day Adventist school, and some things were bigger than mere punishment, so he cancelled all classes and called an impromptu assembly for all of us in primary six through eight. He begged and entreated and threatened and cajoled the culprits to step forward but none did, so we went back to class. In the evening, just before prep, I was delivering a batch of class assignments to the staffroom when he called me into his office and gave me the contraband magazine, holding it by his thumb and forefinger like a rat's smelly carcass.

“There is a fire burning near the fence where the workmen were splitting wood,” he said. “Go and throw this satanic thing into the fire and come back and report to me.”

I ran out of his office and across the parade ground holding that magazine and it was like one of those hairy caterpillars had crawled across my brain; I was itching to read that thing, itching bad. For most of the run to the little smoking bonfire I was visible from his office, and he was famous for always having an eye out that window looking for trouble. There was a place however, where the path went behind an old crumbling wall and as soon as I was out of sight, I paused and opened the magazine. The first picture was a cannon-hole that fired a burning blast which shattered into vulva-shaped pieces the ceiling of decency that my mother, the church, my school, and society had spent fourteen years erecting. I ripped off the page and resumed my run, threw the magazine in a wide arc for my audience of one and headed back. I had just passed the latrines when a thought struck me: if Mr. Oyoo patted my pockets he would feel the page, cold against my buttocks, stuffed into my underwear. I turned round and went to the boys' latrine to pull out the page, intending to stuff it into a crack and retrieve it later. Again the picture startled me, and this time the excitement in the pit of my belly slowly spread lower. Staring at the picture, I undid the buttons on my shorts and pushed down my underwear. The woman was old, almost our home science teacher's age and size. Was this what Madam Owino looked like down there? I was holding my throbbing initiate in my hand, tight, and when it came I was off balance, almost tripping over my shorts. The spasms gripped my calves so that I suddenly stood on tiptoe, flexed my thighs so that I leaned heavily on the wall to avoid falling and then I felt an unstoppable building up of fluid and thought, "Oh, this is the urination." I squirted a fluid that was definitely not urine on the grimy wall of the latrine and went weak at the knees. I ran to class. Mr. Oyoo could come and find me there if he wanted. If I had gone to his office just then, I would have given the game away with the stupid smile on my face.

I was still a virgin in form two of secondary school. I hadn't learned anything new since that one incident back in primary eight. I was going to Migori Secondary, the local day school. There was a teachers' strike but we students kept coming to school to help each other with school work and to revise. Some young teaching practice students from university, who were not members of the national teachers' unions, came to teach us. My class got a Ms. Gakuo whose harsh and unwelcoming demeanour was more than offset by her being callipygian.

Her math lessons were chaotic affairs: with every stroke of the chalk as she wrote on the blackboard, her derriere trembled while we nursed tented trousers and decidedly non-mathematical fantasies. Once Muteithia let his penis stick out through his fly and showed it to Raphael in the next row. Vita Richard became quite famous for holding his hands high in the air and shifting his desk up and down using nothing but his erection. When she would turn round, thinking he wanted to ask a question, he would say he was

just stretching. Nobody would get up to do examples on the board, not even me though I knew all the answers, and she began to hate us even as we loved her more and more.

The absence of our regular teachers and the presence of village girls whose secondary schools had closed invited and enabled truancy with sexual intent.

Now you never went alone when you played truant to go for a tryst with a village girl. An irate father might split your head with a hoe and claim you were stealing, or just bury you quietly, and nobody would be the wiser. You went with someone—a wingman who would keep watch and, in case of trouble, give you a warning signal—and after you were done with your paramour, you convinced her to let him have one go. We called it combi—combination sex. That is how I lost my virginity proper.

My old friend Mangwana, now a fellow point guard on the basketball team, had convinced a girl from Ulanda Secondary to let him visit whenever her father was out. In our parlance, they were “pushing”. Usually he went with our teammate Oshani but after hearing several stories about Oshani usurping unsuspecting benefactors, he decided to play it safe. He called me behind the dining hall one day.

“Do you know Lorraine, the daughter of that policeman who lives behind BAT?”

I knew her, she had been a year behind us in primary school and that was not all.

“Her father walks everywhere with his gun, and they have a police dog,” I said.

“He was promoted. He has been in Kisii at his new posting for two weeks already.”

“And the dog? I don’t want to be outside with that beast.”

“Lorraine will lock it up after lunch, just watch out for her elder brother. He usually passes by on his way from the farm. If he doesn’t see Lorraine outside he comes to check. If you see him, you knock the window twice and hide.”

It seemed simple enough. Just one thing left to seal the deal.

“How long will you take?”

“Not long,” he replied.

“And after you’re done?” I pursued.

He turned his head away, “After I’m done you have ten minutes or I’m coming in with a stone. I swear, ten minutes only. You hear?”

I nodded. We walked nonchalantly to the toilets, chatting about nothing. Opere DC, the headmaster’s son, had cut a hole in the fence there and everybody knew about it but the

teachers. We took off our school shirts and stuffed them in a polythene bag, put on a pair of t-shirts Mangwana had carried with him and we slipped out. Two hours later, I was sitting behind the small outhouse where Lorraine and her sisters slept, listening to the low rumble of Mangwana's voice and Lorraine's occasional chuckles. The shade of an acacia tree fell directly on me and, in the afternoon heat, I wanted to close my eyes and sleep but I kept my eyes on the dusty path leading to the gate.

They were more silent than I thought they ought to be; sex was meant to be accompanied by creaking beds and loud, pleasurable noises yet all I had heard after an hour of listening was a really loud grunt from Mangwana. The sun now struck me almost directly, heating up my left side through a gap in the foliage. I was just getting up when Mangwana appeared round the corner of the house.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Can you feel that sun?" I replied, a bit angry because he was being inconsiderate. But I kept it down: this was the part where he told me I could have sex with his girl.

"Ten minutes," he said, looking me right in the eye. "Don't close the latch and don't let me hear her cry out."

I brushed his shoulder as I passed. He smelled damp and musty, like something from a dirty kitchen. When I walked into the room, the same smell struck me almost like a slap. Lorraine was lying on the bed in a t-shirt, a sheet over her obviously naked lower body. I met her gaze and saw that she was not angry or displeased at the sight of me.

"Hurry, my brother will be passing soon."

I closed the door behind me and drew the latch.

I cannot remember the moments between when I closed the door and when I got into the bed beside her, naked. I do remember, however, that she frowned when I lifted her t-shirt over her head. "Mangwana will be angry at you for that," she warned.

"Will you tell him?" I asked as I eased a nipple into my mouth. She answered by pulling my head closer against her breast.

The first feel of a woman's skin, all of it, against one's own is a special thing. I held her around the back and pressed myself to her so hard that she cried out and held a hand over her mouth, but I didn't care. I lowered my head and smelled between her legs like a dog, smelled deep until the sharpness caught in my throat and she closed her thighs bashfully, unsure. I moved her legs so she was splayed out like the woman on the magazine page, and I stared. Surprised at the sight of my own penis waving like a straining sea anemone in an ocean current, I moved close, my face right above hers, my lips enclosing her lower lip and tugging softly, then I pushed myself into her yawning

centre and felt the warmth of her body enclose me, pull me deeper, consume me. I'm not sure if I remembered to thrust but she did, moving her hips up and down, one hand on my buttocks. I'm not sure if I shouted but she held her hand over my mouth and asked me to keep quiet.

Mangwana knocked on the window to warn me but I was too far gone to care. I'm not sure if I satisfied her, if she felt even a smidgen of the pleasure I felt, but I remember waves carrying me and smashing me on the rocks of her grinding hips, and the pressure building and building and building until I exploded, and exploded, and exploded, and when she felt me empty myself deep inside her, only then did she cry out. I'm not sure how we disentangled, when I dressed up, if Mangwana was angry when she opened the door, or if he spoke to me at all on the way back to school. All I remember is that after I was spent and finished she held me there, still inside her, wrapped her legs around my back and smiled at me. And I didn't want to ever move.

Mangwana went back to taking Oshani along with him after that.

Moi University, first semester of my second year on a weekday afternoon and I'm in Sheila's room, the curtains drawn tight. I've missed basketball practice again.

Mangwana is on the basketball team here and we haven't been able to talk properly since I arrived. I've been avoiding him at practice.

Sheila is on the bed, lying on her stomach with her legs slightly apart. I'm kneeling between them, a hand on each smooth, pampered calf. I bend her legs at the knees so that her feet come up on both sides of me as I rub along her shins. She arches her feet like a ballerina en pointe. I lean back and bring her feet together, sandwiching my penis with them. Her feet are moist and warm from the closed shoes I just took off, a small line indented along each by the edge of the leather. Slowly, I rub my penis along the sole of her left foot, the tip trailing a clear shimmering line of fluid. Her foot twitches, she giggles, rubs her toes against each other and feels them slide easily, lubricated.

I met her at the basketball court a few months back after two grueling hours of training drills, a romance novel in her hand. I walked up to her and she smiled, bemused, and let me drink from her water bottle.

I slide my fingers between her toes and rub them one by one. From this angle, each toe has a distinct shape: a triangle, a square, an almost perfect circle. When I hold them against each other though, they fit like a jigsaw puzzle. I put a finger to the tip of my penis and rub the fluid into the corns where shoes have rubbed her over the years. They feel soft and smooth. She moans, moving her other foot into my hand.

"What size are you?" I ask.

She turns, coquettish, "Measure me. What size are you?"

I lay the length of my penis along her foot and rub it to and fro, kneading the instep of her foot with my fingers.

“I didn’t know you had a thing for feet,” she murmurs.

I laugh, crawl over her legs and move up so my penis is between her shoulder blades.

“That’s a bit high,” she jokes.

I wriggle back good-humouredly, one knee at a time, letting my penis rub along the length of her spine. As before, it trails a line of shimmering moistness. She arches her back.

“Ohhh...it is so cold,” she purrs.

My penis disappears between the hills of her buttocks, drawing its moist line in the valley between. I come to a slow stop, put a hand on her shoulder, and ease my weight down onto her.

I had asked the other basketballers about her and got nothing but hostility. I was a junior after all, and not even good enough to get on the first team. I suspected she was going out with one of them and, if they wouldn’t tell me, I was going to find out for myself. So after I drank her water that day, I sank down on the steps near the court where she was sitting and asked her outright.

“How come you always come to watch? Is there someone you like on the team?”

She smiled, but didn’t look up from her book. We just sat there as the court cleared and evening fell and, when she stood up to go, I offered to carry her books for her. She let me.

I feel her tense, her sphincter tightening reflexively beneath the tip of my penis, the muscle of her shoulder knotting. Gently, I move my waist around and around—yundo. I lean forward to kiss her back, between her shoulder blades, tasting myself. I lick and flick my tongue from left to right until she gasps, all the while working my hips, left, right. My penis makes soft sticking noises. I have knocked the door enough so I stop and wait. Gentleness, patience, desire overwhelms instinct. She pushes back towards me so that, as soon as I move a little, I slip in, the head of my penis enveloped by a tight shifting warmth.

“Stop,” she whispers. “No, don’t pull out. Just leave it there. Let me move.”

Līt tō mīt.

She works her hips now around and around and sometimes up so I go deep and sometimes down so I almost pop out and she has her hand on her vagina; and louder

and louder and louder she moans until she rocks against me hard and squeezes me tight and punches the pillow with her free hand and cries out. And then she subsides.

“Go and clean up,” she says weakly.

I remember the first time I kissed her, just inside the door of this very room after delivering her books as usual. I went in and she held my face away, her hand across my lips, and asked me, “What are you doing?”

“Kissing you,” I replied.

Looking into my eyes, she had seen that I was honest in my desire, so she had let me.

I dip her washcloth into a bucket of cold water and carefully rub my penis, then I rinse and clean it again and wash my hands. I’m tumescent almost to the point of pain. I turn to her and she hasn’t moved, except to touch herself some more, her fingers wet and silvery in the dim light.

“Come and get it.”

I climb up behind her and let my body kiss hers, all of my skin against all of hers. My penis finds her centre, following a constant wave of radiating heat, and I enter her hungrily, feeling her close around me, claiming me.

“Ahhh...it is so cold,” she gasps.

If it is cold to her it is blazing hot to me, and I push in and push in and push in until my muscles are spasming and seizing. I’m gripping the headboard which is shaking as she moans and thrashes, and my loins are turning inside out, through my penis and into her, then I’m empty and I collapse on her back, immobilized—lāyo. I breathe deeply. We lie there like that for what seems like a year, then she rolls me off and starts to arrange the place, naked.

“You have to leave, he’ll be coming here as soon as practice is done,” she says.

Mangwana. He’s the one she used to come to watch at the basketball court. I saw them together, kissing on the day of a big match just before he went in to take his place. We had already made love, her and me, and it had been, as it always was with her, transcendent.

I put on my clothes, help her make the bed, and open the windows to let out the smell of sex. Then I kiss her and, smiling because of the déjà-vu, I leave: Mangwana is coming after me—combī.

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Kudinyana* by Linda Musita

After eating all the ndare, lugus, and matomoko they could for a day, they usually sat on the trees, bored, passing soft smelly air hoping it did not turn into black, yellow, and white diarrhea. Very ripe fruits were sweet and evil, and diarrhea was not good for what was coming next.

Pete's idea: "Twende tukadinyane."

The boys went behind Mr. Orina's house first. They took off their shorts and trousers and waited for the girls.

"Today I am picking Betty," Pete called.

"You always pick her," Wallace said.

"Yeah, because she is mine and when we grow up I will marry her and touch her breasts anytime I feel like it. How cool is that? Have you seen how they are growing? One big, the other bigger. They look like how balloons with warm water feel. I bet by the time we are married they will be huge enough for me to squeeze until they burst mahira. I even gave her my big brown teddy bear. So she knows I have booked her."

"Is that why your mum beat you up on Sunday?"

"The teddy bear?"

"Yes?"

"Yeah, I told her I took it out to play and it got lost. She was so annoyed."

"You scream like a girl when you are beaten. We heard you all the way at our house. 'Yiiii mami naomba msamaha. Yiiiiii. Yiiiiii. Yiiiiii sitarudia. Uuuuu mami mimi ni mjinga.'"

"Like how your mother screams when your father gives her kei in her mkundu mnuko. Kuma ya mamako na makende zimestunya."

"What do you know about my mother when yours kamatanas with Popsy. That dog always barks loud and long when she goes out to give it food. Do you want me to show

you how she puts Popsy on its back, parts its back legs, sits on its penis, holds its front legs and starts bouncing up and down? ”

“Eh, ni cha hicho sasa?”

“We are even, now. Say something else and I will be the dog your mother chases every night.”

Pete smacked Wallace’s head.

“Now we are even. Stupid.”

“You guys are weird,” Banju said.

“Anyway, I will pick Ndundus today,” Wallace said.

“Ndundus is so fat,” Pete said.

“Piggy, piggy, can’t you see, sometimes your farts just hypnotise me. And I just love your fatty ways nenenenenenenen-ne-ne-ne-ne-ne,” Banju couldn’t help himself.

“Piggy is your mother,” Wallace said.

“You guy you need to stop with my mother or we will cut friendship.” Banju held out his little finger and waited. No one wanted to stop being friends.

Now that Pete and Wallace had chosen, Banju had to pick between Schola and Pinky. Or maybe take both, one after the other...

“Or together? But how would that work?”

“What?” Pete said.

“You have chosen Betty. Wallace has chosen Ndundus. I have to choose between Schola and my sister. I was wondering if I can dinya both of them at the same time.”

“You are greedy, aren’t you? I don’t think that is possible. You only have one kanyamo. How are you going to put it in two girls at the same time?”

“Good question.”

“Ah you guys, I am starting to think we will get caught by Orina. What is taking the girls so long?” Wallace said.

Nothing.

Betty, Ndundus, Schola and Pinky appeared with their dresses wrapped around their waists, their panties tucked in their collars. Heaven forfend that the panties got lost and they went home without them.

They spread their pullovers on the ground, lay down on their backs, and waited.

Betty prayed so hard that Pete would not pick her again. He smelled of dust all the time and chewed on his sweater's sleeve while he dinyad her. The sound of his teeth gnawing on his sweater really irritated her ears and teeth. Creaky doors had nothing on his racket.

Plus his penis was too short for a twelve year old. It was as small as her kid brother's. When she washed Kim in the evening and got to his private parts, all she saw was Pete dangling his short rubber stick before kneeling and forcing it into her lady-hole. Kim was just three years old. Pete on the other hand...sometimes his penis did not even enter her properly or at all. It rubbed on the upper part of her genitals. Other times, he rubbed the wrong place so hard and bruised things after which she could barely urinate without crying. Fujo nyingi na hata hajui kutombana. Betty was not sure about Pete. He did not seem to know how people dinyana even though it was always his idea.

Why was Pete's penis too short for a boy his age? Because Banju had a bigger one and he was also twelve. But he always picked last, because Pete was the main guy. He decided on everything including how long they would all have sex.

Betty liked Banju so much. She did not like how Pete made things impossible. So she just lay there as he chewed on his sweater and made her vagina feel like graphite on paper being erased by a rubber band.

Kerew, kerew, kerew

Pfuuuut

Kerew kerew kerew

Pfuuuut

Kerew kerew kerew

Pfuuuut

She was eleven but she knew that she should be feeling something nice. She just knew it. But there was nothing. Just rubbing and very cold air. There was so much space between his penis and the walls of her vagina. Betty always thought that it should fit like the big new lollipops did in her mouth and not like a straw in a bottle.

Pete should never have picked her in the first place. But one day, she would carry him up a tree and stick his stupid rubber dong into a beehive. Maybe it would swell and finally be useful to her.

Next to them, Banju was makudinyana with Schola, and Pinky was watching.

Schola was just nine. Betty knew that she did not deserve Banju—lying there looking at the sky like she had never seen it before. That one should just be kicked out of the play gang. She was still a baby. No breasts. No menstruation. No sexiness. Nothing. Yet she got the best guy.

Banju was very brown. His buttocks moved super fast. Betty liked to look at the ripples go down his thighs to his knees, which scrubbed the ground so vigorously he lost some skin. He was so into this sex thing that he even made short hooting sounds while doing it. Like he was enjoying Schola's hole, dipping his kinyamo into Schola like Betty's dad dipped his fat forefinger into bones to pull out juicy marrow.

"Shut up you owl! Someone will hear you," Pete had told Banju so many times since their orgies started. Banju had learned to block him out of his experience.

"You shut up and finish," Betty always wanted to tell Pete.

Banju finished with Schola and asked Pinky if she wanted to lie down.

"No. But can I touch it?"

"What?"

"Can I touch it?"

"My kanyamo?"

"Yes."

"Why would you want to do that? It is for mdinyano not being touched. Silly girl."

"Just let me touch it a bit."

"No."

"Why are you like that? I am just touching!"

"No. You either let me dinya you or forget it. This thing is not for touching."

"If you don't let me touch it, I will tell mummy and daddy."

"Tell them what?"

“That you did bad manners with Schola.”

“Okay, okay...touch it then.”

Pinky squatted and looked at her brother’s kanyamo.

“Haiya, do you want to look or touch?”

She took hold of it and started squeezing, bending, feeling for bones and flesh.

“Why is it even between your legs? Why is it not behind like a dog’s tail?”

“How would I know?” Banju said.

“Why do you use it for kudinyana when it is meant for susuing? So what happens when you want to susu and you are doing it with me or Schola? Do you susu in us?”

“I have never felt like urinating but if I ever did I guess I would just have to urinate in you. That is the sensible thing to do. I can’t remove my kanyamo, can I?”

“But then that will add more susu in us. And make us so pressed till we susu on ourselves.”

“Pinky, you are just six years old, you don’t know anything.”

“Do you know anything?”

“Of course I do, I am way older than you and you should listen to me.”

“Okay.”

Pinky started pulling at Banju’s penis, trying to smooth the creases.

“It looks like cold sausage, Banju. Yuck.”

“No it doesn’t.”

“Yes it does. Look how it looks. Look.”

Banju slapped her hand off and looked at his kanyamo. It did look like what his baby sister said it was.

“Well it looks like I will not dinya you today, you silly girl.”

“No it doesn’t; it looks like cold sausage. We can even show mummy when we go home and ask her what it looks like. I bet she will say it does not look like you will not dinya me. She will say it looks like cold sausage. Hey, can I peel the skin off?”

“Stupid! No! And if you tell mummy anything I will never bring you out to play,” Banju told his sister as he got up to put on his trousers.

He caught Betty looking at him.

“Pete, Betty is looking at me funny.”

Pete stopped his rubbing and looked at Betty. Her eyes were closed.

“Banju, you are such a liar. Stop spoiling my moment. If you have finished, take your baby sister home. Leave us alone.”

“The liar is you, idiot.”

Banju stood aside and watched Wallace lie still on top of Ndundus.

“Hey Wallace, what’s wrong with the two of you?”

“I am trying. She won’t open her legs.”

“Ndundus stop being selfish,” Banju said.

“He smells like poop and he refuses to get off me. He is so disgusting.”

“Wallace, did anything seep out while you were farting?” Banju started giggling.

“Yes, but what has that to do with anything? It’s not like my kanyamo is the one that let out some of that stuff. This girl is just stupid and fat.”

“I am not stupid. Get off me or I will scream till people come and find us,” Ndundus told Wallace.

“No. Panua miguu.”

“Sipanui.”

“Panua ama nitagugonga kichwa.”

“Sipanui.”

Wallace poked his fingers into her eyes.

Ndundus screamed so loudly that panties, shorts, and trousers went up legs that ran away very fast as Mr. Orina asked questions from his house.

“What is happening there? Who is screaming?”

“It is me, Ndundus.”

“What is wrong?”

“Wallace poked me in the eyes. I can’t see. I can’t see. It hurts. Woi mami, I can’t see.”

Mr. Orina opened his door and found a fat and ripe little girl, her dress wrapped around her waist, brown panties tucked in collar. She was rubbing her eyes and struggling to sit up.

How delightful!

Wonderful predicament.

Kiswahili (in English)

- *Kudinyana* – What kids in the 90s called sex.
 - *Ndare, lugus, and matomoko* – Raspberries, Loquats and Custard Apples.
 - *Mahira* – pus.
 - *Eh, ni cha hicho sasa* – It’s like that now?
 - *Kanyamo/kinyamo* – penis.
 - *Your father gives her kei in her mkundu mnuko. Kuma ya mamako na makende zimestunya* – Your father fucks her in her smelly asshole. Your mother’s vagina and your father’s testicles are muscular.
 - *Fujo nyingi na hata hajui kutombana* – Too much exertion and he doesn’t even know how to fuck.
 - *Panua miguu* – Open your legs.
 - *Sipanui* – I am not opening my legs.
 - *Ama nitakugonga kichwa* – Or I will hit your head.
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She works as a literary agent at Lelsleigh Inc in Nairobi and is an editor at The Star newspaper.

Linda began writing when she was fourteen years old and her first story was published in an anthology, African Children Speak, published by Thomas S Gale.

Her fiction has been published on the Storymoja publishers' blog and the Daily Nation. Linda has also written some pieces on literature and art in Kenya, which have been published on the Daily Nation, The Star and Brainstorm Kenya.

She is an avid reader and her favourite authors are David Maillu, Edgar Allan Poe, Lewis Carroll, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, David Mitchell, Aravind Adiga and Michael Logan. She reckons the best book/novella she has read so far is "Chronicle of a Death Foretold" by Marquez.

Linda is currently working on her first novel, whose working title is "Papoose".

She is a Storymoja Hay Festival 2012/13 fellow being mentored by 2010 Caine Prize for African Writing shortlisted author, Lily Mabura, and assistant mentor Michael Don. Linda and other fellows in the program are working on several short stories and ideas for novellas.

Bobbitt wars by Nkatha Obungu

I am wearing a red skirt which he calls "the destroyer." When I walk into the office, he is sitting on his recliner, staring at the wall with a blank bovine expression on his face. I don't look at him as I stride past.

He writes me emails which he thinks are anonymous, calls me a whore. My boss has failed to grasp the concept of named e-mail accounts. I think he was one of those boys in primary school whose idea of graffiti was spelling their names with smeared shit on latrine walls. He has a yellow-toothed leer.

My desk is to his left. When my skirt rides up my thighs as I sit, he wolfs down the view in fascinated disgust. I don't say a thing, and this morning he does not berate me for disrespectfully failing to acknowledge him. I imagine he has extracted his mental prayer beads and is calculating how best to fuck me without losing the dignified carriage of his high-horse. I cross my legs and hear a belatedly suppressed gasp. He swallows and pretends not to look at me.

The first time my boss fondled my breasts, he circled my desk like a crazed vulture, his red-rimmed eyes like laser points aimed at my cleavage. I had been softer then, giggled

at his non-jokes, eager to please, eager not to be trouble. Then he had dipped his great big paws into my chest and time had stood still. His fingers—rough cigarette stubs—scraped my nipples, made that sound that waves make when they slap across jagged reefs, and I had the overwhelming sensation that time existed only to drag me across this barren desert of middle-aged men bending over my desk, panting, and groping at me.

The hours drag along. Hope is a winged bird in my breast. He has not said a word to me. He grunts when I hand him typed correspondence. His fingers are poised over his keyboard and with his other hand he is rubbing his temple as though in a trance. I suspect he is in the middle of composing one of his sanctimonious, curse-filled emails to me.

“Get me a cup of tea,” he orders. I stand up slowly. I walk to the tea trolley at the corner of the room. There is a loud echo as my flats hit the linoleum floor. The room is a prison. *Breathe in, breathe out.* I pour milk over tea bags, scoop sugar into cup. All I can hear are the little noises his throat makes when words are choking him. I hand him the obnoxious tiny teacup which his wife brought to the office to mark her territory. He grins. It begins. He places a claw on my thigh and I cannot walk away, trapped in an impossible zugzwang. The sun dips into angry clouds.

“Zena,” his voice forced through a sewer pipe into open air. Blood congeals then freezes. *Don't hit him. Don't hit him. Don't hit him.*

“Zena,” he repeats, forcefully, making the veins in my leg scream. I fantasise about kneeling him in the groin. Common sense is a noose around my neck. I dig my fingernails into my palm.

“Sit down.” He pats the space next to him on the recliner seat. It is the shape of a coiled rattler. When I sit down, my skirt rides up and his hands begin ploughing my thigh.

His calloused fingers are doing a strange dance on my legs. I want to bring up my breakfast.

“Please stop.” My voice is steady, my eyes fastened on his which are red, yellow, glazed; so many repulsive colours.

“Zena, why do you dress so indecently?” We have been here before. His moustache twitches up and down. I let him rationalise the beast within. The air is thick. It coils around us in tangled ropes and wrestles on the floor-space surrounding us.

“Sir.” I decide this is a safe statement.

“That skirt...it’s too short. You must not disrespect yourself, distracting men.”

His hand is still on my leg. It makes a rapid ascent up my thigh. I remain quiet. I think of warm food and a roof that doesn’t leak.

There is a point on the ceiling that doesn’t go dark when he pulls the blinds and locks the door. It is a tiny speck of light, hovering over the room, betrayed by tiny holes in the thick office blinds.

Tables take on new meanings when the ridges of my back are pressed against them. When I am forced down by hefty man-bulk, they hold the pain trickling down my thighs. Thick carpets absorb the loud screams that are forced back into my throat by pudgy, garlic-scented fingers.

“Slut” and “whore” are spewed into my ear. I raise my hands to shut them out. My limbs are useless, pinned by an unnameable force, my will whistling away. His inexhaustible driving into the cave of my thighs recedes into a breathless sonata. The sharp report of vibrating violins is an allegro. A cello begins its plaintive undertones. Saxophones are the slam of his body against my body, accompaniment to the drumming of droplets of his sweat onto my face. A crescendo begins; vamped sounds escape, perfunctory raps on black keys; the chorus falls into disharmony; sheets fly everywhere; the audience gasps;

lights flicker; instruments screech; his spit dribbles down my neck; his fists, my fists, pound on tables.

A tsunami topples over the ocean inside me. Warm and sticky, it spreads beneath my buttocks.

Extricating oneself from a just-fucked situation: his, the hasty pulling-up of trousers; mine, the mopping-up of bodily fluids; ours, a great terrible silence.

Life resumes.

He is slurping up tea which I have reheated. He makes a high-pitched gurgling sound and smacks his lips, a habit which gives me nightmares. The figures on my computer screen blur into one timeless image and I feel a call singing in my blood. I want to cut off my legs, cut away my body from my mind, cut away all the things that are me.

I wait.

The slurping continues. I try not to look at him. His head hits his desk and the cup shatters on the floor. I am holding my breath. He is frothing at the mouth. He is choking. He is begging. My terror is mirrored in his face.

I pick up my bag. I walk out. I forget about those five minutes. I forget about that horribly stencilled teacup.

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Bound by Anne Moraa

Alex is in charge of every woman.

He has a system.

He pulls her close and places his strong hand on the back of her neck. She breathes into him and he pulls her closer still, lips dancing. She leans into him and he pulls away, lets her, no, makes her reach for him. He wants her thirsty.

He kisses her neck, the hard line of her throat, takes gentle bites and kisses the pain away. Their clothes are eager to fall off and do so, effortlessly. Unless he peels them off, layer by impatient layer, till they scream to be ripped off. His hands take their time, fingers carefully tracing the outline of her richly coloured nipples, pointed and hard against smooth (creamy or cocoa or caramel) breasts. He is a calligrapher using the tip of his tongue as an ink brush, carefully lettering her body with his name. He glosses straight lines down between her clavicles, between her breasts, pausing only to highlight each nipple, straight down to her navel, down to her labia. There, he has options. Long languid licks, perhaps, up and down the length of her. For another, small sweet circles on her clitoris; for another, quick, urgent pressure; another, fierce forceful sucking. He writes calligraphy on her pussy with his tongue.

She may return the favour, doing so as gently or furiously as she desires. She may not do it at all. It is not important to him. Pleasurable yes, but not important. The candlelit dinner beforehand, or the romantic movie, or the drinks at her favourite bar or the jewellery unwrapped on the desk or the conversation about what she likes are all in service of what is important: the urgent moans only he can elicit.

When he takes her, he takes her. Sometimes it starts slow, a gentle press of the tip, deep, long strokes that move with the irresistible motion of waves at high tide. Sometimes it's a ferocious thrust, a near angry pace, the ocean in a hurricane. Sometimes her (long dreadlocked or short bobbed or tightly curled) hair may be pulled, or her (shapely round or small pert or thick bouncy) ass may be slapped. Eyes may gaze deeply. She is lost in him, the figure of abandon. Powerless.

At all times, he waits patiently behind his strokes for her scream in his ear or her nails in his back or her thrust on his hips. He finds her climax gratifying, his release from obligation.

It is always disappointing.

He never calls them back.

Alex and Ochiri have been together for more than a year now; his longest relationship. He proposed three months ago and she is planning the wedding. He has a great job as a top tier Financial Consultant with DelaHoitte, DelaHoitte and Greenberg. She will be his beautiful wife. They both have shiny white teeth and their skin is charcoal and blemish free.

He tried his system with her in the beginning.

He wrote her sonnets with his tongue but she was different. He could taste it, the lack of wet and desire. She was bored. When he glanced up at her, she looked down on him. His eyebrow raised a question. She answered with an obligatory sigh. When he took her, she was absent. Her nails did dig into his back, and her legs did wrap around his waist, but more so, they wrapped around his thoughts, pulling him in deeper into hers. You can't have me. Her eyes were coal and blank.

He flipped her over. Tried it from the back. He moved slower. He teased her with just the tip, waiting for her to beg and she did, obligingly. He turned her over again, and found eyes unwilling and bemused—*You can't have me*—Each thrust, each move was parried by her unimpressed glare—*I can't have her*.

He ground himself deeper—*I can't have her*—impaled himself—*I can't have her*—into the dark—*I can't stop*—and found—*I can't have her*—he couldn't wait—*I must have her*—behind—*I can't have her*—his strokes—*I can't*—and came.

He came harder than he ever had before.

He kept trying after that night. He tried his system for a while. He wanted her moans and sighs to be the music to his lyric. She moaned and sighed, obligingly. He changed his system. He tried new systems. He dropped his system. He read forums and asked questions. He tried every kink and every motion and every emotion. Her obliging moans and sighs began to taper off. She grew more silent, less responsive each time. Her nails stopped digging into his back and her legs stopped wrapping around his waist. He hates himself more each time.

She used to moan and sigh. She doesn't do that anymore. The room stays silent when they fuck. He loves her for it.

Their ritual began the very first night they spent together.

“Did you come?”

“Yes, babe.”

She goes to take a shower.

He waits five minutes.

He goes to the shower.

He stands in front of the lightly frosted glass.

He watches her.

She washes the scent of him off her. The soapy water looks luxurious on her skin, opalescent white on decadent black. Her hands trace the firm curves of her body, muscles trained to taut perfection. She takes her time, hands on her breasts give a gentle massage then her right hand moves down. Her fingers move deftly, practised, in undefined motions and patterns, seemingly catching her off guard every now and again. When her fingers start to thrust in and out of herself, there is no image, just feeling. In and out, harder and faster. She comes.

He watches her.

He wonders if he'll ever do that to her. Each time he finds her—breathless and wet, like he imagined her, like he wanted her to be because of him—he is weak, powerless.

She watches him.

Their eyes meet. Her eyes tell him no, no he never will do this to her. But he'll keep trying.

She smiles.

They have talked about it only once.

She was sitting on the couch, across from him. The television's volume was low. On it was a sex scene to which she was barely paying attention. It took him a full minute to gather the strength to speak.

"You never look like that," Alex said. The female lead (the witch Alagantre) was writhing, eyes rolled to the back of her head as the male lead pumped behind her.

"Like what?"

"You know, like that." Alagantre had her eyes shut tight, faces screwed up and mouth open, gasping. "You never look like that. Not with me."

"Oh, come on, it's a TV show. No one ever looks like that."

"I know."

“I mean, her eyeliner hasn’t even smudged, and she was crying like two minutes ago.”

“I wasn’t talking about that.”

“What were you talking about?”

“I just mean, her face. I dunno, she was lost, I guess.”

“Oh.”

They watched it for a few seconds more.

“Everyone is different,” she said. Her tone was brutal. He knew she was going to punish him for asking. The sex scene was over. There was a sword fight on now. He increased the volume.

They had sex that night. He was more tireless than ever, desperate to make up for his mistake; she was as blank as ever. He began the ritual.

“Did you come?”

“No.”

She got up to shower.

He couldn’t move.

She stopped by the bathroom door, looked at him, coal and blank.

“You should try harder.”

She went in; locked the bathroom door for the first time. She was telling him that he didn’t deserve to watch. He knew why. She made sure she was loud this time, let him listen to his failure.

He pressed his ear against the door.

Anne Moraa (@tweetmoraa) is a creative writer, editor, performer and all round word-obsessive. Exploring various forms, her poetry has been commissioned and performed at venues from Kenya to Scotland and she is presently studying for her Creative Writing (MA) in Fiction, as well as being a Founding member and Director at [Jalada](#). For more information, contact her via mailmoraa@gmail.com

Sex on a Train Wagon by Richard Oduor

Natasha sat at the corner of the wagon fidgeting with her phone, shuffling through “Jesus Daily” Facebook updates and typing “Amen” in the comment sections, prodding God to salvage humanity from tears and rot. It was early afternoon. Dust and exhaust soot settled on the shrubs clothing the abandoned train wagons under Tam-Tam Railway Bridge. City noise slapped the wagons and fell down on the spiky grasses, but only silence sat with Natasha in the corner of one wagon. This was KR-092—huge enough for an orgy of fifty, rusty inside, but largely stable. Most wagons were ankle deep in the marsh. They lay on their sides sporting bumps and bends. KR-092 stood on its feet, away from the marsh, with not a chink on its sides. Natasha was impressed that the double-doors had not been cut off and sold as scrap metal. They gave the wagon a safe freedom. She could lock herself inside if she sensed danger. She will lock herself inside when he arrives. Today...again.

Tommy’s mind wandered. He knew the wagons were not very safe. Just last month street urchins had discovered an unsightly situation in one. The police had to be called to do the necessary and chase the tens of wild dogs circling the scene. Natasha did not know this. He did not tell her. This would be their last time here, he told himself as he crossed the street, descended the steps built on the embankment and took a detour to the thickets hiding unused wagons. Brisk strides. Sweat leathered his face. Tommy was a man oblivious to the concept of lateness, especially when he had an important assignment pending. The latch of one of the doors was fastened, but the other wasn’t. Natasha crawled and hid behind the locked door. She watched his shadow enter, then the tips of his shoes, then the whole of him. His eyes caught a brown leather Pouchee lying at the usual corner, but not Natasha. When she began tiptoeing towards him, he turned and met her with a big grin, pulled her into her arms and planted a kiss on her lips.

Hey Tash!

Been waiting.

Tommy kicked the door closed and latched it. Four beams of light remained shooting through the spaces between the hinges on the left door.

Not much I guess. My watch says 2:45.

I know. Just missed you.

She knew what he was going to do: yank off her panties, lift and pin her to the wall, undo his belt and shake his waist till his jeans were scrambled on the floor, then bulldoze into her. Rough and wild. She liked it sometimes. She did not like it sometimes. Addiction is a bad thing. When one is addicted, one uses the same formula to solve the same

equation. She was a girl of many formulas. She did not want it that way today. She pushed him away gently, just when the tip of his middle finger had thrown up her dress and was edging for her waistline.

No Amazon feast today.

Why?

I want something unscripted Tommy. We've been through this a million times. I want to be surprised.

A million? Haha! Be the Prof. today, then. Introduce me to new concepts.

Tommy stooped to undo his laces, shake off his shoes, and kick off his trousers. He was 5'9", well-built and toned. Tommy's ribs were not visible enough to count. Natasha ran her fingers over the ripples of muscle on his stomach. She was just 5'5". She pulled his head down and kissed him. Short. Playful.

I won't play Prof. I want you to surprise me, not me to surprise myself.

Tommy turned 27 last year. His experience with legs and breasts started when he was just stepping into his teen years. By that time, Amina had been his family's house-help for three years. He was in Class 8 and Amina could not have been more than five years older. He assigned her an age three years older, to assuage his ego. Tommy knew there was a huge valley of experience between them but it did not take long before he proved himself to Amina. He had seen a good number of legs and breasts since then but had largely avoided romantic attachment.

But he was addicted to Natasha, though he tried to hide this from himself. She was just 22 and boundaryless like him. That scared him. It made his experience and certificates of sexual expertise inadequate. With Natasha, he wanted to become young again, to restructure the problem, introduce new equations and try out new combinations. He wanted to take his time, be the beloved tutor, assist her to arrive at her answer before reaching his own.

Natasha knew Tommy was better than the midget asymmetrical boy with the cricket-voice that was her boyfriend. Tommy's hands were invisible hands. They moved at the speed of light and warmed every part of her body that they touched. Every dart of his fingers from one geographical region of her body to the other was received with an applause of sighs. Each of these sighs pumped him up. He was a naturally large man, so the sighs that would have made a small man adequate made him enormous. If an ant was to land on his enormousness, and prick it just a little, it would blow up.

She spread the lesso on the hard metal floor and pushed him to sit on it. She stood legs apart and watched his eyes wet with desire. Tommy pulled her lithe body closer, one

hand toying with her bush. She spread her legs wider, like a woman preparing to lift a basket of cassava to her head, until the lips of her vagina rested on Tommy's waiting lips. She closed her eyes.

Take your time. You know I like when our classes are long. And please be creative while at it.

Tash, can you shut up?

Her legs began to fail her. They shook and trembled like springs. He lowered her gently onto his lap and she swallowed him whole like the Whale swallowed Jonas. He was always glad to live inside her.

Cargo trains are long and fat. They spit soot into the air, soot which settles on shrubs concealing abandoned train wagons. The train chugged and chugged, snaking noisily on Tam-Tam Railway Bridge. The train noise drowned Tommy's sex noise, but his swears were insistent. Obscene and loud swears became obscenest and loudest swears. Tommy's swears drowned Natasha's whimpers and moans as he pumped into her. Unafraid. Fearless. Invited. They chugged and chugged, accelerating as the cargo train nearing the station above slowed. They chugged and chugged, inside KR-092.

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Sext Me by Aleya

S: Last night was incredible. I am still tingling all over. If it wasn't for the damn askaris...

Saved by the askaris. Not a good idea to be caught fucking in the parking lot in Westlands. What kind of a girl does that! What kind of a girl does that the first time she sleeps with a guy... Oh, but this guy...

K: I know. I wanted more. I wanted you so bad. I want you now.

S: Next time we must avoid parking lots. Somebody might see us. Also cops are bastards.

K: Agreed. I got carried away... you have the softest lips. Down there as well

Oh my! I knew I should have waxed. Did he notice?

K: And your labia is so sexy

What the? He moves fast! What on earth even makes a labia sexy? Who even uses that word labia when sexting????

S: What do you mean?

K: Your labia has all these sexy folds

Is that what men find sexy? Folds? Ass, breasts I get...but folds! Heh. Kumba labias can be sexy.

S: Next time, I don't know if I will be able to control myself

K: I loved the way you sat on my fingers. You are a baaad girl

Daaaaaaaaaaaaamn! I did? I don't even remember. What ELSE did I do in the throes of my sluttish abandon? Does he think I am too forward?

Fuck it. Let's play.

S: You don't know just how bad...

K: Show me

S: You will have to find out for yourself. Think of it as a treasure hunt. You will have to caress, finger, lick and suck your way to the prize at the end

K: When? Date. Tomorrow?

What? Is that the end of the sexting? I was just getting started. Tomorrow. No! I have to wax and get a pedicure done. Also, am I ready to have sex with him? Propriety dictates we sext for at least 2 more weeks before meeting again! Shit. What do I say? If I say yes, he will know I am gagging for it, and maybe I am too easy. I should make him wait. But I AM gagging. Besides, who are we kidding. I am easy!

S: Next week...

K: Wear a dress. With nothing on underneath

Ati nothing on underneath. What is that? Some line from a 90s Hollywood B movie. Men, they don't get we have bits that need holding in. THAT is what underwear is for! But whatever...if that floats his boat.

S: Deal! I keep getting flashbacks. You hard against me.

K: I loved the way you were grinding. You are just so damn sexy

He finds me sexy! Damn sexy! Nobody says "damn" unless they really mean it. Come on now. Channel Inner Sex Goddess. Turn him on.

S: I can't wait for that moment. When you enter me. When I feel you slipping into me.

K: I want to tease you. Rub the head of my cock against your pussy. Slide it back and forth. Until you are gagging and begging for more

Ooooooh...I really love when a man does that. HmMMMMM. This could work. Ok. We are doing this. He said it. The C word and P words. We have officially crossed that line.

S: I reaaaaaaaaally like that! I want to grab your ass as you thrust into me. Nice and slow

K: You like it slow?

S: Sometimes. Sometimes I like it hard and fast. There are times when you just need to be fucked, you know

K: Like yesterday...

S: Yes. When it is sweaty and furious, and your toes curl, and your back arches, and...and...and... What do you like?

Please oh please let it not involve pissing. Of any sort!

K: Tying you up so I can explore every inch of your body with my tongue

Phew!!! That, I can dig. I think. Unless...oh shit, unless he turns out to be some serial killer, and I will be helpless all tied up. Mental note: must make back up plan to tell friend where I will be in case I need rescuing...except by the time she gets there, I will probably be some tiny article in the newspaper...**Stupid Gullible Woman Gets Heart Broken (And Limbs Chopped Off) In Lurid Sex Game With Serial Killer.**

K: What is your fantasy?

Will he think I am a freak if I tell him the truth? Gulp. Maybe it is too soon.

S: Fucking you somewhere we could get caught...

K: Damn! I wish I was there now. I want you on top, so I can suck on your nipples

Ohhhhhh yes!

S: I want to ride you, feel every ridge of your hard dick. Feel your naked skin against mine

I wonder if this is turning him on. For heaven's sake shut up! Heaven. Is that blasphemous? Focus!

K: And you feel my balls slapping against your clit

Huh? Is that even anatomically possible in that position? Unless he has balls with supersonic pendulum powers. Or my clit moves up to my ass. Ignore.

S: My wet pussy sucking you in, as you thrust inside me, slow and deep.

K: I want to slip a finger in your ass.

Ok. That's it. I lost my erection. What the fuck!?! Now I can NEVER have sex with him. I don't want to have to protect my ass the whole time. Why are some men so obsessed with that? Should I tell him? Honey. My holes are one way traffic only! Tell him! Or forever keep clenched.

S: I am not such a fan of that...

Shit. He's gone all quiet. Quick, text something to make it less awkward. Got it. Blowjob. Men love blowjobs.

S: But I would love to taste you...to swirl my tongue and suck you deep in my mouth

K: Hmmm.... as I fuck you with my fingers, making you wetter

Really, what's up with this dude? He keeps getting the positions mixed up! I am now sucking you. Focus. Either he has freakishly long arms, doesn't understand how human anatomy works, or is just not paying attention. Keep up man!

S: You make me so wet. I am touching myself...Rubbing my clit with my fingertip, slowly in circles.

I hope he is taking notes. I hate when men jab, prod and poke like they're pushing a bloody elevator button.

K: I am so hard

Ok. I am officially turned on. Is that all it takes? Knowing he is hard? Hard for me.

K: I want to lick you. Eat you. I have never tasted a Muhindi before

What the? Is that what this is...? Am I the token eroticised Muhindi chick he wants to try? Does he think brown chicks have vaginas that taste of curry or something? That we fuck different? But then again...who knows...maybe we do. What if I am not as good in bed as black chicks? Mental note: must enquire further.

This is fucking absurd! I can't believe that even crossed my mind. As if it is a competition! But seriously...maybe culturally there is something they do to please men in a way I have never learned...or been taught. Maybe he expects me to whip out the Kamasutra! Second mental note: must buy Kamasutra.

Come on! You are being even more ridiculous than he is. Stop focussing on having to perform for him. Make him work for you. Be woman!

S: Hmmm. So I will be popping your brown girl cherry?

K: Be gentle. Initiate me into the pleasures.

S: Oh I will be gentle...at first. Then it may get rough, and hard and fast...

K: Have you ever been with a black man?

Ohhhh...now I get it! What an idiot. He gets off on this, turned on by the taboo of deflowering desi. He probably has visions of dropping his trousers, proudly thrusting like a peacock, and me gasping in shock/desire/lust/fear when I see his big black...Huh! And here YOU thought he actually liked you.

Hmm....maybe I should mess with him a bit.

S: A black man...no. But black women...hmmmmmm

Aleya is a Kenyan writer and past producer of the Storymoja Hay Festival. She has written for Awaaz, Sahan Journal, and blogs at <http://www.chanyado.wordpress.com> which is a little haven for her self-indulgent literary musings.

She is also a performer, having moaned her way through the 2013 “Vagina Monologues”, and most recently as part of the cast of Sitawa Namwali’s acclaimed dramatized poetry show “Silence is a Woman.”

She is a voracious reader, with an ongoing love affair with yoga.

Transaction by Wanjeri Gakuru

You’ve just turned nineteen
and are sitting in a tiny hotel room
fiercely reciting to yourself that from this day forth
the things that get trapped between your teeth and your thighs
will be nobody else’s business but your own. To make this stick, you shout
over and over in your head and especially loud as you blow out the solitary,
fast-burning matchstick atop a ten-shilling cupcake in one forceful fried-chicken exhale.

Air stops rushing out of the small, sickle-shaped space between your pursed lips but you decide to hold them in place a few seconds longer. After all, this is it. There is a shirtless guy next to you in bed. And it is on his outstretched left palm that the unexpected gift marking the nineteenth anniversary of your birth stands: a tiny cake you could clear in three bites. No matter, the overhead bulb is casting a flattering glow on his smooth dark torso and firm legs that sprout out of a faded pair of green shorts. The slight bulge of his pecks reminds you of the chicken breast you’d saved for later.

“Happy mbazday.”

You wince, wishing he hadn’t spoken, hadn’t broken the illusion that is the two of you actually in a cramped hotel room above a very noisy bar. But you decide to turn the scowl into an awkward smile and softly pat the young man’s beautiful head as one would a dog that had brought its master a dead rat happily clutched in its teeth.

It may be small but the room is clean. Frayed and partially drawn curtains reveal a cloudless sky and a full moon. The thumping music from the bar downstairs rises to meet your power-radiant face. You square your shoulders, place the uneaten cake on the bed-stand, and push the man gently back on the bed.

You kick off your sandals then put your hands under your yellow dress. You wiggle floral panties down your plump thighs and beneath one foot then the next. Motioning the man

to make space on the tiny bed, you set your back down heavily, feeling your flesh spread out and away from your core, colonizing the narrow space between the mattress' edge and the man's side.

“Vaa hii.” Put this on.

One of three square silver packets is now freed from your dress' pocket. A smell like Auntie Veronica's ancient basket of plastic fruits sat too long in the sun tickles your nose. You try not to stare as he peels off his shorts but your eyes grow wide and eyebrows creep higher and higher as you sneak a first proper look at what lies between a grown man's legs. Your stomach's gurgling sounds become drumrolls that egg on the man's fingers as they pinch and roll the yellow prophylactic device over an appendage with the girth and presence of a well-watered carrot.

A cock crows.

Or a guitar? You push your knees up against your pillowy belly, the front of your nightdress hiked up mid-thigh. Your squashed bottom having made contact with the bed's flimsy blanket, you take a deep breath and gradually increase the distance between your fleshy thighs. Fighting the urge to pull down your dress and flee, you fix your eyes on the water-damaged ceiling and ask the man to proceed quickly to deflower you, as discussed.

Your torso wobbles as he supports himself into a kneeling position by your side. His massive form soon darkens the V-shaped frame of your quivering thighs. You become thankful for the now switched-off lights because the man can become a stand in for Mr. Whomever. Behind the drawn veil of your eyes you're all sass and beauty and flat stomach and perky breasts.

You jump a little as warm hands gently lower your legs—sharp hills plateau into two trembling rods. You wonder what to do with your hands. Should you reach up? *Down?* Lay them impotently by your sides? After a few minutes you question what is taking so long. Ah, there he goes. Breathe. You try to relax. But wait, what's that? A hot, sharp pain starts to slice through you.

“Aah, acha!” Stop!

You can smell the thin film of sweat on the man's forehead as he hovers above you. Mr. Whomever is Mr. Stumped. His sinewy arms are planted on either side of your vast torso. You imagine that his eyes are darting between the space your chubby face must occupy and the dark tussling organs below. You feel the man relax his arms, turn, and rest on his back.

“Nipe ingine.” Give me another.

Your dress is crumpled halfway up your back. You feel wet and sticky in the usual, and sadly, wrong places. Should the two of you have kissed at least? Was that part of the deal? You can't remember. The gist of the proposal when you picked up the guy downstairs was two thousand bob for a painless poke in your nethers, one of them anyway.

"Tunawesa acha." We could stop.

The man's whispers mingle with the velvety darkness, the soft swish of a kale-flavoured plea. Your earlier worries about his amateur skills are confirmed. Chickening out already? You begin to assess the situation. You could stop...or you could get on top; crush his body under your weight, trap him within your spindly web of stretchmarks and take what you carefully saved up in order to pay for.

Instead, the disinterested flicker in the man's face makes you angry.

"You men are so stupid! This myth of the ideal African woman is bullshit. All you really want is smooth curves and symmetry. Anything other than that is disgusting. Every time a woman walks out of her house, her body is hacked into parts. There are breast-men, leg-men, butt-men but where are the men who like big girls?"

The air feels leaden. Your chest is rapidly heaving. You've even held balled fists against the bed's blanket.

"Kama hutaki, tunawesa acha." If you don't want...

But you don't want him to stop, do you? Not when there's a chance to finally rid your body of its shame, of this rite of passage that hadn't yet come to pass, that didn't seem likely to. Because, when was the last time you were touched properly by anyone? Handshakes don't count and it has been years since your high school hockey teammates threw you brief neck hugs and butt pats.

Extended periods of touch had only been by the gloved hands of doctors and the clinical pedicures of nurses when you were fourteen, when your mother ordered a series of tests to find the cause of your continued weight gain. Cold rubber hands, white and acrid, and small blankets of lifeless second skins that groped at you.

Besides, no one ever touched you *there*. Not even you. You knew how sex worked, of course, but your natural vessel by which to participate in the act was still a mystery. The one brave night you held a small mirror to it, you quickly withdrew from the sight of your hairy slit. Therefore, as much as you were embarrassed that after some concentrated shoving, nothing had happened besides a burst condom and searing pain, you would proceed.

Or would you?

You get out of bed and switch on the light. You smooth down your dress and sit on the bed's edge. Your eyes sweep slowly across the room and take in the cheap blue paint on the walls, the old wall clock, and a wooden door from behind which you can catch the unpromising whiff of an unflushed toilet. Your eyes finally rest on the man. He looks uncomfortable, eyes fixed on palms cupped at the top of his crossed legs.

You remember avoiding meeting his gaze from the start. You were afraid to see the look dancing in there. Would it be disgust? Revulsion at having to deal with the blob of rolling flesh that he watched labour up an endless series of staircases? Or worse, would you have caught indifference in there? Did he see you as just another piece of meat which paid to be devoured?

“Polē.”

He gives you a look of surprise. You're equally surprised. You find yourself beginning to speak. The words come in fits and starts. Under a solitary bulb and in the view of a lonely moon, you wrestle with your tongue. Finally you tell him about your childhood and about your father who ranted about your ballooning school fees as your mother railed on and on about the corresponding increase in your girth. You tell him, the room, the world, how people on the streets barely looked you in the eye but planted daggers of disapproval into your back. You tell him how you're constantly walking under a cloud of unhappiness until you sit before a plate of food. You tell him how food doesn't judge or disappoint you, how it's always present when you need it. You talk until the words that first poured out as thick lumpy porridge take on the sleekness of flowing water. You talk until you don't even notice that these waters have receded from your mouth and were now flowing down your face.

You stand up, embarrassed, and decide to brave the toilet in the hope of finding a running tap. Once there, you blow your nose and splash cold water on your face. You take a long look at the chubby girl in the spotty mirror. You smooth down her dress again and smile at her. You step back into the room. Look at that? The man is now fully dressed and is delicately holding the cupcake in the hollow of his cupped palms. He brushes aside the two thousand bob notes in your hand.

“Happy mbazday.”

He quickly exits the room and you stand there cake in hand, a huge grin on your face wondering where the hell you threw your undies.

Wanjeri Gakuru (@mawazo_mengi) is a print journalist, creative writer and a 2012-2014 StoryMoja Fellow. She writes Some Semblance of Literature at <http://www.wanjeri.com>

Inbox (1) by Dorothy Kigen

Beloved,

I wish I could bring you here now. I wish you were in this room, with me, in the cool darkness of dawn. I wish I could bring you close, closer, into my mind so that you could feel what I feel. For if you were in the room, you would only see the dark shape of him, and my face eerily lit by the alien glow of the phone's screen. And that would not be enough; you would still have no idea how fast and how far my thoughts have travelled.

When he took me—took me, took me; why do we say that, I wonder, when I am the one receiving? Shouldn't I be taking him? Taking him in, taking him all—when he took me that first time I cried, and was glad my face was pressed into the pillow so that he would not see my tears. Because how was I to explain what they meant? He is not you, beloved; we have not shared millions of coffees dissecting my feelings for him, deciding what I want from him.

It would have been nice if it were more romantic, but I gave up any Disney-scored hopes long ago, at least as far as he was concerned. I whittled them down, disappointment after disappointment, until he was a wild-card, until he was my if-only, my just-in-case, my no-matter-what-else-is-going-on. Shaven, unshaven, single, unsingle—I didn't care anymore. If he was even remotely into it, I was going to go for it.

You already know this. You were there when I gave up on fate, on hoping to run into him. I prowled all the networks—he annoyingly has no presence online but his friends do. One mutual friend was all it took for me to hit “accept” in those days. Another

exception. It never worked, of course, all that trawling through tweets and facebook memes. In the end, it was only preparation for yesterday, when after a day of chatting he nonchalantly asked me if I was out. I casually shrugged, casually maybe'd, but there was nothing casual about how I hunted him down. I told you I was leaving and you said: Go, it's fine, you have to, and I'll always be here, you go. I took a cab, got a ride from a second-line acquaintance, asked a stranger where he was until where he was was where I was.

Imagine: I took myself there, I did not wait for him, because I accepted, beloved, accepted that he might not come for me, and when I left that tower, beloved, I never intended to go back. He may not be the one but, my God, I am done pining in isolation.

We have always been on slightly different wavelengths, he and I, but this was a big-amplitude signal, powerful enough for the most oblivious receiver. I kept pushing, kept creating situations to which to agree. He said he could drop me home—Really? I live near Ruiru, you know, it's pretty far. I left out—But since they finished the highway, it's like fifteen minutes now!

And then I balked. After all that!

I got into his All Blacks jersey, then into his bed, and breathed the sounds of FIFA 14 drifting in from the next room. He called out to me, quietly, like he knew I was waiting, and I sat up, considered pulling my jeans on again, told my thighs to be brave, and finally walked into the liquid, crystalline glow of his flat-screen.

And I was terrified, despite everything, beloved. I had all our conversations and the sworn emptiness of the tower in me, but I was so scared. He tucked me in next to him, under his arm, with the shuka I remember from so many Sevens tournaments over both of us, but the slow strong beating of his heart did not calm me; I just kept thinking of biology, and how athletes' hearts beat slow because of more efficient oxygenation or something, and how I hated PE because it was the only class in which I was consistently

last, and how the coolness of my skin which he loved (poor lost love) was really just because of cellulite.

But, beloved—when his tongue touched my ear, beloved. The relief that crashed over me was so strong, so strong that my whimper was only half satisfaction. It was glorious, and so ridiculous. Just my ear, which must taste horrible; ears are full of crevices for dirt to get into; ear wax, too—bitterest of all body products, right up there with bile. And just a tongue—you read factoids about how the human mouth is filthy, more bacteria than a toilet seat, but those bacteria must have been on ecstasy last night, or something amazing, because when the relief and the grin on my face faded back into the visible spectrum I twisted around and met his lips, and his bacteria and my bacteria met, and it was fireworks on the beach on New Year's Eve. He tasted of Guinness, and I never thought I'd care for it, but the next time we're out, beloved, I'm ordering one just to inhale it because he tasted of Guinness and bacteria high on life.

I climbed him like a tree, clambered into his lap, and it was I who pulled off our shirts—his shirts—so that we could be skin-to-skin, at forever-last, beloved. He got me a bottle of water from his fridge when I asked for it, and when he walked back in with the glow of the television on his skin I nearly lost my breath again because my God, beloved, he was so beautiful I wanted to ask him if I could take a picture for the Whatsapp group. Tall and strong and perfect, as if back when we were dreamily writing lists in high school someone was actually listening. He picked me up without difficulty and, clinging to his shoulders, my legs tight around his (tapering, smooth, hard) waist, I was terrified of being less than desirable, even as he lowered me onto his bed, still ruffled from my waiting.

And it was mad, beloved. Words like good and hot and amazing lose meaning here, when I sincerely thought my mind would break from sheer intensity. Separate from and above everything else was the sheer pleasure of watching him. The contrast of our skins—the border where his chocolate met my caramel—was an unexpected gift, and to lay back and watch his tongue trace circles around my nipples was more than I ever

thought I could have. I had wanted to object when he switched on his bedroom lights but, watching the muscles of his shoulders work beneath his skin, I thanked a benevolent God that I hadn't.

There was so much to feel, when he was divinely heavy and breathing my name into my ear, and fucking growling, beloved, growling, with his hands in my hair as I did like we read—breathe in and out, through your nose, don't think about puking, lots of saliva—and he kissed me after I swallowed, kissed me hard.

I was relieved that he was cut because I wasn't sure what I would have done with the foreskin I expected. The length of him tasted of salty skin, and when my tongue ran over and lingered on the opening at his very tip I could feel the immense strength of him subdued to me; that epicentre of saltiness was like a trigger for him. He liked having his balls sucked, first one, then the other, with my hand still wrapped around his shaft, and the other lightly trailing along the muscles of his thigh. I have always had an odd fondness for balls and, cupping his, I found I could lightly graze his taint with a fingernail and it was amazing, almost amusing, to see him—who has always been in charge and alpha—at my mercy and conceding defeat because of a fingernail on a taint. By such small things, beloved, is the world destroyed. When I took him in my mouth once more, I swear I could hear desperation in his voice, he was almost begging, and I looked up at him, and God save me that look on his face will warm me when I am old and beyond caring. I almost gagged when he exploded in my mouth but a few deep breaths and the deep desire to finish as planned and I was fine.

He drew me up and kissed me then laughingly swore revenge which he got, beloved. Even though I was on top, my hands gripping the muscles of his torso, he still managed to take control, pulling me down so that I was bent almost double and held nearly immobile by his hands on my ass. But such is the magic of chemistry. I don't know how he found it, but he did: that magic rhythm, that sweet spot that isn't sweetness as much as a buildup of pressure and when he suddenly slipped a finger up my asshole I was too far gone to do anything but let my eyes fly open in shock. And he merely grinned

cheekily at my stunned cries, and reached up to bite my lower lip, to suck on it, and tug on it, while I was temporarily freed of this world.

He was not what I expected, not the fantasy I created, but his own self, and it thrilled me to be in this give and take with him, that my sounds triggered his, that his smile reflected mine, that when it's tomorrow, when it maybe turns out that this was the last time, that it was true, that this will always have happened.

He is stirring now, so I must tap lighter, or stop, soon. His breathing next to me is unexpectedly gentle and soothing, and in the early morning light seeping through his curtains I can see teeth marks denting his shoulder and the beautiful suppleness of his neck and chest, and I can feel the beginnings of a deeply satisfying ache in me, beloved. His fingers are heavy with the smell of me, now, and if I were to kiss him again, just a taste—

—yes, I linger in his mouth as well.

I shall see you later, beloved. We shall giggle, but I know nothing I say will tell you everything, which is why I wish you were here, behind my eyes, within me. Because this was so much; I fear you'll never really know, and what is left of mine that isn't yours? But I shall do my best.

Java?

Dorothy Kigen (@nukta_) has always enjoyed the power of words and only recently begun experimenting with writing for a public. She blogs intermittently at nuktamrefu.wordpress.com and hopes to complete an anthology of stories based on the Nairobi night.

Jalada Africa began as informal gatherings to refine and enjoy each other's artistic productions, and grew into a pan-African interactive space where writers share their work, edit and critique each other, and provide guidance on ways of developing craft.

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