

BEYOND THE MOUND

Yemi Atanda

*Department of Theatre Arts
Faculty of Humanities
College of Humanities and Culture
Osun State University Osogbo
Osun State, Nigeria*

You live in my heart every second in pernicious tremor. I can no longer hold back the flood of thoughts about you in my heart. These thoughts are like droplets of words from the ink of my pen. I use 'pen' here as a metonym of computer I'm using this very moment to put in black and white; words in the painful memory of our friendship. If only I can find my way to cross over to see you; to behold your sleek, slim, energetic and enigmatic personality, I will now. If only I can close my eyes and assume death in the garment of its sackcloth, I will now. If I can find my way on the narrow passage rite to wake you up from your long slumber in your watery grave, I will now. If only I can grow wings to befriend wind to fly me into the world of the dead to bring you home, I will now. If only I can find you beside me in this gay mood to share with you joy and happiness of coming this far in the struggles to live my dreams, our dreams, I will now. Eni, do you know today, I'm bagged with a Doctorate in Performance Theory from Howard University? I'm still in my academic gown, I wish to sleep in it for you, and perhaps you can still share in this thrilling joy from the great beyond. Besides, I had earned a degree in Law, at University of Maryland, and I have an NGO to fight for the victims of human trafficking and to help immigrants get their resident permit.

We decided finally to relocate after five years of searching for the unavailable jobs of our dreams. None was forth coming. What was alive on our minds was to further our studies and afterwards, work- we considered that as the only way to be out of poverty. We're determined to search for the Golden Fleece in a saner space and to grace on a greener pasture- and United States of America was a land of our dreams. Having tried all possibilities to get scholarships or visas to travel to America failed, we resulted to go through the unconventional tedious means. We found out about an agency that helped people travel abroad, without necessarily procuring certified documents. This was our last result. It worked! We embarked on this fortuitous journey without informing anyone, especially my parents and siblings knowing that they would disapprove of such venture. We went through Ghana to Libya. It was late and regrettably sad enough, Eni, that we put the cart before the horse, and our reasoning dove-tailed our dreams without weighing how deprived, this assault would have on our human dignity. Our

education was meaningless by reasoning through our anuses. We failed on our own part. I failed you, Eniola; I ought to have disagreed to your suggestion that we should leave Nigeria. No doubt, I had greater influence on you and you always respected my candid opinions. We knew that our leaders, all the past leaders in our nation had failed us, but couldn't we have used our brains to be patient to secure a legitimate process to travel abroad rather than this obnoxious way of subjecting ourselves to such grievous harm? It was in Libya we knew we had taken a wrong decision. We got stranded! And we were subjected to highest indignity anyone could think off. We knew early enough that we had become victims of human trafficking, yet played along so that we would get our freedom.

Remembered? We moved under the cover of the nights on the coiled streets of Tripoli, writhing like serpents to confound ghosts of time as we sneaked out of our new abode: The coal mine. We worked as supervisors in grime, blazing fiery oven for two wasted years, to foster our dreams to America. By then, we had got rid of our agent by involving police and the Anti-Human-Trafficking Committee to dare the indelicate, having possessed our identity and travel documents. However, sojourning here had the imprints with marked of time as to familiarize ourselves with, and to learn through the tropes of escape. We visited beer gardens, yet you would not drink. We befriended brothels to endear with sex workers, at initial negotiations, you're reluctant, but by now you needed to quench urge of your libido; you finally obliged. By our encounters, we knew so many of these innocent ladies were lured, tricked, deceived, coaxed and forced into this profession and un-dignifying labour under the pretext of going abroad from their mother countries. Maybe we should pardon them that many did not have sound education and were ignorant of the intricacies of the venture they were being dragged into, but could we forgive ourselves? Their agents ripped them off. Forced them into debt they found difficult to wriggle themselves out and remained perpetually slavish until our moment of interventions. So were many of our co-workers at the coal mine. It was painful and drudgery to slave out to the point of death in the fiery tunnels; wherein hands became darkened and crooked, bodies were contoured and disfigured by the burden of labour. What's more lethal was having one's psyche decimated each moment the past was viewed against the present, and the future became uncertain. We were not better than them, rather worst. We came to the realization that the balloon of our dreams had been punctured and plummeted, especially, you became so despondent. You began to regret for suggesting the idea to japa abroad. 'Cheer up, Eni, cheer up', saying that with a stick of cigarette within my fingers, held it gingerly, while its flame burnt, and smoke coiled into your nostrils, I gave it a long draw, then, puffed into the sky. 'Cheer up, Eni, cheer up; we shall survive and have good tales to tell', I said. 'Common, you bloody son of the devil, you dragged me into sins; and these are the consequences', you said regrettably. 'But you know our Lord loved sinners, he came purposely for people like me and, I'm sure I'm

going to find favours with him. I'm the thief on his right, I shall be with him in his father's Kingdom', saying this, you just slapped my face. Suddenly you began to cry. I was astounded you did this to me. Well, I had long forgiven you. While you were losing your mind, I found mine and began to use my brain to find the meaning for our common purpose. One night I met a guy who offered to help us get across to the Americas through Mediterranean and there after we could sneak through the porous border of Spain, and later into the United States of America. I informed you, and you felt reasonable in the recent time. You suddenly became lively and full of hopes. I could see that in you, it glistened on your skin, and eye balls were drained of blood shots, sparkling once again as a very handsome dud I had known. We ventured into this, and our fates were stamped with zeal. You told me one thing: 'I shall spend my God given resources and talents to fight and defend the plights of the victims of human trafficking, when I'm permanently settled in the United States of America, by His Grace', those were your words, Eniola.

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To go back to the memory lane, the moment we met; we just became twinned. That's the time we fresh students were in the queue to register at the registry. One guy aimed to jump the queue, then Eniola and I simultaneously decried the attempt and forced him to rescind it, shortly afterwards we look at each other, since that very moment we became friends. We were done with registration, we both agreed to have something to eat, because we were so famished, having been standing for some hours in the scorching sun. We placed our orders at the cafeteria. While eating, we got talking about our lives, families and education. One thing that was common, perhaps a binding factor was poverty; and this we vowed to overcome. We made a solid solemnity to work hard, play a little and pray hard for success. Eniola was in Philosophy, while I was in Theatre Arts. We both aimed to graduate with first class degree from our respective course of studies. I remember what you told me about your parents: 'My father, a carpenter, and mother a petty trader. Life is difficult for all us. The economy is too bad', you once told me. What made life more difficult was the result of the economic policy of the military government of the "Maradona". This appellation, "Maradona", was given to the Military President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. Who could have coined that name for him, journalists or who? No one can say. But I'm sure the name could have come from his attribute of inconsistent promises made and promises failed. He was regarded a dribbler after the Argentine football hero, Diego Maradona, who was greatly regarded on the pitch of football as maverick dribbler. Before his government would take a decision, he would have thrown out a public debate on such a policy, but deceitfully, it would have taken that decision earlier on; what came out or suggestions made in the public debates would be sharp contrast of government policy. Such debates were

sheer waste of resources, time and energy! For instance, his policy on Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) on economy, this the public decried that it would amount to hoodwink or economic enslavement by the World Bank to embark on such dehumanizing programme, yet his government keyed into that foreign order. 'That's the period things went awry for my parents', you once lamented.

As for me and my family, the story was not different, only it remained sour taste in the palate of my memory; each time I remembered the past, each moment I shuddered, and I always felt I should vomit it. 'My both parents are school teachers: My mother teaches in a public primary school, while father teaches in a public secondary school', this I told you. 'I was the last born of five in the family- three girls, two boys, but I missed the goodies my brother and sisters enjoyed', unlike you the first born, you had it raw and despicable. 'Before my birth, the family could afford to fill the pantry with different sorts of food: Raw, cans, provisions, drinks and other assorted, but when I was growing up; it became so difficult and life was ebbing out and unbearable. My father had to use his car as a cab in the evenings after school and weekends to support his family, while mother turned to a compere in wedding ceremonies; because salaries were not paid for several months. In fact, we could not afford using cooking gas or ordinary stove, we resulted into using coals, later fire woods and finally sawdusts', so I narrated again.

How do I curtail the flow of this turbulent flood of sad memory, and how do I live on without you? We both decided to stay together at Mellanby Hall. I had opportunity to get a bed space; it was a joyous thing to share it, just as we shared all we had from rice, beans, bread and all we could afford. We hardly slept in the bed, especially in the nights. We turned the Library of the Department of Theatre Arts to our reading and bed room. Your Department was just at the ground floor, yet many people thought you were in Theatre Arts. You were always coming to see me. We both had our dreams; we wanted to be successful in our chosen careers. We determined to live our spelt-out principles. I was just a book-warm, you were too; but you were all round talented. You were a good footballer and a dexterous swimmer. Ah, I wonder if any fish in waters could beat you in all strokes; back or front, you were super. Each time you represented the Premier University in the Nigerian Universities Games (NUGA), in swimming; you always coveted gold medal.

In dreams, we were one. In determination, we found our strength. In hard work, we had a purpose. But different in so many degrees of nature and social and emotional fluidities, because you were calmer, more handsome, deep seated thinker, but contrarily, I was the other side of the coin. You never smoked cigarettes, I did and still do; you never liked drinking beer, I loved my bottles, I still drink beers, but lately I've chosen to take wine; red or white and occasionally

brandy. You weren't a ladies' man. You wouldn't want to hurt a fly perching on the sleeve of a beautiful lady, not to talk of rupturing her emotional vitiation. No doubt, you were very kinder with them, then, little wonder they tagged you "Bobo Nice". To me that's an insult. I knew they took advantage of your kindheartedness without you feeling offended by it, when they subtly derided you. I read between the lines of their seemingly innocuous, but rude action; I rebuffed occasionally. Only you wouldn't let me redress such hideous emotional drive. Why? Your Christian indoctrination always heeded your consideration to say, 'let it be Segun, let it be. Christ wanted us to be kind and loving without prejudice'. I had to find a way out; anyway, it's a paradoxical situation, when I lured you into it against your will. I remembered, that's when we were in 300 Level, I can't find her name now... yes, I can now remember, Tunmise, that beautiful Law Student. We met the tradition that's called "October Rush". Despite that when the new students resumed; as we did, weren't in October, but August; this was as a result of the constant industrial dispute between University Academic Staff Union and the government. Yet, the act of guys' adumbrating serious lover boys to make quick catch amongst new female entrants was still known as "October Rush". For me, I wouldn't let such tradition elude me, I keyed into it, but you; you were very unyielding, not until I had to lure you into it. Incredibly, serendipitously, it worked like a magic. The picture of that night loomed large now; that was the day Femi Kuti came to perform in the Trenchard Hall- the University of Ibadan Main Auditorium. Femi needs no introduction anyway, the scion of the maverick, philosopher, iconic social crusader, a gadfly on the iridescent flesh of the Military Juntas and the nefarious civil libertine in democratic gabs; Fela Anikulapo! It was a night. We wore our best. Sprayed the perfume I stole from my elder sister, when last time I was in Lagos to see her, she was a banker.

I knew why we needed to attend the show; you would not want us to. You preferred us going to study, but I had my way. 'Eni, do not forget our cardinal principles: Hard work; play a little and pray hard, now we need to play a little'. We shall resume to our books tomorrow. Is that okay?' I was able to convince you, so we went. The informal arrangement seemed to add some extra sparkling hues; some expected exhilaration, pepping up our spirits and humorous conviviality to the general mood to our gist with our babes over popcorns and drinks. You had Tunmise, I had Folakemi. We quickly returned to our room, knowing that other roommates would still be hanging out at the show. We got back to our room, bolted the door and locked it. You used our bed; I occupied Lanre's bed, having turned off the lights. So, our show began. It didn't take long time for me and Folakemi to swim in the stream of emotions. I knew the tricks, but I feared for you, because I knew it was your first time. While we were floating, after the fore-runs, I had Folakemi's breasts right in my mouth, using my teeth first, then tip of my tongue, gently to suck its nipples; she began to groan as I went on pumping her. Then, I had forgotten about you and Tunmise.

However, I later learnt she was the one that taught you the tricks practically; all I was able to teach before then was mere theory. The night turned out to be a marvelous success, more than we had actually anticipated. Since then, Tunmise and Folakemi were constant visitors. Folakemi was in to study medicine. She had control of me, and succeeded in fencing off, using sign and its cognitive meanings to ensure that my other girlfriends stopped coming. Each time I teased you, you never wanted to talk about it. Well, I understood, you did not want to fornicate, yet you had sex with Tunmise on the regular bases; only you were pretending that fucking a girl was a sin, unless your wife. I knew you would have married her, because you loved her and she loved you too. Tunmise is a now successful lawyer in Nigeria, happily married with two kids, while Folakemi is now in bed with our son, Eniola, named after your memory.

Another thing about you and I; apart from being avid readers and brilliant budding scholars, was that we were highly argumentative. We argued on so many things: Social issues, politics, religion, literature, culture, nature, society, history and economy. By your look, one may perceive you an introvert, unlike me. Then, I was too playful, but you were bright, taciturn and easy going. No one could detect fire of ideas in you, unless you're being sparked and drawn into intellectual discussions. Then, you would be discovered as an orator. In our arguments, we might start off from religions, in this regard, I was always insisting that most religions were instruments of deceits and oppressions created by man, for man and against man. To this you would stoutly disagree. And you posited that religions, especially, Christianity was not originally created as religion; but a way of life. 'The reason Christ said, I'm the way and the life, whoever comes through me, would not perish but have everlasting life'. Before any of us knew it, we would drift into politics. Eni, you sincerely loved politics, this I hated with passion. I called politicians liars, ruffians and corrupt individuals. In defence, you argued and strengthened it with what Plato or Aristotle said about politics and politicians. 'We're all political animals and, whoever feels unconcerned shall give room to be ruled by rogues'. You even went to say that Christ our Lord recognized politics and politicians the reason he told his disciples that 'give on to Cesar what's Cesar's. You strongly supported this by arguing that 'society has its valence of realities in our existence, and that is what the philosophy of existentialism explores'. And you went on to say as 'Nietzsche's observation, the account of this given by Franklin Frazer in the *Pathology of Race Prejudice*', "that insanity in individuals is something rare, but in groups, parties, nations, and epochs; it is the rule", and that there's no way anyone can circumvent it'. I would counter you that 'life is very absurd, and that what any reasonable individual could do is to find its meaning in the mire of nothingness. That's what your religion, Christianity, in fact all religions are seeking to find'. We would go on this manner for a long hours, whenever we felt the need to cool off the steam from reading. It's always the opportunity for both of us to display

our knowledge, philosophical ideas; by giving examples from Literatures, Economics, Political Science, Sociology, Philosophy, Cultural Studies, Performances, etc.

We commonly dissected nature and society; on this we couldn't agree more. African society is still at the state of her "crude" nature', I intoned. 'How do you mean?' In my characteristic manner of a budding scholar, just like you, I understood the sense in your interrogation; and I said, 'it's been a long period of manifestation in negligence, this history affords us to know. You may agree with me, Eni, our forebears were naïve, ignorant, and equally docile from pre-slavery era to the colonial period and postcolonial time. We remained perpetually unconcerned about man and his relationship with nature. We refused to explore, intervene, and subdue it, unlike our enslavers, colonialists and neo-colonialists. Today, African leaders are corrupt so are the led. It's important to note that the ecology of our society contains extra ordinary amount of human history- through this there is always social reflections about man and his relations with nature', I submitted. On the account of corrupt nature of African leaders, I decided to narrate *Play of the Giants*, by Wole Soyinka. The next day you read the play at Africana section of the University main library. In your disputations, you said that 'if our society was devoid of intrusions and subjugations by the West, perhaps we would be leading the world as it was in the past. Don't forget that Egypt was the cradle of civilization, and that science of pyramid remains a mystery to the superior imaginative capacity of the West'. 'Then, why do we remain undeveloped?' We both had our answers in *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon and *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* by Walter Rodney. I remembered I ended our arguments, especially on that night by saying that, 'you know, we're fixated as a people in an unbridled common agreement to be ineptitude to think in the spirit of service, and this remains "the form into which our African society has been cast", paraphrasing Raymond Williams from his *Ideas of Nature*.

Our bound was unique: My parents were your parents, and my siblings were yours; so were all yours mine. I sincerely wish to fill the vacuum you left in their hearts, and I promise I shall do that to the best of my ability. They are fine. I spoke with them yesterday, and I promised to send them money soonest. We're like twins born by different mothers not only in the manner we conducted ourselves, but largely the way people perceived us. To some, we weren't just friends, but lovers. Some insinuations were making rounds in this wise, without us knowing it, that we were homos. How did they come this horrifying assumption was astonishing to you and I? Perhaps, it was because of the borderless intimacy between us that signaled to them a sensual bond beyond friendship. Although it crossed my mind at a grinding moment of emotional stupor that I wished you were my wife. You couldn't have imagined your picture

on the template of my mind. How could you? I have had enough of sexual escapades with some female friends, this experience you lacked, if not until that night's experience you had with Tunmise that served your first journey to Eldorado. The fear I had was how you would understand me without me losing our friendship that I so much cherished. However, I know how to put strokes of fire under you. We nearly had it; that night when I pressed my erected rod on to your "bombom", you were charged as well and yours also shot out. I held it and you held mine, but suddenly something came up on you, and you shouted 'Jesus', I rebuke the spirit of Sodom'. That's the end of that attempt, before Tunmise and Folakemi came into our lives, since then I have never thought of it again.

Eni, why did you move the idea that we should relocate to America? This idea was a precursor to the eventual realization of our individual destiny, as we both agreed to relocate after searching for jobs in futility. We had worked hard to make good grades. You came on top of your class with a First-Class degree and I made Second Class Upper, in fact I was just less than 0.02 from making First Class grade too, even at that I still led my class. We're both happy thinking to secure good jobs in the highly competitive market would not be so difficult. Initially we had thought we would be retained by our individual Departments as Graduate Assistants, but nay; it wasn't so. We trudged and combed streets and offices looking for vacancies. We lost so many opportunities to the so-called Federal Character Policy, or to the lack of social connections. I remember now, one day we're at Oyingbo at the motor park, it was customary on Saturday mornings to steal time to read newspapers at the news stand, where there was always a crowd of free readers which they called "Free Readers' Association". We gladly joined them without procuring a license, or membership card. We weren't there to look for political news or whatever news really, but to check vacancy adverts in the newspapers, especially The Guardian. At the moment you pointed my attention to one particular advert of Wema Bank, Plc., while trying to figure out the details from the advert, one man fired a salvo, 'These yeye politishians, self, dey too corrupt, one man, come steal three hundred million naira only from Port Authority accounts, thunder go strike dem all!'. Another man said, 'na that one de worry una, you? You don hiar about late Abacha, who don become ATM, as him dey give Federal Government money, our own money, wey him pack commort to foreign banks? The first man responded; let's thank OBJ, who dey use his international connections, to get our money back, that man na bulldozer, the *Ebora* himself'. Which kin baboon OBJ, which kin President he be? Dey no be the same thing, as Fela talk am? Aba, you don forget that Wind Fall Gulf money about 12b naira wey come vamoose, abi you forget 2.8 billion naira, oiel money during OBJ, as the military Head of State? I tell you, all of them be rogues....them be same of same!' We really enjoined their arguments, actually without paying keen attention to their debates, because we meant business with our focus.

Three years rolling by, nothing was forthcoming, apart from odd jobs here and there. We're grossly under-employed. Life was at its ebb. Actually, I didn't feel for myself than I did for you. I knew pressure was on you as the first born in the family of seven, seven children with some other dependents. As for me, it wasn't as such, not only because of being the last born, all my older brother and sisters were graduates and gainfully employed. We had a Banker who studied economics, the first child, and a Pharmacist, she was working in a Pharmaceutical Company, a Medical Doctor, he worked in LUTH, Idi Aba, Yaba, Lagos, a Nurse working in a private clinic and I, jobless. Our parents toiled for us indeed. Really, because of their financial assistance I got from them; our lives were bearable, yet unfulfilling. We kept the faith. This was your courage. You believed in the norm that 'God's time is the best'. Could you remember, aha, Eni, I wish you can, one day we had to be in Ikeja, at one advertising agency on Oba Akran Road, for an interview? There're two occasions that I would never forget, each time I remember the past, the play back of those two events are always magnifying and humorous. We chose to board a *molue* going through Maryland to Ikeja. *Molue* is a type of commercial vehicles that plied highways in the Lagos metropolis constructed by the indigenous fabricators and painted in yellow with black stripes in the middle. Many of these buses were supposed to be off the road, because there were so rickety, yet the crowd of passengers was in the picture of apt description made by maverick Fela Anikulapo-Kuti as '69 sitting and 99 standing'. However, as I'm writing now, those *molues* are no more on the Lagos highways, guess what, is democracy at work? Well, without sounding pessimistic, one day, Nigeria would become a better country; just mark my words. The world in the yellow bus was a microscopic entity of the nation, Nigeria- a society that all was chaotic, unruly, disorganized and tragic. It was a society where you could find all that were disgusting and horrible, yet laughable: drug peddlers, religious charlatans, business icons, corporate individual, students, teachers, women and children and the driver as head of the government. In this environment I was standing and sand-witched between two beautiful young ladies. Right there I had forgotten I was going for an interview. It was a burning situation as the one behind me placed her big breasts on me and the one in front intentionally, I guessed, rested her buttocks on my turgid penis. At that moment was a commotion erupted from outside as the vehicle maneuvered to park at a bus-stop. I couldn't know what engendered the fight; I only tried to look through the window as I took advantage of the situation to touch the breasts of the lady in front of me. It was as if she was waiting for me to do that, she just hanged on it for a while. The two guys were just fighting with their mouths, but not with their hands, and they were making noise, parrying feeble fists in shadowy moves, fretting and guiding in vacuity, rained abuses and curses on each other. We left them in their acts, when our bus zoomed off, and enveloped all in the dark sooth sprawling from its exhaust.

On the eve of our departure to be on board of a boat to take us across the Mediterranean, we were wantonly exposed to horrific violence as we're trapped in the conflicts between the forces of government and the rebels exchanging shoot-outs in the city. We walked with gripping fears under the cover of the night. We blindly found our way through, while bullets were flying above and all around us; it was beyond assumption of being literarily dead, but not clinically yet, we had our hearts pounding as we breathed. Eni, I could hear your heart beats, you're nearly betrayed your emotions as you began to mutter some inaudible words, I could feel you, I saw it in your eyes; I had to pinch your side to keep calm, then, you held your lips firmly with the grip of your teeth. We became so forlorn, especially you. I could discern your palpable throbbing pulsations underneath your now pallid skin and exasperations in you were like atoms in a glass of beer colliding in fear with each other, through the slit open of your teeth holding your lips, as we hid behind the dark strong tank, and said, 'Cheesus, Cheesus'. Then, I quickly interjected to enthralling your mind, 'be strong, be positive; we shall overcome'.

However, within me, irreverent thoughts were sauntering in, the more I fought to keep them at bay, and the more they bounced against the strong wall of my heart. Then, I sensed the ghost of George lurking, a Ghanaian whose image loomed large in me with a sad memory. A young man of twenty-five felt that he needed a change for better life; met an agent named Dakwah who promised to assist him transit abroad to realize his dreams. Getting to Libya, he was in dire straits, felt abandoned and was forced to do mania jobs under a boss, and later subjected to debase sexual abuse against his consent; and eventually made mess of his anus with his big dangerous turgid erected phallus. He spoke with me about it, I promised to help, but unfortunately, in his attempt to start the process of returning to Ghana, he was caught in the web of furious air strikes which reduced him to mince of meats, his brain spattered on the old window of an old widow who had lost her only two sons in the same conflicts. It was a gory picture of a body to behold, and seeing it melting with fuses of dreams lost to the inglorious moment. We're living in the difficult period that constantly leaves me in a bitter taste to a virulent imagination of a cruel world, where we wade through the horror and rigours of survival- a festering sore space to breed the naked blood sucking predators. Nowhere is safe for humanity, nowhere, because the more you run the closer you get to the dungeon of doom- a hole of depression! While I was still fighting tooth and nail against caustic thoughts that sprang suicide spikes in me, then I felt your tears drenched my sleeves as you hanged on me, Eni. Yet the thought of Mary, whom Mrs. Ata deceived to believing that she, would find a better life in Spain; I left her in the brothel, came banging on my sensations of

love and hate. I loved her, but I hated the world, the world that pushed her to the brink of ruins. Mary, a young lady of nineteen two years ago from Uyo, fell into a deep ditch of deceit, a con woman lured her into believing that her life could be better abroad, because Nigeria was already in nauseating economic mess. On getting here, she was made to believe she had to work for two years in Libya, then, later to her final destination in Spain, but she got to work in the brothel as a prostitute... Suddenly, we're jolted alive by the strident airstrikes. We quickly moved. I dragged you, Eniola along with me as we ran into a safe tunnel; suddenly we heard a loud bang. The strong dark tank was shattered to shards, and gutted into flame as it was hit by a bomb from the air strikes. We both became numbed. I could hear farts thundering out from you, and you began to shiver; I held you tightly with my right hand wrapped around you with air of assurance. You were muttering away something, I hardly heard, but faintly as you said in mist of lamentations, 'I'm waiting no more, I need to go home'. 'Home, home you mean?' 'Are you kidding? 'Or you mad?' I whispered. I could see your face, as beam of light from a far shone aslant into it; you wore a mask of dejection, I gazed through it across time to your fading spirit. 'Common, Eni, we ain't going back any home. No home anywhere now. With God, you know brother, all things are possible. America is our destination, no home nonsense!' You held your peace.

A moment of reprieve came; we found our way to a dark snaky narrow road. I could walk around many roads; I knew I would need street knowledge of web structure network of Tripoli, if we must survival. This I immediately put into use, as we joined one street to another, hoping to find our way to the brothel, until we got to a popular junction not too far from it. At the brothel, Mary was waiting for me. She served us cups of tea, from which you hardly took some sips, before you started snoring. I promised Mary that as soon as we settled down, I shall invite her to join us in the US.

. We're now on board of a boat taking us across the Mediterranean. You were still not cheerful as a man hoping to realize his dreams. Then, I needed to take you on memory lane: I reminded you how we met, and we became two inseparable kinds; and we indulged in so many things together. I spoke to you about expectations of your parents, your siblings and society. I wanted you to see reason why we should be positive and dream higher as soon as we settled in the United States. Then, I could see on you wearing a mask of forced smile, which quickly vanished as soon as it came. I held your hand that God would make our dreams come true. Right in the heart of the sea, we saw a boat on our left; that was the MSF search and rescue boat, and another one almost at our right; that was the boat of the Libyan Coast Guard, unfortunately, colluding with human traffickers. Before we knew it, both boats were moving at athwart along our boat. Everyone began to panic as soon there were shoot-outs between the rescue team

and the Libyan Coast guards who were working in collaboration with the traffickers. It was as if nature was in connivance with “war” going on. Waves began to rise and it became turbulent. Our boat lost control. That was the last I could say, until I was submerged in the sea. Then, you came for me; you came for your friend. You helped as you assured me in the sea as we swum on to ensure I was in the good hand of a diver among the rescue team. You went for others and you saved so many. You put into good use your talent as dexterous active swimmer for the sake of me and others, but unfortunately you couldn’t survive this. What really happened remained a painful memory of the past. One of the rescue guards told me you had over exerted yourself in saving others and became weak, unfortunately you fell into the trap of a bank of crocodiles, and in their bellies lied your grave.