

**A PUBLICATION OF
NIGERIAN WOMEN WRITERS FORUM**



WHIRL OF HORROR AND OTHER STORIES

**A Collection of short stories from Nigerian Women Writers
in memory and honour of the Chibok Girls**

**Compiled and Edited By:
Wole Adedoyin**

EDITOR'S NOTE

Whirls of Horror and other stories is a compilation of educative stories fabricated in order to inform and create awareness of people to issues happening around them.

This publication is dedicated to the Chibok Girls and all the victims of the deadly sect Boko Haram.

MY NAME IS HABIBA

I knew what awaited me at sun rise, a fate I have tried severally to get rid of by escaping, but each time I tried, I got caught and the barriers became thicker. Barriers that I am always ready to break through just to run away from them, just to run into mamas arms –to lay my head on her heavy chest and hear baba finally say ‘ I am proud of you’. He has never approved of me, my going to school, my preference to my mother’s Ibo family or even my friendship with Charles who lives down the road. A warm trickle ran down my thigh, a quick reminder that my bladder had given way to tension Stress and Elasticity the topic I was studying the night they took us away. As I relieved myself at one of the corners of the room I was being held, I wondered at what happened to my (physics textbook), if the giant rats that nibbled on our toes while we slept had filled their tummy with its lonely pages. The sound of shuffling feet made me jump from my squatting position onto the mat to pretend I was fast asleep. Before my pounding heart could settle I was roughly thrown over a shoulder and

suddenly my back was on the cold sand. My eyes took in my surrounding, not knowing exactly where I was, my mind plotting an escape when I realized I was in the middle of the compound where we have been long held hostage. The sun had long gone to bed but light was glowing from every hut in harmony with the full moon. They held my hands and legs while another ripped off my clothes, I was being used to issue a warning to anyone who dared to escape again. I began to plead and cry, promising to be at my best henceforth when the one with a scar on his brow gave me a dirty slap and under the brightness of the moon, amidst my cries and pain, he took my innocence, one that was meant for Hassan my betrothed, one that I always fantasized Charles taking just like in the romance novels I secretly read. One after the other, they raped me till the tears dried off my eyes, and my throat too cracked to even let out a scream. There I lay looking dazed at the moon and listening to the whimpers from the other girls till the women who we call mamana carried me off to the wash room.

That night Left me broken- body, soul and spirit. I was thrown back to the holding room where the stench of my urine hit my nostrils and added to my misery. I tried to find sleep, maybe I would wake in another country but the screams, the gun shots of 15th April raided my head. I began to scream, high and loud to see if my heavy heart would be unburdened but one of them rushed in, pulled off my hijab and folded it into my mouth and taped it. I felt like dying but yet had a strong urge to survive, to see this through. I wondered if the other girls had a paradise to fantasize about to keep them going, but we said little to each other and the only sounds that came out from our mouths were greetings or grunts of pain. I stayed there till I was pardoned and at the rise of every new dawn I took my duties to heart and listened more to our instructors. My memories of happy moments were soon replaced with the anger they fed us and I digested it like kunu. One afternoon when the sun was fighting with her lover, we were gathered outside and forced to sit in a circle. Then she was brought out, I used to be like her, always trying to escape, now I only want to survive. She was made to kneel at the centre of

the circle and immediately a bullet went into her head-
bare without her hijab, sending her to eternal rest. I
looked at her lying there while others sobbed back into
their huts, but I knelt there and kept looking at her not
because I felt sorry for her but because I was sent back in
time, to that night under the full moon when I lay where
she was lying dead right now. One of them came to me
and asked me to follow him but I remained fixed at that
point staring at her lifeless body. He pulled my hands
and dragged me on the floor away from there to the one
they call Yayana. We never met him yet we heard of him
and dreaded him without reason, I forgot about the dead
girl when I realised I was before him and feared for my
life. He gave instructions in a language I could not
understand and I began to imagine various forms of
punishment I was to serve but I was taken to a hut and
from thence was given special treatment; I was given
new clothes, and ate the kind of food they ate. Yayana
told me that if I behaved myself I would be allowed to
go home, his words carved a path for hope to creep into
my bleeding heart. The night I received the news of my
return home, my body felt light and practised in my

mind how I would hug baba when he came to pick me up and damn him if he tried to rebuke me. I thanked the stars that favoured me, I would be the first girl to leave the camp in a legit way but I then remembered my comrades and felt sad for we were in a silent battle together and it felt like I was abandoning them. When the day arrived, I was treated to a large helping of jollof rice and given fresh smelling clothes. With mixed feelings I waved the camp good bye. We drove all day and all night till we drove into a city and my heart began to beat rapidly in anticipation, after what felt like eternity we stopped close to a large building and was given a black nylon and warned never to open it till I saw baba. My back hurt as I got out of the van but I didn't care. Nagode I said to them and walked into the building like a woman with dignity restored. I stood in the hallway for some minutes lost, looking for Baba while people went by carrying on their usual businesses; I was disappointed no one recognised me, haven't they seen our pictures or videos on the internet? My thoughts were interrupted by a ticking sound in the bag I was carrying and then it

dawned on me where I was going to see baba. In that split second a loud explosion shattered me to pieces.

This is the story of the beginning of the end of my life. I am not Chibok girl for I have a name HABIBA, we all have names and there in the forest we wait forgotten by the outside world. And here i lay scattered in pieces, covered by crumbled walls and dust forgotten.

Onyeji-Jarret Constance

WHIRLS OF HORROR

She took a deep draw of the cigarette and gulped down all the content in the glass cup beside her. She was still tensed up, she noticed. She hated such feelings. It makes her feel unsecured. She dropped the glass on the table close to her and poured herself another drink from the uncorked bottle before her. Finishing the last content in the bottle, she draws deeply on her cigarette again. It wasn't helping. Nothing seems to be helping. Abruptly her lips tightened into a smirk. The valium, she thought smiling lightly. She threw the remaining cigarette into the ashtray; she headed to her study and pulled out the white container from the drawer. She uncorked it and took two of the whitish substances and threw into her mouth. She chewed them gently then she took a glass of water. She felt relieved a little. Although that isn't the way she wanted to feel yet she felt better than before.

She abruptly felt a shiver run down her spin. She though she heard a noise in the porch. She titled her ears and listened. No noise. She relaxed. She wasn't expecting anyone. Not at this odd time in the night. Trying not to

dwell much on that, she stared out of the open window, inhaling the cool April air sipping in through the open louvers. It was spring. The trees were rustling under the heavy influences of the April breeze. The night was noiseless more because most people around may have gone to bed. There was no noise except for the croaking of toads and the shrill songs of the crickets somewhere in the distance. She stared up into the star filled sky. She thought she saw a shooting star swoosh past, she immediately made a wish.

There were only few houses in the suburb. Houses that were rather too old and old fashioned with leaky roofs and rats in the attics. Funny, this was the place she chooses to live. This was the places, she called home. Having bought the house from her one year saving in Mexico, she had immediately moved to Washington and bought this house. She smiled at her achievement, although it was nothing to count out for, but she felt proud.

It hadn't been easy for her to move on in life after she lost Jim her husband two years ago. The bank had seized everything they had stripping her off the comforts she had known over the period of five years she lived with Jim. Jim had died leaving her with countless of his financial problems. In spite of the fact that he had the family fortune and business, he wasted them in bad business before his demise. He was a worthless gambler.

Things had been so hard, the bills to pay and repay. The huge sum of money he owed to the bank and others. After the bank took over three of the house and half part of the fleets of cars, she was still left with plenty of assets. Not until the other people he owed came to be repaid, she was then left with little to cater for herself and her three year old daughter. She must go and check on Jessy, she thought as the clock chimed. She always checks on her at ten everyday before she retires to bed. Just then she felt a shadow fell over her.

There was only a dim light in the hall, so she couldn't clearly see the owner of the shadow. She was

instantly filled with trepidation. She saw a smiling inimical muscular figure holding a raised knife advanced towards her. She was frightened. It was evidence in the horrified look in her eyes and the palpitating of her heart beat. She leaned back against the tall table, feeling it simultaneously with her eyes glued to the intruder. She snatched up a paper weight and heaved it as she dashed to the door.

The paper grazed the side of his face. He felt the blood roll down towards his left eye. He could see the horror in her big bedroom eyes. Her blonde tresses were a bit ruffled. He watched her race into the sitting room. He knew that there was no time. He wanted to take his time and torture her but no, he was running out of time. He began to walk closer to her with long great strides.

Just as she began to scream, the phone rang. He saw her rush towards it. But he got there first, catching her wrist and squeezing them terribly, she winced in pain, screaming. Oh lord, don't let Jessie wake up, she prayed silently. She knew she was no match for her tormentor.

Although the light was dim, she could see the features of the bloke holding her. He wasn't anything more than seventeen. He seemed to be very high in drugs and alcohol, she noticed from his heavy breathing.

The phone was still ringing, she was still screaming he didn't know when he did it but just as the third ring ended, he pushed her down to the ground. She fought, still screaming. With her free hand, she shoved, knocking over the table. The phone fell on the floor beside him. He took the cord and wrapped it around her throat, pulling hard. He watched her wriggling under the cord, he didn't stop pulling. He couldn't not until the screaming stopped and he looked up and saw a teeny little girl creaming mummy. He lurched at her with bloody eyes. He was ready for more kills.

Princess Sarah Akpu

EVERY SHADE

By the time I pushed our daughter into the world, she'd been fourteen years long overdue. And we'd not expected, hoped to hold an infant again, to watch a baby sleep, to be the ones to ease the cries of a newborn. And I for one had not expected to suckle a child again, ever.

We were married on the last day of June, and by the end of July, I was pregnant. It was unplanned, it was unexpected, but it was very much welcome. When our son arrived in April 1995, he was perfect in every way. He had black curly hair and his nose was round and pudgy, his cheeks extremely chubby. And he looked exactly like Doyin did, had the same hue of well done chocolate.

He was our joy and pride, and quickly stole our hearts.

When he was two, we decided to add to our family and couldn't at first understand why I wouldn't get pregnant immediately. For heaven's sake, we'd already had one

baby even without trying, so we were eminently qualified for a second one, weren't we?

But a baby would not come. And the several visits to specialists and gynecologists yielded the same news; I had a 20 per cent chance of getting pregnant because my fallopian tubes were misshapen. And Doyin had an extremely low sperm count. As individuals, it was hard enough for us to become parents. Combined together, it would take a miracle.

Crushed but exultant that we already had a child together, we figured we'd had enough miracles as a family. We returned to the comfort of our homes to pursue happiness.

Occasionally, I longed for another baby, perhaps a girl this time even though a boy would have done just fine. When the yearning got larger than life, we would try IVF or hormonal therapy, or whatever the fad at that time was.

By the tenth year of our marriage, we had given up on the hope of another miracle. We sent our son to school every morning with love, received him back every evening with the same love, and ate and played and worked together in a near-delirium state of happiness.

I was a computer nerd, had developed software that was being used in our country's burgeoning military, and we had the comforts of life to show for it. An engineer, Doyin himself was not doing badly. And Mayowa was as bright as a new coin, his future stretched out ahead of him.

We celebrated our fourteenth year anniversary in June 2008 by taking a trip to Mexico, a country we'd never been to before. We left Mayowa with his grandmother and made our way to the white beaches of Mexico. Only that I was too dizzy to get out of bed every day, too nauseous that even the smell of taco made me violently sick. Doyin was a nervous wreck, vacillating between taking care of me and falling into a worry stupor.

The third day, he dragged me to a clinic, and we were flabbergasted when we were told I was pregnant, two months gone.

I was forty-two, in a strange country, and I was two months pregnant.

We came home on the next available flight, ecstatic, riding on the moon. Mayowa, thirteen years old, his eyes preternaturally large behind his prescription glasses, swallowed hard at the news, didn't know the emotion to give in to. He finally came to me and hugged me around the waist. When we came apart, his face was wet with tears, and he was ashamed of his juvenile tears.

Our friends, our church family, our families, our neighbours; everyone was happy for us, and all were in agreement that it had to be God at His best. It was nothing but a miracle.

By the third month, my morning sickness was gone, and I filled out in places that I had been hitherto skinny. My

face took on a glow, and Doyin would look at me each time with renewed adoration.

By the early Monday morning that Doyin drove me to the hospital to deliver our baby girl, I had turned forty three and was petrified of what age and gravity had done to my body. I was despairing that I would be unable to push this child that I already loved so much into the world all by myself.

“God will perfect this miracle.” Doyin kept saying.

We arrived the hospital four am in the morning. As we stepped on the threshold, my water broke and the contractions became hard and fast hitting. By six am, the wails of a newborn rend the still antiseptic air. But for a minute, that was all that was in the room; the wail of the newborn. There was hushed silence as they cleaned the baby, a hushed silence as they put her in my arms.

Her skin was the colour of the insides of a raw yam; white tinged with a pale pink. Her hair was a bleached white and her irises were golden flecks.

God had obviously not perfected this miracle, because He had given me an albino for a child. Something that felt like stone descended into my throat and went all the way down to my heart. I swallowed back tears and anguish and a pain that was so deep it was almost physical.

When Doyin was let into the room, he looked from me to the child, then from the child back to me. I saw him swallow, saw him nod, and saw him break into a smile as he crossed to the bedside.

“She is beautiful.” His voice, when he spoke, was tremulous and for once did not have that familiar bass ring to it.

My face now streaked with tears, incredulous at what my husband was saying, I raised my face to his and was surprised to see love there.

“But she is not black?” I heard myself say. “She is nothing but an albino.”

My Doyin, always quick to speak, was for a moment silent, his eyes slit like he was lost in thoughts. When he finally spoke, it was with a quiet authority. “Who says black cannot come in another shade? What does nothing but an albino mean? And who says she cannot be beautiful because she didn’t come out the shade that we expected her to?”

How dare he preach at me? How dare he? We were Christians, weren’t we? And we believed in a miraculous God. We had not asked for this child and He had chosen to give her to us? Why couldn’t He have made her perfect? Why wasn’t her skin the colour of caramel, as Mayowa’s and Doyin’s were, or the colour of a ripe mango, like mine was? Why had God given me an albino daughter?

But my mouth wouldn’t, couldn’t articulate all of my words. I didn’t want to say something I would regret later, but my heart billowed over with disappointment. And the silent tears washed my face as I stared at Doyin.

The little baby let out a little mewl as Doyin made to collect her from me. Wordlessly, I handed her over, watching as Doyin's eyes lit up. With the baby in his arms, he bent at the waist and dropped a kiss on my forehead.

“It's hard, sweetheart, I expect, to have pushed an albino baby into the world. But I ...we've loved this baby for so long...and so hard, that this...that this...should not matter terribly much.” In my husband's eyes were tears and a brokenness that made him look like a little boy.

“I suppose.” I said, because I had to say something, and because the weight of the world was pressing down on my shoulders at that time.

“We'll love her just like we love Mayowa, won't we?” And there was a pleading quality in his voice that broke my heart yet again.

In the evening, Mayowa came to meet his little sister. By then, she was already bathed, diapered and fed, and was sleeping quietly in a side cot. My boy, in his glasses, did

not seem to notice the colour of her skin as his face suffused with joy and jubilation.

“Oh Mom,” He cried, forgetting for a moment that he was supposed to be cultivating an attitude of teenage nonchalance. “She is so cute, and so tiny, and so...so...beautiful.” His voice was filled with awe and wonder.

Was I the only sane person in this family, I wondered. “What about her skin colour?” I asked in a snappy tone.

“Oh...that...” he sighed, “She does look a little different than everybody else, but she is all right. She is not sick, is she?” He asked me, suddenly afraid.

And it was in that moment that I saw the light. My daughter was an albino, but she had ten fingers and ten toes. She wasn't the beautiful black colour I had envisaged but she was a beautiful pink and healthy. And she was indeed God's miracle, a perfect little specimen of His grace.

My thirteen year old boy, looking like a wisened old man came to me in my bed then. “Mom, do you remember that song we learnt when I was younger. That one that says Jesus loves the little children, whether yellow, black or white?”

I smiled. For as long as we could remember, Mayowa’d had a unique habit of jumping from the beginning of songs to the end, leaving the middle hanging. He’d done the same now. But I got the message, the spirit of what he was saying.

“I do.”

“The songwriter should have added albino to it.” He smiled and sighed at the same time, an affectation that was purely Mayowa. “God loves her just as she is, and I love her too.”

And in that moment, my heart filled with love, and with gratitude. God loved me. God loved my little girl. And that was all that mattered. I knew that in the future, some strangers would look at my daughter’s different skin

without understanding. But we, her family would always know that every child is beautiful, that every shade of black is beautiful, and we would ensure that our daughter, our sister was loved.

When I breastfed my child that night, and I stroked the velvety texture of her bleached white hair, my heart continued to fill with love, and with gratitude, and with overwhelming joy.

And when we went home two days later, to a nursery filled with pink girly baby things and a home filled with warmth and love. Doyin had already told those who'd not made it to the hospital to see the baby that she was an albino, so that there would be no awkwardness when they finally met her.

And there was nothing but love and acceptance and gratitude.

Today, our Nifemi is five years old. For me, she is the epitome of grace and beauty, a perfect little lady whose heart is as large as Mother Teresa's. She is

compassionate and sympathetic; a crier who would weep at any injustice meted out to any of her many friends. She'd sit in Doyin's lap and stroke his graying hair, and declare in a triumphant voice, "now your hair is growing white like mine."

Last year, we had a scare of melanoma, that skin cancer that is common in albinos, but the result came back negative. The sore that was on her shoulder, that had scared us so much, was nothing but a stubborn and nasty mosquito bite.

Yes, her skin would need special care for the rest of her life, and next year she would get glasses to correct her near sightedness. But my daughter is beautiful. Her own shade of black is beautiful, because a perfect God made her.

Folakemi Emem-Akpan

