

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Alabi Muheez Ajibola: “Crappy Arrival”

Alabi Muheez Ajibola · Monday, September 7th, 2020

In the months after Kammy’s return to the city, We had again and again brooded over the way the white man treated the black. Comparing it to Christianity, the white man believed in God, brought God to us and God taught : ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’. Christ came so we might have life abundantly. The Church taught that we were all brethren in Christ, one with another. And the whites, who had hatred towards us were Christians too. The function didn’t match, where was the error? In Christianity? In us? In the whites? In our environments? And how where we to make it work?

Here in College, it worked. The fathers who taught us lived up to expectations. They were peaceful people, good men and poured all of their lives into what they taught, accompanied by their good works. Their beliefs, teachings and ideologies transitioned into reality, action and life. We were the witnesses.

But we would leave here and go proper into the big world where the whites were. Amongst them, this feeling of peace and equality didn’t work out. When the whites entered our church, they made for the front row. When we drank, they didn’t share our cups. When we slept, the whites were in another room. Disgusting! We’re humans for God’s sake!

I wrote from Sam time to time. He wrote and sent me copies of *Inequality*. My efforts had spurred the boy on, he became a monster in poetry. At least I’d leave a legacy in him, I thought.

At last, end of term came. I was packing my case at night. Kammy was doing the same. He looked so inquisitive and started somehow, a conversation.

” Bola... “

“Yes. “

“Are you coming back”?

“No. “

“I thought not. I will miss you bad”

“Me too, kam”

“Have you told Father Barley? “

“No. I’ll write to him”

“You must Bola, he likes you and it will upset him”

“I know Kam. He’s a good Father”

Our faces shied at each other. Silence reigned for a long time with no one to break the impasse. we visited the Nam river like we always did. Hot tears oozed from my eyes but I hid them lest Kam cried too.

In the morning, I took my leave from Grace villa leaving Kammy on the bed. That was how I departed Socoto.

On reaching home, I had written to Father Barley and told him I was not returning to college next term. I had not the courage to offer him the error Kammy and I had found in the equation so I had made some excuse about not intending to be a teacher. I had expected him to be done with me after such ingratitude. But I received a gentle letter from him. He was sorry I had decided not to return. Perhaps I would be happier at Topflight Laureates College just outside my house. Father Barley had written to the principal, Mr. Dolan, about me. He had told him to help me grow as one of the top students in my new school.

I was unable to do anything about it. I had no way of coping with Kindness. With a feeling of guilt, ingratitude and a sense of disappointment, I submitted. That world in Socoto was just too small for me. Father Barley was just a part of it, the other whites made a good percentage. I couldn’t live that life, I couldn’t! I realized I had missed home too and mum. I had to come back.

In Principal Dolan, a tall, handsome man with a miserly face and hawk-like features like olden Britons, I had met my first socialist. He was a Christian too. Through him, visual art and classical music revealed to me. I read Baruch and Van Beethoven, both interesting.

He took me to East top University on a Saturday and then I saw something I was familiar with, it wasn’t a graffiti nor a billboard design, it was pure racism! Discrimination!

“RESERVED FOR THE WHITES ONLY” was clearly written on different shops, superstores etc. on the campus.

“Where is meant for us, sire?” i quizzed

“What do you mean us? There’s no us here. Everywhere is meant everybody, neglect those writings, they are old ones”.

“Oh, but why are they still there? Someone should remove them”.

“You see, it’s everybody’s work, which is nobody’s work”

Just then, I was satisfied. He noticed the smile on my face and he made a beautiful one too.

“Come on, let’s go”

“Ok sir”.

I visited the office of The Black Brothers next morning. Mr. Lech received me warmly. He was a young man with shrewd, kindly eyes and a very dry manner. He sent for two tea cups and talked about my college in Socoto. We delved into books and poetry.

“We talk you sometimes” Lech started ” You write in English and already touching things that should not be mentioned. See what I mean?

“Yes, I see. “

“Good. We argue between ourselves and someone says ‘if only you were white’ and another says ‘man’s got no future as a colored’

He sat up and his looks were changed now. “We hope, my friend, we all do hope. We know the path seem blur, probably unfair, but we hope. “

A boy brought the tea, Lech’s mood changed. He talked about his home and struggles hilariously. I gave him new poems. He gave me little money.

” It is not much but a man wants to help. “

I drifted into Sixth Villa and into Jacob’s. I had no money so I slept in the office of the Freedom Group. I hardly spent a night there alone, lots of children who left the cold cuddles of home stay there. I didn’t flee from home but I had to free Mum, Linda and Sally .They said ‘ I cherish the white now ‘ – I laughed at that thought.

These things that scared me out of Socoto have crept in here too, my home. We’ll give a fight here and I’ll lead it.

(“Crappy Arrival” is an excerpt from a book in progress, [Raises from the Dust.](#))

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