



IN-HOUSE SHORT STORY CONTEST COLLECTIONS

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This book is lovingly dedicated to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A note from the club's president.

In December 2021, all the leaders at Christian Writers and Readers Club decided to organize an in-house short story contest for all our members. Christmas was almost approaching as well as the end of the year... A lot of churches were organizing Christmas carols and almost all our members were active one way or the other with the preparations at their local churches... Because of this, we had to go for our second and last break for the year. But we didn't just want to go like that, we wanted to end the year with something for all of our members and also for our faithful readers and loyal fans on our social media handles, thus, that was how the In-House Short Story Contest came to be.

We organized it on our Facebook page and asked our readers to vote for their best stories, the ones with the highest reactions would emerge as the winner, first and second runner-up.

Before and during the contest, we were able to put out several broadcasts on Facebook, WhatsApp, Wattpad and other social media handles... By the time the contest was over, everything was successful... Praise Abraham emerged as the winner, Oremodu Bukunola was the first runner-up while Faith Ijiga was the second runner-up.

Because we are always looking for new ways to share the gospel with our contents, we mapped out a lot of plans for the club this year, and that includes the publication of this book you are currently reading.

Towards the end of October 2022, our first magazine which will contain our anthologies on the End Times will be published, watch out for it.

Eight people entered the contest, but because of some obvious reasons, we published six of them... But you can visit our Facebook page to read the entire short stories for that contest and including other works published by our members.

As you read this book, My prayer is that you will enjoy the entertainment and also that the stories will speak directly to your heart.

~Aquila Kyeng F: CWRC president.

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GREATER LOVE

By Faith Ijiga.

This story is dedicated to all the Nigerian soldiers who had lost their lives for our freedom.

--

Today was going to be a peculiar day in the life of Second lieutenant Victory Chinonso Ike and he knew it. There was no sign, just instinct.

But believing that it was one of the apprehensions that permeated the heart of any soldier going for the kind of operation he and his colleagues were currently going for, he shrugged it off as nothing more than the usual.

The soldiers had been sent to the community of Achi, Enugu state after receiving an Intel of an imminent attack by armed terrorists. Their mission was to go there and prevent the attack from happening at all costs.

Victory heard his name and tilted his head to see his best friend, 2nd lieutenant Emmanuel Chidindu Akunna calling him. The duo had met each other from their days in the Nigerian defense academy and bonded when they discovered that they were the only ones from their local government. They loved each other like Brothers and their friends and colleagues often called them twins because of their closeness.

The duo had a lot of similarities in most areas of their lives but: they couldn't have been more different in their spiritual and religious beliefs. Victory was an agnostic while Emmanuel was one of the most serious Christian Victory had ever seen.

The soldiers promptly arrived at their place of assignment and started alighting from the armored vehicles.

The moment everyone's feet touched the ground, the first gunshot rang out from a close range, followed by another, and the third hit one of the drivers and almost ripped out his face from his body. The driver was dead before he hit the ground.

The sight of their fallen comrade explained the harsh and unpleasant reality that the soldiers had unfortunately dropped into.

Instantly alert, the soldiers snapped into action.

But the terrorists had anticipated their actions and planned accordingly because without warning, a barrage of gunfire erupted from different angle, instantly killing two more soldiers.

And as clear as the night is from the day, they knew that they were ambushed.

A torrent of expletives flew out of the soldiers' mouths as they took cover and began to return sporadic gunshots into the enemy lines.

Within minutes, the casualty on both sides were enormous and still, more soldiers and terrorists continued to give up the ghost or join the badly injured comrades who were writhing and screeching in pains.

As they continued fighting, the soldiers realized that they had two problems. The first was that they were outnumbered, second was the fact that they couldn't retreat and backup wouldn't come before all this would be over.

Soldiers emptied their bullets, took cover, and ejected their spent magazines, popped in new ones and joined their fellow soldiers to eliminate their enemies. RPGs flew to and fro the enemy lines, bullets ricocheted.

By the time they finished killing the two sets of terrorists who attacked them in their hundreds, they had lost their commander and the soldiers were down to only five men who were left with just one round of ammunition in their kalashnikov to fight off the third set of terrorist who were fastly approaching.

With a look of resignation, the soldiers waited for the end to come.

Emmanuel offered a quick prayer for help on behalf of him and his friends. Knowing the fate that was about to befall them, he contemplated if he should ask them to say the prayer of salvation but with the distraught look on their faces, he knew it would be fatal.

An idea dropped in his mind and he welcomed it. Not waiting to confirm if it was the Holy Spirit or not, he gave thanks and ran off with the idea.

No words could explain the astonish expressions of the other soldiers when Emmanuel shared his idea.

Emmanuel watched as Victory's facial expression changed from shock to anger. "You dey craz oo! Hope you no say na kolo dey worry you? Guy, you don mad finish!" Victory let out a stream of diatribe at Emmanuel in Pidgin English.

Not having enough time to argue his sanity, Emmanuel began explaining to the soldiers why he should carry on with his idea.

Just when the other soldiers were beginning to understand him, Victory stood up and gave him a resounding slap.

"Stop this nonsense now!" Victory bellowed, wagging his right index finger. "I swear, I won't allow your plans to succeed, you hear me?"

Not having time to cuddle Victory's hysterics, he ordered the other soldiers to overpower and disarm him.. They complied and with a few punches and hard kicks, victory was subdued and pinned to the ground.

Emmanuel addressed the soldiers. "It is obvious that we received the wrong Intel and staying here together will make us sitting ducks. There is no way we can out run these cold blooded Killers who are fast approaching and this is more of the reasons we should carry on with my plans. I can't seem to find any other way out of this. I beg you guys not to allow them to succeed by accomplishing their goal of killing us all, go back and give the report."

By the time he was finished with his remark, victory had lost the willpower to fight, looked dazed at his friend as if intent on memorizing the outlines of his features, and sat down stoically as Emmanuel ordered the soldiers to set him up for what they called operation Samson.

Emmanuel went down quietly on his knees on the grass and prayed Samson's prayer from the book of Judges 16:28 & 30. And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

When they finished setting off explosives and arranging four helmets to lead the terrorists away from the soldiers escape route, Emmanuel immediately sent them on their way.

"God bless you." They said with lumps in their throats and began leading Victory away.

"God bless you too, and god bless the federal Republic of Nigeria." He replied solemnly.

Victory and the other soldiers barely got into one of their armored vehicles when they heard the deafening explosion that violently shook the ground, they immediately drove away from the raging inferno that it ignited.

As they drove back to their command base. The enormity of what Emmanuel had just done came up on Victory like a gigantic Rock.

Unable to hold back the dam of emotions, he slumped forward, buried his face in his palms and his shoulders shook violently as he wept unabashedly. The other soldiers gave him a much-needed space as they watched him with pain and sadness in their eyes.

On the day 2nd lieutenant Emmanuel Chidindu Akunna and the other fallen soldiers were to be buried in one of the military cemeteries, victory and a few other soldiers preceded the whipping family and friends who had come to bury their dead.

Victory had never gotten over the events that took the lives of his colleagues and his best Friend. Could he ever forget it? He didn't think so. The pain of that event still throbbed like a fresh jagged wound.

For several days and nights, when he thought no one was watching him, he often whispered to himself.

"He died for me, he died for me!" On and on he chanted it like a mantra, wishing it wasn't true, wheeling the event to go away.

But the ongoing funeral was a harsh reminder of the horrific event.

None of the bodies of the soldiers could be recovered after being blown into smithereens, thus some soldiers were sent back to the site to fetch some of the ashes to put inside the coffins...

As they marched on, Victory could hear the wailing mother of his late best friend. And the anguished cry of Emmanuel's girlfriend who he had planned to propose to. He felt for both of them, but especially the mother of his late best friend, she was a widow and had also lost her only child in the world.

The funeral at the graveside started and one of the military pastors stepped out to give the eulogy.

"Today is another sad day in the history of this country and in our lives." The pastor began. "I pray that every sacrifice our brother's, sons, friends and colleagues have made for the freedom of this country will never be forgotten in Jesus name."

The people replied to him with an, "amen", before he continued the eulogy.

"When the news of the failed operation reached my ears, I was heartbroken and torn apart, but there was a particular report about the event that made me dissolve into tears, and that was the selfless act of late second lieutenant Emmanuel Chidindu Akunna."

At the mention of her late son's name, Mrs. Akunna, who had calmed down a little, resumed another high-pitched cry, and more people rushed to her side to console her.

When everything had calmed down a little, the pastor resumed. "While I prayed and asked God for the Bible passage to use for this funeral, the Holy Spirit showed me John 15:13."

The pastor opened his Bible and read aloud... John 15:13. "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

He closed the Bible and peered into the crowd. "This Bible passage sums it up, my friends."

"This selfless act of love is what Emmanuel did for the four survivors that came home to us, for the community of Achi and Nigeria."

"While I was meditating on the scripture, the Holy Spirit showed me how the shoe fits with the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross of Calvary. Just like Emmanuel, Jesus was the only son of God who gave his life for us so that we might be saved. And he didn't just do it for a country or continent, he did it for the whole of mankind."

"This, my friends, is the greater Love. And may the sacrifice of our brother always serve as remembrance of that greater love of Jesus Christ."

When the funeral was over, and everyone had left the burial ground, Victory sat down at the edge of his friend's grave. He needed his own personal time with his friend, it wasn't like his friend was in that grave anyway.

"I'm still finding it hard to believe that we've separated from each other," Victory started.

"I don't even need to ask how you're doing because I know you are happy up there. I'm just sad that I didn't listen to you all this while you were giving me those messages of salvation, we would have gone together that day."

And that was when Victory broke down crying and repented from all his sins and welcomed Jesus into his life. When he finished, an inexplicable peace rested upon him, and he smiled for joy for the first time since his friend's death.

Instead of looking at the grave, he looked up to the sky this time around and spoke again to his friend.

"I love you, my brother. Thank you for giving me another chance in life. I know we will meet again, up there, and we will both catch up on old times: but until then, rest well, my friend. Rest in peace, my brother.

Victory got up and dusted off sand from his trousers. He gave the grave one long look before wheeling himself out of the cemetery with a new life.

The end.

About the Author

Faith Ijiga is a Christian fiction author that writes suspense, mystery and thriller. Faith resides in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

She is the author of two fiction books and five short stories. She's a blogger and a book reviewer... Faith is the founder of an online club for Christian writers. She turned Twenty-seven on the 26th of August 2022, the same day her second book, a crime fiction, was published, she's a bachelor's degree holder from the National Open University of Nigeria where she read Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution... She is an advocate for Peace and a political analyst.

Faith was diagnosed with cataracts when she was barely six months old, she had a failed surgery at the age of one which ended up making her sight condition beyond medical repair... Faith grew up with a sight impairment for over 20 years and also attended a special school for the blind... Today, she uses her experiences as a testimony to inspire others by letting them know that truly, nothing is impossible with God.

Faith loves talking about sports, she is a die-hard fan of Chelsea FC. When she is not writing or Googling New authors to obsess over, Faith enjoys learning new things, watching sports shows and updates, spending time with family and friends and ultimately the Holy Spirit who is her best friend and helper.

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THIS IS IT

By IDOWU KEHINDE ELIZABETH.

'There's a rumor that the Corona Virus started in a Chinese lab...

Conspiracy theorists have confirmed that the lab is the origin of the Covid-19 CoronaVirus outbreak.

There are two main versions of the rumor, and they have one common thread: that the CoronaVirus SARS-COV-2, originated in a level 4 (the highest biosafety level) research laboratory in Wuhan.

In one version of the rumor, the Virus was engineered in a lab by humans as a 'bioweapon.'

In another version, the Virus was being studied in a lab (after being isolated from animals) and then 'escaped' or 'leaked' because of poor safety protocol.

The Wuhan Institute of Virology is a real place and the exact origin of the novel CoronaVirus is still a mystery, with researchers racing since the outbreak began to figure it out.

But already, Virologist who've parsed the genome and infectious disease experts who study CoronaVirus are brand new and came from nature.

The emergence of the Virus in the same city as China's only level 4 biosafety lab, it turns out, appears to be pure coincidence...'

"And here's the latest scoop from yours truly, Amanda Brown from the only Conspiracy debunking TV channel."

Aria sighed as she turned off the antique TV.

She groaned into her pillow.

'So which was it?'

Being a Conspiracy Theory debunker, it's been her goal for a while now—roughly seven years—to always seek out the truth.

The real truth.

And not the bull the U.S government gave the public to make them none the wiser.

She stood and stretched, her long hair falling in waves behind her back.

She looked down at her outfit—she was in a boxer brief and blue tank top.

She looked around her apartment—it was messy.

It looked as if a bomb had exploded in it the night before.

She sighed for like the umpteenth time that day.

It was time to get cleaned.

She raced out of her small but homey apartment still struggling to put on her left shoe.

'Blast it!'

She had to catch the train to downtown, she had a reliable source waiting for her there.

She was a journalist, but she flew solo and the only reason being she hates attachments.

But the most insecure part of her knew it was because she was afraid of getting hurt, by people, so she surrounded herself with steels that were practically impenetrable.

In ten minutes, she reached her destination.

She followed religiously the coordinates sent to her and she found herself in front of an abandoned looking house.

She closed the door to the cab and immediately it zoomed off.

She looked around and saw nothing but trees.

The house looked intimidating and her doubts began to grow.

She swallowed and buried her hands deep into her pocket and headed in.

She got in.

"Hello." She called out as she walked tentatively through the house.

She was greeted with silence.

Suddenly, she felt strong arms grab her into a room.

Aria was already prepared to go 'Kung Fu Panda' on their ass, when she heard a familiar voice speak.

"Shhh."

She turned around to face her captor.

"Bryan?"

Said person pulled their hoodie to reveal a handsome face. His blue-green eyes stared into hers and her heart raced.

Aria cursed herself for allowing herself to be affected by him.

She freed herself from his hold, putting her game face on.

"What was so urgent you had to pick this crappy location?"

"Keep your voice down Aria." He told her in a whisper.

But she ignored him.

"I just got a call from Antonio. What's all this bull about 5G? Another conspiracy theory. The Corona Virus being a cover up for the death it supposedly caused?"

He walked up to her and grabbed both her arms firmly staring into her eyes.

For the very first time she got there, she noticed the pure panic and fear in them.

"Bryan?" She whispered.

"None of that matters. None of that'll matter in a few months Aria." He let her go rather harshly and she watched him confused as he paced through the fairly dark room running a shaky hand through his hair.

Aria looked around and realized the interior of the house was much worse than its exterior. Dust covered everywhere.

"Will you calm down and talk to me?"

He took several calming breaths before turning to face her.

"The breach in Wuhan, the CoronaVirus, 5G and all the other conspiracy theories are all a front for Aria."

"A distraction from an even bigger threat that could lead to the destruction of mankind as we know it." He started.

"What do you mean?" Aria was still very confused.

Aria's eyes caught briefly, the crucifix he always wore around his neck.

Ever since she'd known him, he was a devoted Christian, always wanting to do the right thing that was why he became a reporter in the first place.

And that was also what led to their break up in the first place.

Apparently, he'd wanted to wait and she had wanted to take things to the next level.

Feeling rejected, she'd broken things off with him.

He'd claimed it was against his beliefs.

She'd called Bull.

He now stood staring into her eyes and she'd never seen him look so hopeless before.

"God showed me Aria." He whispered.

Her palms began to sweat and her throat became dry.

She knew whatever he had to say would be the truth.

When she'd said he was a Christian, she'd meant he had the gifts as well, though she'd tried to tell herself otherwise.

"The Beast is here." He said.

'What?'

Aria's eyes widened.

"You don't mean—" He nodded as her voice died off.

Her hands began to tremble and in that instant, Aria vaguely recalled vaguely the dreams she'd also been having recently, about the end of the world.

The Beast, the False Prophet....

She hadn't told anyone about it.

Aria looked back up at him, feeling more scared than she'd ever been in her entire life.

Then she'd told him about her dreams, seeing how he was telling her the same truth, that must mean there was an iota of truth in what he was saying...or they could just both be going crazy...

"Take my hand Aria and I'll show you what I saw."

She took two steps back afraid.

"I don't want to." A tear fell down her cheek.

She didn't want to, her dream had been enough.

She was a reporter, there was supposed to be a rational explanation for everything, scientific explanation.

But nothing about her dream had made sense.

He held her hand and pulled her gently to him.

"I promise no harm will come to you. You have to know I can't bear this on my own. Someone else has to know."

And immediately, Aria felt warmth fill her entire being.

"Don't worry Aria...He's here."

She pulled back from his embrace and nodded looking into his eyes, her heart in her throat.

She placed her second hand in his and closed her eyes...

...

When she opened them, Aria found herself in front of a very large Castle engulfed in darkness, fire burned everywhere and the air wreaked of sulfur.

She felt fear so intense, she nearly passed out.

But her curiosity as a journalist propelled her forward.

Slowly, she made her way to the Castle and surprisingly the door opened up to her.

She saw a long table that stretched almost to the end of the impossibly big room with chairs arranged on both sides.

Aria's eyes widened and her heart almost gave out as she saw demons chatter loudly, there were scores of them.

They came in forms and sizes but they were all disgustingly hideous.

She saw several terrifying-looking demons taking their seats, they seemed to be very high ranked.

She took a step back frightened at the disturbing sight in front of her.

She felt a hand hold hers suddenly and she jumped.

"I'm right here. Don't be afraid." She saw Bryan by her side staring down at her, a determined look in his eyes.

He turned back to the scene in front of them.

"They can't see or sense us."

They both stood by a corner and watched the entire scene unfold in front of them.

She saw a man enter the room, he looked surprisingly gentle.

But right in front of her, he transformed into a giant hideous demon, much bigger than the rest of the other demons.

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