

Chronicles of Zazzau: A WRITER'S ODYSSEY

Tear gas..., Screams...,Gunshots...., Fear!!!!

"Wake up ", Onomza beckons, "you're screaming again in your sleep", she says.

I took my time to roll over to the right side of my bed, alas! It's morning, I couldn't be more grateful, I picked up my phone and quickly snoozed the alarm that had been blaring while I was fast asleep.

The nights are usually long, I thought to myself and these days I've been having series of weird dreams, infact all my life has been a cycle of reminiscence. There's a thing called PTSD, I also thought... I seem to often fall deep into thoughts about past events but this particular event is different, it has stayed, my memory still paints vivid pictures of the event and I wonder why I still feel all the emotions I felt on that day, the shocking part is I was a baby, I was two years old and now I'm twenty four.

That particular day was different, I imagined as I got deeper in thoughts.

I thought about the dream and how Onomza had felt after seeing me blabber in my sleep and then waking up startled and somewhat relieved.

It's always an amplified mix of emotions for me, I can paint pictures with my memory and my imaginations can be as vivid as real.

I live in a world of sonic artistry, even the music I listen to turn to motion pictures in my head, I have a heightened sense of imagination.

I recall the events of that day, a day that had scarred me so deeply, a day that has made me question my existencial purpose, a day that introduced to real life.....I pause, take a deep breathe and slowly immerse myself back in thoughts of that day, a day my memory seem to keep on replay, the nightmares too, let me tell you about the nightmares, I see two buildings facing each other, I see a single block of classroom and then a small passage to the entrance of the block.

I was too much of an infant to had taken note of all these but I was too scared on that day that I remember exactly what happened.

We were little kids in a classroom filled with floral frames and alphabet pictures, you could tell from a glance into the classroom that the little kids in this class were at an age where pictures, shapes and sounds of words, objects and alphabets were their primary mode of learning.

I remember being carried away hurriedly through the passage, it was so cloudy that day and I tried to close my eyes but I couldn't, I couldn't because my eye balls would hurt till I'm forced to open my eyes.

I remember the ear piercing screams that filled the atmosphere, someone swiped little me off the ground, swiftly into their palms and then dashed off towards the entrance to the single block of classroom, I can't recall the face of the person that picked me up but I remember the pounding heart beat, I remember the pants, the sound of scared school

children and teachers clouded everywhere, then the gunshots followed, it was loud, it made everywhere vibrate, even the concrete wall shook like it was going to fall. The person carrying me ran quickly into the building and then made their way towards the concrete wall, I couldn't help but still wonder in between how precise everything was, like it was pre-planned.

Everything happened so fast, the tear gas, the screams, the heart pounding and then in a blink we're at the concrete wall, what next?

This is how the night mares always come, hence my reaction whenever Onomza wakes me up.

It doesn't stop with nightmares though, the nightmares always take me back to the concrete wall, a place my memory dreads so much, it was the point of escape on the day, that particular event took place.

I would constantly drive my mind back to the concrete wall knowingly or otherwise.

I'm fully awake now, conscious enough to tell the tale of the concrete wall.

The concrete wall was all we had on that scary day of screams and gunshots.

I remember a concrete wall, then I saw a hole in the wall that led to the "other side", I was tossed in hand like a freshly baked bread escaping the hands of the baker cause of the heat emitting from the baking pan, someone caught me, someone I don't remember who.... and immediately a calm atmosphere welcomed me on the "other side"

In the blink of an eye, I was away from the cloud of tear gas, the gunshots no longer sounded close and the screams of the other school children so far away.

I'd finally escaped, or so I thought to myself.

THE CRISIS

I checked online, I did my research and even asked questions but all to no avail.

No one seems to remember or even recall the happenings of 2001, could this be a facade.... or maybe it's just fragments of my imaginations?

It can't be, I reassured myself briefly, the one event that has kept my mind imprisoned for over 20 years is not a make believe, I saw remember every thing that happened, I heard the cries, I saw the concrete wall but to what end?

History has no record, word of mouth cannot attest to the happenings too and now I'm stuck in a timeline that even I cannot bring myself to understand.

This is my voyage of reassessment, I can not tell categorically what happened on that day but I can tell for a fact that Zazzau is a town filled with tales and discoveries, some of which you have to see and experience for yourself, others are fragments of events that question your sanity and stance.

Let me introduce myself to you, my name is Mimi Hassan, a 24 year old from the City of the great queen Amina, Zaria (Zazzau).

This is my odyssey.

THE ODYSSEY

Scars tell stories, Melodies are soothing to the hearer's ear and words are the writer's expression.

This odyssey is an expression of fear, trauma and so many untold tales that linger. Growing up in Zaria is a unique experience that life presented me with, I was excited about a lot of things as a child, the morning road drives that my dad takes my siblings and on that always leaves my mum with a frown even though we enjoyed it, junior choir rehearsals in church too but going to school was one of the things that kept me active and the happiest as a child.

I lived at House [23, Aminci Road, Tudun Samiya](#), Zaria in Kaduna state, My family lived a simple life at the time, my both parents are Nurses and both were in active service and provided my siblings and I with a comfortable life.

It was easy to navigate the neighborhood because everything and everyone had close proximity.

I could stand at the veranda and get a cross-sectional view of the whole area, my church and school were even located in the same place which was a stone throw from my house, I could easily go to school myself and making my way around the neighborhood even as a kid wasn't a difficult task, in fact my mom said I was enrolled in school earlier than she'd wanted me to because I would frequently leave the house and make my way to school, I don't remember doing that but she says she'll find me countless times sitting in the classroom with the other kids and since I attended the church that was in the school, the teachers there recognized me [from Sunday](#) school and would often let me to sit in class with the other kids. My first teacher Mrs Zakari managed to convince my mom to enroll me in school, she would say "she is a smart kid and if she enjoys coming to school on her own then I think enrolling her wouldn't be difficult ", my mom had objected at first because she didn't want any of her children to start school before the age of three and I was two years old, after much persuasion from my teachers and my constant disappearance from the house, my mom decided to enroll me in school and I became a pupil officially.

I would always come back from school excited and singing the letters of the alphabet was my usual jam.

I looked forward to getting ready for school every morning and unlike other kids, I never cried when going to school.

I enjoyed learning at a very young age, I found my teachers amusing and they found me interesting because I was the youngest in the class.

Everyday was a different learning experience for me and I can say that my classroom was my happy place until that eventful day.

Everything took a different turn that morning after my mom dropped me off at school

and made her way to back.

Other kids in my class had a frequent attitude of crying and I just couldn't understand what the displeasure was for them at the time, but that morning the cries were different, it seemed like everyone in the school had a reason, Fear was the reason. That event threw everyone in disarray and all I can remember was one second I was happily reciting the letters of the alphabets and then the next second I was at the concrete wall, everything happened so fast on that day.

The rest is a blur.

THE "OTHER SIDE" OF TRAUMA

My whole life has been a constant replay of the events that happened that day.

I've grown with the memories and sometimes I have nightmares about the concrete wall, I'm constantly battling with my thoughts because the memories have refused to fade.

I wake up every morning and I'm relieved because my dreams always present screams and concrete walls to me.

I walk around thinking about that day and how scared I was, I don't know what happened afterwards, I don't even know if other pupils made it out alive, I cannot help but think to my self even after twenty two years.

It's has been an endless journey of emotions for me, It's always the screams, it's always the gunshot, it's always the heart beat of terror.

I can't seem to forget the happenings of that day and I can't stop talking about it either, because I would have picked another story to tell this morning but here I am at edge of my bed with my phone in hand, lost and recalling yet again what had happened, now I'm left to tell a story that lives even I with so many unanswered questions.

I'm left with nothing but wordful expressions of my odyssey.

I have now become the writer character and reader at the same time.

I tell my tales of myself by myself describing myself in this event.

Now you're also a voyager going through the trauma of a twenty four year old writer who is expressing how she feels and what event is most memorable in her life , where she expresses her deepest and most profound emotions in this story, it's a root story of survival, over coming fear and finding calm after this sail called life.

This is The writer's odyssey.

A lost tale of unanswered questions.