Narrativa Aracne

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Nightfall in Paradise

Animal World War
Big Story of the World from Africa

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To,

My mother Mgbojiri
And my daughter Margherita Ezenwanyi

Author's note

I feel it critically necessary with a sense of duty, taking up this emergency theme, of also our time, **WAR**.

Human history is full of wars. Kingdoms were built with huge volumes of human blood and each rested on vast ruins of people's lives. Empires rose, lasted and fell upon cruel days that left inglorious landmarks of dreadful memories. At worst, mankind has witnessed two world wars, while the third threatens. Nations still rise against nations. Great wastage of lives and destruction of diverse values are measureless. Many innocent people are still daily victims of other forms of new warfare including neo-colonialism and terrorism.

Times have seen mankind surviving through this recurrent disaster and globally spread tragedy. But man is habitually active in same social wrong. Today wounded and divided human family needs healing; having arrived of age as modern tools of communication, are increasingly unifying the world.

War and other catastrophes in any part of the Earth are directly or indirectly felt everywhere. News of war creates reactions at all levels of public life and upsets peace of human society as a whole.

Horrors of wars in Africa and other parts of the World are still doing irreparable damages. Human crisis often occurs. Genocide, social vices and mass displacement are common. The anguish of old ones and separation of family units are unbearable. Babies starve and get lost in uncontrollable stampede. Wild abuse of children and other bewildering acts against humanity challenge sanity. Total destruction of cities and villages is evident with damages or complete disruption of public infrastructures. Huge funds, materials and human resources are yet, being wasted by peaceful but insecure states keeping armies whiles hunger, malnutrition, diseases, homelessness, death, tears and sorrow are order of the day in war and poverty affected areas worldwide.

Ironically enough, war is not a natural disaster. It is artificial creation of man. It is indeed a policy; planned and implemented by governments. Sometimes, it is organised criminal business operation, between local and foreign interests.

War is the worst method of conflict resolution in today's world. But the outbreak of more wars continues to defile and frustrate international pacific efforts wanting to end war permanently on Earth. Concerned people have raised voices, written words and antiwar activists are taking actions against war everywhere. This is my contribution among other media of decent, addressing the junior generations. I am doing what my conscience and human ability, allow me to do.

I saw war partially as a child when Nigerian civil war was ending. There were news and rumours about the fall of far big cities, distant towns and nearby villages; while it lasted. Refugees surged into my village tired and hungry. It became our turn later. I was one of many children that walked long distances with swollen feet, when the war arrived. We ran to farm settlement and again into forest. It was raining night and day. Mud was up above knees. We stayed under grooves for more than fourteen days. There were sounds of guns and bombings. War planes roared past in sky above. Disgusting odour of human decays was everywhere. Scenes of bloody corpses, skulls and skeletons were horrifying. Sights of mines, grenades, bullets, guns and soldiers terrified my infant mind and constituted nightmares to my memory thereafter.

Terrible impression left deep in me was reawakened years afterwards, when I saw refugees once again coming into Nigeria, with outbreak of wars in West African sub-region. This awareness further drew my attention, imagination and thoughts increasingly with time. I became more and more conscious of its holocaust effects, more so while wars were spreading in all parts of entire Africa continent.

Wars of recent times witnessed, all over the world show notorious extents of human calamity consciously being caused by man. Notable among those include wars of: Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Chad, Congo, Angola, Algeria, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique, Namibia, Colombia, Philippines, Burma, Cambodia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka,

India/Pakistan, Iran, Israel/Palestine, Chechnya, Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Afghanistan Lebanon and Iraq; etc
I use animal fables and other forms of folklores, inspired by my grandmother earlier in my life in making my story. That offers me better and familiar means of addressing young ones as I was who will become leaders tomorrow. I do think that most national leaders, who take decisions to go to war, have done so mainly because the common literatures of their childhood glorified war.

This narrative also shows animals with senses of humour, love, organisation, choice, friendship, survival and family etc. This helps us to compare our attitudes with characteristics of animals as a mirror of human behaviours, in order to see images of our selves. Such abstraction turns us into audience, to observe a stage replica of man's worst social vice, in a simple and unforgettable form.

This story is a symbolic moonlight tale a grandfather would tell his grandchildren, showing the huge world of mankind in small village setting. The text is written in verses of seven lines, for easy reading and clear understanding. It reduces greater realities into lowest common forms. War although a serious tragedy is reconstructed into a comedy.

The story is principally meant for juniors of 10-20years old. But it is not my intention to impose limits on literary values that could be derived from it by adults likewise. Human community is shown as an animal society. Human occupations transform to animal behaviours. A particular animal therefore represents a large sector of human profession.

Vulture (*scavenger bird*) represents material interests;
Owl (*nocturnal wondering bird*) represents public rumour;
Bat (*seeming coal-dirty like a blacksmith*) represents weapon industries;
Weaverbirds (*noisily clustering coloured birds*) represent news media;
Lion, shark and hawk (*flesh devouring animals*) represent military profession;
Mantis (*seemingly meditative creature*) represents religion;
Dove (*peaceful and friendly*) represents pacifisms;
Sheep and Ram (*very feminine and masculine respectively*) represent Lovers;
Cockerels and Frogs (*periodic noise raisers*) represent state propaganda etc.

The Earth is also recreated into an animal planet made up of only three continental nations without man. Those are:

Amaland, nation of land animals
Zaquinia, nation of water animals
Airecia, nation of air animals

Main characters in the drama are:

Banetus a Vulture businessman
Sadowin an Owl Sadist rumour monger
Domigan an Elephant king of Amaland
Megalord a Whale king of Zaquinia
Hugozone an Eagle king of Airecia

Patrick a Parrot diplomat Airecian Foreign Minister
Titus a Lion Amaland Military chief and Defence Minister
Chaka a Shark Zaquinian Defence Minister
Morana a Dove Peace maker
Babarube a Mantis Religious preacher
Gregory and Gloria are Ram and Sheep Lovers…

Names of persons and places are freely adopted or invented. The reader should apply common sense of symbolism. This is necessary in order to receive with ease the simple but boundless messages to be found in this story of Nature.

It remains an irony, despite present level of human development, that life on earth is continually endangered by acts of man himself. Claim of human civilization, so far agreeable, is questionable if civilized man of today still misbehaves, even worse than uncivilized person of yesteryears.

I set out with NIGHTFALL IN PARADISE to give a word to someone and leave a voice for all. Both to, re-awake our consciousness and to build better tomorrow. I hope the book will be a source of inspiration for younger generations, helping to make wiser future decisions and leading to greater general life equilibrium.

Ezenwa Nwokoro

Part One

Chapter One

Peace Festival is holding.
But the World War is beginning.
Banetus a Vulture arrives, flying.
Sadowin an Owl is following behind.
The poor bad Airecians descend and perch together on the tower this noon.
They are hungry, as they watch the main great celebration;
That is taking place in Amaland nation.

Monkongonzano is beating.
Crowds of Nduma city are dancing.
The prestigious ancestral music of land people plays once a year.
Many are eating, more drinking and others happily joking.
The weather is fair today and country is peaceful.
All is going well and life is so fine.
The occasion is at peak.

The greatest crowd has come from everywhere.
Men, women, young and old are still, arriving from far and wide.
Latecomers from remote areas are happily hurrying on their way.
Those near can see risen dust, out of dancing feet from distance,
As they close in towards the gigantic playground of Amaland.
Amadum is the largest and most outstanding construction
That is made by man in the world.

Today's event is the biggest of all past centuries.
Amadum has been decorated as never done for years.
It is a lively scene with beautiful things and colours.
Amalands have all come out in their bests of attires.
Public statues, paintings, fine leaves and flowers
Have, been displayed in befitting artistic forms.
Every family wears a uniform fashion.

Zebras are in black and white stripes.
Giraffes wear brown, yellow, black and white shadings.
Tigers are clothed in black and brown narrow lines.
Pythons and snakes mix yellow, brown and black.
Leopards are adorned in yellow and black spots.
Horses, cats, sheep, monkeys, lions and bears
Carry various shapes of haircuts.

Ebenezer a cow is trumpeter.
Muza an elephant is base-drummer.
Emeka a kangaroo is playing conga.
Diego a chimpanzee beats gong.
Andropov a cat blows horn.
Titilo a mouse plays string.
Hisa a pig is on organs.

Popular singers have sung, versions
They adapted from the seven folk songs.
Instruments are all beginning to beat stronger.
Giant drum booms harder with trumpets blazing higher.
Horns are blowing sharper, noise louder and scene rowdier.
More people are entering stage centre and dance grows warmer.
Feet are moving smarter with musical flow, while dust rises thicker.

Everyone is having full fun.
Each is doing own, stepping and gesticulations.
Some are dancing forward, some backwardly moving.
Another is stoop-down walking, some others up-hopping.
Some are hanging their limbs, turning and shivering.
Others are falling, crawling, kneeling and rising.
Some run, halt and run again.

Monkeys are jumping around.
Kangaroos are leaping up and down.
Dogs are all wagging their tails about.
Horses are hanging forelegs, galloping.
Snakes are wriggling and lifting upright.
Gorillas are showing their teeth up to sunlight.
Pigs are digging in soil with their mouths.

Rabbits are smartly sprinting.
Tigers are acrobatically dancing.
Cheetahs are speeding across and round.

He-goats are nosing behind asses of women.
Millipedes and centipedes are coiling and uncoiling.
Lizards are all nodding their heads to sounds.
Snails are moving slowly to rhythms.

Monkongonzano goes climatic!
Entire crowd joins it with rhythmic clapping.
The countless chorusing sound forms a powerful shower of soulful energy.
All are screaming: lions roaring, dogs barking, goats bleating and ants ranting.
Amadum is thrown into a huge free state of general ecstasy.
The sky is clear and blue over the good day.
The sun beams bright with golden rays.

Chapter Two

But the music changes rhythms.
Musicians are now playing a different tune.
The lively flowing sound loses its smooth melody.
Monkongonzano turns rough, with discordant thundering.
It creates a mixed feeling of fear, strife, violence and danger.
The weak, the females, the miniature and the children:
Are, leaving the floor for those bigger and stronger.

The big drum thunders louder.
Men begin to shout and run wild.
Game turns rough as they clash with one another.
Drum booms on and centre becomes tougher and rougher.
Drum continues booming and cracks its highest, storming like terrible thunder.
Game rages more into total disorder; lawless, cruel, very violent; for a little while.
Till, Monkongonzano returns to dignified rhythms and lowers into absolute order.

Music ebbs till silence.
Every person leaves the dance stage.
The lively scene heavily settles with smiles, resting in boozing state again.
King Domigan rises and gracefully goes till the pulpit on platform.
The giant elephant strongly stands on feet, facing entire people.
He begins to address huge crowds of the occasion;
Whiles, people are listening with keen attention.

Voice of the king
Is, sounding loud and clear.
It echoes high into the blue sky.
Amaland citizens are being caught
By the bold words Domigan is speaking.
People are becoming interested in his promises of plenty.
They break into noisily widening cheers under the burning sunshine.