Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

A Shadow of the Night

Benjamim João Luís · Friday, July 15th, 2022

A Shadow of the Night

by Benjamim João Luís

June, 1998, in the neighbourhood of Munhava, a controversial and peripheral neighbourhood of the second capital of Mozambique, a country of beautiful beaches, cultural diversity, gastronomy that warms and enchants the soul, linguistic diversity, beautiful muses dressed in Capulana and their faces painted with Musiro and, at the same time, bathed in a lot of black magic, land of different types of sorcerers, land of homeless children, and heroes with discarded ideas and replaced by the greed of those who govern.

It was winter. The cold was so intense that the intestines were hiding inside the stomach, the fingers froze, and the lips were so dry and cracked they went through a peeling process. The hours passed at a snail's pace and night came quickly with the darkness that precipitated the night itself. And the mouth of the night was the harbinger of the feast that the sorcerers and the night shadows of the Munhava neighbourhood would make around the fire under their sinful hosannas.

In the neighbourhood of Munhava Matope there was a centenary family whose surname was Wasosa Wafa in a literal translation means "provoked, died," a feared family—at that time fear meant respect and the family was well known for being traditional and having two healers' wives of the kinglet Mugaute which means a thick and lethal peak. Mwezi, which means Moon, was his first wife and Ngondo, which means "war," was his second wife. They both had something in common: enviable beauty of African goddesses, a pure essence and hardworking women who owned large agricultural production fields in the lowlands of Inhamizua.

Mwezi had two children. Chanaze, 24 years old, and Faria, 26 years old. Ngondo had only one daughter, Tangi. Tangi, which means "Goddess of praise" in the Bantu language of Namibia, was the most beautiful girl in the whole area. She was 18 years old, with the skin of a mermaid, plump, rosy lips made to measure. Her smile was like the June sun on a chilly morning that warmed the day of everyone who saw her. Her gait was a real waddle; the gods had a lot of patience and time when sculpting this magnificent work of art that enchanted, hypnotized and devastated the hearts of all men in the neighbourhood. And the fame of her beauty was heard in neighbouring areas such as Muchatazina, Vaz, Pioneiros and Massamba.

Chanaze drew little attention from men because she had beauty standards common to any girl at that time, and she always had poor performance at school, having preferred to dedicate herself to the production of vegetables for entrepreneurship despite not being as beautiful as her sister. In Africa, we don't say half-sister. Sister is sister. She was focused, hardworking, kind, humble and a woman with a huge heart. She helped others whenever she could, but she had little luck in love, the two attempts at lobolo failures, and until the age of 24, she was single and virgin, which was a reason to panic for parents at that time when women were getting married early.

One block from the Wasosa Wafa house, there was an assimilated family from the south of the country—the Machava, made up of Mr. Machava, his wife Madalena and their two children, who had just arrived from Cuba where they had been studying. Both won scholarships from the missionary priests of the Catholic Church. Edson was a military engineer and Panguane was a doctor. Panguane was the youngest and was looking forward to getting married. His parents had already talked to the Wasosa Wafa to ask for their daughter Tangi's hand to Panguane when he returned from Cuba.

Tangi was excited and happy because she was going to marry a doctor. Panguane was at that time a young man that many other girls in the neighbourhood wanted and their families would be very happy if they had a son-in-law like him. The two families talked and there was permission on the part of the Wasosa Wafa to ask for her daughter Tangi's hand as soon as Panguane returned from Cuba.

Weeks later, Panguane and Tangi celebrated their marriage and there was a big feast. A week after the wedding, the couple moved to the Ponta-Gea neighbourhood and the husband started working at the Beira Central Hospital. Chanaze happily celebrated her sister's wedding, but inside she was unhappy because she was the oldest and still single. She questioned herself and didn't find answers, but she never lost faith that one day she would find her soulmate.

A year had passed and Tangi hadn't gotten pregnant. She had frequent dreams about a shadow of the night having sex with her and she loved and reached the peak, different when she did with her husband, but this was a reality that she never told her husband, only the mother, and she knew the whole truth and the reason for the problems her daughter faced, as she offered it to her spirits in the genesis of her profession as healer. It was an offer to the gods of the underworld for her to do great works, to get a lot of customers and to be very recognized, and so she was, but to disguise she started to create confusion with her rival, Ngondo. She accused her of having cast a spell on her daughter, Tangi, a shadow husband so that she would never conceive and be happy in her home. Because Tangi was prettier than Chanaze and because she was lucky enough to marry a very dear young doctor, her accusations were believable. Chanaze was the unfortunate one and Ngondo had every reason to be jealous and bewitch her stepdaughter. Their husband as well as the people of Munhava believed it was envy on the part of Ngondo, and her strong and warlike personality agreed with the accusations, but the two rival healers knew the whole truth. The problem was how Ngondo could prove otherwise, that despite all the presumable evidence she had nothing to do with her stepdaughter's misfortune and unhappiness.

A month went by and the atmosphere in the Wasosa Wafa family was more intense, the husband no longer slept with Ngondo and started sleeping with Mwezi entirely, discarding the agreement made when Ngondo accepted to be the second wife. And, at this moment, a war between two healers began taking place. Each night the rivals would find themselves on the wide grounds of the house, naked, each one in her night jet wielding powerful sorcery weapons and fighting. Ngondo

claimed why Mwezi accused her of such a crime, and she was the one who had to ask the spirits and undo the sacrifice she made for her daughter, but Mwezi didn't want to know and wanted to take advantage of the situation for her husband to separate from his second wife.

On a night of a blood moon, they were in the backyard of the house while the world wandered in walking dreams. In this fight, Mwezi was wounded with very strong sorcery magic, a tactic that her rival Ngondo had learned from her late great-grandmother who was the greatest sorceress from the district of Mambone, a distant land where President Samora Machel passed away. The morning after, Mwezi couldn't get up. She was seriously ill and regretted that it was her rival who had bewitched her to kill her to be her husband's only wife, because she was so bad that she wanted to end her and her daughter´s life. When the entire neighbourhood of Munhava realized, it revolted and the people wanted to finish Ngondo's life, but her husband was a kinglet and they couldn't do anything.

It was a Saturday night; the sky and the stars were a harbinger of better days. They carried the sick woman and brought her to the backyard. She almost choked to see all the crowd around her and with many healers. Ngondo had already been hastily condemned and they were just to confirm through all the healers in the place. The drumming began to sound loud. Men grunted and groaned while several beads around the tired waists of the healers danced electrifyingly.

At dawn, the drums stopped beating and the clairvoyance session began, in which it was discovered that Mwezi sacrificed her daughter Tangi's longing to the spirits of ancestors so that she would be a recognized healer, operate better and have many clients. All the people present were flabbergasted. His daughter almost lost consciousness and gasped. The great witchdoctor named Ntsai headed the whole team and directed the ceremonies.

Mwezi would only get better if she confessed the whole truth. She did so and at the same moment, she was already better and managed to get up.

In the same session, Mwezi undid the sacrifice and the daughter fainted. In the moment everyone paid attention to her daughter, Mwezi turned into a giant snake and slithered away forever.

The next morning the sky was beautiful and the sun was shining bright. Three months later Tangi got pregnant. Chanaze met a young professor, got married and went to live in Maputo. The knglet Wasosa Wafa stayed with his second wife, Ngondo, and his son Faria who started to manage the family's agricultural fields, as they were already producing enough started to supply the entire region of the city.

Ten months later, Tangi had a daughter and named her Mwezi in honour of her that evaporated in the clouds forever after becoming a giant snake, and Fario finally married Xiluwa, a girl who had just arrived from Inhambane, niece of the Massoco´s family, a strict family that lived in the Muchatazina neighbourhood.

(Featured image from Reddit user jabalsad)

This entry was posted on Friday, July 15th, 2022 at 7:33 am and is filed under Fiction
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can leave a

response, or trackback from your own site.