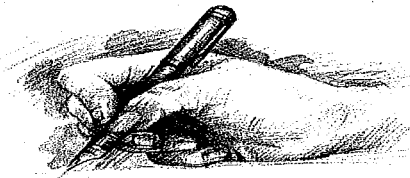


*GFWC GEORGIA FEDERATION OF
WOMEN'S CLUBS PRESENTS
THE
"SHORT STORY & POETRY"
WINNERS*



*AWARDED AT THE
125th Anniversary State Convention
June 10 - 13, 2021
Embassy Suites Savannah Airport
Savannah, Georgia*

GFWC GEORGIA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS
2021 SHORT STORY AWARD WINNERS
MEMBER WINNERS

CENTRAL EAST DISTRICT
No Entries

CENTRAL WEST DISTRICT
No Entries

NORTH EAST DISTRICT
No Entries

NORTH WEST DISTRICT
Jamila-Negesti Porter – GFWC Atlanta Woman's Club

SOUTH EAST DISTRICT
No Entries

SOUTH WEST DISTRICT
No Entries

THE JANE AUSTIN SHORT STORY AWARD
Jamila-Negesti Porter
GFWC Atlanta Woman's Club

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Atlanta Woman's Club/ Georgia Federation of Women's Clubs
Short Story
Yejide

She took a deep breath and held in the humid air. It was thick as mud; saturated moisture that traveled by way of trade winds. The dense mud like air and low-lying storm clouds were like twin sisters, partnered to bring forth torrential rain, and a terribly humid atmosphere.

The weather uniquely remained this way throughout the showdown between Yejide's mother and prestigious lawyer and the corrupt infiltration within the Jamaican government.

That evening, the violent storm ceased an hour before sunset; the heavy rain subsided. And the white chunk of a waxing gibbous moon that Yejide called a round swiss cheese accented the now clear sky.

"Sun and moon at the same time. Your mother loved this," recalled Ras Mauro, Yejide's father.

"God, his breath blew away the clouds. You see how dem move across the sky?" asked Yejide.

"Yes daughter. Mi feel it."

"It was like this when Mama left. Do you remember?"

Yejide's father had his moment, when he felt the urge to cry, and he held back his tears. It was difficult to speak on. So he didn't. They held on to the silence and grasped separate memories of Sheba (otherwise known as Makeda), Yejide's mother. Ras Mauro closed his aging delicate eyes, to feel nature's breeze.

To lift her spirit he told her, "Now daughter that the electric storm is over, we can go chant

Izes tonight. Let's prepare."

Izes is another term for Nyahbinghi, which is a gathering for worship amongst Rastafarians. A Rastafarian recognizes the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I as their returned Messiah. They call him the King of Kings. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Elect of the Throne. Light of the World. This religion was started right there on the island of Jamaica in the 1930's. They beat Nyahbinghi drums and sing or chant religious songs. They read the Psalms.

That was Yejide's cue to go dress for worship and she could gather with her cousin and friends. She retreated to her room. Yejide wrapped her locks with a white knitted scarf that was embroidered on the edges with red, gold, and green. It told a story of black redemption, African patriotism, and recognition of her African roots beyond Jamaica.

"I and I a di roots," she sang. That was a popular Bob Marley song. It was just released last year, 1976. The lyrics fresh on her tongue.

"Read this." Sheba placed a document in 16-year-old Yejide's hands (two years prior). The date read February 15, 1975.

She sat down and began reading the speech. "My fellow Jamaicans, know this, that Powers & Powers Law Firm has been a listening ear and a beacon of hope for the poor and working middle class. With the assistance of the leaders within the People's National Party, sanctioned by Norman Manley, we wish to submit a proposal to regenerate life back into the communities. Domingo and Collins of PNP have decided to fully back our endeavors, after their historic wins within the Courts of our land. Evidence of legitimacy will be made available to the public, declaring our clients' innocence as they become our major financial backers. I move to affirm that

our investments will come to fruition in 1977."

"Mama, there's some serious trouble here, isn't there?" She cleverly read between the lines, the way an advanced 16-year-old would. "Makeda Powers, Esquire, this is just the beginning." She began shaking her head, the way a teacher would to a student.

Benjamin (Yejide's cousin) and Yejide walked the full length of the 100-foot front yard. The neighborhood was truly rural and naturally beautiful. Crickets and cicadas sounded off. Nightingales were singing away, and dogs were barking intermittently through the early evening. It wasn't long before they heard their hangout crew as they approached the tip of the yard. They emerged from around the eight foot high pine shrubs, perfectly trimmed into a swirling funnel shape.

"The whole of dem a catch firefly. Come!" and she motioned to Benjamin. The five youth clamored together, cupping their hands around fireflies. Peeking through a hole in their fists, they could see the fireflies light up on the tips of their abdomens. Releasing and capturing another. Bumping into one another and laughing heavily and delightfully. It was quite the entertainment.

"We're too old for this!" Yejide laughed, and the others joined in chuckling. "But it was fun!"

The crew of five, between the ages 16-18, made their way to the beach, where they could hear the waves roar against the rocks, and listen to the seagulls squawk and fly in families through the sky. These were the times they adored.

The night sky settled in slowly.

"The water so clear." Yejide noticed these things. "The waves are violent."

"Like the night you said your Mother left for safety, because the police were after her."

Ruthy could not have found a worse moment.

She continued, "Don't feel like two years ago when this first started. How you feelin?"

"There are times, when I don't know, I feel like I lost her for good. She is a gem. I have to share her with di world, for that is how great her intentions are. To rid all of us from the clutches of corruption and poverty. She was greater than herself. Greater than our family."

"Yeah mon. We need her, you know? My parents told me about her project between the Powers & Powers Firm and the People's National Party. It benefited all of us. Pick your head up. Dem can't keep we down for long." Ruthy finished.

The other 5 friends listened knowingly, but silent. This truly humbled them.

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"No, place it there." Sheba then glanced up at Yejide, who awoke in the middle of the night. She rubbed her eyes, for a clear look at what Sheba was doing. There was a safe in the wall, the kind that had a security code to lock it.

As Yejide walked closer, she watched Sheba and two of her assistants place documents into folders for stow away into the safe. There were heaping amounts of papers, and they were organizing it all, sitting on the hardwood floor working diligently. As Yejide's knee touched Sheba's shoulder, Yejide read, "In receipt of purchases for Personal Care Items in the amount of \$15,000." Below it, "In receipt of purchases for Food Items in the amount of \$10,000." Next to this document Yejide started reading again. "The properties located in the parish of St. Mary - 100 acres of land (including farmland) - shall be immediately placed into the possession of Powers & Powers Firm after being purchased and rightfully attained in the amount of \$75,000. on the date March 2, 1975."

"Mama, what is this?"

"Baby we did it. We are going to finally be able to open up a village for the poor, with jobs!"

"We're calling it "The Rolling Mountains of the King," Georgina, Sheba's assistant chimed in

excitedly. "In honor of Haile Selassie's visit in 1966."

"You finally decided to go through with it?" Yejide began shaking her head in opposition. "If you develop on it, may they stop you. What about your enemies from the Jamaican Labour Party?"

"We've been planning this since 1975, and it's '76. I am not abandoning our dreams. We can save lives by carrying this out. It's perfect."

"But Mama, they say the money to purchase it was from bribes."

They retreated from the beach and sand-filled parking lot, walked through the woods, down the paved path to the flat clearing, surrounded by benevolent rolling hills. This is where the Rastafari Community held the Nyahbinghi. The hills were easy on the eyes to look at. You became eye-struck when viewing them. Similar to mounds, they hugged the land designated for the worship.

The sweet song of the Izes filled Yejide's ears. The drums echoed through the skies. The group of friends listened and sang the songs of the Nyahbinghi. The sea of people chorused in unison.

"By the rivers of Babylon, where we sat down. And there we wept, when we remembered Zion."

The men danced, and the women swayed from side to side rhythmically. The kete drum resonated an independent rhythm that made Yejide and her cousin smile. Melodic, like a solo, it inherited the likeness of its' African roots, reminding all of the cradle of civilization from which they came. Jumping high in the air, shaking their dreadlocks about, clapping, rejoicing, celebrating the coming of the Black King.

Yejide closed her eyes, and all at once she felt an inspiration that her mother had taught her about, when the holy spirit fills you up, which is almost indescribable. Light as a feather she wanted to fly away, away, away, from the trouble, the fear, and the loss of Sheba.

. . .

Sheba was looking outside. Her heart beat rapidly, and Yejide noticed. Finally, Ras Mauro called very loudly for her. When Yejide stood up and turned into the same direction, she saw the lights from the police cars, and she was directed to stay in the study. The kaliedescope of colors caught Sheba and Yejide's eyes.

"Stay out of sight."

"Okay."

That's when the rain started. It pitta patted on the roof and windows. The thunder roared quietly, like a tiger's snarl. It was a deep introduction that something extreme and life changing was about to occur, and similar to nature's fury.

That night was the last. Like a thief in the night Yejide's Mama was gone.

. . .

Two police cars sped by the three, sirens blazing. "Have they nothing to do?" Benjamin laughed. "They awfully think dem busy," replied Yejide. "Indeed," chimed in Ras Mauro and they all laughed together.

Minutes later, they heard, "Yejide! Yejide!" She walked more alert. "Ras Mauro!" It was a desperate sounding female voice.

Releasing his hands, Ras Mauro began running into the direction of the voice, with his staff waving in the air. "Does that voice sound familiar?" asked Benjamin. Jaws dropped, the two ran off too, towards the house.

The two police cars had pulled up at their house. They had already exited their vehicles. Guns drawn.

"Mama. You're back!" Running steadily towards Sheba, Yejide steered into her arms. "You came home Mama, I knew you would."

"Yes, it's been three months, and I miss mi love." Her voice sounding both gentle and strong: her dual natures.

The embraces, the kisses, the tears, and the 'I love you's.

"Yejide, go on ahead inside. Stay in your bedroom. No matter what you hear, don't come out." Ras Mauro knew what was best for his daughter.

Ras Mauro pulled open the door slowly as if it were supported with thick slabs of heavy oak wood. For Yejide it represented a door that would lock out her fears, and Yejide had to help him, his arms shaking terribly.

The door slammed shut on her worried and trembling face. And before long, hours of an inner silence, in Yejide's bedroom, she held on to a terror.

So Yejide waited patiently on her family, as they debated outside, and her future was in the balance. For where would she be without her Mama?

Finally, she fell in and out of sleep on her leather Ottomon, curled up like a tiny baby, free-flowing tears drying on her cheeks, imagining the worst a Jamaican daughter could imagine. Yet a strength lurked inside her. She knew she had to have faith, like her Jamaican ancestors that championed before her. She recited Psalms silently, hoping the wicked would be driven away like chaff in the wind.

GFWC GEORGIA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS
2021 SHORT STORY AWARD WINNERS
STUDENT WINNERS

CATEGORY ONE

No Entries

CATEGORY TWO

Makenzie Braun

GFWC Bremen Junior Woman's Club
Central West District

CATEGORY THREE

No Entries

CATEGORY FOUR

No Entries

WOODBINE WOMAN'S CLUB STUDENT SHORT STORY AWARD

Makenzie Braun
GFWC Bremen Junior Woman's Club
Central West District

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Bremen Junior Woman's Club
Student Short Story
Category 2
"Short Arms"

The Beginning

Once I was an ordinary girl, well almost, I still had short arms. I often got called short arms, but I didn't care. I lived in a small town called Graveyard Hill. Of course, you're wondering why it's called Graveyard Hill. Well, there used to be a killer, but no one ever figured out who he or she was so there was no way of stopping him or her. Then one day the killing stopped. This is the part when I asked my grandpa if he had ever seen the killer in action. He just stared at me then sighed and said, "it's time I tell you the truth, I was..." I stopped him before he could say another word. I didn't even know what to do. I thought my grandpa was just a store manager, but he has actually been the killer? Grandpa sighed again and said, "Look, I have this uncontrollable power where I can stretch as far as I want to. It also comes with strength but it only begins when I'm angry, and when I'm with someone."

After hearing that I started wondering, then why am I not dead? I didn't understand, but I was only 11 then. 25 years passed. Now I'm 36, and I've finally noticed two people with this "uncontrollable power" as grandpa describes it,

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Category 2
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wouldn't kill each other. It scared me to know I might have had the power all along.

Sadly, grandpa died in a fire seven years after he told me the truth. I really don't know if I'll ever forgive him, but truly I need him now.

I've been getting so mad at things for nothing. Once I was in a hotel with my older sister. She's only one year older than me. Since I knew that I might have a killer inside of me, I was trying so hard not to get mad. By doing that I was getting mad at myself, because I didn't have a reason to be mad! Now, I just can't control myself. It's like the anger is controlling me, and the power inside turned on, like a light switch. I got into a car wreck and was paralyzed from the waist down. I might not have told you this, but this is how the killing all started with grandpa and now me...

The killing is back!

I'm a monster. I try hiding myself so no one can find me, because I kill anyone who is in my sight, ever since I got in the wreck. I hate this curse so much, but I'm normal when I'm alone! Oh right, there's a lot I haven't told you yet. I finally thought of searching up the power that I have. It said it was a curse and it

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switched family to family each 1,000 years, but who knows how long it's been in my family.

While looking this up, out of nowhere I heard footsteps. I ran as fast as I could away. But I had no idea which way was away. Then I came face to face with a man. Darkness flooded over me. I couldn't see anything, but I could still feel. My teeth were sharp, and I was holding something, maybe a stick. Then I felt the terrible pain of my arms extending. It was over, and I ran away again finding the best hiding spot I could.

I mean it's not like I enjoy killing. You might be wondering how I ran away if I'm paralyzed. Well, when the "curse" comes over me, I get strength that heals me instantly. Did I tell you that people think I'm dead. The reason for that is I disappeared and never came back after my accident, so people think I'm dead, but never mind that.

I like looking up to the stars at night. I think of them as my only friends that I can't kill. You might think that's crazy, but what's weird is I haven't slept in a while. I don't want anyone coming up to me without knowing. I want to always be aware even though it doesn't usually help. The last time I heard footsteps, they

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had gotten closer this time. it was coming from my right, so I ran the opposite way. I found myself in the middle of the road. I closed my eyes before that monster came back inside of me. I thought to myself maybe it's time to control this curse. So, without thinking I opened my eyes. But no, they were right in front of me and the darkness and pain had fallen over me. I heard people crying and screaming. I could not take it any more with all of this anger following me, so I screamed as loud as I could, "**STOP**"...

I woke up in a hospital with three people around me and nothing was happening. The curse was gone, gone forever! I couldn't believe I was able to look at people. It was a little weird though because I wasn't paralyzed either. I finally can live a life without horror in it. For all these years I thought it would never end.

GFWC GEORGIA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS
2021 POETRY AWARD WINNERS
MEMBER WINNERS

CENTRAL EAST DISTRICT

Jane Brown ~ GFWC Stone Mountain Woman's Club

CENTRAL WEST DISTRICT

No Entries

NORTH EAST DISTRICT

No Entries

NORTH WEST DISTRICT

No Entries

SOUTH EAST DISTRICT

Sharon Blank ~ GFWC Sylvania Junior Woman's Club

SOUTH WEST DISTRICT

Genie McCook ~ GFWC Tifton Woman's Club

THE EMILY BRONTE POETRY AWARD

Sharon Blank
GFWC Sylvania Junior Woman's Club
South East District

Jane Brown
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GFWC Stone Mountain Woman's Club
GFWC Georgia, Central East District
Poetry - A poem/song for my father who will turn 90 in 2021.
A Man Planted an Oak Tree in 1931

A Man Planted an Oak Tree in 1931

While it grew straight and true reaching for the sun
the ground was cold and the snow was deep
This was not a place his soul could keep

So when the winds of war began to blow
to foreign lands he'd gladly go
When his time was served and freedom found
in a warmer clime he put his roots down

In his new southern home he began to thrive
He settled in with his belle of a bride
His boughs were soon filled with babies and love
and his voice sang praise to the Lord above

(Continued)

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Poetry

A Man Planted an Oak Tree in 1931

Three little ones have come and gone
you watched them as they grew
Now four beautiful generations
are looking up to you

Beautiful tree, 90 years strong
wise with years of what now is done
May we sit at your feet and hear your song stories
until one day we all sing them in Glory

Chorus:

Stand tall with your roots down deep
Watch over our family
Give us shade when the days half done
Reach to the stars at night
Your shadows dance in my window light
We will always be...
Family....



A RAINY CHRISTMAS EVE

By Sharon Blank

'Twas a rainy Christmas Eve day, and my mood was rather sour
No glittery tree tall-standing - I didn't have the power

The energy I lacked, for my health was somewhat poor
No Christmas cookies baked, no guests were at my door

Just me and my five cats would be celebrating Yule
And to decorate my home seemed the wastage of a fool

The world was full of woes, both political and plague
And many kids this Christmas would be missing Santa's sleigh

The worries they abounded, though encouragement I gave
For there's no point in not sharing what things seemed not so grave

Yet my mood was still not full of joyfulness and light
Though I knew that I was blessed that my fortunes weren't tight

My little troubles filled me, gnawed on my mind like flies
They would not be dismissed as silly or as lies

And so I started writing to type out all my woes
To see if that would stop them from trodding on my toes

I wrote of work and illness, of misfortune and of pain
Of chances that were missed, of those whose dreams were slain

I wrote of the misfortune, of responses that were botched
Of honor left besmirched, of memories that were blocked

I wrote of politicians who served themselves not us
Who profited from plagues, leaving all else in the dust

I wrote of grave misfortunes, I wrote of willful evil
I wrote and wrote and wrote and wrote - I barely kept it civil

Still caught up in the web of sorrow and of pain
I found myself full-sobbing that we'd lost our change again

And then I had a thought that opened up my eyes
What if I wrote of hope, instead of bitterness and lies?

What if I counted blessings instead of counting pains?
What if I turned my thoughts to the blessings of the rains?

For rain, it is a blessing, it washes all things clean
It quenches all our thirsts, through times both rich and lean

It sweeps clear all the debris that's been baked dry by the sun
And washes it away so we can enjoy when it is done

The rain, it brings renewal, it is a source of life
It sustains us through the winter of bitterness and strife

Without the rain we'd perish, of this there is no doubt
Ask any farmer out there who's lived through any drought

Oh, my worries aren't diminished, they'll find me once again
But for now I'll just relax... and listen to the rain.

Genie McCook

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GFWC Tifton Woman's Club, GFWC Georgia

Poem

"Pandemic"

Pandemic

Pandemic is something I never thought I'd see.

In this great nation, I thought we'd always be free;

From things that only happen in countries that are poor.

Please Lord, let the scientists find a cure.

We go to the store, with a mask on our face;

Trying to keep our neighbors safe.

We must wash, sanitize and show good judgment.

And try to stay away from folks without any sense.

Family and friends in the hospital didn't make the trip back home.

We sadly mourn the terrible loss as many died all alone

I pray one day the sun will shine.

And this pandemic will disappear with time.

The day is coming when God will paint rainbows in the sky;

For all the world to see and know the reason why.

There will be signs to tell us all is well.

And we are free from this pandemic hell.

Dawn will awake to a crystal clear day.

Once more we'll happily be on our way.

For nothing's ever made to last.

And just like time, this pandemic will pass.

The streets in town will come alive.

Stores and restaurants will be occupied.

But the moments to cherish will be when,

Family and friends meet with hugs again.