

From DARKNESS



to ***LIGHT***

Patrick Wafula Wanyama

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THROUGHOUT my childhood my mother Magdalena often used to remind me of my unusual birth. I was born on November 11th 1971 on a white settler's farm in Trans-Nzoia District where my parents were squatters.

While I was undertaking a computer course at Microtown Computer Centre in Kitale town in October 1994, I managed to feed the above dates into the computer and asked it to tell me the exact day on which I was born. The amazing machine revealed that the day was a Thursday. And, indeed, facts in my file at Kiminini Catholic Church where I was baptized at the age of three months reveal the same details.

Three months after I was born, I developed a baffling abnormality. My stomach bulged and remained inflated like a balloon. This strange symptom was soon accompanied by persistent crying, restlessness, and sleeplessness at night.

After many sleepless nights, and the agony of endeavouring vainly to lull me to sleep, my mother decided to consult a witchdoctor to establish the cause of this strange malady.

Julius the Diviner was the most powerful witchdoctor in those days. My mother said that no sooner had she stepped into the diviner's eerie hut than the spirits called her by name.

"Our daughter," they said in eerie unison, "We know you. Your name is Nabangala. You have a sick child at home and you have come to consult us about the cause of the sickness. Is that true our daughter?"

"Yes, my esteemed grandfathers," mother answered in a tremulous voice, bowing at the shrine.

"Then do as our master will tell you and we shall solve your problem." Then their eerie voices receded into whispers.

At that juncture, Julius the Diviner spoke, requesting my mother to sit down. She sat down on the lone traditional stool opposite the weird shrine.

"My daughter," the famous witchdoctor said, "pay the usual consultation fee, and five shillings for the herbs"

After she had paid the consultation fee, the spirits told her that I was being haunted by the spirit of my paternal grandfather who was seeking I be named after him. The spirits elaborated the nature of the sacrifice and the rituals it entailed in order to appease and invite the restless spirit of my grandfather into our home and into my life.

On the night after which this ritual was performed, I slept very peacefully, and a few days later, my distended stomach diminished.

Since that time, I was fondly called by the name of my grandfather, Murambakania, and reared up as a pious Catholic Sunday School child; in fact, I was one of the Massboys at our Kiminini Catholic Church, until I attained the age of eighteen. At that age, a very strange and supernatural experience occurred to me that changed my life for ever.

It was on the fateful night of Sunday the 16th of April, 1989, at around 9:30pm, while in the kitchen with our eldest sister Mary Nekesa, who was preaching to me, that I decided to change and be a born again Christian.

At the time of this momentous experience I was just completing my first in Form One at Nabunga High School, and I had just sat for my Catholic Seminary interview in preparation to join Saint Thomas Aquinas College in Nairobi to pursue Catholic Priesthood, after my "O" Level. This was in accordance with my parents' plans.

By the way, my sister Mary is married with seven children, and she lives in West Pokot District. At the time of this tremendous event, she had just paid us a visit to bring the testimony of her conversion to our parents, but her new faith and testimony was strongly rebuffed by our entire family.

On Monday the 17th very early in the morning, Mary, together with the rest of the visitors, left for West Pokot. After seeing her off at Kiminini bus stage, I returned to our home in Nyasi Village, feeling lonely and vulnerable to the imminent, strong forces of opposition which I was bound to face from my stern parents. My father was a very stern and strict parent, he was also an adhering Bukusu traditionalist.

Now one evening a few weeks later, while we were seated in the sitting room, my father paused amid his smoking session- he liked smoking after supper- and asked me:

'My son, now that you claim to be born again like your sister Mary, and now that you are calling everyone in this home a devil, and I hear that you are even calling me Lucifer himself when I'm drunk, will you also renounce the great name of your grandfather ?'

I told him that the name in itself was harmless, but the traditional rituals it entailed was what would make me reject it.

In our clan, once you are named after an ancestor, it is believed that you have inherited his or her character; in fact, you are his or her reincarnation.

For instance, in January 1989, our entire clan of Bakhwami gathered in our home to offer a sacrifice to this paternal grandfather Murambakania. During this ritual I was placed at the shrine of the departed ancestor, and received the sacrifice on his behalf. They offered blood and meat to this ancestor while I sat quietly at the shrine and watched everything in awe for the required length of time before I joined the rest in the ceremony.

In fact, I was my father's favourite son, and I was adored just the same way my grandfather, Murambakania, was adored when he was alive.

So my father showed great concern and frustration the moment he realised I was no longer worshiping, adoring or honouring the ancestors including my grandfather. When I confirmed to him that I was totally against that name, he replied:

“Well, my son, I warn you in advance, just as I had warned you earlier on: do not trifle around with that sacred name, Murambakania. Your grandfather can be very deadly and vicious at times when he is provoked. You may deny him now, but be sure he will haunt you to death. I, your father, have spoken to you as I'm the one who sired and named you after him. May his spirit avenge itself. That is all, my son.”

Then I told him: “Father, there's no power under heaven that's greater than that of Jesus Christ, and there is no other name that is greater than the name of Jesus Christ. It is the name above all names, and every shall bow before Him and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! Let me tell you, father, I shall pray and bind this troublesome name and spirit called Murambakania in the name of Jesus!”

My father's eyes bulged and with total flabbergation and bafflement. He replied in a gruffy tone: “My son, how dare you blaspheme the ancestors? We shall see.” And then he retired into his bedroom in a huff.

That night, you can well imagine what the subject of my prayer was. While alone in my cottage, I prayed fervently and rebuked the name and spirit of Murambakania many times. Finally, I commanded and bound it, telling it to leave me alone and go to hell, its respective destination. Then, with overwhelming peace and assurance, I slumped into bed and soon I was sound asleep.

But shortly after midnight, I was awakened by a screeching noise and loud bangs on the door. Then, the door rattled open, and some shuffling, spooky, obscure human-like shadows groped into my room.

One of them took the table noisily and turned it upside down. The other one dislodged all the stools, throwing them in different directions. The third one, with ponderous footsteps, leaped towards me.

He pounced on me like a mighty, angry cat, and our combined weight made my safari bed squeak.

“Who are you?” I screamed in breathless terror, ‘Who are you?’

‘I'm your grandfather Murambakania,’ the spook rumbled in a throaty, malevolent tone, ‘You have forsaken me! You are up to no good. You are profaning my name and I have come to kill you because of all these offences! And I'm killing you right now!’

But just before those chilly, lifeless fingers closed in on my throat, I managed to utter a great, ear-piercing scream: ‘In the name of Jesus! Oh, Jes-s-us! In Jesus' name! Go away! You evil spirits! Go to hell!...’

Immediately, the spooky shadow fell on the floor with a loud thud, then there was some more shuffling and screeching noises, followed by dead silence.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Born in 1971 in Trans-Nzoia District to Jafred Wanyama Murambakania and Magdalene Nabangala, Patrick Wafula Wanyama is a former pupil of Koy Koy Primary and student of Nabunga High School in Trans-Nzoia; he holds a Diploma in Education and School Management from Kenyatta University and a Diploma in Business Administration from Komarock College of Business Studies. He is the co-founder and Executive Director of Bahati Community Centre and Schools in Nairobi's Eastlands, Kenya, where he also teaches English Language and Literature.

Brother Patrick, who is born again, is currently a missionary with Kingdom Driven Ministries Kenya Inc. He is married to Loise and they live in Soweto, Nairobi, with their four children: Faith, Esther, Elizabeth and Vittorio.

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