

'Under African Skies'

The night was crisp cold, biting at the tips of my fingers. I was far from home now. I had walked for miles, following the sun as it slipped from sight. When I stopped, I looked up; for the first time in my life, I was truly curious of the endless sheet of darkness that, every night, hung intimidatingly over our country. We had learnt to hide from the darkness and the dangers hiding within it but never before had I thought to truly acknowledge the beauty of danger.

As my head tilted back, I was struck by a sense of singularity, being totally alone under the night sky. It never stopped, no matter how hard I looked. It made my head spin.

"We are so small." I thought to myself.

We are always told that the stars were holes in the night sky, windows where our ancestors watched over us from. Now, when I look up, I do not see holes or windows. I see stories. Long, extravagant, ancient stories of heroes, victories, wars, death, birth, love. Every star has a story. A story, lost to time many moons ago.

My nose tingled with the freshness of the night. My eyes ached from eyeballing the endless abyss above me. The golden sun, thrown by the night, finally disappeared behind the jagged mountains, ready to be thrown across the sky again when morning came.

As I roamed on, my feet kicked up the dust that once rested on the floor. The cloud of sandy earth made it difficult to breathe. On realisation, I headed swiftly for the long grass. As soon as I felt the thin, dry blades brush against my hip, I lowered my arm from my mouth and appreciated the clear air once again.

I waded on slowly, listening out for snakes but I soon realised the constant hissing and buzzing that surrounded me was not the deadly serpents I assumed. I brushed my hands through the reeds with caution. Suddenly, a flood of light seemed to burst from its chambers.

The torrent of light threw me back to the ground. Only to unleash another hurricane of light behind me!

Fireflies.

I could see clear, in full light, for a mile. It was like a dream. The ill-tempered bugs settled; it looked like the sky was falling. After the shock, I found I was laughing hysterically. Rolling around uncontrollably, like a child.