

The True Story of my Life

By Simon Mol (Moleke mo Njie)

This is not fiction! But the true story of my life. It's not the worst though, but something at least worth reading about... Just read on, perhaps you will see why, or not. It doesn't matter either way... What matters is to move on....

January 6th 1995 is fresh in my mind; like yesterday. It will forever be. How can I forget this day in which my life nose-dived through a 360-degree turn, with unfathomable circumstances stretching beyond time and space. I was a passenger on board Cameroon Airline's Boeing 737 flight from Johannesburg to Douala (Cameroon). It was the last stopover at the Kinshasa airport in then Zaire, and I stood on the tarmac watching the lights and limps of this great city etching away the last days of former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. Then, current dictator Laurent Kabila was somewhere in the southern forests preparing his ambush, which brought him to power two years later. Back in the plane, my mind in the flight of imagination flew back to the neon streets of Johannesburg, revisiting my brief sojourn there. For the umpteenth time I saw again the Queen Victoria building; a mammoth palace in Jo'burg, which had been bought by one of Cameroon's ministers for over \$70 million!

I sighed sipping my coke. It was 30 minutes to landing time and my mind projected to the immediate future. Thinking about relatives waiting to pick me up, and how I will recount tales of the new South Africa that had pulled off the shackles of apartheid. I sat thinking about the story under my belt, and how I will do a job in exposing Ministers involved in it. I sat thinking.... yet blind to reality; poor me; not knowing I was about to keep a fatal appointment with my destiny. A year before, I had written a poem THE CALLING. Some how, that part of my being which is omniscient had inspired me to tabulate in poetry what lay ahead...of me.

While daydreaming in the plane, a sinister drama was equally unfolding; fixing me in the centre of a designed plot typical of espionage movies, that was to permanently disorientate my life.

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Agents of CENER; Cameroon's secret service network stationed in Jo'burg, connected with their headquarters alleging that an Anglophone Cameroonian journalist was on board; ... a suspect with subversive documents. The decision to travel to South Africa came after I was arrested twice as a result of articles I wrote which were considered to be offensive and insulting to the government.

As the plane landed and we marched to the control chambers, I joined the queue, and this was where the catalyst of disaster detonated. Two men in plain clothes approached me with the question "are you Simon". "Yes", I replied. "Follow us" they ordered. Surprised, I followed. Silently, they conducted me to a room underground. Inside, I was handcuffed and left alone. "Why?" I queried. "You will know later" was the mocking reply.

The next day brought a barrage of interrogation. I was conducted to a room, where I met my belongings scattered on the floor. Everything had been gone through with microscopic thoroughness. "Where are the FIUAC documents?", one thundered. "What documents?" ; was my response. "Don't be silly, we want the endorsement letters!". This was accompanied by a kick on my buttocks. I knew what they were talking about, but I wasn't stupid enough to accept; for the letters were the documentary proof of the story I had stumbled upon in Jo'burg, involving Ministers. I intended without the slightest compunction to publish them. I had taken my time to conceal them behind the photos in my album. When I refused to crack under the pressure of slaps and insults, I was returned to my cell. The next day saw a repeat of day one, with added insinuations. I was accused of being an agent of the English minority demanding a separate state. The point was driven home with kicks and threats. Some how, I had been identified with the president of the Youth wing of the leading opposition party in the country, who currently is being tried for treason, and inciting civil disobedience in the country. Actually, the government is recommending a life sentence on him. In reality, we were very close personal friends, as former classmates. To me, there was no reason why a man's social or political stand should antagonise his relationships. As a reporter, I usually carried stories about his activities. This went a long way to complicate matters for me. The ensuing two days saw little development. I spent the time in the cell, in handcuffs.

However, my Family and colleagues were active. They contacted some prominent personalities who started mounting pressure. This was my saving grace, for I later learnt that there were plans to send me to Kondengui (the country's most notorious Political prison). On the fifth day I was released . The commissioner in his office told me to desist with any publication about my experiences in South Africa. He further made it succinctly clear that my fate would be beyond redemption should his warnings be rejected. He signed my release, which stated that I was to report in his office on a weekly basis. However, the drama was far from over. When I reported the first week, I was detained for two weeks. This time it was very trying as I was subjected to beatings. I was spanked with electrically charged whips, and lighted cigarette was used to burn my flesh. One of my tormentors urinated on me while I was lying supine on the floor. This was followed with a barrage of insults... ' Anglo-fool' 'Biafrian', he yelled in French. I returned home a sick, sad person.

Twice back at home, two unidentified men came late at night to conduct searches. My parents were really worried. My mother; in a sea of tears would wail "I had warned you not to do journalism". My two siblings spent most of the time by my chair, watching me with clouded faces that spelt misery and uncertainty. As time dragged on, the heat reduced and the flame ebbed out. I returned to the life of the newsroom. Life was just about to return to normal when my conscious, propelled by the chain of destiny passed its verdict concerning the Johannesburg drama. I had to publish or remain a prisoner of conscious. I published. We had long deliberated upon the headline, and it had the desired effect which rebounded on my life.... SMART CAMEROONIAN EXPORTS CROOKERY TO SOUTH AFRICA...SIX MINISTERS INVOLVED!!!

The consequences were immediate and disastrous, and this was how I inherited the crown of the Biblical Cain. However, with the irony that I did not kill my brother. I was ready for eventualities when the tip off came. Late at night, I was whisked to the coast of the Atlantic where I boarded an engine canoe for a risky journey by sea to Malabo; the capital city of Equatorial Guinea. This wasn't ideal for me, but I was powerless in deciding where to go at that

point in time. It was even dangerous, because the natives of this former Spanish colony had a common root with the ruling tyrants in Cameroon. The name Essingang had the same meaning amongst the Fang tribe, which form an unholy trinity shared between Cameroon, Gabon and E. Guinea. The Essingang, is a sacred tree of mysterious powers. Members of the Essingang Mafia in Cameroon (the ruling cult); had to swear by this tree; an oath with occult implications.

In Malabo I continued to Bata, and took to the forests heading for Gabon. I spent three days in the forest. On the fourth day, I got to a village where I asked for the hamlet of the pygmies; on the pretext that I had some spiritual problems to resolve. This was a common excuse as people traveled from far to consult the pygmies who are reputed with the ability to heal, contact the spirit world and talk with herbs with incredible ease and mastery. I was directed to their colony, and fortunately the head of the clan could speak understandable French. They were kind to me and told me many things about my past and future; some of which have come to pass.

Once I accompanied the head of the clan to check his traps in the forest. It was an opportune time to ask questions; " Tell me Pa Pierre, why do Pygmies live such a simple life ?. You go bare footed, live in huts, sleep on bamboo; what kind of satisfaction do you get from life ?", I demanded.

He laughed and was silent for a while. " Well, life is short " he said, "When I look above, the heaven is peopled by beings; when I look down, the earth below is peopled by beings. I am a traveler, and have a short time to be here. Very short indeed. For us, there is little point in amassing things one finally leaves behind. Such loads make one's burden too heavy to move on. I go bare footed because the earth heals, and the forest is the only home for us. Nobody thinks of us, except as tourist attractions or when some

football match has to be won, or somebody desires promotion at his job. Then they come to us for spiritual intervention. And now because of greed, even our home; the forest, is being taken away from us through destruction in the quest for timber. Very sad indeed " he concluded. I was silent for a long time, as there was little I could say. My experience there is a complete story all

together, and after nine weeks I thanked them and left for the North of Gabon. I was afraid to progress to the Capital, and rather settled in a small village.

Time fled. Feelings bled. Days died to weeks....weeks reincarnated as months; and months; impregnated by macabre and sinister events, gave birth to a year. This schooled me; well schooled in the incredible and unpredictable subject of human character. A world apart; of wonder and terror. A world sustain by greed, treachery and the uncompromising quest for parochial heroism. What a school!, what a science!. I saw the physical embodiment of evil and tasted the acid of spiritual wickedness. What a saying that 'wickedness is the brainchild of stupidity'!

I had to operate under a false identity, and succeeded in misleading human vigilance but not those with four eyes... those who see beyond veils. Those who transmit subtle waves from the planes of superior influences for good or evil.....and as it were, my path crossed with the agents of Belzibuth; bastions of the essingang realm, guarding the fortress of the unholy trinity. I received an indescribable spiritual beating and emotional bashing. Consciousness; in a whirlpool of mental cataclysm, crossed new horizons. Prayer couldn't ascend. The atmosphere was polluted by witchery, dangerous occult weeds, and all kinds of etheric and astral garbage. Mediums outnumbered non-mediums. Scores are settled with metaphysical weapons. A bulletproof vest is ridiculous against shots from their 'fusil nocturne', or nocturnal gun. This is a metaphysical gun that could be aimed at a victim within their astral radius; irrespective of distance or presence, by the prime mover of macabre incantations, thunderstones, and all kinds of bizarre occult paraphernalia. Many victims never recover from this mystic warfare. From explanations, a high concentration of energy through mystic ceremonies is vital to provide an etheric bulletproof vest against this. Usually after an astral operation upon a victim performed by a shaman, pebbles are taken out from his body.

People swear in the names of shrines and totems. I bled emotionally, this coagulated into throbbing pains and heartaches and crystallised as tears. There were no physical blows, yet I wept....like a baby. I stood alone; in this mad world and my ordeal was physically non-existent. None could perceive or comprehend this, and it was useless to tell. He who feels it, knows it. What the eye doesn't see the mind doesn't grieve about, as outer appearance is not inner reality.

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How limited is the perception of mortal man! even worse is that of the rational mind! Then I stood on the threshold of death and insanity. This forced doors to open, and I beheld archetype images. I was the ill-fated recipient of countless punches from a battalion of tangible shadows.

One night when hope was at its lowest ebb, a comforter came in my dream....this experience rekindled the flame of hope.

Somehow, my cover blew and there were whispers that I was a journalist fighting the regime of Paul Biya. An Anglophone for that matter. It became serious, as people cross from one frontier to the other in weekly markets, and information travels with the wind. People started asking questions, and I lived in fear. It aggravated when it got close to the period of presidential elections in Cameroon. As both countries are peopled by the same ethnic group at this border point, there were rumours that people in organised political manoeuvres, voted on either side. Another dimension of the essingang mystery. Newspaper articles were replete with gory tales and pictures of dead bodies found with their genitals ripped off, in human sacrifices. And close to election periods, especially legislative elections, when demon incarnates who pass for politicians vie for seats in the parliament; this is the most deadly period.

Thanks to the vigilance of my soul, instructions came from my death fiating me to flee with urgency. My death was not ready for me yet. And I fled. I fled like a refugee fleeing a desert pogrom. I fled and risked a journey home. I was arrested at the border town, and by pure miracle, I succeeded to escape again. I kept on fleeing...without looking behind, with little in my pocket. On the wings of destiny and fate I flew, and reached the North of Nigeria.

I went through Northern Nigeria, where the little money I had on me was confiscated by corrupt border guards. I got to Niger republic, and was whisked to the capital Niamey. For seven days I was at their national security headquarters, under surveillance. After listening to my tale, I was given the condition of ceasing from practising journalism if they were to grant me asylum. I turned this down, and the next day instructions came for me to be transported to any border of my choice. I ended up at the frontier of Burkina-Faso, where I slept at the Control Post for three

days. Finally, orders came from the capital Ouagadougou, spelling out clearly that I was to be allowed only to traverse the territory, without any stop whatsoever at the capital city..... This was how fate wove events for me to end up in Ghana. At the frontier without taking chances, I dribbled the border guards, and headed straight for the regional office of the Ghana Journalists Association. They were really nice to me and catered for my fair to the capital Accra.....and this opened another chapter in my life.

By the time I left Ghana I was not the same person any more. My sojourn there had a triple impact on my being. My health came under severe test. The difficulties I met here, provided a fertile ground for the trauma I encountered in Gabon to germinate. I saw death stalking me. My mental world and mind exploded, resulting in raptures recounted in poetry. My soul was on constant alert; guarding and guiding through the pitfalls of spiritual wickedness and political insanity. The Ghana Journalists Association was of much help, providing me with initial shelter, and International PEN of Ghana adopted me as their exile son. On two occasions, they saved my life. I met some friends equally in exile, from Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra-Leon and Togo. I learnt much from them, about surviving life in exile. Very trying. From the abyss of frustration, nostalgia, and uncertainty, unstable emotions in torrents of unpredictable phases, would lift one high with hopes, and drop him the next moment in despair, leaving him a nervous wretch for weeks. At such times, a smile from someone was like a dose of anti-depression; and even a smile was difficult to come by. Very difficult indeed. Very few people were interested in one's welfare. The first sign of trouble came when I sent an article to the leading sports News paper in the country 'Graphic sports', an arm of the Graphic corporation; the leading Media industry in the country, which is state owned. To my utter shock, the article was plagiarised by the winner of the 1998 Ghana Journalists Association award for sports journalists. This was done word for word, with his by-line. When I protested to the Editor, he released a barrage of threats and insults at me, giving me an appointment at the court of law. He asked if I was legal in Ghana, and if he could come to my country Cameroon and talk to an editor of his caliber. The president of the West African Journalists Association asked me to write a letter of complain to him and to the President of the Ghana Journalists Association. I did, and later after pondering over it, I decided to drop everything. This was as a direct result of the fact that I strongly believe in cosmic laws,

which are immutable, implacable and the principles of retribution which are entirely free from passion.

My next immediate problem was to survive, and this meant work. Through contacts, I was recruited as a reporter for the Ghanaian Democrat. The propaganda mouthpiece of the ruling NDC party. Later on, I started a column with the WEEKLY INSIGHT; the most critical and vociferous Newspaper of the Rawlings regime and his NDC party. Here, I had unlimited restrictions, and I vented my opinions. I must admit that this was the highest form of professional controversy, but this did not bother me. However, it did not take long for the Editor of Democrat to summon me for a meeting. I was expecting this all along. " Simon, am sorry, but my attention has been brought to the fact that you equally write for the INSIGHT. You should know that they are our political opponents. As a professional colleague, I would turn a blind eye. But as the situation stands, you must make a choice. Democrat or Insight? " he rounded. I asked him to give me a couple of days to reflect on it, thanked him and excused myself. I never went back there. I simply stopped penning for the Democrat. We met on several occasions at press conferences, and he would simply ask, "Simon, how is INSIGHT ?" "We are O.K" would be my response, with diplomatic politeness.

However, this was not the end of the story. My separation with Democrat turned out to be a painful divorce. It wasn't taken in good faith, and this ignited the vindictive flame of political aggressiveness. Some of the big wigs could not reconcile the fact that after being lenient with me by granting me asylum, I should become an ungrateful ingrate by working for their political opponents. For me, the reason was clear. From experience, I had learnt to Prefer the onslaughts of the oppressor, rather than the vindictive wrath of my conscience. With INSIGHT, I focused on sports, which has if not the most corrupt ministry in Ghana. My articles came under a weekly review with the leading FM station in the country. This inflamed the crisis, and I had a direct warning from the ministry. I was equally writing burning articles exposing the corruption in Cameroon.

Some over patriotic Cameroonians in Ghana who owe allegiance to Biya's regime, started protesting that in allowing me to attack Cameroon through the Ghanaian Media, Ghana was contravening the agreement of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). I was constantly briefed by colleagues. I wasn't the only one concerned though. Other exile colleagues from Nigeria, were busy hitting the maverick and monstrous regime of former dictator Sani Abacha. It was so serious that two of them were arrested and had their documents confiscated, plus a ban to desist from practising journalism in Ghana. What saved them was the fact that they were registered with UNHCR. And so this made it diplomatically impossible to send them back to Nigeria. These were very dangerous times for exile journalists. One exile Nigerian journalist in Benin republic was kidnapped and whisked to Nigeria, where he ended up in jail after a life sentence was slammed on him. However, he was released when Abacha met his mysterious end. And this was possible only after a wave of international campaigning.

Perhaps the most thrilling experience was that of a Nigerian Medical professor turned guerilla fighter. I was introduced to him by a Nigerian journalist friend, and we always referred to him as ' Prof '. His is really an epic thriller, should it be enacted in a movie. From Nigeria, to the USA, to Benin Rep., Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe and back to Ghana, his dream to topple Abacha carried him in a floodtide of events from one part of the world to another. " I was compelled by hunger and fear for blindness to dissect and eat a raw lizard ", he once told me.

It is quite obvious that former British colonies are just one degree behind their counterparts of Former French colonies when it comes to political bestiality. Most often, the later do not give a damn about issues of human rights. And so when pressure came on me, it was clearly stupid and myopic to leave anything to chance. Once I got home and learnt that a white landrover came with two men looking for me. I abandoned my residence. Some human rights activists and colleagues of the press took immediate charge and told me not worry. I went into hiding while things were being put into place to enable me leave in disguise.

Early one evening, I was driven to the airport and handed a Ghanaian passport, with my picture but with different name. I did not even know where I was flying to. Somebody was to bribe my

way to the plane, but at the third control point, there were some complications and he fled. He had to, to avoid implications. I later learnt there was a tip off. I stood then alone. All alone. Never had I felt so lonely in my life. Like a tragic actor, I was led to the commissioner's office, and this was how my journey to jail for six weeks began.

My friends, aware of the dilemma alerted some reputable human rights lawyers to step in, should the need arise. The next day I was driven to a detention centre. The place was horrible. The stench emanating from the cell could drive anyone crazy. The building I learnt, was erected in 1908 by the British during the colonial rule. The door was of metal with a small hole the size of a football provided the only source of ventilation. Inside, a four-metre square hall with an adjacent metre square toilet were all the facilities. Once while there, there were as many as thirty people inside. The hygienic condition was a complete mess. Ventilation was a serious problem. The commissioner promised to replace the door and a carpenter came to measure the door but nothing happened. A week later, it was a repeat performance. Still nothing. At one point a madman was brought into the cell. He excreted on the floor. The shouts from inmates forced the guards to chain him outside. Later a German was brought in pending repatriation. He wept under the barbaric conditions and told me; " Simon, in Germany even dogs have a better condition than this. No dog can sleep like this!". "You know " he continued, " My mother will not believe this if I tell her about this situation ". We slept on bare wood and on the floor. This has affected my neck and spinal cord.

It is very difficult for me to eat while in very trying moments. For twenty-one days I survived on oranges and fresh Coconut water. It was not a fast, simply respect to my feelings. However, this had a drastic effect on my health. I stopped to worry, and resigned to fate. Books were brought to me, and I spent time reading and writing poems. Many poems of mine were written in this period. By the second week I was taken to a separate room and interrogated by a man who identified himself as a worker at the presidency. He forced me to disclose the names of those who helped me to obtain the passport. I refused. I received some slaps and my head was forced in a bucket of water. I almost suffocated. Later, I was returned to the cell. A week later I was driven to the Castle (the Ghanaian Presidency). I met some French speaking gentleman there; no

doubt a Cameroonian agent. I had a rough time there with threats and questioning. I was told to thank my stars that the New World order made it slightly complicated to get rid of elements like us, without international criticism. But that should I persist in this line, then the risk will be taken. I was returned to the cell for another three weeks. By now the Media were mounting pressure, with threats to alert the international community.

All along PEN Ghana was working to have me released, and finally the Ghana journalists Association secured my bail. However this was granted on the condition that I was to stop practising as a journalist. I agreed in principle, then.

When I came out of jail, I was not the same person anymore. I had undergone a psychic and mental metamorphoses. Friends noticed this and brought my attention to it. All about me changed. I couldn't eat food but depended on fruits, for months. I fell seriously ill. My writing too was affected; it became more matured. My poems too. At intervals, I would experience a sense of indescribable peace and joy within, in spite of the fact that my life was at a crossroad. I had nothing to place my hope on. Yet somehow, there was this feeling that things would be alright. Perhaps what gave me this abstract hope was the fact that my poems, which were being published in a monthly anthology in India, were receiving recognition. I regularly received letters from around the globe from tested poets and scholars, praising my works. Once the Editor of the Anthology, a Poet Laureate himself, wrote under one of my poems ; "world poets must enthuse this African genius, they must!".

One evening when I went for Oranges by a Tee junction, I stood and saw the over crowded street as a colony of busy ants. Actually I felt it to be so. This feeling was accompanied by a wave of tangible bliss. I got out my pen and started writing. The old lady orange seller was surprised by my sudden transformation to complete silence. I asked her to excuse me and left.

I just avoided people, and became a social monk. Sixty percent of my time was spent by the sea shore day dreaming. Dreams which crystalised into poems. On New Year eve of 1998, I sat by a quiet corner of the sea close to midnight, alone. I talked with the tides and waves. Media

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colleagues asked me to forget the ban and write. I ignored the ban and wrote. Not only this, but I equally went on airwaves in popular talk show programmes. By this time, a reputable West African Media Organisation had applied for my Geneva 1951 travel document to the appropriate quarters, on the pretext that I was to attend a conference in the Gambia. This was for me to be ready for any eventuality. After one of the radio programmes, I received a call which simply said "so you still practise ? ". I did not say anything. International PEN, aware of my dilemma, dispatched enough fund for me to leave. This coincided with the Warsaw congress. The president of PEN Ghana was suppose to attend, but being aware of condition, he gave me the chance to leave. Two weeks to my departure, a convocation came from the department of immigration ordering my presence. I ignored the order. And it was under this pending order that I manouvered my way to Poland.

From 6th January 1995 to date, it has been a long, deep sleep. With dreams of one continues nightmare. However, with interpolations of miracles. Take the way I left Ghana for instance... after jail, an address was given me by the president of Ghanaian PEN, and Mr. Frank Mackay Anim-Appiah to the organisation that tries to assist persecuted artists- AIDA, based in the Netherlands. I wrote to them explaining my situation. They never wrote back, but started a course of events that culminated with the PEN Emergency Fund dispatching enough money to secure my escape.... A real miracle in a dream. In this dream, I flew several times!, and as I live my last days on earth; I sigh with regret at some of the desires pursued by men to grasp power.

Power, mortal power and wealth, all to borrow from the famous Desiderata, ' perennial as the grass '

It has been a deep, long and instructive sleep. Now it is early morning; for me, and am just about to wake up... in Poland.

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