

CHANCE ONCE A MORE

A Man Who Is About To Start A
New Life

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TascoDesigns

TOP THE TABLE MOVEMENT PRESENTS

A CHANCE ONCE MORE a short story written by Chifundo
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"Everything I am or ever hope to be, I owe it to my mother"-
Abraham Lincoln

PREFACE

The story a chance once more exhibits the life of a young man who is sentenced to prison. He encounters such tragedy whilst at college. He reconciles whilst in prison and resolves to change the moment he gets released.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank **Tasco designs** for a job well done. I also would like to recognize **Prince Lucas and Matthews offen** for helping out and providing some expertise. A loud of applause to all my fans and everyone reading this story I hope you will enjoy, **THANK YOU.**

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A CHANCE ONCE MORE

A ray of light pierced through the bars of our cell room. Sending a message that a new day had arrived. A new page had been overturned and perhaps not just a new page but a new chapter. Joy comes in the morning, I concede. The most awaited day was finally here. The day my pages overturned. Once in my lifetime I had caught a glimpse of my future and had a feeling that I might live my dream again.

The warden banged our heavy metallic door to inform us that it was time to wake up. I squinted a little as the beam of light ran fast into my eyes. It was crazy how I laid my head to the door not the other way round, not that much of a surprise because almost everything around the prison was crazy. But we had no choice neither did we have the freedom to be asking for comfortable and luxurious services. Our cell room was big enough to accommodate a maximum of six people. Apparently only eleven of us were sharing the room. You can only imagine how sleeping in such a room would be like. Sleeping on the floor, no mattress. The only difference between us and the floor was a one cell thick carton which was not enough to completely keep us away from the actual floor. The sleeping pattern itself was indescribable but all in all that was our way of life because we had no option; we were inmates after all. The pliability of our lives did not matter to us that much. What was important to us was the calendar on the wall that gave us a picture as to when will we walk out of hell.

The warden unlocked the doors to let us out. Usually this moment was like bitter honey. The same time you were happy that at least your body will be stretched you were also worried bearing in mind the work that was waiting for you. As for me that day it was a different story. Knowing that it was the last time I will ever sleep in a cell room let alone be an inmate. I walked out of my cell room in a slow motion as if I was the main actor appearing in the last scene of a movie. I was minutes away from being a free man. "Mpata", the prison warden called out my name. I knew it was time. After fourteen years of suffering I was finally leaving the barbed wire off to the free world. Fellow inmates started to bid farewell. Some were happy for me, others jealous and some were shedding tears. They knew that I was going and possibly forever and most of them still had a couple of years to enjoy the

bitter taste of prison. Of all the prisoner's farewell, the most heartfelt goodbye was from two of my friends: **Lunda and Gawa**. These two are the souls I will never forget in my life, even unto my death. The brotherhood among the three of us was so authentic and the history we shared was unforgettable. When the other inmates were waving goodbye I was a little bit of proud that I was going but the moment I set my eyes on the duo everything changed. My face fell down, nerve impulses were sent all over my body as memories unfolded. As much as i was happy that I was stepping out of the dead end so was I sad that I was separating from two of the best friends I ever had in my life.

"Be of courage my brother, go out there and represent yourself, show the world that you are no longer the same person and most importantly represent us" said Lunda with his hand on my shoulder. I hugged both of them and as usual the other inmates cheered the incident. "Ipatse moto" some chanted. The message from Lunda was emotional, a lot of people felt it though not everyone understood what he meant. For them to fully understand what he meant when he said "*...represent us..*" they had to first know how I found myself behind bars. As to how I found myself inside prison lines is a tale I only love to share its resolution. Fifteen years ago I started my tertiary education at **Nakamba university of applied sciences(NUAS)** after I got selected the previous year. I was and still is a village boy. Being a person of such low profile and making it to the university was something to be proud of. Back in my village people never valued the power of education. We had less role models hence people could not visualize the importance of education as a result not a lot of people prioritized going to school. Me on the other hand knew that this was all out of ignorance and I was fully aware of the benefits of being educated. I finished my secondary school education and passed my examination with flying colors. I later applied for bachelor of science in mechanical engineering which I got selected but later failed the entrance examinations due to lack of adequate resources since I was no step closer to money, then and now. I was later redirected to pursue bachelor of science in social development. I then went back to the village to prepare myself for the next challenge. The school was situated in the city. Miles away from my village which meant that I had to stress about transport cost. Going to college was a motivation for my village, my family in particular. There were five of us in our family, I was the first born of

all five children which meant that I had to set a good example to my four siblings; three sisters and one brother. My father was a farmer and my mother was a simple house wife. The day I left for the city was memorable. My whole family was present at the bus station to say goodbye alongside some of my friends.

“My son remember who you are. Remember where you are coming from and never forget the poverty of your home”, this was all my father could say. His words sunk deep into my brain immediately like a metal bar thrown into a river. His words were so touching that I felt them being scribbled into my heart. Unlike my father’s solemn face, my mother’s face was propitious with a huge smile on it. I said goodbye to my siblings, my friends then I started off. Truth be told leaving for the city was a mixture of feelings. At times I was worried and had a bit of nostalgia at the very same time I was excited that I was going to start a new chapter in my life. I arrived in the city five hours before sunset, this allowed me to reach the house I rented in time. The accommodation fee was so expensive for me to secure a place inside campus so I rented a small house fifty minutes away from the campus as a consolation. My first days of college life were a bit hard. I was kind of being ostracized from the social group and most of my classmates simply because I was from the village. In those days it was rare for village secondary school candidates to make it to the university, as a result those from the village were one of the minority groups of students in universities. I was being called various names: primitive, barbaric, out of class, old fashioned, you name it. Quite frankly none of us could back fire, they were right after all. The tables were slightly overturned after the mid-semester results were out. The boy referred to as “out of class” really outclassed the whole class. I performed better than everyone. Since the old school guy was now familiar with the new school most of my classmates started flocking to me though not to chat with me but to seek assistance whenever they needed help with academic work. This was strange since it never used to happen. Despite being surrounded during class time I was still socially isolated, nevertheless, at least I was interacting with some. Whilst at college one of the problems I used to encounter was that of inadequate finance. I was coming from a poor family hence I did not have a constant supply of money as a result I was running dry most of the times at school. This forced me to be charging anyone who came to seek assistance at times. Though it

seemed inhumane it helped me for a while. When the first semester came to an end I decided not to go home for the holiday but to stay behind and look for a job to boost my financial power. I wrote a letter to my father informing him about the development. He then wrote to me two weeks later to inform me that he understood the situation and that he was in line with the idea.

The next day I went for job hunting. Working on the counter or just being a general salesman/woman was common among college students then. I did not want a high profile job since I had no proper qualification but I never settled for less. Walking in the streets of the city looking for jobs was tiresome. During the mid-semester holiday I also tried to secure myself a job but to no avail. Having walked for almost five hours I decided to take a rest. It was almost twelve noon and according to my time table I was supposed to go home and prepare for my study periods. Hours later after I had my lunch I left for **SYMPHONY** hills where I used to take my studies. As the name suggest the place was harmonic and had a pleasant environment. The feature was located away from noise pollution sources hence its quietness, as quite as the cemetery. I studied for three long hours and after that I went back home. The day was just hectic that it did not take me long before I faded off to sleep. Hours into my sleep I had dream. I was on my way back to the village. I was not sure why I was going back home but the way I looked was not close to how a college student would look like if he was going back home. I looked deteriorated. I finally got my answer after I met my uncle at the bus depot of my village. "welcome Mpata" he said

"Thank you uncle"

"I hope you are alright?"

"Yes all is now well, I don't know with you and everyone?"

"Unfortunately all is not well here"

"What is the matter?"

"I don't know how to say this but your father just kicked the bucket"

I was devastated by the sad news. We started off to my house. Along the way uncle explained to me everything, that his death was mysterious and sudden and that my mother was pointing fingers at me. He said that my mother believed I was the one responsible for the death of my father; I denied the accusation. Much as I was heartbroken prior to my father's death I was also disappointed with my mother. I never expected such an

accusation from her. Meanwhile my uncle was busy comforting me; I was shattered to be frank. The man I looked up to was gone, the pillar of our family. Worse still the fact that his death was sudden and I had no chance to say goodbye pained me the most. We were now close to our house. I could here cries of women, I could feel the agony that covered their hearts. I started sobbing but as a man I controlled myself. I don't know who went ahead to tell my mother that I was coming all I could remember was seeing my mother running towards me with a panga knife. I was baffled as to why was she trying to do that, I mean with what evidence did she gather to confirm that I killed my father in fact why would I kill my own father and my only source of help. This aside I knew that my life was in danger, I started running away to save my life. Some men tried to hold her but they failed. I ran as fast as I could since my life was at stake. I woke up. Sweating heavily, panting and full of fear. I wondered why I had such a dream and if the dream was a prophecy.

"i killed my father?" I asked myself. I decided to take it easy because it was just a dream but its flashes kept coming back time after time. I was totally confused to the extent that I omitted my schedule. I needed to recover, I couldn't have gone for job hunting with the state I was in. I needed to go somewhere, a quite place where I could get over my thoughts. I left for Symphony hills. I got so carried away that I did not realize how long it took me to reach my destination. I gained some altitudes and found the ideal place to think about it. Honestly I don't know if this was the better idea because it also made things worse. The thin transparent air started projecting my dream to my eyes vividly. It was pure apparition. My heart started beating so fast. I heard a loud cry. It frightened me. I wanted to run away, I thought it was part of the day mare but no it wasn't. I stood alert to trace where the cry was coming from. When I went towards its direction I saw what my brain interpreted as disgusting, inhuman and immoral. I saw two men attempting to rape a girl. For a moment i thought that the dream was a prophecy because i was close to killing someone. The good thing is that i managed to save the girl. She was sixteen; three years younger than me. Her name was **Abigail** she was a secondary school candidate and was writing her final examinations that year. The reason why she found herself at the hill was because she wanted to study. Unfortunately she almost met her worst nightmare but thanks to me she didn't. To some

extent I understood the evil minded men because truth be told Abigail was more than the definition of beauty. I escorted her to her home and handed her over to her mother.

“Words alone can’t describe how thankful I am” she said and of course she gave me something. She was a thirty one year old single mother. She was forced to drop out of school and get married at the age of fourteen for some reasons withheld. Her husband abandoned her a year later after she gave birth to Abigail. She had to raise her head and face life with courage in order to facilitate her livelihood.

“When I think of my mother I think of a warrior, I think of a soldier can’t get past her armor. I think of the battles she has fought, the lessons she has taught. Am so proud God chose me to be her daughter. When you see me you see the reflection of a queen who won’t give up her throne and stands tall on her beliefs”, this is what Abigail would say when I ask her to describe her mother. She used to run a business of a restaurant and this is what sustained her for sixteen years. Of course I didn’t know all the information the very same day. I gathered all this information after I started working for her. A week after my heroic deed I met her in the streets that’s when she learned about my situation and decided to offer me a job as a salesman at her restaurant. I was glad I finally found a job to help me earn money for my upkeep. Unfortunately I worked for a week then school resumed, nevertheless I was still in touch with her. In addition to this Abigail and I were still in contact because I used to help her with her assignments and general studies since she was three months away from her final examinations.

One Sunday as usual she visited. She said she had some problems to do with geometry. I let her in. That day she looked stunning. Her cotton dress dancing in the wind complimented her beauty. That day she forgot her mathematical instrument box and I told her to get mine from my room. At the very same moment the devil’s agent paid my mind a visit. I followed her to my room. I knew that Abigail was beautiful since the day I met her but since I took her as my sister I never thought of anything dirty in regards to how I met her. This time around the temptation was beyond my level of resistance; I fell in. What happened afterwards is what am disgusted with the most and it runs down as the worst thing I’ve ever done in my life. Even in prison I used to have flashes of the incident.

“What are you doing?”... “why are you doing this?”... “I thought I took you as my brother”... “Stop!!” ... “Aaaaaaa aaaa aaa”

I had no chance to call off my decision since the beans had already been spilled and immorality had infiltrated. I raped Abigail. About how remorseful I was after what I did is way beyond my ability of explanation. Two days later I heard a siren, I knew what was coming for me next. A knock on the door, I came out. The first person my eyes met was Abigail's mother. I could tell she was disappointed with me. I couldn't imagine the level of pain inside her. She was forced into an early marriage now her daughter defiled by the boy she trusted I've never embarrassed myself like I did that time. Abigail's mother filed a case against me. I was taken by the police to be kept in custody waiting for the case. I admitted that I was wrong, there was nothing I could do. Defending myself was as good as fighting a losing battle. Abigail had an army of non-governmental organizations behind her fighting for the girl child's rights and justice. I was sentenced to fourteen years in prison with hard labour. I admitted facing the consequences because I brought it on myself. What killed me sometimes was that some innocent people had to be victims of my stupidity. After he heard of what I did and that I was sentenced he was bewildered. My father died of heart attack. I learned of his death from someone from my village who came to visit his friend. My mother never came to visit me my entire prison life for reasons I don't know.

My first days of prison life were horrible. Never had I been subjected to such torture in my life. In addition to this my wound was yet to heal so I still endured its pain. Every time I used to think over what I did and kept blaming myself, of course I had myself to blame but the problem is I reached to the extent of never forgiving myself in either words I wasn't moving on. Somewhere in maze of sadness I was until I met the two friends of mine. That was the fulcrum of my prison experience and my whole life in general. Though it was hard for me to get along with the two at first but we interacted anyways. Lunda, a thirty years old man then; now forty four. Found himself behind bars on the charge of money laundering in church since he worked at the treasury department. Gawa was twenty two then now thirty six. He was jailed after he unconsciously killed his step father. He was a victim of injustice to be frank. His step father was a drunkard and he used to batter his wife; Gawa's biological mother. One day

Gawa had enough of it and rose to the occasion, the rest is history. I was the youngest of them all when I first met them at nineteen years of age and thirty three when we separated. They had noticed my state and were concerned. At first I was pained by the fact that I was jailed the very first year of my tertiary education which to me meant that my education journey was in the mud. This mentality was altered after interacting with the two. I realized I wasn't done with my life.

"It's only over when someone dies, as long as you are living you have the potential to achieve anything in life" Lunda used to remind me. The lectures I had from Lunda, comfort from Gawa made me realize there was more to life than crying over the past. Since the day I met the two my life changed and my wound started to heal. It was in the afternoon during resting hours. Lunda noticed i wasn't okay.

"You look bothered what's the matter?" he inquired

"something is eating me up"

"you wanna talk about or?"

"you are the last person on earth I would hide my problems from"
[he giggled]

"so say it"

"I've been thinking, as you said this is not the dead end that I have more to do in my life..."

"yes..."

"But what worries me is what will happen when I get out of prison. People's perception in regards to what I did. How will people look at me? I obviously have to cooperate to achieve my goals but how? Who would want to work with a rapist? How will the females look at me at school? Or any other place? What about the society in general? How are they going to believe me that I've changed? Which words can explain better? What am I..."

"Stop crying" he cut me off "you worry too much"

"But am being realistic this is obviously going to affect me in one way or the other"

"That I know but what you don't know is that you can not change what people think of you with words. No matter what they say cast a deaf ear and like I've always said focus on the positive. Live out the best version of your life and be productive. Let your behaviour speak for you and amaze your critics. We are all human we are bound to making mistakes in this world. One thing I would like to make myself clear to you is that if you get out of this hell of

a prison don't look at it as a burden. Look at it from the brighter side. Take it as your chance to make it in life again after failing your former chance. When we are born we are all given our first chance in life it is to us to use it to our benefit or not. For your own information almost everyone misuses his or her first chance in life but it doesn't mean that the journey ends there because we are given another chance. Everyone in this world has ever fallen no one hasn't. What distinguishes the strong from the weak minded is how they handle it when they fall. The strength of a man is shown when he wakes up with courage after a fall. Coming to prison was your fall and that's normal but it would be foolish of you if you get released but still act in the same way as before. Only a fool looks at life huddles as a punishment, a wise man learns some lessons. Being a prisoner must teach you some lessons that you should never forget and should help you develop"

Probably this is the reason why he said "*...represent us...*". Both Lunda and I were paying our debts to justice and in the process we reconciled and chose to do better.

"Where you are going live a productive life. Take it as your chance to live your dreams again. Show the society that you are not what they might think of you, that you are better than their perception towards you. Prove a point not only to the society but to your life as well"

I could visualize these words behind the phrase "*...represent us...*" in my mind. He wanted me to disapprove the mindset that people have concerning critical law breakers.

I left the prisoners uniform, took my belongings and left the prison corridors. I was a free man now. Ready to make a statement, ready to prove my worth and value.

I walked past the main gate. I looked back, waved goodbye to

Linthumbu prison. Life gave me a chance once more.

THE END

Author's note

The author of this book would like to say a few more words about the story. This story is original and it represents only the views of the author. Fictitious as is it the story was not derived from any other source or copied from life situations of anyone. Therefore if the story or part of it represent real life situation of anyone that is a total coincidence. The main reason this story was written was to change the mindset that runs in most of us. In most societies in this case Malawian, there is that kind of mindset that ostracizes everyone who has ever been in prison or who has ever committed a public abominations. A lot more people don't give such people a chance to represent themselves in the society or explain themselves. This story is sending a message to everyone that everyone deserve another chance no matter the sin they committed. As for the victims the story would like to say that there is no dead end in life and there is always a room for change and improvement for everyone. The people we isolate are the same people that might help in the development of our societies. Let's all join hands and live in harmony in our respective societies. Thank you.