

ISSUE III

JULY 2023

PENCILMARKS

*YOU CAN DO BIG THINGS
FROM A SMALL PLACE*

*OUR VERY FIRST ESSAY
COLLECTION*

& SCRIBBLES

Welcome to Scribbles 3, this body of work will include collated essays from Nigerian writers influenced by the house topic 'You can do big things from a small place'. The foreword is given by the editor, Timileyin Akinsaya and the epilogue by the founder, Clara Jack. This issue will as a special treat include testimonials from the team. Enjoy!

Cover art by Yoel Winkler from Retna.





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FOREWORD.

A NECESSARY REMINDER

Hello all, lovely to write to you again! It is with great pleasure from all of us at the team to herald July's magazine issue, titled "You can do big things from a small place". There is something so dynamic about this theme because it makes you self-reflect and opens your eyes to actually see things you'd normally just glance through.

When I was working on this note, I felt a wrecking sense of disingenuousness. I just did not think I could possibly write anything memorable that would be on theme. I didn't feel like I had any awesome story to share because my current reality wouldn't be what I'd classify as inspiring. Then it eventually came to me, like life's lessons usually do and I realized that we spend so much time hankering on the quest for a better life that we do not appreciate the one we already have.

Today's society is so fast-paced and ever-moving that we find ourselves constantly attempting to keep up and not be left behind. In the grand scheme of things, we are not allowed to just stop and stare because one thing the world will do is keep on going. I personally didn't really grasp how much this feeds into our very lives, our interactions and relationships. It is something that we cannot avoid and so we play along. July's magazine issue reminds us exactly why we should give ourselves grace to take things in, to enjoy life as much as we can, in the little joys. To pursue our ambitions also appreciating the tiny gifts of now.

My little thing from a big place would definitely be Pencilmarks and Scribbles Magazine. There's nothing as important and noteworthy as the work we do here and I am so proud to be a member of this project. As a young reader, I used to yearn for more books and pieces from people like me. I wanted to read stories I could see myself in, to read all forms of literature; light and serious alike. I wanted to see more African writers leaving the box of heavy and elevated literature they have been put in. Literature as an art form in Africa struggles now because it has been stripped of its pleasure. To be taken seriously as an author you often have to write a certain way and I saw how this discouraged everyone else who weren't as exceptional from doing what they enjoy, just because they enjoy it.

I recognize how much our publishing house is changing that narrative. We house all types of literature, we want the ones that you think aren't your best

3 Scribbles.

and even the ones that you are proud of because storytelling at its core is the essence of our existence. We all have a story to tell and they deserve to be immortalized. I am deeply proud of the work we are doing here at Pencilmarks and Scribbles Magazine and of the African writers we have spotlighted and put out there. We still have a long way to go but I genuinely look forward to how much more stories we will publish and how much more writers we will discover. July's Issue is one I will fondly remember for this necessary reminder. And I hope that as you read the amazing entries, it serves as your very own reminder of how possible it is to do marvelous things from a small place.

Tímileyín Akinsànyà,
Editor,
Pencilmarks and Scribbles Magazine.



Now-

WE BRING YOU,



BIG THINGS.

Okikikola Perí with Anonymous Hero.

I wasn't meant to be born, and as a matter of fact me being on earth is quite questionable. Having been raised with the story of conflict about my preexistence, my struggles with life already started even before I was nine months old.

The man who should be my father is from an influential background, while my mother is the daughter of a Civil servant. Honestly, nothing seems more perfect in a time where values and morals are still appreciated and the possibility of an unending tragedy was a little far-fetched.

But the way life would have it, two lovers from completely different societal backgrounds started a relationship without the certainty of it leading to a proper marriage and instead it led them to an unexpected pregnancy. In this case, it wasn't such bad timing because both parties were in their late twenties and it would have seemed right to do the right thing even though it happened at the wrong timing. Considering some unnecessary factors, I became unwanted. The fact that I'm alive and writing this tells a whole lot about my disappointments at this unfortunate dilemma that I've been aware of from the time consciousness started functioning in me. And I'm only enjoying this piece because it absolutely feels great and wonderful to be a living entity, therefore if any human is proud to still be alive, it's definitely me.

One thing I've always known is everybody has a story, and our daily activities take us on a journey of life in different phases. Apart from the fact that I wasn't accepted by my father and his family, there were several failed attempts into tricking my mother to terminate me and so the battles I've been fighting have been from inception.

The beautiful part is my mother is the true warrior, neglecting all the continuous pressure including mental and emotional struggles. She made sure she did everything not to lose me, she stood her ground and held strong which is why I can draw inspiration from her story to make this pen bleed.

Every human being shed tears, we've had reasons to experience sorrow in various facets and the truth is our experiences make us who we truly are. My awareness of being brought up by a single mother carrying a heavy/broken heart developed my mentality to become exemplary and extraordinary in my relationships and dealings with people, from being selfless, real and taking kindness as an obligation which I learnt from my mother. She never wants to see people suffer, she takes care of anyone that might ever be in need, she has accommodated and catered for countless people, young and old, helped lots of single mothers struggling with their reality. For more than twenty years she

taught children with disabilities, from the blind to children with hearing impairments in a school for the disabled.

I have witnessed her practice and perform cultural dance with the mute, it's amazing how she teaches them to type with the manual typewriter, building them academically, making sure they develop to be fully ingrained in the society. I've heard stories of her students who eventually got married, graduated from college, performed greatly in sports, travelled abroad to represent the country, etcetera.

I called her a warrior because apart from saving my life and nurturing me all by herself without any man, she is always defensive when a person is being cheated, she saves marriages from abuse and domestic violence, helps structure the lives of youngsters so they don't fall apart and go astray. She says her experience in life has taught her that a single simple mistake can be so costly that it might take years to correct and it could have a negative impact in the near future.

I chose this story because I studied the life of a woman that never got married but built a home, became so industrious and productive regardless of the unfortunate circumstances from her early life, she took it upon herself all through the years to be there for people she knows and meets, she sees everyone as family, working hard to make sure all that is within her jurisdiction is not polluted, fighting against any form of injustice as she sets examples in the lives of strangers, because she believes if she can achieve a whole lot on her own, then another person in the right path has endless possibilities. Her heroic acts are not the type that is publicized for the whole world to see, but the effects of her contributions in the lives of different individuals always brings a soul changing and uplifting result. All I've seen and heard the most in her life are scenarios of people coming to testify and show appreciation for her involvement in their lives, and this remarkable quality has become an adopted trait that helps in making the world a better place.

Author's note:

I wrote this essay solely because it resonates with my personal experience, it's largely why I decided to be a writer. This narrative has shaped my thinking through the years and it has been a guide in my life, I realized a lot from the hurt and pain that almost destroyed a great future and how it eventually turned out to be a blessing in disguise. One can only learn and be thankful for an opportunity to live a life of fulfilment, even though there have been lots of

obstacles, trials and tribulations. This is the core lesson to understand one's strengths and purpose in life.



Jemimah Osoba with You can do big things from a small place.

Rollercoaster!

Yes, if I was asked to describe my life in one word. Right now, I'm filled with a lot of emotions ~ happiness, tension, anxiety, surprise. If someone had told me a month ago, that by today, I would be on a plane, flying to the UK to receive an award, I would've screamed at the person to stop teasing.

But, that's my life right now. I was just a regular seventeen-year-old, who lived with her grandmother in a small community and in a twinkle of an eye, my whole life changed.

"They love your work. Your art....your art is...I can't find the exact words right now. It's in my head but the words are not coming out. All I can say is, it simply is PERFECT " Aunt Osas had said to me and my grandma when she broke the good news to us.

She continued. "Adufe, pack your bags, cos you're going to the UK. "

It felt surreal. God truly works miracles.

I've been through many ups and downs. When I was just twelve years old, my grandma whom I had thought was my mother, confessed the whole truth to me. I had learned that my real mother ~ her only child ~ had gotten pregnant at age nineteen and sadly, she had passed away exactly three hours after I was conceived.

My grandmother saw me as a replacement and, she kept the truth as a secret for many years. She told me that, I looked exactly like my mother — the same beautiful blue eyes, oval face— I was the exact replica of my mother.

I was angry and sad at the same time. Angry, that she took that long to tell me the truth and Sad because I didn't get to meet my mother.

"What do you mean by that? This...this can't be. I don't understand anything you're saying. You're my mother, I'm your daughter. You're the only one I've got and, I'm the only one you've got " I had said in a confused state.

My grandmother was already in tears.

"Adufe, I know that this is very hard for you to understand, but you just have to listen to me" she had managed to speak amidst tears.

"No" I had screamed " I am done listening, I won't sit here and listen to any more word. After twelve years of thinking you were my mother, now it turns out that you're my grandmother and my mother is actually dead." I had paused for a moment, to wipe away the tears that had stubbornly refused to stop falling from my eyes.

"Why did it take you this long to tell me the truth? And how could life be so cruel as to take her away from me, without letting me get the opportunity to know her "

I had stormed out of the living room. The whole house was spinning and, I could feel the walls closing in on me.....

***** ****

I know my life has changed for the better. Now, at this moment and particular period in my life, I wished my mother was here with me, I wanted both of them to join me in this new phase in my life.

My grandma once told me that my mother was a beautiful artist, she could tell stories through art and that I also possessed the same gift.

While in school, my best friend ~ Lanre ~ whose parents owned the school, had taken home one of my artworks and his mother's sister who owned an art gallery in the city, had been really fascinated and impressed by my work.

She had offered to buy the piece and when it was displayed at an art exhibition she had organized, it gained widespread recognition. It broke the internet. I went viral on social media. Everyone was talking about it. The whole country now knew my name and my whole life changed.

In a few hours, I will be in the UK to receive an award for my beautiful artwork. I'm grateful to God, my grandma, my friend and his family for their endless love and support. I hope my mom is proud of me.

Who would have thought that someone from such a small community could create something that incredible, but as they say "You can do big things from a small place".

Author's Note:

As Vincent Van Gogh once said "Great things are done by a series of small things brought together "

I chose this narrative because I wanted to talk about some of the restraints a lot of people with great potential have due to the kind of environment and background, they find themselves in. My character Adufe despite losing her mother, still found art to be magical. It was her haven.

It shows that no matter our race, background, or what happens in our lives, we can still create something special and unique that will make an impact to our society and the world at large.

Gabriel Divine Favour with the theme as a title.

It started on the twenty-third of May... This time it didn't start June as it usually did and I didn't know if that made me keen or not. It came earlier, which should be a good thing right? More time to prepare and be over the damage it brought to the innocent occupants of Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Everyone was used to it by now, except me. After all, I was never around when it started. I don't remember much of it from when I was younger, but it was never that bad for us. By now, you're probably wondering what I am talking about and maybe at this point, I should tell you what it is. You may think it is not a big deal but to us it was. The Flood.

Every year, from the last days of June up until the later days of October, a flood plagued the people of Yenagoa. You may think me biased for only mentioning Yenagoa, because if you were from Nigeria or knew a great deal about the country, you'd wonder why I mention only Yenagoa when almost all the riverine areas in Nigeria experience this great flood.

Well, that is because this is my narration, and my concern was what I experienced and witnessed. So, I'll start with how this flood affected us first. My mother, Mrs. Gabriel Grace had her own school. I have not been to a lot of places in the world, nor a lot of places in Nigeria, but in Yenagoa, my mother's status as the owner of a school didn't mean much. It was a small bungalow where my dad, who is a pastor, held Sunday services for our family. A small church that was converted into an even smaller school.

My mother was a nice woman, some might say too nice even. She loved children a lot and loved making people happy. She wasn't a pushover but you could cajole her into making you happy. Maybe that was the reason her school never made enough money. My mom could never let a child have an education, even if the parents never paid their fees.

So, while this might be my somewhat bitter essay, really it is just my mother's story.

My mom was always thinking of ways to make life easier for everyone. She always talked about what it would be like if we were rich, and how she would love to help everyone she could. So it never came to me as a surprise that although we were struggling and barely feeding, her heart went out to the innocent people who were rendered homeless by the flood.

I used to attend a boarding school in Abuja for six years, so I was never around for the flood. It was my first year in the University and unlike my secondary

school schedule, I was at home for the holidays. All the schools in Yenagoa had already been shut down due to the flood. My mom's school was not an exception, sadly our only source of income.

We had only one choice, to starve to death or find another means of survival-my mom took to making snacks so I could go around and sell them. The sales weren't so bad and in a day I made up to 5000 Naira while my mom set up a show-glass in front of our house to sell the snacks too.

Things weren't so good, but they could have been worse. Unlike a lot of people around us who had their houses covered by the flood, we still had our house. A friend of mine soon introduced me to ghost-writing and I began earning 1Naira per word for every story. This was a breakthrough for us.

Mind you, my mom was still worried about the people who had lost their homes so when I got my first pay for a book, which was 50,000 words, we were ecstatic. Following right after that, was a contract my mom got to make snacks for a wedding.

A lot of people loved my mom's snacks so when she got the contract, we were above the moon. My mom's dream seemed more like reality now so she set the ball in motion.

Her first step was the post she made on her WhatsApp status, soliciting assistance to reach out to the starved families out there. Of course, only a few people responded but my mom's dream couldn't be quenched.

What she saw on the news about the suffering people had moved her so much that with all the money we could gather, we launched our personal, "Feed the People" project. My mom was already a skilled caterer so we put all the funds into buying foodstuffs for the project.

My mom prepared all sorts of meals, from eba and different soups, like egusi, Banga, and okro soup which are the common meals amongst our parts to jollof rice and assorted meat. The whole process was quite enthralling.

The first day we left home with the food, the places were even worse than the news captured and not one of us had a dry eye when sharing those meals with the people. It brought so much joy to our faces seeing those little kids and helpless mothers happy.

We kept with our project for one week while my mom kept on endearing her contacts to help out in any way they could. Another breakthrough came when an NGO stumbled upon my mom's message and decided to sponsor the meals. If I never believed in miracles before, I did then and it was the greatest miracle ever.

The best thing for me was watching my mom put a smile on those faces continually even while we were in a small place ourselves.

Author's Note

I chose this particular essay because although I know there is good in this world, I've always been of the opinion that humans don't deserve that good, as they never appreciate it. But the events that happened in this essay and recounting them have been more like an eye-opener for me to my mother's favorite saying, "Humans may not appreciate kindness doesn't mean you shouldn't give it."

This essay reminds me every day, what a great mother I have and how much I aspire to be like this great woman.
Thank you!



Jennifer Okwudirimbah with the theme as a title.

6/6/2006.

Numerics had had their fair share of tango in my head, birthdays or water marking events, always lost in the abyss of my memory; but 6th June, 6th June; it was one that even if in an absolutely fictional dimension, I had some sort of psychological disorder, say, I was diagnosed with extreme depression or bipolar disorder or even worse, Alzheimer's disease, I would not be able to forget.

Okay, I'm not trying to be exaggerative but the point is that the date is one cleanly etched in my memory.

Before the call, I remember feeling so sad. Matter of fact, I was angry and disgusted. Angry that examination results were out and once again, I had gotten a 'B' in my favorite course, a near 'A' 'B'.

Why a 69 again, I was supposed to be used to this near success syndrome because it wasn't the third or fourth time, but how?, I just couldn't.

I was disgusted because of the feeling of envy I had tried so hard to suppress sprung up again when I found out that he who would not be named had gotten an 'A', and his A was a 70.

To make it worse, the sky had darkened, clouds had formed, it was going to rain and I didn't have an umbrella.

I was so in my feelings that I didn't want to speak to anyone.

The buzz in my bag amplified my annoyance but being a calm person, I relaxed and brought out the phone. It was Chi.

'Jerry is dead'

She said it so calmly, you'd think she was merely telling me to get her something if I was coming home. I didn't understand. I was quiet and she called my name a little louder and repeated her words.

I immediately got dizzy. I was still trying to comprehend her words.

'Are you coming home?'

She spoke again, still sounding unaffected but that was who she was, she hardly showed emotions. She only felt them.

'Yeah'

She hung up. Goosebumps covered my skin. I went completely still, the dizziness made me lose my balance but the tree before me prevented a head on crash with the ground.

My head took the blow, hitting really hard on the tree that it could cause some serious damage, but I couldn't feel it. My whole body except my chest was numb, the pain, so palpable that my body immediately woke up.

Three days later...

It was almost 11pm when Madam NK came knocking on our gate. She was with one of those little boys, I'm sure he's the one they call Naza, either that or Obinna, I'm not good with names either.

I'm certain she came this late because it was hard for her to find someone to fetch her water; a task she would have conveniently done herself considering she's middle aged if not for the humongous lumps of fat that clustered every corner of her body; a little more and she'd be categorized as obese.

I turned off the tap once her cans were full and as I gestured towards my house, she said while wailing,

'Hewww, shebi If Jerry still dey, I no for dey struggle with this small pikin, him for don fetch this water since'

I turned back and saw the little boy staggering while pushing the barrow while she barely held it by the side.

I couldn't comprehend if I felt agony or humor; agony for the ostensible and humor because of the irony. I was overcome with acute nostalgia: you, holding the hose towards one of the four large cans you used to fetch for her. You'd laugh and tell me that you know she doesn't deserve it, she doesn't deserve your help because at your front, she shuns you, unless it's when you ask for two of her cans which she'd immediately bring the double of, together with a fake and ugly large smile as you described; and at your back she says bad things about you, discussing your ill health with others in a way that made it seem like it was not nature but your own weakness.

When you were done with the water, you'd sit at the base of the pavement and ask me to tell you how I was doing. I'd tell you my problems, something that I never did, people would always assume that my life was smooth and you'd smile and in trying to comfort me you'd totally deviate, like starting off, reciting the alphabet and ending with the numbers like 100. It was always funny and somehow, it made the problems seem less worrisome.

You helped me in the same way you helped the old lady that lived in the mud house down your street. You'd clean for her and do all the washing. The help you rendered us, though different in context, wasn't absolutely mutually exclusive because they both had one end; you eased our sufferings, our pain.

What dazed me even more was when you'd come back for midday breaks, and with the meager money you earned from selling your nature portraits, you'd buy chilled zobo drinks for some of the little children.

You were a small person, fated with less than the average amount of life's goods, but you used your less greatly, and to a great number.

Your autism impaired you only in the eyes of the world because you saw yourself as equal and even better than others. You even played better. Never did I imagine that there was to be no old age for you. And for the days and moments since that call; never had nature been in a more somber mood, never had she been more fertile in her display of melancholy.

Author's Notes:

I knew a Jerry.
He passed on due to ill monitored autism.
He came from an impoverished background, a home of nine and though it discomferts me to say this, he was a menace to them.
Despite all negatives, he was great to a large number, helped in ways he could while disregarding the unfavorable condition he was in. He was never really acknowledged for his many goods among which I wrote few.
His presence and now absence has taught me that the world cannot be understood, there aren't answers to the whys.
This is my TRIBUTE to him.

Pencilmarks.

Michael Omírín with The Power Within: Illuminating the World from Small Places

(Stage is dimly lit. A single spotlight illuminates a figure standing at the center stage. The figure, a person of determination and resilience, gazes out into the audience.)

Performer:

You see this small place, this unassuming corner of the world? It holds within it a power that transcends its size, a power to ignite change, to transform lives, and to leave an indelible mark on the tapestry of humanity. For in this place, ordinary people have done extraordinary things through their consistent acts of compassion, love, and unwavering commitment.

In the vastness of our world, it is easy to feel insignificant, to believe that our actions cannot make a difference. But I am here to tell you that every single act, no matter how small, has the potential to create a ripple that reaches far beyond what our eyes can see.

Take, for instance, the humble schoolteacher in a remote village. Year after year, she pours her heart and soul into nurturing the minds of her students, instilling in them a love for knowledge and the belief that they can achieve greatness. She may never grace the halls of fame or have her name etched in history books, but through her unwavering dedication, she shapes the future, one young mind at a time.

Or consider the tireless community organizer, tirelessly working to uplift those living in the shadow of poverty and despair. From a small office tucked away in the heart of the neighborhood, they orchestrate initiatives to provide food, shelter, and hope to the forgotten souls. Their consistent acts of compassion breathe life into broken spirits, reminding them that they are seen, valued, and deserving of a brighter future.

And what about the quiet artist, capturing moments of beauty on canvas or through the lens of a camera? Their work, born from their unique perspective and talent, has the power to stir emotions, challenge perceptions, and ignite conversations that reshape the way we see the world. From their small studio or darkroom, they paint strokes of inspiration that transcend borders and touch the hearts of millions.

These extraordinary individuals, hidden in plain sight, teach us that it is not the grand gestures or the public acclaim that define greatness. Rather, it is the consistent acts of kindness, love, and dedication that have the power to change lives, to inspire others, and to create a wave of transformation that can be felt across generations.

So let us remember that we are not bound by the size of our stage or the reach of our spotlight. The true measure of our impact lies in the consistent acts of goodness and compassion we perform each day, no matter how seemingly insignificant they may appear.

You, my friends, have the power to do big things from this seemingly small place. Embrace the power within you and let it shine brightly, illuminating the lives of those around you. Be relentless in your pursuit of positive change, for in this world of interconnectedness, a small place can become the launching pad for a movement, a catalyst for transformation, and a beacon of hope for all.

Remember, it is not where you stand, but how you stand that truly matters. It is not the external circumstances or the physical location that determines the impact you can make in this world. It is the unwavering conviction in your beliefs, the resilience in the face of challenges, and the unwavering commitment to your values that define your true power.

So go forth, my fellow change-makers, with hearts brimming with love, kindness, and compassion. Let these qualities be the guiding forces that shape your actions and interactions with others. In this vast world filled with strife and adversity, it is your consistent acts of extraordinary love, kindness, and compassion that have the potential to rewrite the narratives of pain and division.

Redefine the boundaries of what is possible. Break free from the confines of societal expectations and limitations. Dare to dream bigger, love deeper, and extend kindness further. Embrace the power within you to challenge the status quo, to uplift the marginalized, and to create a world where empathy and understanding are the cornerstones of human interaction.

In this small place, where you find yourself, you hold the power to create a world that knows no limits. Each act of love, no matter how small, can be a catalyst for greatness. Whether it is lending a helping hand to a neighbor in

need, offering a word of encouragement to a struggling friend, or dedicating yourself to a cause that ignites your passion, remember that every act matters.

Your consistent acts of love, kindness, and compassion have the power to create a ripple effect that extends far beyond what you can imagine. They have the power to inspire others to join in the pursuit of a better world. Through your small but mighty acts, you have the ability to plant seeds of change that will blossom and transform lives, communities, and even nations.

So, my fellow change-makers, let us unite in our shared mission to make a difference. Let us embrace the power of love, kindness, and compassion, and wield them as our greatest tools for transformation. Let us defy the limitations imposed upon us and create a world that is defined not by boundaries, but by our collective commitment to uplift, support, and empower one another.

Together, we can build a world where every act, no matter how small, is celebrated and cherished as a step towards a brighter future. Let our small places become the epicenters of extraordinary change, and let us leave a legacy of compassion and love for generations to come.

(Performer stands tall, radiating confidence and determination, as the spotlight slowly fades away, leaving the stage in darkness.)

Author's Note:

I chose this narrative because it celebrates the transformative power of consistent acts of kindness and compassion from seemingly small places. It is a reminder that even the smallest gestures can have a profound impact on the lives of others and can contribute to creating a better world.

In a society that often emphasizes grand gestures and fame as measures of success, it is important to recognize and highlight the significance of consistent acts. This narrative aims to shift the focus from the idea that only big, flashy actions can make a difference to the understanding that everyday acts of goodness can be powerful catalysts for change.

By showcasing individuals who work tirelessly and passionately in their small corners of the world, the narrative seeks to inspire and empower others to take action and make a positive impact within their own spheres of influence. It encourages individuals to see the value in their daily actions and to recognize that they have the power to create change and touch lives, no matter how small their place may seem.

Akinwade REMI with the theme as a title.

Like every twenty-something year old man out in the wild of concrete buildings and capitalistic pursuits, I'm seeking meaning. Trying to do grand things from small places. Oscillating from passionate to indifference, stoicism to flamboyant nihilism - trying to fit into categories arbitrarily forged. Religiously pretending to be interesting or worth paying any attention to. But all of that dissipates into the upper atmosphere when your niece walks into your room while you are reading, with a cereal stained face and puppy eyes coyly demanding that you help clean her up.

I've always been self-absorbed to a slightly nauseating degree. Neurotic with an aching need to figure out the complex math that comes with being a person.

Anything that was remotely "uncool" did not get my appraisal and a life of domestication seemed beneath me. Five years ago, if you asked me where I saw myself at age 27 or 28 I'd tell you something about being at a film screening for something I directed or co-wrote with a friend, I'd tell you about how I wanted to live alone in my apartment with a game console and all my favourite novels. Something about a mini-bohemia of my own doing fascinated me. My life had to be isolating for me to enjoy it. It had to be clinical but expressive and I had convinced myself on a subconscious level that such a life was the closest thing to absolute freedom... Then came my niece, like a comet bursting through the ether of a once quiet planet - leaving a crater, illuminating everything and everywhere.

There are moments I let the details of the present escape my immediate perception. I intentionally do not observe because I don't believe in "once in a lifetime". Life is a cyclical cosmic entity and most things are repetitive ; I used to say all things are repetitive but now it's just most things. I'll never get the feeling of seeing my niece on her first day on earth, clueless of the unforgiving nature of where she just landed but bright-eyed with so much ignorance you

could feel the innocence swallow my entire family whole. I'll never get back the time she said her first coherent words or the cliché yet genuine happiness of seeing her first steps. I'll never get those moments back. Most of all, I'll never forget the day she observed the paternal absence. An absence caused by events that predates her existence. I could read the lack of words on her face, the urge to express the currently inexpressible. All I did was watch because that was all I could do at the time and when it was needed I'd take her out to get chicken and chips or ice cream (every staff at chicken republic knows her now), we'd see animals at the zoo we've been to twenty times and I would hope those little outings represent what she needs to know ; that there's love here, however minute and in spite of an absence.

A certain tinge of hyper self-awareness hangs over my head as I write this. I know it's an attempt to hold on to the halcyon days of a growing child. A way of saying I witnessed the genesis and helped with the nurturing, but I also think I'm trying to say in so many words that I do not fear being domesticated and neither do I neurotically crave my small utopian isolation. I still want my freedom and being a present uncle hasn't really taken away my "coolness". I have matured a bit but I'm also in touch with my infantile core that wants to be silly and watch cartoons and make up the wildest stories in the known universe. I know my niece will not remember most of her early years and how she saved me from sinking into a life that would have rendered me unlovable. I will not tell her any of that and God forbid she finds this essay in the crannies of the internet; but if she does I hope she knows I know she'll come to hate all my nicknames eventually and I know all her little tricks to get out of the house because I invented them, I hope she knows I have a video of her singing the Sofia the first theme song with so much passion and malaprops. I hope she knows her father had his demons but she'll be fine for the most part. I hope she knows I don't mind if she forgets to call me sometimes because I hope she forgets to call me sometimes, that's a sign of a life being lived. I hope she knows that when she decides to call, if she's in trouble there's no judgement

here, no calvary in the world can stop me from coming to her aid. No philosophy in the world is more important than her and because of her there's some meaning to whatever this life is supposed to be. And loving is perhaps the most consistently useful thing I've ever done in my short stint on earth. I hope she knows that when she calls and I pick up and say hello, wherever I am, in a colony on the moon or the neon-lighted streets of a future Nigerian state, I will sound like home.

Author's Note:

I chose this narrative for the simplest of reasons; there's dignity in helping with the upbringing of someone younger and vulnerable. It doesn't necessarily have to be a parental or embryonic bond, but it does matter. It is a small act with an endless ripple effect. I'm getting around to setting my ego and self-absorption aside so I can see the bigger picture-that there's someone younger and integral to my life as I am to her. In my own odd way, it's an epistolary piece for the future. I hope she finds this, and I hope she's happy.

Pencilmarks.

FROM



Jess-

At the time when I got into Pencilmarks, I wanted to be a part of something. I had also been a fan of the founder's writing for a while so I believed in her vision and wanted to be a part of it.

I love working behind the scenes and I love literature and Pencilmarks provided a space where I could bring these two together. My ability to document and organise has improved greatly since I joined the magazine. I am also more confident about being able to pull off whatever I am tasked with. I remember being given a task that required me using Canva, I had prior to this only used it to design simple birthday cards for myself lol but I completed that task feeling oh shit you did this. That one event shot up my confidence level. Every Friday when we publish, I view our social media posts smiling and being glad that I am part of something so beautiful and important.

Dammy-

My name is Damilola everyone calls me Dammy. I work as an intern in the content team.

When I first started, I thought "why did I sign up for this?", I had to really ask myself that because I love writing and authors. Then I discovered that I had a passion for helping other writers push their work out there even though I haven't done mine.

Anyways, I later discovered at PENCILMARKS how to work with a team of creatives, I mean these set of people had the ability to think creatively anytime. Also, I love my sub-boss, Timileyin. She's so cool, I'd love to meet her. Working here has really helped me a whole lot, I learnt to expand my imagination and got to network with different people without feeling mediocre. I also love my top Boss, Clara. I mean the compensation is great and I'd love to work here after my internship.

3 Scribbles.

Naomi

I like the work that we do at Pencilmarks and Scribbles, our work opens my mind to new ideas ,the endless possibilities in writing and the magic in literature.

Atty-

Hi, I'm Atty and working at Pencilmarks is specially exciting for me because for the past year and half, I've focused more on just literary projects to earn a living, but being at pencil marks feels like having a purpose, like it's not just work, I have a part in helping other writers like myself find a space in the world.

Felicia

I saw the application for the internship on Twitter and I applied because I loved the name of the company and more importantly I love the process of writing and publishing literary works. I've always been fascinated by the idea of bringing stories to life, and I knew that Pencilmarks and Scribbles would be a great place to learn and grow.

Since joining the content and publishing team, I've had a sense of fulfillment in the sense that I'm able to partake in certain activities that enable authors and poets to publish their work. I've been able to generate content ideas, edit and proofread manuscripts, and even create some of my own content. I've also learned how to use Canva design app, which has been a great tool for creating eye-catching visuals for our social media channels.

Being on the team at Pencilmarks and Scribbles has been a great experience. I've learned a lot, I've met some great people, and I've had the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of authors and poets. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this team, and I'm excited to see what the future holds.

3 Scribbles.

From the Founder's Desk

'Things come to you and then you must carry them delicately'.

'Welcome to the best place on earth'. That's what I tell a new team member when I add them to the group chat and by the testimonials up there, I think you can see why. When this publication started in 2017, the very first header I put up on the website was 'The best things in life are the things that happen unexpectedly and the things that grow'. How prophetic and poetic of me. I rarely find myself speechless but at this point I am. Everything for this particular issue came to me and it came so beautifully. Reaffirms the love I have for the number 3.

The work we do at Pencilmarks always grounds me because we are a group chat changing a scene with each blog post, each issue, with each letter and every time a writer tells me we had a hand in changing their lives, I don't know whether to cry or smile. A dream can grow bigger than you who birthed it and I believe that is the most rewarding thing. This is my life's work and seeing it flourish so splendidly is deeply rewarding. This dream came to me, keeps coming and now it has come to you to bear witness. Here's to every light in a corner, in a small place, in a crease, in a tunnel, you make your world bright, there's honor for you. I read through the blog from day one during our break and my heart was so full. Literature is a form of architecture in the way it builds and stores our memories. These timestamps capture growth beautifully, show us just how far we have come and how much more we can go. We can go the distance even from a small place.

See you once more, with issue 4!

