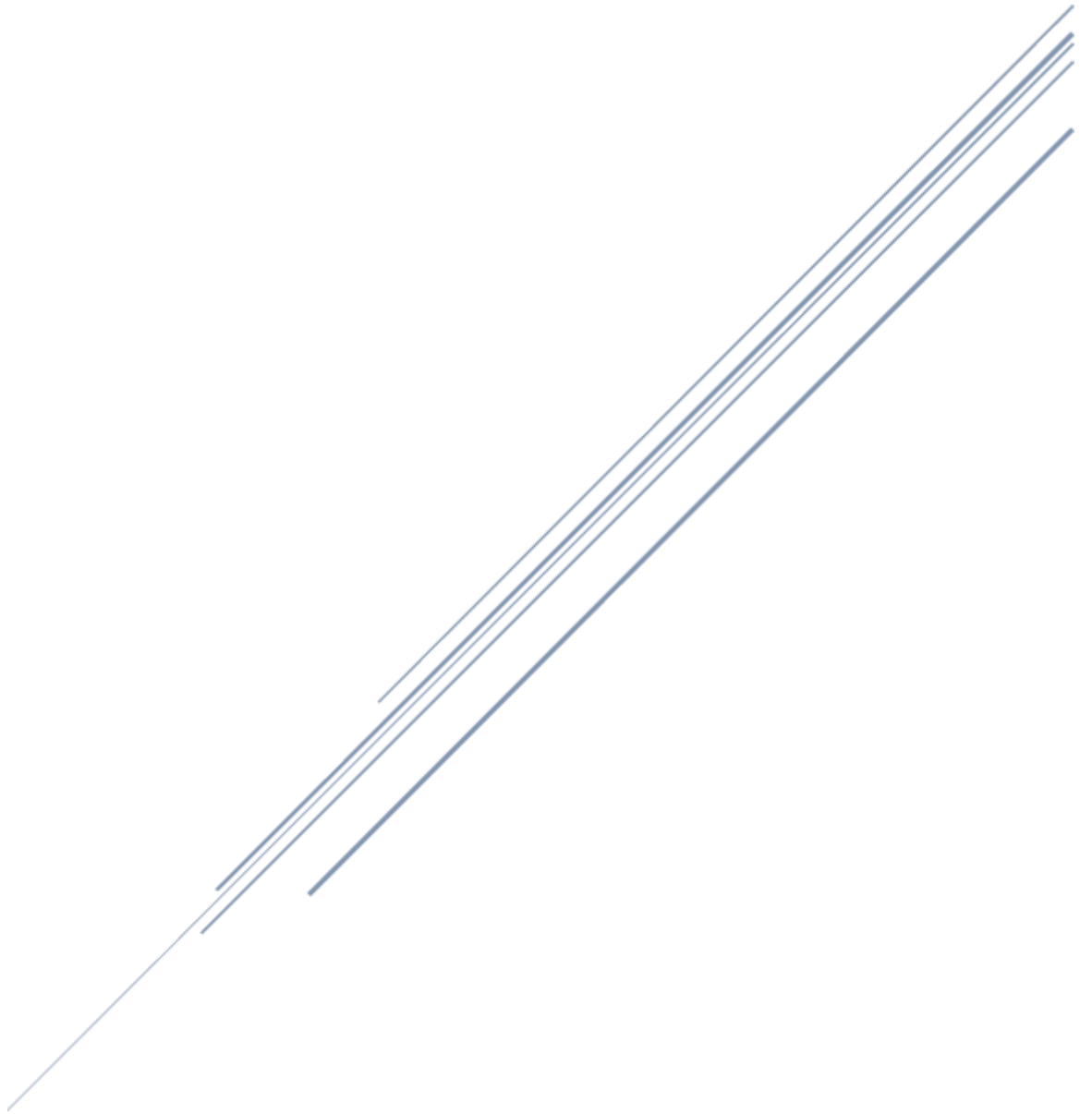


MARCH CHALLENGE SUBMISSION

The short story of Iduun



By Carlos MAMPEMBE

The short story of Iduun Tight

Topics: the transition from teenage life to adult life

Summer was already coming. Summer, this time of the year echoed the sunny weather, the vacations, the end of classes. But for Iduun, it meant that the high school graduation exam was approaching. Her whole school life was about this exam. She had worked hard to get there. And her academic record reflected that. She received numerous awards from the school principal himself! She was the best student of the decade and was said to have a promising future. However, even with this clean record, the most confident student would also falter before the famous exam.

Iduun's parents also thought it was an important exam. That's why they had set up a system: the O.C.F, which stands for 'Only focus on course'. They had applied it since their Iduun's entry in middle school. There was no way they were going to let her get sidetracked from her studies. She was perfectly supervised by them. Evening classes at the local commune, close attention to her grades, and increased supervision of her company. She was young, she didn't need these 'modern' distractions. Mr. Tight, Iduun's father, was sure of that. All she had to do was to concentrate on her studies, the rest would come later. So in application to this idea, he focused solely on this aspect of his child's life. He had it all mapped out, first the science high school for his daughter, then a medical degree and a specialization in neurology. He had put everything in place for her professional success. Mrs. Tight agreed with her husband. However, some rumors did not please her. That her lovely Iduun was having some trouble at school. She would be bullied, which she found hard to believe. Her daughter was sweet and would not get into such trouble. Also, it was just child's play to her. She believed hard that if this was the case, Iduun would grow up and forget all about it.

The high school graduation exams went well and as most expected, Iduun had one of the highest scores in the region. The Tight house was in full celebration. Most of the neighbors came to congratulate Iduun. She didn't even know them. Her parents had declined most of the birthday invitations she received. She only had attended a few. For example, the birthday party of Mrs. Libertas's daughter, Laetitia. They lived next door to each other and had been friends until high school. From middle school on, her parents weren't too keen on her hanging out with Laetitia. According to the Tights, the education she was giving her daughter was not well organized. The girl didn't seem to care that much about her studies. She was captain of the gymnastics team and vice president of the journalism club. However, she spent her time in parks listening to music. She went out a lot, to the movies. An attitude that the Tights found

dangerous. They felt the Libertas were too lenient with their young teenager. She was in danger of failing. To everyone's surprise, the latter had passed her high school diploma with honors. But for the Tights, it was a stroke of luck.

The diploma in the pocket, Iduun had to prepare to leave. She had been admitted to the University of Yole, in the neighboring country. It was time to leave her hometown. She wasn't sure if she wanted to, but her parents had insisted. So she would go. Besides, she was packing her suitcase. It was exciting. She had seen her apartment through pictures, something fairly simple but practical. Her parents had contacted their friends in the city to help them. Iduun wasn't sure what to make of it. The medical studies, the city chosen. She had her doubts. She didn't really feel ready to leave, at least she wasn't sure. She didn't know the people who were going to receive her and the idea of living alone so soon scared her a little. She was only 17 years old. But the pressure was enormous, she didn't think her parents would hear her and understand her concerns.

When she finished packing her suitcase, she went to the dining room, dinner was already served. It was the last meal and Indo wondered what she and her parents would talk about. Strangely, she didn't feel so emotional. Deep down, she had mixed feelings. Get out of here as soon as possible and start her life, or stay here and learn more about how she should do it. She sat down in front of her mother, right next to her father. Her father helped himself and looked at her for a moment. She realized that it was time to talk about important things, such as how she should conduct herself during her studies. That was what they always talked about in serious moments. Her father told her that the family didn't have many doctors and that it was a noble profession that she had to succeed in. This is exactly what she expected, even though she had some expectations that her parents would explain what it would be like to go home and live alone. She was curious. She felt like she had always been living in a shell and protected from the world now that she was going out, now that she was going away she was excited but also scared because she was completely unprepared. All she was asked to do was study, study, and study. She thought that she would have time to learn how to live her life outside of school. She had a lot of questions, but she didn't dare ask them out loud. She thought about the time she tried to tell them that she was being bullied at school and her mother told her that it was something that would pass, that it was something that happened, that kids would go through it. So she had a second helping and ate in silence.

The next morning they set off for the airport, the first time she had been there. While waiting for her luggage to be organized, her parents tried to debrief her quickly on how it was going to

be. But it was still a blur so when a nice lady in the queue in front of her offered to accompany their daughter, she was more than happy. She wouldn't be alone at least for the trip.

It was now time to leave Hindu was torn. Little Iduun, who had never lived far from her parents, was now going to another country to study. She turned to them and saw that her mother was crying. Her father looked at her and reminded her what she had to do, which was to succeed, so she waved her hand at them for the last time.

The lady who offered to help her guided her step by step until she was seated on the plane. The trip went well. The trip had been quite quick. A 12-hour flight with one stopover. When she came out of the airport, her father's friends greeted her. She had never seen them before and didn't know how to behave with them, so they took her to her apartment and helped her to settle in. She met the landlord who explained to her that she had to pay the rent at the end of each month with a certain amount. She felt good here. She felt free. Studies were starting and everything seemed to be going well.

She began her studies the following month. It went well at the beginning, but she was soon disillusioned. After a few months, Iduun didn't know what to do. Her studies were hard enough and her social life was almost dead. She heard people talking about taxes and investment. But she didn't know how to start or if she should start. Everything she had been taught was studied. It was like that for her social life too, she had been so reclusive. She had been kept away from what a social life was all through your childhood.

Time passed, and it was getting harder and harder. She wondered why she had chosen to study there. Her parents tried to keep in touch with her but they felt that she had become cold and distant. Even though she was not a very jovial child, she was always quiet. She said she was busy most of the time, but the truth is that Iduun couldn't take it anymore. The studies that had been chosen for her were not suitable for her. She couldn't face the blood of the application exercises. She couldn't attend them. The last time she tried, she had thrown up. This didn't help her reputation as a freak. Also, aside from school and her apartment, she didn't get out much. She didn't go out much. She didn't know what to do, she was overworked, she had no social life, and she had no life outside of college at all. After a few months, it was too much to handle so she stopped everything. She told her parents who didn't understand. They had done everything to make her succeed. That's what she blamed them for. They had done everything

for her, even her own, and had not prepared her for anything but studying. But there is more to life than that.

She explained to them that it had not been her choice, that they had chosen for her and that throughout her life they had made the choices for her. Now she didn't know how to make her own and she didn't know how to start her adult life. She had been treated like a child all her life. Her father disagreed with her, saying that it was the duty of parents to guide their children and to choose for them. To put them in the best conditions for professional success. However for Iduun her decision was without appeal, she stopped everything. She was angry at them for not having prepared her for what adult life could be. Now she was leaving medical school with a burn out and a depression and that had cut off her desire to study.

Not wanting to go home to face her parents' anger, she looked for a job. She found one as a waitress. One thing led to another and she ended up taking over the restaurant where she had started her career. It was a fairly simple job and she felt that it gave her the sociability she should have had.

One day while on duty she met a young woman who walked into her restaurant. The young woman who entered reminded her of someone. When she looked at her more closely she recognized Laetitia. She had grown up a lot after all that, it had been 8 years since she had seen her. She hesitated for a moment but then went to talk to her. They greeted each other. To her surprise, Laetitia was happy to see her again, so they talked. Iduun thought she would resent having cut her off at college, but that was not the case, far from it. Laetitia confided in him that she knew it wasn't her fault. As she grew older, she realized that her parents had had a big influence on the way she acted. They exchanged a little more. Iduun learned that Laetitia had studied journalism. She had dreamed of doing so since middle school and her parents had encouraged her to pursue her dreams. Unlike her, she had not left the family cocoon early. After all, she was only 16. Her parents had enrolled her in the city's community college. She studied there for a year. Then she entered the university in their hometown for her bachelor's degree. After that, she felt ready to study elsewhere. So she did. Now she was a journalist at the national TV station and loved her job. Iduun was fascinated by her words. Her life seemed to have been very different from his. When it was time to say goodbye, the young women promised each other that they would dream about each other. Laetitia was surprised that it was Iduun who suggested that they meet again. But she was happy about it. When Laetitia left, Iduun sat down on one of the chairs in the restaurant. It was already late. She looked around the medium-sized room and wondered what it would have been like if she had had the

freedom of choice that Laetitia had. She didn't regret her little restaurant, but hey ... she sighed and got up from her chair to close her restaurant.

Ironically, the Tights who had foreseen Laetitia's failure now took her as an example when talking to their daughter. Unlike Laetitia, Iduun was guided all her life. From her schooling to her choice of studies. She was not prepared to live outside her home. For her parents only the studies were important. They smothered their child without realizing it. They did not teach her to make her own choices and be independent. When the time came for her to do so, she didn't know what to do. She didn't hold. Unlike Laetitia. Her parents listened to her and always gave her the freedom to choose. They supervised her but did not overprotect her. By not pushing her to leave in a hurry like the Tights did with Iduun, the Libertas allowed Laetitia to gain her independence little by little. They guided her along the way and she made it through.

Iduun's case is not general, but many young people go through this. Parents get them used to living a certain way and rush them to another way of life without preparing them. During their lives, they are usually told that the baccalaureate is the key to everything. But do young people really learn how to make **the transition from teenage life to adult life**? We throw them into unknown waters hoping that they will learn to swim! We also understand that young people should have the freedom to do the studies that they like so that they can develop in what they like. University studies are already hard enough, and to pursue them in a field that one did not choose is even harder. Choosing a degree is not just about the salary that comes with it. Passion and love for the field must also be taken into account.

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