





WET UNDER THE RAINBOW



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Akariza Laurette Annely



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## Foreword

Across Rwanda, the shift of focus to programs catered to youth's unique experiences in a post-genocide context has been strategic and well-orchestrated. Youth play a critical role in societal healing because it is by their hands that Rwanda can propel itself into space which preserves the memory of generations before and after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, yet still looks forward to how young people can rebuild their own future for the good of the nation.

26 years after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, ex-perpetrators are being released from prison and now have to reintegrate into a society that is completely new and has been transformed. As a result, spaces for peace building have to adjust their objectives to bridge the gaps and mend the social fabric of Rwanda in a new way. In many cases, young people carry a level of trans-generational trauma, which has been passed down from their parents. Everyone's trauma is unique to their experience, and each family has their own wounds and difficult memories.

Complex questions are emerging at a rate that is difficult to keep up with. Parents and survivors cannot face their wounds alone, which is why young people need to be equipped with sufficient knowledge and understanding to spark a meaningful, healing conversation. We know that youth have to be a part of the conversation about how to remember because the youth of today are becoming parents and are reaching the professional world. By participating in spaces for healing and memory preservation young people better prepare themselves for the workforce. In Rwanda, approximately 60% of the population is under the age of 30.

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Imfura Heritage Rwanda has contributed to engaging youth in preserving memory and healing by creating various spaces for peace building and dialogue on healing and reconciliation. Through telling stories, young people have relieved themselves of some of the complicated feelings and deciphered dense emotions tied to their own or their parent's traumatic experiences thus, beginning their healing journey.

Storytelling is among the most vulnerable presentations of past trauma or heavy memories. By writing these stories, publishing novels like this of Akariza Laurette Annely and biographies, not just locally but internationally, Rwandan youth can correct false narratives and write a truthful history of the country thus preserving the memory for generations to come. In this sense, youth have found their place in the preservation of healing and memory through bold literary expression.

This work of Akariza Laurette Annely is showing a youth face challenges with fix self-expression, understanding a dense history of trauma and how to help their own and relatives who survived traumatic experiences they are steadily contributing to memory preservation by writing stories and changing the narratives around what is known and still left to be discovered about the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and daily life. The efforts to develop safe spaces for memory and healing are immense and clear. As young people continue their remembrance practices and find their place within memory preservation it is through youth leadership that more youth will feel comfortable and free to explore their own heritage.

**Mfuranzima Fred**

Author, CEO/Founder at Imfura Heritage Rwanda



## Special thanks

God has been so good to me and helped me since I first had a thought of writing this “Wet under the rainbow” am so grateful.

I thank you all who helped me up to the step, without you this work would have been only in my dreams. Thank you is not enough for you.

My family who understand me, especially my Mother who made this work amazing am grateful.

Thank you, U Wivine, I Agathe, K Agape, K Joy, M Mellissa, S Joshua, N Shanice, K Herve, K Rabia, T Lysee, N Priscille, K Linda, B Kellen, U Eduige, M Innocent, C Celine, Imena ry’Imaragishyigika family, am thankful for what you did for me.

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I thank you all for every support, motivation, courage and prayers, this is the outcome of your work.

May God bless you! Abundantly.

## Preface

The Genocide against Tutsi 1994 in Rwanda took a lot from us than we can ever apprehend, what form present-day perceptions of the past is the passing down of stories and testimonies, being raised by parents who have seen the worst of humanity or who are paying back their most horrible deeds impacted our mental health unknowingly.

Cyusa was born three years after the genocide this is his life, together with his friends they are struggling to fight an invisible war of accepting their country's history, rising above their loss, and helping their parents to heal and that occur to cost them their dreams and happiness sadly they were late to know that it was worth fighting together.

Fighting alone to show how much they're not affected is making them experience depressions that is still indescribable because they are in the hardship of acting strongly to help their parents in healing and living in this modern life which potency you to depict more happiness than what you have, but how long will our future leaders live in that forged life, is even that anyone's bliss? They are still wet under the rainbow.

This is not a true story  
But it is based on real-life after  
Genocide against Tutsi in 1994

## Dedications

### *THIS BOOK IS FOR ALL OF YOU*

- Who died in agony of leaving your children behind, rest in peace, they have become our best parents.
- Who have a repent heart of their unthinkable actions, feel forgiven, restore the light and let's build up our country again and again.
- Who had a depressing background, may you develop for the impressive future of your children...
- Who left behind their dreams for healing their broken parents, may you reach the success you fight for...
- Who are trying not to remain in the past, may your perfections inspire others behind you...
- Who are still wet under the rainbow, this is time to light up together.



## CYUSA

**T**his is the story of my life, it's a pleasure I have to share it with you, where should I start from? Let me start from my earliest childhood memories, mmh I'm Cyusa David, my father is Muvunyi Aimable; he was a nurse and my lovely mother is Murekatete Mediatrice. I am the firstborn of my family and my only sister is Umuhiza Divine whom I usually call Divine and I hope you too will read this my love for you is always strong, I was born in 1997 three years after the Genocide against Tutsi in 1994 and Divine was born in 2000.

My childhood was not different from any other child in that period.

Our mother is very calm, she barely speaks, and I knew that she speaks only when she felt her words are more important than her silent but it was ok with everyone at home. Her eyes were filled with love from the very first memory of her that I have. We always enjoyed each other's company especially Divine's, as our last born she was our source of happiness, she could make her sit beside just to make sure she was comfortable, she is a good businesswoman and in her silent she manages to do it perfectly, she had a shop of groceries near us but she later shifted further.

Did I just talk about my amazing father? A cheerleader who even helped us with our Home Works. Divine and I were so

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happy and comfortable to be around him, he was so mindful of our mentor and physical growth.

Divine grew up fast but she was still our little angel. She was very smiley and sweet girl, to grow up beside her was among the best thing that ever happened to me before all things started to fall apart.

Every boy in primary school is known to like football but my passion of it was there Lucky was my friend though we always found ourselves in different teams. We're all good in football so we couldn't be in the same team, we were always discussing about soccer, visiting each other, as we were neighbours, I came to see something different in their family, they always had people visiting and them going to their aunties and uncles and he had Patrick who was in the last year in our school. He was his cousin, and He is in football school team that time.

He was the best player and the captain of our football team, he helped Lucky join the school team as we were to join it a year later. It is not jealousy but that time I wanted to have elder cousins or elder brothers too. Because I thought that cousins or elder brothers were meant to help, support and lift each other. As my parents were busy, we spent most of our times with aunty Betty, Mama's younger sister.

I can't remember when I heard about Genocide for the first time but I get flashes of memories like when we sat in the compound. Aunty Betty was cooking and I was drinking milk in beside of her; "Aunty is Paul your Brother?" I asked, she laughed harder that time and she said "No, Cyusa Paul is not my brother, He is just your uncle"

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I didn't get her well that time, when I was young, we had no many visitors at home which didn't bother me because I didn't know another life than that, frequently they called me Cyusa I didn't know even its meaning, in our culture, our family name had a strong meaning and it held promises sometimes.

"But aunty can I ask you?" she responded with a simple yes she was peeling potatoes in the kitchen "why don't we have cousins too" she surprisingly looked at me and I realized that I was not asking a simple question "Aaaaaa Cyusa and is Divine not enough for you?"

I shook my head and she said "Tell me, go and bring that chair there and sit so we can talk" as I was coming back, I started claiming "But Divine is not my cousin I want my cousins to be helping me;

*'See, Aunty we don't even have uncles, where are they? I mean your brothers because you told me Paul is only my uncle and I know Kalisa works with Papa. He is not even his cousin.'*

She yelled at me and that was not something I was expecting "But Cyusa how dare you to call adults by names, don't you know its tonto, not Kalisa, we were taught to respect adults since our childhood, in our culture we don't call adults in their names instead aunties and uncles that time I apologized and then lastly I didn't get my answer.

And later at dinner when, I remembered that I didn't get my answer and I wondered if I could rise my question there but I thought it was not a good idea. "Cyusa why are you not eating" when Mama said that I was finally brought back from my thoughts.

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"Cyusa you are now old let me tell you..." Aunt Betty said after stressing her the following day. After finishing answering me, I knew that being old was bearing the worst and becoming strong as far as I can remember this is the beginning of my story. "Didn't you study Genocide at school?" then I nodded. She continued "Cyusa you have Divine, you can help each other, you will ind everything you need in her since our parents and their siblings are not here. "I asked before she even finished" where are they?" she looked at me with sorrow" Cyusa Genocide took them "I was so shocked I knew they were not there I even thought that they died, but I don't know it was genocide.

Yes, but surely hearing it stunned me more than I expected, was I so careless that at my age of nine. I didn't know that my parents had lost their families in Genocide. I started to wonder... I think Aunt read my mind "Cyusa you were young to know this, I know Papa will tell you about it, don't worry, he is waiting for the right time."

I was carried away into deep thoughts and sorrow usually cried when Papa flagged us for misbehaving or when fallen down while playing. After all, it hurts too but I never have such sorrow before. I remember that I asked her "Were they killed that bad as I saw it on television?" they were several images which were displayed on television that I didn't know how terrible, but that time it became clear in my mind I wondered why they were killed before I even meet them.

I cried hard, I felt like my heart wanted to burst, I slept early that night Mama brought my food in the bedroom, I didn't know what bothering me but I told Mama that my head was hurting, she even asked me "Cyusa; did you fight at your school? your eyes are red" I shook my head she could not have thought of it that much cause I was not likely to be in fights



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like other boys of my age, when I was about to sleep, I heard papa coming in my room; he looked at me, I wanted to wake up and tell him that I knew that he didn't have cousins, I was young, what else to think? I stayed still and I heard him asking Mama if I was sick that I need treatments and I didn't hear what she responded.

Divine have big beautiful eyes it could be clear looking into it when she had a problem, and I always wondered if she knew what I knew. As time passed, I started to know a lot about the family I never got a chance to know.

I remember Aunty once told me "Cyusa if you continue to cry like a baby am not going to tell you anything again, you are old now" from that time we continued to talk until when she had to tell Dad about the thoughts that I had. Before that she sometimes said that I looked like her mother, I was so excited that I was going to see someone who looked alike but I was very disappointed when she said "no I don't have her picture it was all lost "nothing that I could have told Aunt that could upset her cause she knew I was a kid but as I finished saying " But Aunt won't you forget her?" she responded in a lower voice "No, I can't forget my mother " just now I know that I offended her with my childish words I started to think that Mama have many reasons of being silent.

I was learning that I was in a hurt family that were still healing and I had to act and speak wisely but as I continued to fill my mind of what my parents had gone through, I enlarged extreme hate for those who have made my parents suffer, was that even unusual at my age?

Aunt can I ask you? Aunt smiled "what have you done, why are you speaking so nice to me or you want something, do you want to go visit Lucky? No, it's late...." When she looked at me

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she knew something was wrong” what happened Cyusa why do you look like that?” that time I was feeling like, I am an adult it was more than one year when I knew about my family “Aunt can you tell me about those who killed your family I heard it’s Hutus but I want to know them...” she was very shocked that time I see it in her face “Shiiii Cyusa what is up with you, who told you that, look here they are not here they are in prison” I insisted on her that I even asked her at least to show me their children, that afternoon is when she told that she won’t tell me any other thing and that she was going to tell it to Dad, I had no fear of asking it to him too, I wanted them to show me them I was full of hatred, and curious.

That evening we were revising the room with Divine, Papa came and greeted us after a while he came back and said “Cyusa come I want you” it was the first time Papa that he wanted me when we were revising but I followed him in the sitting room. He stared at me and I started to search for what to explain I knew very well what he was about to tell me, Papa was very strict, he was the one who even punished us when we did wrong so the time when he looked me in the eyes I wondered even why I upset Aunt few hours earlier. I wanted to explain to him before he even say anything but when he spoke It all faded and I started to understand him “Cyusa you were too young to know all that, I was about to tell you everything regarding our family but I was so surprised that you’ve grown so fast.....” for a long time I nodded to what he said until later when I promised him the best promise of my life. My father continued “ I know what you’ve been thinking but you have to learn to forgive that’s the best think that gives peace that me and your mother embraced” it’s as if he was reading my mind as usual I was started to think that forgiving is ignoring the worst and terrible things those people did.

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“You might think that it means pretending it doesn’t hurt and numbing yourself but it is not true we forgive to release ourselves and from the past holding grudges only gives you less peace and hinder you from progressing, forgiving is instantaneous healing is process are you understanding what am saying? If we all waited until we felt like forgiving it would have never happened this is a part of what makes forgiving meaningful we forgive in the midst of our emotions and it make us release the bitterness it doesn’t stop justice what those people did is unbelievable but now it’s out of our hands the rest is from the law to give us justice...” He told me a lot and I still remember many of them.

He said like almost an hour until He could see it in my eyes that I was convinced and so He said “you have a long journey before you, even God doesn’t like children with that heart filled with hatred” we’re Christian family, Papa couldn’t finish something like that without preaching me the word of God. later on when Mother was saying that Supper was ready, He said; “So, Cyusa; promise me that you are going to forgive them and always forgive them when you grow up and realise a lot of chances that they took from you” It was hard to promise that, he was saying as if there was a lot that I didn’t know and even I wondered if I’ll keep my promise.

Everyone was busy Mama gave us space on purpose. I could see she knew what we were talking about I had no chance I had to promise

“are you thinking about it? Can I give you time and promise this later “ He asked me and I thought “ No, I promise that he would be angry if I don’t do it then so I said “Papa I will always forgive” That’s the longest sentence I said that evening “do you mean it? Will you stay on your word as a man?” he asked me and I nodded firmly, he said “No, speak it with your mouth