

Dream Tales

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Dr Sam Umealu

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my wonderful daughter,
Chinelo for inspiring me to write these stories.

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Chapter 1: The Moon is Gold

Once upon a time in an ancient town, there was an old woman. She lived alone in a small hut with a red door, near the town square. She was very poor and could barely afford decent meals. The moon has always lived up in the heaven and her skin has always been made of gold. Those days, however, she used to come down to earth regularly.

The moon had a friend who, like the old woman, lived near the town square. It was in his house that the moon normally stayed during her visits to earth. One afternoon when the moon was in town, there was a

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heavy downpour and she was drenched. When she arrived at her friend's house, no one was home and the door was locked. Therefore, she could not get in.

She shivered with cold as she moved from one house to another, knocking on the door and begging to be let in, but was turned away. Finally, she knocked on the red door of a small hut. Inside the hut, an old woman was sitting in a chair near the fire place. She dragged herself out of the chair and slowly made her way towards the door with the help of a walking stick. It took her fairly long to get to the door.

Just as the moon had turned to leave, the door opened behind her and she turned to face an old woman. "Oh dear! You must be very cold. Please come into the

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warmth”, the old woman said. As the moon walked into the little hut, she was instantly drawn to the fireplace. The yellow flame of the fireplace was irresistibly inviting, in her present condition. There were two empty chairs near the fireplace. She walked past the old woman and took one of them. Shortly after that, she spread her hands before the open fire to absorb as much warmth as she possibly could.

The old woman stood in the middle of the room and stared at her. She was, supporting herself on the walking stick. “Perhaps you might want to change into some warm clothes”, the old woman said. The moon shook her head. In reality, the moon was longing for warm clothes. She had only declined the old woman’s offer because she didn’t think that the poor woman had any decent clothes. As if the old woman had read

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her mind, she pointed at one corner of the room. The moon turned to look in that direction and saw a beautiful dress hanging on the wall.

She sprang to her feet and excitedly moved towards the dress. she had not noticed the beautiful dress when she first walked into the room. The fireplace had grabbed all her attention. She stared at the dress longingly for a brief moment, before taking it down from its hanger. Without any further encouragement, the moon commenced to change into the beautiful dress. She unzipped her wet dress and allowed it to drop on the floor, thereby revealing her golden skin. The old woman stared at her skin in bemused admiration. At this point, the moon remembered that no earthling had ever seen her skin. In her excitement to get into the beautiful dress, the moon had forgotten

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all about her determination to keep her gold-plated skin secret from her earthly hosts. The earthlings were greedy and might be tempted to skin her for the gold, her mother had once told her. Confused, the moon muttered, “ I shed my skin every month, you know”. The significance of that statement was lost on the old woman. She was not thinking about monetary values at that moment.

The old woman prepared lunch with the assistance of the moon. It was a meagre meal. But, it was delicious. The two women sat down in the dinning room and enjoyed the delicious meal, as the moon continued to talk about her skin. It was her golden skin that lightened up the earth from her home in the heavens. She kept the earth illuminated every night by removing her clothes to expose her skin. She shed her skin once

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in a month. Then she would appear thinner to the earthlings, less bright and less effective in illuminating the earth.

By the time the two women had finished their lunch, the rain had stopped and night fall was fast approaching. The moon left and returned to her heavenly home, from where she would continue to perform her heavenly duty to the earthlings. She would never again return to the earth for fear of being skinned for her gold. The earthlings now know her secret. She was still wearing the beautiful dress when she left. The old woman had asked her to keep it. The next time the old woman would go into her dinning room, she would be surprised to see a big bowl of gold dust on her dinning table. She would later sell it and become rich.

Chapter 2: The Fatherless Child

Long time ago, there was a beautiful kingdom. The name of the kingdom was Udo. Udo kingdom was ruled by a king whose name was Eze. Like his grandfather before him, Eze was a kind king.

Iyi was without a doubt, the most important asset of Udo kingdom. *Iyi* was a river. It originated from the rocky hill, the home of *Iyiala*, the river goddess. A natural spring water, *Iyi* was a good source of drinking water for the people of Udo. It was probably their only reliable source of drinking water. It was most pure and fresh at the point where it seeped out from a large overhead rock and fell down to join the main

body of water, in what resembled a waterfall. Quite often, there was a queue of women and children, each carrying an empty calabash or clay pot, as they waited for their turn to collect water as it rippled down, from its source above them. The water was mostly used for cooking and drinking. In the kingdom, the task of fetching water was the job of the women and children. It was not a man's job. The more masculine activities of hunting, wine tapping and wrestling were for the men.

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Iyi was also a source of fish for the people of Udo. Fish was a delicacy in the kingdom. In the past, before Eze became king, the people were in perpetual enmity with the neighboring kingdoms. The dispute was almost always about fishing rights at *Iyi*. Once in a while, a full fledged war would break out between Udo and one of those kingdoms and many lives

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would be lost. On becoming king, Eze had quickly made peace with these kingdoms, and there had not been any such wars ever since.

Eze was loved by his subjects, not only because of his peace - loving nature, but also because of his ability to provide food for the people. There always was plenty of food in the kingdom, even during famine.

Fundamental to this ability to provide for his people, was a magic drum. The magic drum was handed down to him from his great grandfather, who was the founder of the kingdom. Legends had it that his great grandfather had defeated a spirit in what had, since the beginning of time, remained the fiercest wrestling match. The drum was then given to him, as a prize. When beaten, the drum invoked food and drinks and anyone present would eat and drink to their

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satisfaction.

Eze had a daughter. Her name was Chinelo. With time, many suitors came forward to ask Eze for his daughter's hand in marriage. They were young handsome and wealthy princes from kingdoms far and wide. But one by one, Eze refused to give them his blessing. It was as if the king did not consider anyone worthy of his daughter.

Udo was a male dominated society. Therefore whoever married Chinelo, would be the next king of the kingdom. As Eze got older, the people became more anxious for a younger leader. In the end, Eze made a strange decision. He would organize a wrestling competition. Who ever turned out to be the

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best wrestler in the kingdom would marry his daughter. The kingdom waited for this event with excitement.

In a small brown hut on the outskirts of the kingdom, at the edge of a thick forest, a middle aged woman stood in the kitchen, a large green calabash balanced on her head. She had just returned from *Iyi*. With a casual demeanor that suggested that this was a daily routine, the woman yelled, “Emenika get out of the bed and help me with the calabash”. Emenike was her son, her only child. Emenike got out of the bed, rubbed his eyes with the back of his right hand and lazily made his way towards the kitchen.

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Emenike was a lanky man in early adulthood. At his age, other men in the kingdom already had their own farms. At cockcrow each day, except for the *eké* market day, which was once in every four days, these

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men would leave for farm. They would work on the farm until dusk. Emenike neither had a farm of his own nor helped in his mother's farm. It was nearly mid day and he was still in bed. Emenike was a loafer.

Emenike's father, *Ude*, was a man of valor. Fourteen years before, when Emenike was only seven, a war had broken out between the kingdom and one of her neighbors. One early morning, *Ude* had equipped himself with a razor sharp machete, bade his family farewell and went to the war. He had not been seen ever since. It was in this same year that Emenike's secret friendship with a chimpanzee began.

It was well past mid day. Under the shade tree, at the back of the house, well away from the view of the passersby, Emenike was in a deep slumber. He dreamt that his father had returned and that he was

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playing with him. It was in the middle of this dream that he was suddenly woken up by a sound. He must have thought that he was still dreaming when he opened his eyes. On a tree branch above him, was a brown chimpanzee. The primate had quietly sat there and watched him, as he slept.

Emenike sprang to his feet and was about to make a dash for the hut, when he changed his mind and as if under a spell, signaled the chimpanzee to join him. The wild beast obliged. It jumped down from the tree and joined Emenike. For the next ten years, the chimpanzee visited him whenever he was home and alone. During each visit, the chimpanzee would play with Emenike, sometimes for hours before, once more, disappearing into the thick forest.

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The weather was balmy with a pleasant temperature. It was the evening of what was arguably the most important event in the Kingdom's calendar. The heat of the sun had now gotten softer and the wrestling competition would soon commence.

The entire kingdom had turned out at the town square, men, women and children. Eze sat in a royal chair, at one end of the ground. The royal guard stood faithfully behind him. His wife and Chinelo were seated on his left and on his right were six men. Each of them wore a red cap, to which a number of eagle feathers were attached. These men belonged to the elected seven member Council of Elders. One member was missing. The name of the missing member was Okolo. Okolo was not expected at the event, at least not by Eze. Earlier in the day, he had

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received word that Okolo had taken ill, the day before.

The rest of the kingdom stood in a semi circle facing the royal party and the elders, leaving the centre of the playground empty. The drummers sat in front of the crowd, also facing the royal party and the elders.

Somewhere in the midst of the huge crowd, was a lanky young man.

The loud noise of the crowd was drowned by the sweet and intoxicating sound of the drums. Suddenly, the sound of the drums stopped and a hush descended on the crowd. Eze stood up, for the first time, to address the crowd. He laid the ground rule for the evening event. Any wrestler who wanted to participate in the competition was to come forward to the center

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of the playground, where he would be challenged by other contestants. Any contestant who suffered a defeat was to take no further part in the competition. The last person standing would be declared the winner and the prize was his daughter.

Dusk was fast approaching. It had been two hours since the first contest took place. There had been fifteen matches since then. A thunderous roar rose above the sound of the drums, each time a wrestler was thrown to the ground. A short stocky man with a thick neck was now standing at the center of the playground. His name was Obioma. Obioma was well known throughout the kingdom. He was a skillful wrestler. He had just defeated his fifth challenger with ease, and there was a general sense amongst the crowd that they had just witnessed the last contest of the

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evening. There were no more challengers in sight. Definitely, he would now be declared the champion.

As he paced up and down, a menacing smile on his face, a lanky young man squeezed through the crowd. He was making his way to the center of the arena. The lanky man was soon identified as the son of the dead warrior. No one had any recollection of his ever being involved in a wrestling contest. Surely, he was not about to challenge Obioma. That would be the worst mismatch in the history of wrestling in the kingdom. If the crowd was surprised, Obioma was flabbergasted.

Obioma was not a man with self-doubt. There was however a mild feeling of apprehension, as he

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accepted his next challenge. There is a saying amongst his people that *one must run if pursued by a hen early in the morning, in case it has developed some teeth overnight.*

The match between Obioma and Emenike was the fiercest in the living memory. It lasted for twice as long as a normal wrestling contest. The crowd watched and cheered. Both wrestlers were now tired and motionless in each other's grip. The judge was moving forward to declare them an equal match, when Emenike opened his bag of wrestling tricks. He dug his right heel behind his opponent and pitched him backwards, and just like magic, Obioma was flat on his back. The crowd went wild.

Emenike was declared the champion, the best

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wrestler in the kingdom. Everyone was surprised by his achievement. He was known throughout the kingdom as a loafer. No one knew about his relationship with the chimpanzee. It was the chimpanzee who taught him the art of wrestling. It was the chimpanzee who made him a fatherless child who would be king.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Nigeria, Dr Samuel (Sam) Okechukwu Umealu studied Chemical Engineering at Anambra State University of technology in Nigeria, then earned a PhD also in Chemical Engineering at National Technical University of Technology, Athens. In 1992, he migrated to Australia where he joined Monash University, as a Postdoctoral research fellow in the area of process simulation.

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Sam lives in Melbourne where in 1998, he founded a technology company - SamSoft Pty Ltd. As a Consulting Architect in Information Technology, he provides Information Technology consulting services to large commercial and government organizations. He is married to Fleure Vaslet and they have a daughter, Chinelo. He writes fictional stories as a hobby and has a passion for health & fitness.

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