Twitter Thread by Author Sakwah Ongoma



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STORY THREAD

Last Saturday, a friend I was with in a club in Westlands picked up a fight with two guys. He was thoroughly beaten as I watched. Today, he has sent me a long text message lambasting me for being a fake friend for I sat out of the fight instead of helping him.

He expected me to help him as friends do and because he was the one who had bought the booze that we were taking. There are two reasons why I chose to enjoy while he was being clobbered instead of fighting alongside him.

When I was 12-years old, I moved to my aunt's place. She owned a large parcel of land that stretched onto the riverbank of River Sio. A large portion of the land that bordered the river was unused. It was a bush where we used to herd her cattle.

Across the River, there was a densely populated village with homesteads standing too close to the river bank. That village barely had land to graze their cattle. More often, they would guard their cattle across the river onto my aunt's land under our mercy.

I was barely a month old at my aunt's place. I had moved to her place that December because I wanted to join the nearby primary school which was producing better KCPE results.
On this day, a day after Christmas, we went to graze her cattle in the bush.

I was with three of my cousins and other kids of my age from nearby.
The leader of the herders was a guy who had been nicknamed, Isaka Serikali. He was thrice our age, tall and built. He was known for his rough and brutish nature.

He was easy to provoke, for that, he commanded fear around the village. Serikali's role was to sit under the shade of the biggest tree and allocate duties to the rest of us. The duties included; lighting a bonfire to roast stolen maize, yams, and sweet potatoes,

stealing the maize, yams, and sweet potatoes from people's farms, stealing sugarcane, etc. Another group would guard the cattle and direct them into the river to drink water.

Around midday, on that fateful Boxing day, a boy from across the river guarded his cattle onto our land.

He was of my age and size. I was roasting yams with one of my cousins when he noted that the boy was grazing the cattle too close to my aunt's maize farm. He asked me to command the boy to guard his cattle away from the maize farm.

I walked to him with the orders. Rudely, the boys asked, 'I have never seen you around, who are you to command me?'
I was angered, for a frivolous reason; he did not reserve the right to question me while standing on my aunt's land. 'This is my aunt's land,' I shoved him.

'My cows are very disciplined. They can't sneak into the plantation,' he explained himself.
'I said, guard the cows far away from the plantation!' I repeated myself. The boy clicked and ignored my mighty orders. The grass was greener next to the plantation.

I pushed him, he shoved me back. A shove-game ensued. My cousins, noting the little squabble, started walking towards where we were. I was vitalized by their attention. The boy, out of fear of being outnumbered, prudently showed restraint.

'Can you imagine the audacity of this boy to pick up a fight with me from our land?' I asked to stir and incite anger into my cousins.
'He needs a lesson,' one of my cousins said. The lesson I gave him was a slap on his face. He did not slap back.

I kicked him, he did not kick me back like before. My cousins were too close. The reason why I was fighting him was that I knew my cousin would offer security in case he attempted to fight back. Serikali, who had been watching the exchange from far, walked towards the scene.

Upon seeing him, the boy started apologizing. He was freaked out.
In a twist that I had not anticipated, Serekali said, in Luhya, 'Nyangaino ni Boxing Day. Lekha vopane khulole wina alakhira. (Today is boxing day; let them fight for their respect.)

My cousins retreated under the command of Serekali and left the battlefield all for my feeble self.
The boy descended upon me with all manner of attacks that he had watched from John Rambo's movies. The beating that he gave me was indiscriminate, merciless, and humiliating.

I barely replied to any of his attacks.
At one point, he attacked my balls with a well-timed vicious kick. I bent forward in excruciating pain only for him to punch me under my chin with another perfectly timed undercut punch. I fell on my back like a sack of Irish potatoes.

When I stood on my feet, it was me and my legs running into the nearest sugarcane plantation where I found my way back home. At that time, I made a decision to leave my aunt's place to go back home. I was too humiliated to set foot in that village.

My face was swollen and uneven as an anthill. On my way home, I avoided roads. I found my way home through bushes and sugarcane plantations to hide my beaten face from people.

Later that evening, when my grandmother asked me why I ran away from my aunt's place before joining the school, I said that I had failed to adapt to the harsh climatic conditions in her village (just five villages away from my homes).

I cited the unevenness on my face and said, 'look at my face, grandma, this is what the unforgiving weather at my aunt's place has done to my once cute face!'

A few years later, My cousin and I were taking a stroll from the market when he was confronted by a guy with whom they were sharing a girl. A fight ensued, which I had decided to be a mere spectator. My cousin was on the receiving end of the fight.

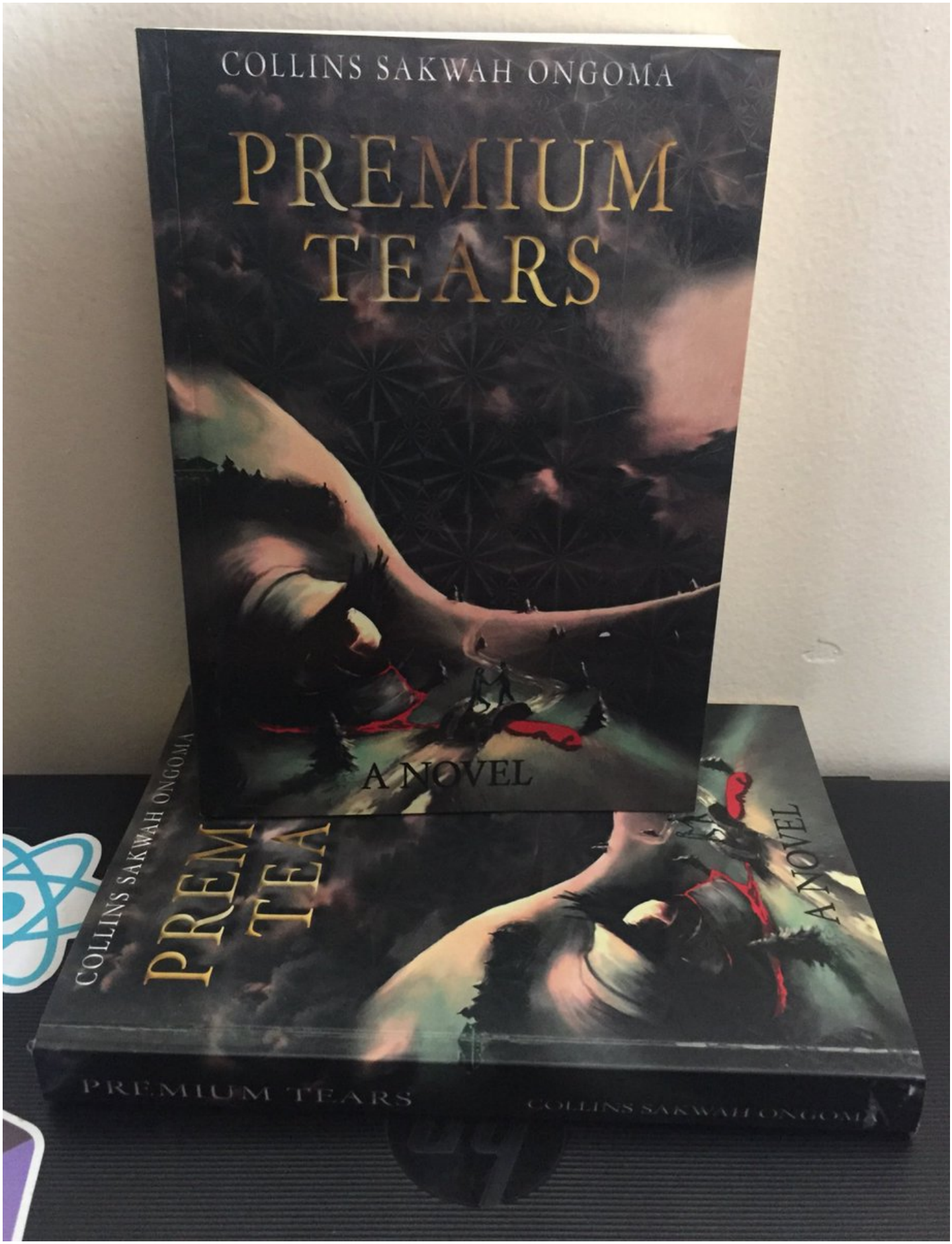
He turned to me and said, 'bro, this guy thinks he can defeat the two of us?' The two of us? It was his fight, not ours. I wasn't there when he was encroaching in that guy's honeypot. Nonetheless, I joined the fight to help him.
I punched and destabilized the guy.

He released my cousin from his grasp and grabbed me instead. Once free, my cousin disappeared into the thin air leaving me under the mercy of the brut. The fight turned into a diabolic beating with my poor soul in the receiving end.

These two incidences taught me two valuable lessons;
I will never pick up a fight expecting help from a third party.
I will never join a fight that I never started.

Even if who you are, whether you are my girlfriend, brother, or whoever, if you pick a fight with someone else in my presence, I am spectating the fight. Let everyone fight their own fights.

I have written two novels, crime-romance fictional books. If you fancy giving a budding Kenyan author a chance, kindly grab a copy. 0728962819
I do deliveries within Nairobi and send the book as a parcel to other parts of the country.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