Crying Rains

Yuxuf Abana

*Iowa State University

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The coroner said it could have been an accidental death, slipped on a cake of Lux and fell. Or was most likely a suicide. You cannot tell with such twisted agitators. I will never understand so much venom in the fragrant suds of a piece of soap. Did that cause his fingernails to fall off too?

And what about that string of wire coiled round his penis? The prison warden laughed and said, “Woman you ask too many questions. Aren’t you glad to be rid of an obscene boy like that! We did all we could to help him readjust. And all he did was indulge in ruinous fantasies about freedom.”

The hardest part was bringing him home for the funeral. I had to post bond, for treason charges were still pending against him. I also needed a special permit to bring the corpse of a subversive to the location. It was the middle of the week. Many could not come for fear of losing their jobs. Parson Lebako could not start the service because the police baas* had not yet signed his permit to be on the location. The baas was having his afternoon siesta.

*baas - Afrikaans for boss
Someone suggested we sing a hymn. That was when we heard the clap. The sun went behind the heavy clouds. Soon the cardboard walls of the church rocked to the driving winds and loud thunder. Peter's fingers pounded faster on the piano, yet the insistent wail of the rain on the roof was all we heard. Then Little Ma Suzie asked if anyone ever heard of a baas signing a permit in the rain, or Parson Lebako conducting a funeral service without one. We Knew Ma Suzie wanted to hurry home to her new husband before they put him in jail again. So we etched a cross on the head of the coffin and a clenched fist at the foot. We held hands and reminded ourselves that a bit of strength was still very necessary for our salvation. The rain stopped when we reached the burial hills, wet and drenched. On the way back home, we discussed the farm season and the price of corn, between quaking lips and shivering palms.

We shook so much we forgot to cry.

—Yuxuf Abana