



God's Children Are Little Broken Things

Arinze Ifeakandu

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In Arinze Ifeakandu's short story collection, queer Nigerian men defy cultural norms to pursue love.

For the Nigerian families in these tales, traditional masculinity is of the utmost importance. Loving men, or not looking manly enough, is grounds for fury, rejection, and worse. Yet even the most serious threats cannot change how their queer sons, brothers, and husbands feel. Surrounded by people who believe their passions are sinful, such men hasten to grasp at moments of happiness before they are snatched away.

Many of the characters are students, worrying for both their academic futures and their romantic prospects. For others—a shopkeeper, a professor, and a grieving father—knowledge and education still loom large: broken dreams of higher education haunt the shopkeeper, while constant worry about who knows what, and what they themselves should have known, makes life miserable for multiple others.

In this tapestry of loss and heartbreak, strands of hope glimmer. In “Where the Heart Sleeps,” a woman bonds with her father’s lover after her father’s unexpected death. “Mother’s Love” concerns a man struggling to cope with his lover’s departure and his mother’s failing health. Despite painful reactions to emotional, unexpected revelations, the story shows that, for some, situations will get better.

In the world these characters inhabit, there are no happy endings or certain futures: there is only the fleeting joy of being known by another. Rather than indulging in neat, artificial endings, the stories reflect a messy, complex world that many will find all too familiar. In doing so, they offer a sort of comfort: no one is alone in their struggles.

God's Children Are Little Broken Things is a collection of stories that spotlight the everyday dangers of being queer in a hostile environment.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (May / June 2022)

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