

Send Her Back and Other Stories

Munashe Kaseke

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Send Her Back is an arresting short story collection in which African women ably navigate complicated personal and social terrains.

The insightful short stories collected in Munashe Kaseke's *Send Her Back* concentrate on Zimbabwean immigrant women's loves, loyalties, and courage.

The stories observe twenty-first-century American culture, wherein police stops incite fear, the mazes surrounding work visas and documentation cause binding situations, and dating is perilous. They also take place in contemporary Africa, where notions of home shift after time spent away from it, and from where women examine the fascinating gulfs between hope and reality.

In these stories, relationships unravel due to men's shortcomings. Thwarted career aspirations culminate in a sense of resignation. Dreams that are achieved are later hampered by outside questioning. And difficulties between parents and their daughters reveal different understandings of love, independence, and belonging. The humanity of such stories is deepened by their honest concerns: the possibility of deportation, microaggressions, and problems that stem from striving for acceptance. People express discomfort about belonging to more than one place, and the restlessness that results.

Still, while the book's characters face massive obstacles, they prove resilient. They have wise and concise conversations within intimate spaces. In one subtle tale, a woman returns to Zimbabwe, where she exercises restraint around her criticisms of her family's habits. Elsewhere, a woman falls in love with a white man, but the charm of their early relationship proves impossible to sustain; he reveals himself in layers as an immature partner. In another story, a woman who endures her boyfriend's thoughtless remarks and flirtations begins to question herself; a sense that even small miscommunications accumulate over time to complicate love arises. An entry focusing on an abused wife at her older husband's deathbed proves to be a quiet, situational foray. But some of the stories end in abrupt ways.

"The Collector of Degrees" distinguishes itself by navigating the simultaneous helplessness and drives of those who pursue educations to maintain their legal statuses—even when their degrees fail to yield other tangible results. It's a potent gut-check that reveals the stringent rules that surround eligibility for DACA, as well as other issues facing immigrants. Another surprising tale follows a student who takes a controversial political stance in order to provoke a response from her American peers; it is revealed that she does so to mask her own feelings of being unseen. Such moments contribute well to this strong collection whose entries are linked by their original perspectives.

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KAREN RIGBY (March 20, 2022)

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