Strength to Carry On by Sean Nickels

“I’m sorry for what I have done. I have always trusted you, I guess I just didn’t want you to become weak because of your injury.” Enitan read slowly trying to contain everything. Suddenly a flood of emotions hit him, he sat down and almost started crying, remembering.

The day was very long as there was so many people and so much noise. The noise was his least favorite part, all the screaming and yelling, breaking of glass, the cracking of wood and breaking of other objects. His mother his dad and he rushed along. His father was a burly man that loved to live up to gender norms trying to be the biggest and strongest guy around, his name was Abidemi. His name means born in father’s absent. He was born when his father was out at war against another tribe. His mother, Akinyi, was the nicest woman in the Unkole tribe as she was so giving and cared for everyone. Her name meant born in the morning, which was most likely the reason why she was so happy and bright all the time. Enitan could just look at his mom and he would feel happier inside, but now she was in fear and Enitan’s stomach was tying itself into knots making him sick. He followed one foot after another. His mom was holding his hand tighter than a boa constrictor. He could feel his hand starting to slip from his mother’s but he held on tighter. His eyes started to burn more and more, he clenched his eyes together, but it only made the pain worse. He tried to speak, but he choked. He realized that he couldn’t even hear himself talk over all the noise, everything around him was spinning faster than he could keep track of. He gasped for air but there was nothing but a choke…

He opened his eyes, he could only see figures around him. he felt something hit once and then again once in his ribs next on his head, then there was more. They continued and when he could react he tried blocking some, but that only make them hit stronger. He was screaming at this point hoping that some good hearted person would help him or he would just wake up and be in his mom’s arms again. His scream turned into a cry as he tried to defend himself. He struggled to get up but hands came down and held him down. They were much stronger than he was, because his struggles became almost non-existent. An arm from the shadowed crowed raised up and smacked down as if to cut meat. It raised and quickly slammed down again each time with the sound of a bone crack. The shriek was loud and harsh, but the figure kept swinging until it died… the shriek at least.

He woke with a jump in his bed. The sun wasn’t out yet, he had woken up on time. He frisked the side of his torn and worn bed. There was a stench that was tremendously traumatizing, his bed has not been cleaned for as long as he could remember. He grabbed the end of one of two long rectangular blocks of wood. Grabbing the other one, he laid both of them on the wall at the head of his bed. He took his arms and spun himself on the bed. He reached for the blocks of wood again putting one in each arm. He pushed himself up and caught his balance with the blocks of wood. He quickly made it out of his mother’s hut being as quite as he could. He knew if he woke up his father, he would never hear the end of it. His father hated his help with anything at all because Enitan would, “fuck it up”. He dashed outside and looked around the sun was lightly burning the edge of the sky, leaving a purple fire dodging and weaving into and out of the clouds. Turning he leaded to their garden. He was ever so careful, he didn’t want to ruin things with his blocks, so he crawled. He checked the soil. He assumed it would have been dry, but his assumptions were incorrect. He started tilling the soil, making pockets for the seeds and planting each one the exact length away from each other. His father never taught him how to plant, or do anything for that matter, but he was a quick learner and he always watched his dad. The bright fire had now turned red and less purple with it getting closer to the land and not just the sky. He knew his time was running out, so he hurried. Once done he shuffled his way inside the house. He made it in to the hut and into his bed as he herd his father storm into his mother’s hut. As he shut his eyes, he drifted off into deep sleep.

Later that day, he sat underneath his favorite tree and stared off in the distance. He would do this for hours on end just thinking and playing memories over in his head. Sometimes he would wonder about this or that but most of the time he just thought things over. He had nobody to talk to about any of it, so it was kind of like he was talking to himself. He didn’t want to go back to his huts, he knew that they were still fighting, and he couldn’t deal with that the way his father, if he could even call him that, would hit his mom. He could never do anything about it, he wasn’t strong enough now with his leg the way it was. He knew not to let anything his father said stop him. His father never cared for him what so ever, but his mother spoiled him whenever she could. That’s why he was here right now and she was there with his father in a place she shouldn’t be.

He decided to go back home. He walked through town seeing everyone he knew but no one knew him. He knew the people from conversations he would listen in on while sitting around during festivals. When he made it back home, there was still the echoing of the man hollering in the still dead air. He paid no attention to either of them, with the last sound of a smack, he walked through and he went straight to his hut that he slept at. As he reached the door, he heard the deep horrible voice behind him. “Where did you go, boy?”

“I went out does it matter?” Enitan had no emotion to his reply, he had no desire to talk to this man.

“Well I would say it matters, and when I ask you something you answer it okay!? Now, where did you go!?” Abidemi was furious at this boy.

“I told you, I went out, I was just in the forest for a bit nothing more.”

“No one told you could leave the house.” At this point people began to gather around their huts. Whispers were going about back and forth Enitan could hear them, but he paid no attention.

“No one told you to lay a hand on mom did they!?”

“What happens with your mother and I is none of your business!” At this point Enitan was done with his father and did not want to keep the conversation going.

“Fine.” He replied walking off into his mother’s hut.

Enitan hated encounters with his father, he would always get yelled at for anything! His mom would get beat quite a bit many times it was Eniatan’s fault. This made him feel even worse about it.

There was a festival soon, and you could tell because everywhere people were preparing left and right. Enitan was standing there watching them all work and prep. The festival was tomorrow, and people were decorating like crazy. Then “bonk” someone bumped into him. He was surprised to find a girl on the ground, there were a bunch of miscellaneous items everywhere. “What are you doing, you idiot!?” the girl yelled in frustration.

“Oh god, I am so sorry.” Enitan shuffled to quickly pick things up.

“It’s fine, I’m sorry, I’m just in a hurry. I didn’t mean to get angry.” The girl was calming down but was still in a hurry. “I would ask you to help carry it with me, but seeing your condition it doesn’t seem possible.” She smiled trying to make Enitan’s leg a soft conversation.

“Ohh, I’m sorry.” Enitan wouldn’t have gone anyways he was too shy.

“I’m going to go prepare for the festival, why don’t you come with? You might be able to help if not, you can still keep me company.” Before Enitan could answer, she spoke again, “Come on, we have to go!” She quickly grabbed everything out of Enitan’s hands and stood waiting for him to get up. Enitan didn’t speak a word. He got up grabbing his wooden planks and gaining his balance. Surprising even himself, he followed. “So my name is Abiodun, what’s yours?”

“Enitan.”

“Ha! What a coincidental name.” she commented not even thinking

“So you have a boy’s name?” Enitan forced himself to talk so he wouldn’t come off as rude.

“What!? No Abiodun is for both genders!”

“Ohh, I’m sorry I didn’t know.” They walked for a while in silence. She led him to a few huts that were just like all the others. When they arrived, she introduced Enitan to her family. They welcomed Enitan. After this he introduced himself to everyone first was the father then the rest of the family

“You’re a very quiet boy aren’t you?” boasted the father. “It’s okay being quiet isn’t always a bad thing. It has many perks. Makes you a great hunter, eh even with your leg there?” The man’s voice was still loud but not angry like his father. Enitan smiled at the man, he didn’t even try to. It was the first time he has smiled in a while. “So my son here talked much about you since you have arrived.”

“Your son, sir? Enitan asked intensely confused.

“Oh I just pick on Abiodun a lot for her name, but she speaks highly of you.” After they talked awhile they began decorating for the next day, Enitan stuck around and helped as much as he could.

The time was falling well into the evening before Enitan realized that he had to be home. Enitan left unannounced. When he arrived home neither his mom nor father were in the hut. He began to worry, so he went looking around the hut calling their names, “Abidemi! Akinyi!” as he yelled his throat choked, he held back his tears as much as he could. Eventually, he gave up. He began to run and run until he made it to his hidden place. As he reached the he noticed a note under the tree. It read: “I’m sorry for what I have done. I have always trusted you, I guess I just didn’t want you to become weak because of your injury. Your mother never understood this and I guess all the stress didn’t help. Your mother was still get mad at me all the time for not saving you quicker that day, and to be honest I beat myself up for it too.” There was a light pitter patter of rain that was trickling down from above but enitan kept reading.

“I always knew where you went when you ran off when things got bad, I watched you go one time when I was working but I never wanted to ruin your spot so I kept it between us and didn’t tell anyone. I hope you will forgive me and your mother for everything we never meant to hurt you. You remember how I told you that you would never be a man? Well that was wrong you have been a man for a long time, at least more of a man then me. Take care of your mom for me will you.” a drip of blood hit the paper and it startled Enitan. He started to look around and as he looked up he found his father with every little bit of life and pride drained from him. He just hanged there… dead. Enitan collapsed and started crying he didn’t know what to do. He had nowhere to go. He didn’t want to go back to his hut there was no one there and at this point all he wanted was just a person. He began walking and his crying never stopped he walked for a while until he made it to abiodun’s huts. No one was outside of Corse because of the rain. Enitan collapsed and leaned against a hut.