

## **Never Forget That Place: Asante, Where I was Made**

**By Julia Serwaa Peterson**

You got this, girl, and if you fall, we'll catch you, girl. We never really appreciate anything anymore.

I can remember being a little kid and having to beg for more...

That's for sure. I'm kind of tired of always falling short. I see people smile in those instances, but I guess that's why they always say to count your blessings.

Work a little harder, and you'll make it.

Don't chase it; let your dreams fly away, and perhaps, you will learn to face it.

Great things don't work like they do in the movies. Life is truly unruly, but that's why you gotta embrace it.

Looking for handouts because I believe I deserve them. Why do the poorest always have to be perfect? Stand on that shit. I could be highly balanced and make dollars as easily as wiping my hands on paper napkins.

They will never see it, because only the devil ever took a second chance looking at me. Maybe she is more than the skin-deep hate, which seems to bring hate. I'm dark and beautiful, but they don't like black and beautiful.

I was four years old, running across the tall grass. My mother's ghost is always hunting me. She just misses her little baby. That's how I didn't see the snake till it bit me. My family history, you can read it, but it is in English. I have a weird relationship with colonization. I was colonized, and I hate it. Every time I talk, the tears flow, but I then remember. Nobody cares for orphans' fears or tears. Been told all of my life to just face it, but wait bitch, this is a bit crazy, I was only a kid.

They know they don't care for black kids, but hey, that's never been new. Don't believe me? Just go back and read it in the history books. It's no mystery that being black saved my life, so I gotta say thanks to the ministry. God never saved me; the Petersons did.

Just wait, I'm sorry, but you will never be great. You need to be glad that you made it past eighteen. No, that doesn't offend me at all. Fifteen sneaked its way to me, and I couldn't breathe. They were right, so I tried and tried, but it didn't work when I tried taking my life.

I only brought it up as a joke. If I told the truth, they would think it was all a joke, so.... I simply bowed down like it's curtains closing because that's the part of the smoke. If they saw me as who I am, then it would hurt me to let them see me choke.

I won't even pretend, but I feel so guilty for my family's sake. My sister is still in Africa, and since I never did anything for her, I have to do something to make it up. How do I lose my sister and have nothing to show for it? I have been carrying this load on my back since I was six years old. They should have bet on another kid because my little hands covered my soul.

Broken pieces of my heart lie somewhere broken in Ghana soil, my family's home. My little niece doesn't know I live or breathe, but I hope she knows that she's my greatest dream. Another generation over broken dreams. Maybe it would end a little differently, but life sometimes gives more hope for sorrow, and the clock doesn't rewind. That's why I never care to see tomorrow.

Twenty-five years, grab my hands and shake, because this is what history made. Asante to I die, Africa, all that land does it bleed. Who am I to speak? I can even talk in Twi. The last time I saw my grandmother, I forgot to say, "Rest in peace."

Now she's at rest and I ain't got peace. I just really hope she didn't believe in me.

My depression took me before the third grade. All the jokes I made couldn't change; if I stopped talking, I would want to be erased. That's not the type of stuff Jesus would praise. Then I ask why he killed my parents, and there is just a weird silence and hate. Ok, I guess the adults don't have the answers, but they stay and keep making me pray. Lord, you hear me, I want the little kids never to be afraid and always to be okay.

I saw so many little bodies headed to the grave, and I couldn't understand how the world could be saved. I didn't realize there were people out there getting paid. Every little soul was collected, and there was more money in the offering plates. The politicians in the States get a raise, and praise the day. The only God they believe in is green, and that's how I learned greed.

When others can't eat, they say they made it. That's famous and strange because they can't even remember their names. Go ahead and change it; why face it? Your shiny face is the new image.

These are the ideals we are supposed to believe in, but thankfully, I can see the demons. Trust that they sell a dream; if you buy in, baby, you become the product, and that's how they make a dollar.

Being hoodwinked, too, I play my best parts as the fool. Desperate to have friends, I always acted like a fool. You stop playing a part, and now everybody is mad at how you act. That's just the facts, so I stay alone in my room. Here, I'm too cool, and everything I say is true. I never want to leave this door until the casket gives me more room.

No, I'm not suicidal, I can't afford to die when my parents are still alive. I gotta at least wait until the final day, and maybe I will have something to say, but nothing that the birds can't sing for me. Death always promised me an early grave.

The truth is I am a coward and can't face the real me because she is powerful. Killing her would never work, so I had to let the people do it. Didn't realize they've been waiting to get out their knives and go stab, yes you, stab, and you, stab. Ironically, they Julius Caesar's me, and my name is Julia, so in a way it was destiny.

That's what real friends are for, but I said before in this life, nothing is a surprise. Why do people want to fake it anymore? You don't have to love me, but, weirdly, you had to sell me a fantasy in order to try to end me.

Have you been listening, you fraud? I was already dead the day they came and got my momma's body. That's why I have a different name, and that's how I got a different story. No, I'm not nice. Every time I poured love, it always turned to ice.

Politically, I knew I never had any weird ideology. I did not think it was philosophical; I just wanted to be good to the people. Is that why they got all these religions for? Never needed a God not to kill, but maybe I should have adopted one before I learned to steal.

Too late, I already stole. I guess I have to go to hell. If I only had a billion dollars, maybe God could forgive all my wrongs and woes. Perhaps that's just what governments do, because they only give statues to those who killed, took from the poor, and gave it to the HOVs. For the small-minded, that was a discussion on the elites, but the carpenter never asked for anything but a fee. Kings and peasants both bury underneath.

Do they ever gleam that perhaps this is a test? Holding others down, they are burning three times now, since they love being the best.

Sad, that's how it works, because I could be a believer if I knew Bill Clinton would be lying in smokes for being evil. No, I said it, his family should never feel free to be seen. All these men left broken pieces of children in the streets.

I know you don't care, but I do for them each. I never met them, but I have just enough life to cry for those who couldn't save themselves. However, in my stories, they fly and are never lost, warm and never cold. Children are the essence of magic, and I feel very blessed to say this since I've made it. They will do great things, but let's face it, nothing in life can make the lost be found, so now we have to pray for these kids.

Girl, face it, you can make.

All those dreams you have, don't be afraid to share them, even on paper or maybe the digital shit, I'm so mad I don't understand it, but I think you will get it.

I bottle all my feelings, and now I'm drowning, and there's no one to say, "Hey, sis, you can change this." Real shift or real shit, that's your choice to make based on what you learn. My problem was always learning things a little too late or being so ahead that I never saw the trip before I saw the fall.

Haven't written this long since I got my heart broken by a little boy, who claimed he was a man. How could he? When I met his daddy, I saw a kid instead of a man. I should have run, but I was young and didn't believe I could die alone.

They have always said it since I was a little girl. Is it the ugly in me, or what do you see? I used to chase them, screaming, "Let me be free." How could I be free when I had no self-esteem and a bruised body? But I'm telling you just to love me.

This shit isn't Disney, but I'm glad I believe it. There's real love out there if you think about it. You gotta get down and start digging now. Maybe it is the clown who continues who can strike the real deal. Wow.

To the girls and women, clap for yourself because the world can not believe it. All the things you will achieve despite all the violence, you're a superheroine to me. Trust me, I always believed in you, and there's almost nothing you can do. To make me hate a woman unless she stands with a man, who stands on her head, and her kids.

Don't listen to anything; believe what you see. I get the jokes now, so don't harass me. I understand the cage is cozy, and you don't want to hear my message. Please find me on the corner next to everyone who overthought. The battle already started years before I was born.

Mad woman, but if you were a woman, then you would be mad too. Try being black for a day, so that you could die too. Oh well, make room for me in the tomb for Tuesday. Always wanting to burn witches, so they never see the devil preach on Sunday. That's how I'm sure, the devil is winning this game.

Crows, please wait just a moment. No, this can't be the end of my story. I know I chose this path, but now they're circling, and I hear death, and she never misses. Get down on my knees, I'm begging like a little kid. Who I am on the inside, sorry, all you see is a bitch. There's nothing I can change if that's how you feel about me, miss. There was a day when I was just this little curly-haired kid. I became an adult for the first time, and I wasn't ready, but a man said I was, and now I carry that very heavily.

Oh... my God, is this the final call?

I'm sorry to my mom because you were just a young girl and I never saw it till I saw myself in the mirror for the first time. Didn't realize yet that being black was a crime and being a woman was serving prison time.

Murder, murder, but it's just crows, and haven't you heard not to cry for the ghosts.

Let me pass the messages to my ancestors when they pick me up, and oh joy, a family reunion, is this love?

I'm going to the village, and everyone in my bloodline is in the car. I miss the old life, and I'm fine missing out. This right here is paradise, and I can finally cry. Grandma, let's go and play in

the spring right here, bring Mama and my aunties, and let's just stay real close and free. I wish my sisters the longest lives so they can visit me here. Death isn't fair, but it is also so rare. In that sense, it's beautiful except for those still left down there.

Nothing said matters, but you have these words: Asante forever, till I die, Ghana, West Africa is where I lie. Visit me and scream to feel a little joy in these hollow streets. Taste our fruits and think of me, and better yet, see those kids? I was hoping you would give them a kiss for me, I was them and they are me. Asante forever... that's some true blessings.

Okay, you heard the lesson, and you got it.

Girl, now go and tell them all. Fuck it.

All chances are fake. You gotta take control of yourself in this place.

Don't forget about me. I only live in stories, and the final chapter is nearly ending.