

A Foreword to *Lunacy*

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The crisis of the AIDS epidemic in Africa prompts many different reactions worldwide, from the major organizational work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation in advocating, supporting, fundraising, to the groundbreaking book by Stephanie Nolen, 28: *Stories of AIDS in Africa*, where she puts a personal face on the overwhelming statistics of the epidemic.

Some Canadian grandmothers banded together to form the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign; they raise funds for and awareness of the plight of African grandmothers raising their orphaned grandchildren. And some young mothers, like Marika Ince in the beautifully felt poem to follow, make the imaginative leap into the heart of a grandmother. The huge scale of unimaginable devastation spread across a continent is beyond imagining.

By entering the heart of one grandmother as she dreams of her family, in Canada and in Africa, Marika draws our imagination into the centre of the family, source of healing and support.

—Lisbie Rae

Grandmothers of Steel
Hamilton ON, CA
part of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers
Campaign

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Lunacy

I lean into the pane
search the night sky
The moon is full and bright
much as my life has been

I am a grandmother now
I wait for Sunday visits and invest in RESP's
wonder who they will become and what they will do with their lives
just as I wondered about their parents when they were my babies

I gaze on ancient craters
Sea of Serenity, Sea of Tranquility
Bay of Rainbows, Lake of Dreams
Memories dance across her radiance
first steps, first words, first days at school
Graduations, celebrations,
Just enough loss and sorrow to enrich the joys and pleasures
Tides of life

The children I love return with children of their own
I shower them with treats and trinkets
travel and opportunities
There is so much I can do
for them

I gaze on ancient craters
Sea of Crises, Ocean of Storms
Marsh of Decay, Lake of Death
The story of another grandmother surfaces
sails across her shadow scarred face
carries me to the dark side

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE:

You too, became a mother
gave life
Felt it flow in the clasp of tiny fingers
Under the same silent witness you lived simple joys
first steps, first words
Proudly watched them walk to school
uniforms, pencils, books and fees
paid for with chickens
Each morning brought hope
brighter than the rising African sun
Their lives would be better than yours

Some fell in love and married
Others paired off and on
More little fingers and toes

Then came Slim.

Natural order
overturned.

Now you hold their hands
Wrap your own fingers around those too weak to curl
Feel life ebb

as one by one
the children you bore step past you
beyond life

The day comes when your last child, your youngest daughter
mother of three
lies on a straw mat and
you promise her what you have promised the others
Each word torn from your heart
reverberates in the enveloping emptiness

The chickens are long gone.

Grief and loss
Shame and fear
Will not pay for uniforms
pencils, books or fees

Neither will prayers
nor curses
feed their bellies

The moon brings only cycles of loss
Her shining face shrouded in death
You should be sitting under the shade of a baobab tree
Your grandchildren laughing at your feet
their mouths and hands sticky with sweet mango juice
expectant faces turned towards you in hopes of another story, another song.
Instead you sit only when it is too dark to move
when her light is gone and your legs are swollen with weariness and work

A tragedy intensified because
you are not alone
because there are too many children
too many orphaned grandmothers

You are not alone

I step back from the pane
wonder why
a moon so full and bright
does not fall from the sky

—Marika Ince