



The Big Dance - a Song from the Heart of the Horn

Bob Mwangi Kihar

The Big Dance will be at the Oasis where the lion will meet the fox, the palm trees will play the orchestra, and the wind will play the flute.

Calling and summoning the camels, the cattle, the goats and the sheep to the great dance. Some for slaughter and some to water.

The Big Dance will be at the Oasis in Iskushuban. And the shepherds of men, women, animals, young, old and children will be there. To put down their arms and to talk peace.

The great dance will be way past the sand dunes. The elders will carry their walking sticks and the women will prepare the big feast.

The lion and the fox will be somewhere lurking in the shadows as the vultures circle overhead and the hyena droops his tongue wet with saliva.

The young men and women as well as the children will not be left out. There will be something for everyone at the big dance.

The farmers and the nomads will be there too, as the nomad says he is swifter than the farmer, and the farmer says she is more diligent than the nomad.

As the palm trees dance and frolick to the footsteps of the wind, there will be bones for the scavengers and the best and choicest cuts for the oldest man and the oldest woman.

And when the song and dance gets into gear, the elders donning the 'mahwis'* and the 'emama'* will rise up. Chanting as they swirl their walking sticks.

Only then, will the great 'Gogaal'* begin.

If not in Iskushuban, then prepare for the heat of Aluula, right at the tip of The Horn of Africa.

It takes music, song and dance, as well as the coaxing and taunting and the goading of the men by the women, and the lyrics from the poet, for the men to draw their swords.

It takes even more song and dance as well as the ululation by the women, and the contrite lyrics of the poet, for the swords to be pulled back from battle and locked back into their sheaths or the bayonets back into their scabbards.

When the venom from the songs and poetry bites, it will take the same venom to heal the mind possessed and poisoned with rage.

The Big Dance will be at the Oasis.

When the elders chant and wave their stools and walking sticks, then and only then, will the drumbeats reduce the tempo of hate.

And then, and only then, will the 'Gogaal' begin to douse the heat of the venom, and its vicious spirit of turmoil.

And then as others would say, calm will be restored by lighting and smoking the pipe of peace.



And then, the clashing of swords will cease as the chants bring hate to a dead halt. The Big Dance will be at the 'Gogaal'.

And when the swords fall silent as they will eventually do, the voices of silent calm, peace and welcome relief will be heard from the harsh and stubborn landscape.

From pebble of sand to sand dune and from dry wadi to water-caked wadi; from thirsty river to flash floods and from water-well to water-spring and waterfalls.

Everywhere the voice of calm and peace will then prevail.

*Emama – Headgear/wrap worn by Somali men

*Mahwis - Waist-cloth worn by Somali men

* Gogaal - Open gathering for dialogue among Somalis (could be subject to further interpretation)

BIO



Bob Mwangi Kihara is a Kenyan poet, writer and communicator, tree-farmer, environmentalist and Space enthusiast. He has more than three-and-a-half decades long experience in journalism and media relations at national and international level. He has worked professionally as a journalist for a Kenyan newspaper - 'The East African Standard', with the United Nations as a Communication Officer doing duty in Kenya and Somalia and also worked as a Press Officer at the Switzerland-based headquarters of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

Bob is also a translator of poetry into the Kiswahili language for the ITHACA/Poetry Without Borders Project in Spain. Kiswahili is spoken by about 140 million people in East and Central Africa. Bob is also a published poet of a chapbook titled 'The Lion Roars in the Savannah' which is available on Amazon. He is also currently a UN-retiree.

In his poetry, Bob is inspired by the desire to foster peace and good relations between people of different cultures, opinions and beliefs. He believes poetry provides an avenue to conquer, discuss and bridge even the most difficult of issues and differences.