

Night Flyers



Jane K. Silwizya

With its origins in the 1700s, night flying today is an activity engaged in only by flyers of the Academy—that is, those born with the skill, a skill used only for the purpose of executing goodwill missions all over Africa; unlike the missions of The Lost Ones—rogue flyers who had naively parted ways with the Academy more than a hundred years ago...

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The opinions expressed are those of the characters in their relevant environments and should not be entirely linked to those of the author.

The author would like to thank various publications, mostly not mentioned in this novel, for their numerous accounts in relation to real events, specifically regarding "crash-landing wizards", accounts which are all in the public domain and that the author used as the premise for this novel. Although the various stories regarding this topic are deemed to be factual according to those publications, the role that they play in this story is entirely imagined with no factual basis.

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Preface

There are several African languages that would be spoken for the most part in the scenarios depicted in this novel but for ease of reading, practically all have been translated into English.

This novel is divided into alternating chapters of: 1. The actual story unfolding for the central characters and 2. The narrative which provides the background story. As an alternative, if the reader wishes to do so, each of these: the main story or the narrative, can be read en bloc, one after the other—that is, independent of the other.

This novel takes a real-life topic that is considered taboo in many parts of Africa, turns it on its head and like many who have gone before us, many who have dared to question, who have looked way beyond the face of our respective realities and have been courageous enough to invent, it asks the simple question, “What if?” However, after the fact, if it was ever deemed that this preface should have included a cautionary note from the author, then it would be this: Read *without* caution and with an imagination run wild.

More importantly, if you have read or heard about the numerous and well-documented stories about wizards in Africa that are forever “crash-landing”, have you ever wondered about the stories that we *never* hear about; about the wizards that did *not* crash-land as they flew on their various missions?

Chapter 1

Pan African News Agency—Dakar (6 Jan 2001), by Mildred Mulenga

Lusaka, Zambia—More than 30 stark naked people suspected to be wizards “crash-landed” on rooftops of houses owned by families, institutions and filling stations in Zambia last year, leaving the population puzzled... The latest of these bizarre incidents occurred on New Year’s Eve when one such suspected wizard crash-landed in Kasanda, a mining township near the midlands’ central town of Kabwe, 80 km north of Lusaka, the capital. He sustained fatal body and knee injuries on impact.

Mr Mubanga and Mr Mwaba—The Crisis Management Begins

(Location: Outskirts of Kasama, Northern Zambia—Saturday Morning)

Mr Mubanga, a man in his early fifties, calmed himself as he hurried along, on route to his neighbour’s large and modern-day rondavel hut, dressed only in his long *chitenge* (African print) wrap and a white cotton vest that were his usual night wear. It was 4:35 a.m. on a cold morning in the town of Kasama, at the beginning of Zambia’s winter; a winter that seemed to surprise the country’s inhabitants when it arrived every May as though it was totally unexpected and at which point, the locals assumed a British persona and talked incessantly about the dreary weather conditions. Truth be told, in real alignment with their former colonial masters, Zambians talked about the weather at every opportunity in every season, be it the smouldering October heat that seemed to literally melt people of all races bar one or two seemingly sun-resistant and exuberant Peace Corps types; or the heavy rains that tended to make many city roads impassable; or indeed whenever the weather hit anywhere in the region of 12-15 degrees Celsius in an average winter that induced the wearing of knee-high boots and thick woollen scarves among some city dwellers...

“*Odi, odi,*” Mr Mubanga said in a loud whisper as he knocked lightly at the door of the distinguished hut of his neighbour, Mr Mwaba, even though the Zambian *odi* meaning “knock-knock”, was usually said in a loud voice and normally not at such an ungodly hour as this. However, this was an emergency and Mr Mubanga had no choice but to speak urgently with his neighbour—seventeen years his senior—who had actually been his night-flyer *tata* (meaning father, with the female equivalent being *mama*), mentoring him for some nineteen years, up until he had completed his informal training to become a *bakalamba* or elder of the *Landa* Guard—that is, the communications guard of the Academy’s 10th Realm.

As he waited for a reply, Mr Mubanga or *Bashi-Keti* as he was commonly known, meaning the father of Keti, wondered how he was going to handle this particular task. Mr Mubanga’s primary role as one of the *bakalamba* of the *Landa* was to act as a receiver, receiving messages from various night flyers—that is, from another or within his own locality, and these messages could be about any night-flyer mission, big or small; they could be messages regarding the challenges of a mission, or even regarding any questions outside of a mission, that a night flyer may have for a *bakalamba*; but importantly the message had to first be relayed through him for his own locality, and then onto the relevant intended recipient of the message.

Where the matter was more urgent, this sometimes entailed him having to go out in the darkness and lateness of the night; as well, on a few occasions, having to calm his wife down afterwards, for she was becoming concerned that he may be having an affair with some woman in their suburb due to the number of times that she had heard him discreetly leaving their home in the early hours of the morning. Mrs Mubanga had even once threatened to take Bashi-Keti to their village headman so that he could counsel Bashi-Keti on the couple’s “marital problems”!

You see, that was one of the biggest challenges for a night flyer—the fact that when they chose to follow their calling (although in reality, there was no choice) which would occur at a very young age, they were sworn to secrecy so that even their nearest ‘n’ dearest were not allowed to know their secret. However, to make things worse on this particular occasion, as much as every so often Bashi-Keti had had to inform Mr

Mwaba (*Bashi-Kasanda*) about the challenges of or even about some mild variations to a mission's plan, he was not used to a situation where he would have to report a crash-landing! It was made all the worse that he had to inform Bashi-Kasanda that his own teenage son, Kasanda, who had been on a top night-flyer mission in the early hours of that morning, was among the nine flyers of the *Ekotabaya* Guard that had now possibly crash-landed, along with Bashi-Keti's own daughter, Keti. Further still, this was supposed to be one of the *Ekotabaya's* most challenging missions since its inception and the fact that Bashi-Kasanda had actually advised Bashi-Keti of instructions that he had received in a dream a few nights earlier (for Bashi-Kasanda was a seer) that included their two still very young night-flyer children, had surprised Bashi-Keti; but he had been even more surprised that when he had raised some concerns to his *tata*—for the first time it must be noted, that still, Bashi-Kasanda had remained quite unperturbed by their children's forthcoming participation in this particular mission, even with all the risks involved.

Earlier that morning, before he had chosen to rush to Bashi-Kasanda's home—only ten houses down the road, Bashi-Keti had been contacted by the *Kumpela*, the highest messenger in command of the *Landa* Guard, his title literally meaning “at the end”. However, the *Kumpela's* job was to initiate communications, through whatever means necessary, with the relevant *bakalamba* of the *Landa* in the relevant locality, that being Bashi-Keti in this case who would then relay the message face-to-face to a *mama* or *tata*, that being Bashi-Kasanda in this situation.

Many messengers and receivers used nature as their way to communicate with each other and even with other night flyers, and this was very true for Bashi-Keti who received messages from other night flyers in many different and unusual ways, methods that seemed to squeeze their way through the slits in Mother Nature's fabric. He, in particular, had so much skill that even in the most difficult of surroundings, he was able to quickly pick up what a night flyer was trying to say in his or her message.

On this occasion, at the beginning of May, the said emergency occurred on a night when it had rained rather heavily, even though it was way beyond the period of the last rains' usual limits. Throughout

the rainy season, in one spot where a small leak had formed in the thatched roof of their small red-brick house—specifically in Bashi-Keti and his wife’s bedroom, a tin-plate bowl sat below in the corner of their room, into which rainwater had diligently dripped on and off throughout the rains while Bashi-Keti patiently waited for them to come to an end, before he could go up and mend the roof.

When the heavy rains had ended, more than a month previously, he had forgotten to remove the bowl and that night, as he and his wife lay asleep in their bed with the sounds of the unexpected heavy showers, the tapping of the rain water into the bowl, though at first seemingly innocent, started to tap in a manner that only Bashi-Keti could decipher as being very meaningful indeed, as he fully awoke to pay it attention. It was almost like the old fashioned telegram, with the tapping sounds of the rain changing according to the rhythm of the rain; it tapped furiously into the tin bowl and then gentler as the rain softened and then faster again as the rain threatened to return even stronger than before and so on. From that alone, Bashi-Keti was able to translate the full message that said that the mission involving his daughter and Bashi-Kasanda’s son had possibly crash-landed! Most worryingly, the message ended with a simple statement advising that the two teenagers had been separated from the other seven members of the *Ekotabaya* group that were on that particular mission; and they were going to need guidance on their new and very risky mission to get out and return home all on their own.

Chapter 2

The Narrative: Night flyers—a brief history

The structures of the Academy were vastly different from what most people understand to exist within normal schools of learning. Although all night-flyer practices had for centuries been loosely embodied in what was referred to as an “Academy”, the Night Flyer Academy was, in reality, more the non-formal environment that provided some kind of training ground for night flyers, young and old; as opposed to an actual physical structure with an organised and formal arrangement of people, curricula and tools within.

What were more specifically known as “realms” within the Academy (now in its 10th Realm), referred to various jurisdictions or establishments of the Academy; however, this did not refer to jurisdictions that existed concurrently but rather existed one after the other, more or less, with some overlap typically occurring over the transition period from one realm to the next, and sometimes the transition period lasting many years. A realm would be held together by the various practices that that realm would have adopted from previous realms, practices that mutated from realm to realm as new practices were learned or discovered.

Furthermore, to complicate one’s understanding from an ordinary person’s perspective, even the hierarchical formations within the Academy were ones that were loosely developed and certainly existed in the absence of any strict conventionalism, meaning that within the Academy, there had always been, and still was, a natural respect that all night flyers had for each other, regardless of age or gender even.

Nevertheless, closer to some framework of sorts, “guards” existed within each realm, with the basic job of night-flyer members of any guard being to develop and protect a particular area of their night flyer

community, be it the actual practices or structures or physical areas or tools of their community or the night flyers themselves. These guards evolved within the existing realm of night-flyer activity.

The “Ekotabaya” Guard was a newly formed guard of the 10th Realm that had been formed due to the courage of its night flyers and their willingness to push boundaries in their attempts to fly further, faster and complete missions more efficiently than any other African night flyer had ever done. More importantly, the Ekotabaya were distinguished from all other night flyers due to two delineating factors—their extremely high levels of compassion and of awareness.

The Night Flyer Academy had come a long way since its first attempts to provide a loose framework for its night-flying practices in the early 20th Century, when it can be argued that the 1st Realm of the Academy came into existence and with the current realm—that is, the 10th—having evolved from the 9th Realm sometime in the 1990s.

It is believed that night flying had its early inception and recognition in Africa within the related community at some point in the early 1700s. However, the ancestors of many of today’s night flyers, when they had lived on Earth, had been said to speak often about how when they spoke to “the spirits”, they had always been asked to keep seeking the ancient mysteries; mysteries that had been lost when the most ancient of African civilisations that had existed some 200,000 years before Christ, had mysteriously come to an end. It was claimed by the ancestors that the associated practices of this very ancient civilisation had been buried along with it, but with a few remaining “embers” of those practices having directly led to the way in which night flying had come into existence in Africa and evolved over the years. For as long as many of the elder night flyers could remember, when they were being mentored, it had always been a case not of the “how” or the “why” but rather “from whom” and the answer to this foundational question is what would ultimately reveal the great mysteries once again that would be able to solve many of society’s ills.

As so much of the world’s environment had changed over the centuries, along with the fast-paced progression of technology within the last one hundred years or so, it had become necessary for the Academy to guard its own technologies even more jealously so as to ultimately remain true to those ancient mysteries spoken about by the ancestors, even

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though those mysteries remained elusive to all night flyers and even as they sought to protect what they did not truly understand... yet.

Some open-minded outsiders believed that African wizards could actually fly by using various magic paraphernalia like a simple bottle top or the horn of an animal, and that the fuel required for a wizard in order to fly unseen through the skies on their often nefarious missions, was human blood! Like most topics that are surrounded by so much taboo, there also exist many myths and to put it lightly, some of what the general public had been made privy to about the existence of wizards and their activities across Africa, was part-true and part-false.

What was certainly true though was that from the time since the beginning of the known night-flying activity in the 1700s, up until the early 20th Century, the consumption of human blood by the night flyer had been the only known method of “fuelling” that would enable a night flyer to cover any given distance. However, a new era had dawned around a hundred years ago, after night flyers had been challenged to find fuel alternatives, due largely to the exponential growth in their emotional make-up and more specifically in their emotional intelligence.

Over a period of thirty years or so, leading up to the beginning of the 20th Century, a period that would eventually evolve into the 1st Realm of the Academy, it was claimed that the ancestors had consistently communicated to the bakalamba (elders) of the Academy in a way that suggested that a “new way of doing things”—what the bakalamba in the community called new practices—had to be realised; that is, they needed to transform their practices to a higher plane that was more consistent with their evolution. These messages regarding a requirement for change had been delivered through dreams, through visions and then through the whispers that went from the seers to the receivers and then onto the messengers of the night flying community.

A seer in the Academy was an elder and almost always a tata (father) or mama (mother) who would have visions or could even create the atmosphere for having visions that related to important issues regarding the various flyers’ ongoing and imminent future missions. However, these visions were always a form of communication from the ancestors and primarily with regard to instructions provided by the ancestors to seers, to pass onto the relevant night flyers within the seer’s locality regarding their respective missions.

It is important to note here that on “the other side”, the ancestor who communicated with seers and other night flyers still on Earth would not necessarily have been a night flyer during their time on Earth. There was no real process of selection regarding this. It was more to do with the natural calling of those ancestors whose energies continued to connect with those on Earth in a way that allowed for periodic communication between themselves and night flyers, in particular.

Receivers, on the other hand, were elders within the Academy who typically received messages from messengers from within and outside of their localities which the receiver had to deliver or convey to a tata or mama within their locality. In the 10th Realm, only elders of the “Landa” Guard could be receivers or messengers. However, when a new night-flyer practice was to be developed or had been developed, the ultimate duty of the relaying of information was still squarely placed on messengers for it was the messengers specifically who were responsible for spreading the word across their communities, as from decades before.

As a new practice was being developed or gaining traction, this would set off the messengers “whispering through forgetful ears” as it was called, to spread the important news. Night-flyer messengers all over Africa found somewhat amusing the English saying: “in through one ear and out through the other” which is normally regarded as a bad thing but the saying for the night flyer community had a different and more positive meaning. When a messenger whispered into another night flyer’s ear, the message was heard by the recipient and their understanding assumed in their memory, but just as quickly, the message was forgotten by the recipient as he or she got on with their daily lives. This allowed the night flyer to live without the weight of such mammoth information. It would only be when the night flyer needed that specific new practice or information about it, for their mission, that they would automatically recall it from memory.

As with many other changes in cultural practices in their communities over the centuries, a new dawn was born into night flying without one person taking credit for the new invention or the new way of doing things and nobody knew the source; and as was always respected, once messengers began to spread the whispers in earnest, something great was about to manifest itself in the community. Therefore, between 1904 and 1907, the Academy had developed and adopted a new engine and

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a new fuel for its night flights and these were respectively the flyer's mind and the very food that they ate!

More formal scientific studies have shown that the human brain runs mainly on a bit of electricity and glucose (the latter from the food that we eat). The night flyer's anatomy had evolved over the years in such a way that allowed for a night flyer to use any excess glucose over and above the body's normal requirements, as their fuel for night flying. As the human brain is controlled and directed by its neurotransmitters, some of these are also what developed in the night-flyer brain to become the night flyer's flight controls. In its entirety, the new way of flying had become understood to be night flying using the "mind-engine".

This evolved aspect of the night flyer actually became imprinted on their DNA which meant that a night flyer could pass these genes onto a biological child who would from a young age, be naturally able to skillfully operate their mind-engine and have the associated night flying skills. It must be stated though, that there had not arisen a concern in the Academy about a possible extinction of the night flyer through the growing inter- marriages between night flyers and non-night-flyers; since so far proven, one in two children born to an inter-marriage couple, stood a good chance of carrying the relevant night-flyer genes and every child born to two night-flyer parents would automatically assume both copies of these specific genes from both night flyer parents.

Importantly, since the invention of the mind-engine and when in its 8th Realm, the Academy had also developed practices that enabled night flyers to be able to fly in larger formations (of up to nine) as had been in the case of the recently prematurely landed flight that had included Keti and Kasanda.

Still, as with all practices, when a new way was passed on to others in whatever community, there was always the possibility of rogue elements that may decide to go on a different path or remain on the old path and often for selfish reasons, and so the change in the way of doing things had not been well received by all night flyers. A small number of night flyers insisted on staying on the outside of the Academy and having totally defied the whispers in the decades leading up to the creation of the 1st Realm, now used cow blood as a substitute for their fuel; for it would seem that they had simply developed a taste for blood and refused to give up the habit, though rumours abounded within their

own community of how some of them still dared to consume human blood for flying on certain missions.

Today, these rogues were the crash-landing flyers who attracted name-calling from ordinary people, especially calling them wizards, which term was used to encompass many other activities associated with witchcraft. For example, it was still a common belief among many Africans that witchdoctors were capable of “sending” harm to others and that if you had an issue with someone, you could engage a witchdoctor to send some form of harm their way, like through a throng of rats (a common tool) sent to chew through the cables of a vehicle owned by your enemy, thus rendering the vehicle immobile. However, the term “wizard”, used in this way, was not applicable to the true night flyer...

Although it is difficult for any commentator to elaborate much on the history and evolution of the night flying community in general, it seems clear that the 1st Realm of the Academy came into being around the time in the early 20th Century that the split between the good and rogue night flyers occurred. This was around the time that night flyers experienced their first significant mutation in more than two hundred years.

To this day, the rogue flyers were known by members of the Academy as “The Lost Ones”, considerably due to the fact that their own missions almost always ended up in crash-landings but more so because they were considered lost as they had chosen to go down the wrong path with regards to night flying history. As a consequence, the Academy had actively and intuitively developed a credo that ensured that they kept their own methods a well-guarded secret, not only from The Lost Ones but also from others who may not only misunderstand what night flying was really about but that might want to use night flying for their own and possibly ill-intending agendas.

Quite bizarrely, a previous night flying universal practice required a night flyer to fly in their “birthday suit” because the composition of the fabric of their clothing would almost certainly render a night flight unsuccessful, from the very start. This was a practice that The Lost Ones still had to adhere to as they knew no better but it was something that still frustrated them tremendously, especially that with an alarming increase in the number of crash-landings by their members in the last

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twenty years or so, the spectacle that their nudity caused seemed to attract even more attention from those that discovered them and, of course, from the media.

On the other hand, now, whilst the rogue flyers had no choice but to continue with this practice, a night flyer of the Academy simply needed their body to be affected by sleep-paralysis and their mind to be in dream-like mode and this enabled the mind-engine to be engaged, that transported their self-energy from A to B.

Naturally, therefore, night flyers of the Academy looked down on the now very limited skills that The Lost Ones continued to exercise as it was quite beneath them to even imagine taking to the skies like the rogues did—naked, fuelled up on at least a cup of cow's blood and ostensibly with devolution now taking place in their processes as they persistently crash-landed here and there. How very antiquated!

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