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Word count : 445 words

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I vividly remember playing with mud in the fields whilst my granny tilled the land in preparation for the rainy season. "I am going to scrub you during your bath!" she would clamor.

All I cared about was my short lived joy in the mud and pretended not to care about whatever she was saying. I loathed bathing and the daily challenge was always evading it. Like a cat pouncing on a mouse, my grandmother had to ambush me to get me into the bath. I would wail, a raw, emotional sound that conveyed my frustration as clearly as words could. This was the daily routine, everyday.

My favorite moments were when we went to the river to do our laundry. I was fascinated by the tadpoles wiggling through the water, darting with quick, fluid motions. This was enough entertainment that made my pure soul satisfied and vibrate with excitement. Sometimes, I gleefully chased chickens, my sport that never left me exhausted. Even my grandmother marveled at the "inexhaustible energy" I seemed to exude.

These were the earliest years of my life, a time of innocence, perfection and free of crease like a smoothly ironed sheet. Where were my parents in the picture? I did not know, nor did I care. I had never even questioned their absence or existence.

At 5, I moved to the city to live with my mother. Where was my father? Again, I did not know and I never cared to ask. I got enrolled in an urban school where I met a stranger. When other children spoke about Sofia The First I realized that whilst I was watching tadpoles, other children were watching television. It was when I spoke in class that I became aware of my dialect being Tonga and not the "normal Shona". After wrongly holding a racket, I got the revelation that whilst I was chasing chickens, others were chasing tennis balls. Whilst I was playing with mud, my fellow toddlers were playing with dolls. As I walked home alone, I realized that I was an only child, unlike my peers who were collected by their older siblings.

The stranger I met was growth. It made me question my identity. Why I spoke Tonga, why I did not stay with both parents, why I was a rural girl. Growth forced me out of utopia to a world of insecurities. I realized I was a poor and "fatherless" girl. It made me aware of disparities that existed in real life situations.

Suddenly, I was thrust by growth into a world where I had to strive to prove my worth or risk fading away without any recognition or any form of importance attached to my name.

