

## **Moria's Scar: Agbekoya Uprising by Bimbo Bakare**

*Review by Pamela Watson*

### **What the Book is About**

*Moria's Scar* is set against the Agbekoya uprising of 1968-69, during the Nigerian Civil War. This was a time when cocoa farmers, already under pressure from falling global prices, faced increased taxation imposed by a government trying to fund a war.

What followed is often described as a tax revolt, but this novel asks us to look more closely. Through the life of Moriamo (known as Moria) a young girl injured during the unrest, later sent to the United States, and returning decades on to understand what happened, we see a far more complex story unfold.

This is a tale of personal injustice and a layered account of global market forces, local corruption, political pressure and human decisions colliding. At every level - international buyers, national leaders, local intermediaries - power is exercised yet caught in the middle are the farmers, with the least control and the most to lose.

As the African proverb reminds us: *when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers*. In this story, the farmers are the grass.

### **Themes and Insights**

This is a novel about memory and injustice. It shows how unresolved injustice lingers across decades, shaping lives, changing perceptions and creating anger and resentment long after the events themselves.

It is also about power: how global commodity markets, wartime pressures, and local systems of corruption combine to create unbearable strain on those with least power.

The book raises difficult questions about international actors and about complicity within Nigerian systems themselves, including the role of cocoa agents and middlemen who profited while farmers suffered.

Importantly, the novel places women at its centre. While men dominate the political and economic structures, it is women who continue to feed families and farm crops yet bear much of the cost through domestic and cultural violence and economic vulnerability. Mulika's story illustrates the consequences of this inequality.

And underpinning it all is a powerful theme: the importance of recording history. Stories like this which remain unrecorded are forgotten or simplified, leading heroes to be made from winning villains and ignoring uncomfortable truths.

## **Why This Story Matters**

Although rooted in Nigeria, this story resonates far beyond it.

We see echoes in Australia's own history - from the Eureka Stockade, where miners rose against unfair licence fees to the tensions in wartime economies, where scarcity impacted and reshaped communities in unexpected ways.

Across history, the pattern is familiar: economic pressure builds, power concentrates, and those least able to absorb the shock are pushed to breaking point.

*Moria's Scar* effectively brings that pattern to life as a powerful story.

It is also significant that this story is told by a Nigerian Australian father seeking to make Nigeria's history, and even his own family's story, accessible and meaningful to children who have grown up outside Nigeria. In doing so, he offers something valuable to many in the diaspora seeking that same connection.

## **Strengths and Reflections**

This is an intelligent and ambitious novel. Its greatest strength lies in its refusal to simplify. It resists the easy narrative of blame and instead presents a world of overlapping pressures and imperfect actors, many of whom exhibit both good and bad traits and actions.

The personal dimension, rooted in Bimbo Bakare's own family history, gives the story emotional weight and urgency.

At times, the density of history and the number of characters require attention from the reader, but that complexity reflects the reality the book seeks to portray.

## **Conclusion**

*Moria's Scar* is not just a story about a past event. It is a story about how history is experienced, remembered and sometimes left unresolved. It invites us to look again at what we think we understand.

In a multicultural society like Australia, stories like this matter. It helps shape and deepen our understanding of Nigeria, a more complex and multi-layered country than Australia. It helps us appreciate the histories people carry with them and encourages us to not fall back on simple narratives and clichés.