

Why Moria's Scar

Distinguished guests, friends, and my wonderful family—good evening! Looking up tonight, I just know my Dad is looking down with a massive grin on his face, and I can finally say, "Dad, I did it." I was only ten years old when he passed away, so I didn't get a lifetime with him, but he left me something incredible: a mountain of books that most of the family didn't know what to do with. Clearly, those pages stayed with me, but this evening's story actually starts much earlier, at the tail end of the 1960s.

Picture a young mother with her firstborn, boarding a string of buses to make the epic journey from Ode-Ekiti to Ibadan. She had her newborn son tied to her back, still nursing him along the way, all to introduce him to his grandfather. She arrived at the family house just minutes after the Agbekoya protesters had swept through, and when she knocked on the door, the house stayed silent—the family inside was terrified the group had returned! That baby was me, and that woman is my Mum, whom I'm so incredibly lucky to still have alive today.

Fast forward to my own life as a father of two. My kids have been fortunate to grow up across different countries, but being the custodian of our family history isn't always easy. When I tried to tell my daughter about our roots—that I'm an Ibadan man from Olorunda, the hotbed of the Agbekoya Uprising—it was like I was speaking Greek to her. I had to bridge that massive cultural gap, and that's how Moriamo was born. She's Nigerian by blood but American to the core, and through her lens, I was finally able to convey the emotional struggles and pains of the people involved in that uprising.

I felt a deep compulsion to write this because, frankly, the landmarks that should memorialize our past and educate our future simply aren't there. When I travel through these areas today, there are no monuments, no memorials—nothing to help the next generation understand what happened or why things are the way they are. Now, in bringing this story to life, I must be clear: I am no Toyin Falola! This isn't meant to be a dry, academic history. While the book is rooted in the soil of that era, I've taken full literary license to keep things entertaining. I don't expect anyone to take these accounts as absolute historical facts; instead, I invite you to just enjoy the narrative and the emotional journey of the characters.

I spent over two decades in the oil and gas industry—the modern-day equivalent of the cocoa trades of old—sitting in boardrooms and seeing how big-money decisions affect the common man on the street. But my heart has always been with the women who raised me, like my grandmother, whom I watched struggle in the village, processing palm oil with her bare feet. It was through her that I trekked the areas in this book and experienced those struggles firsthand. So, please bear with me if my writing puts women's issues front and center; you now know exactly where that comes from. With *Moria's Scar*, I hope I've done my bit to pass the baton forward, ensuring this story doesn't die with my generation.

I'd like to leave you with a quick reflection. In our digital age, when we search for history or inspiration, we often find ourselves looking through a specific window—one that has been built largely by Western and male perspectives. They've done a wonderful job of documenting their journey, but it's only one part of the human story. The web is like a massive library where some of the most vibrant shelves are still waiting to be filled—by women, by non-Westerners, and by any group that feels under-represented in our narrative. There's an African proverb that says, "Until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter." I believe it's time for all of us to contribute our own chapters so the world can finally see the full, beautiful picture of our shared history.

Today, I also want to think that it is not only my dad who is proud of me, but my son too. Truth be told, he was the first published writer in the house with his book, *A Chase in the Shadow*. I've brought *Moria's Scar* into the world just to let him know that this old dog can also do new tricks!

Finally, I am indebted to many people, far too numerous to mention individually, but chief among them is my wife, Safuratu Bakare—my only Sugar Bobo and my Safu Oloju-edé. Saf, without your constant prodding and relentless encouragement, this book simply would not have seen the light of day. But much more than the literary support, thank you for the greatest feat of all—tolerating me!

Saf will mention a few people when she closes the evening, but I must personally thank the people of the Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre at Greenmount. They selected me as a 2025 Caruso Award recipient and invited me to be a Writer-in-Residence at their beautiful facility, where I was finally able to put the finishing touches on this story.

And to every one of you who stepped away from your busy lives this evening to honour me with your presence, I am truly grateful and humbled. Ubuntu—I am because you are.

'Bimbo Bakare

Perth, WA

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