

John Reyer's Edition of the

STORYBOOK

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*An *etfiction* foundation Text*

Conjoining Stories from the Poet Soldier's STORYBOOK and moments they inspired.
Accompanied by adjoining poems from the POEMBOOK.

By John Reyer Afamasaga

SUMMARY

James is comfortable in the warmth of the June night; his mother's voice as she reads from the STORYBOOK is a fine replacement for the hot chocolate they cannot afford...

CHAPTER 6

GUIOPERA III *The SystemSpectacular*

Value-Add-Interlude

“Nights in a London Dungeon”

by John Reyer Afamasaga

To Janine,
This is a book
With few entries.
It smells of you
As if you hold it.
It is so dark I can see your eyes
And I am so hungry I taste salt
Like that of our tears.
Tidings that will never be as fair as you
John
P.S. Write at daybreak; therefore, read at sundown.

PRELUDE

On a Sunday afternoon in mid-December 2010, Polina arrives at the old bar at the same time as Genisis who closes the cab door.

Both women look at the Christmas decorations in their arms and think about what they will do with them as Arley and Missy ambush the two people who feel relief that Lazoo agreed to a new partnership with The *Guy* and Litigatti.

Missy and Arley join arms as they engage Polina and Genisis in the biggest group hug. And then the happy women hear Mr. Bubl e’s voice from inside the bar.

Lavenda appears as Rocol’s limo pulls up in front, where Lina and her girlfriend begin to scream and jump for joy as they imagine what the new crew has in mind leading up to the finale....

PART 1

Jon Pierre looks down the lane as he hears the theme to this scene: a Christmas song he believes.

The Poet Soldier thinks of Janine, whom he hasn’t laid eyes on for close to a decade now; he begins to feel like he’s never even met her before.

Whimsical, who wrote the script the crew follows, promised the scene they're in will be a breeze.

The Man has a moral obligation to share what information he has with his allies to ensure the alliance remains stronger than its enemies.

Upstairs in the offices belonging to Mr. Businessman is Little Lazoo, who is all grown up. Jon Pierre has decided to send one of his brightest prospects upstairs first to see what Mr. Businessman will tell Lazoo.

The later stages of the Great Depression have been a hard time for Network operatives. Peace time does that, and with commerce almost at a standstill, little or no motivation exists for anyone to forge ahead by means of acquiring information, pertaining to national security or business. The automobile had been designed and created, and so the only thing worth anything on the market these days is what the next big thing will be, and with Edison and Bell gone, you might as well try your hand at making up stuff.

Jon Pierre sees a light come on in a third floor bedroom in the building opposite from the doorway where he stands. It's next to the one Lazoo is in, with its blinds closed. The red curtains blow as the shape of a lantern he sees in the window creates all sorts of images ranging from vases with Picasso flowers to hourglasses, all of which have a special meaning to him and his crew.

The Poet Soldier reaches for his green bag and opens it, keeping his eyes on the open window that the lessening light makes more inviting. He finds one of the diaries, in which he scrawls his pain of not being able to see her.

Snowflakes in London mean the temperature is perfect for the scene they're in, but the comfort factor diminishes with each flake that falls as Jon Pierre's view of the street is now one covered over by the falling snow.

A woman in a dress with her back exposed to the elements appears at the window. She has her head down as she looks at something in front of her.

Jon Pierre finds his pencil; then he lets his switchblade drop from up his sleeve as he quickly sharpens his instrument while watching the woman stroke her neck in the only real light now in the alley.

Upstairs in the hotel room, a woman of fortitude reads the *Times*, in which the writer who calls himself The Poet Soldier has published his "LATEST UPLOAD," his way of selling his work.

From his words, she has gathered that his stories are his only outlet; the words touch her in a way she will never forget. The writer of her heart's desire, a man who could love one woman as much he does, uploads his offerings in hopes the gods will answer his prayers

as he goes from one mission to the next, wishing he will again one day meet the operative who goes by the name of Janine.

The writer now perches on his knees as he finds inspiration in the elegance and poise of the woman who fits the bill. She appears almost overcome with the grace she displays as she hides the tides of emotion that spring from something she sees, or she may even read.

In the office adjacent to the room with a view is Lazoo.

“John James, it’s been a long time coming, but Janine’s pride and joy is ready to take his place at the helm as the teller of stories that future generations will only be able to wish for as they cast longing gazes back to times when masters walked amongst everyday men....”

Lazoo looks at the ground as Mr. Businessman makes the young operative feel good about the role he sometimes wishes belonged to his enemy.

Little Lazoo, a name from love letters his mother received from a colleague she worked with a few times, looks at the file Mr. Businessman has open in front of him.

Jon Pierre, not one to trust his eyesight, bows his head as the woman up in the apartment turns to close the window. Her appearance moves his hand to write her name, “To Janine....”

The moment is short-lived, however, when she closes the curtains. Then he hears footsteps that crush snow just as his heart feels crushed when he hears the snarl.

“Page is worthless to you now that everyone knows who Little Lazoo is....”

JPS hears Ammer before Jon Pierre forces himself to look in the direction from where the vile voice is coming.

PART 2

Lavenda watches from down and across the street as The *Guy* shakes hands with the one they call Lazoo.

The irony of the scene, in which the new kids on the block carry out the finishing touches to another mission and The *Guy* is now joined by Whimsical, is it’s happening on Fleet Street.

The *Guy* believes the debrief is going to be straightforward without any hassles, regarding having to cover up any use of unwarranted force during the project, or explain any cases of guns accidentally going off or backfiring as Tone Horroh is still in the Middle East, where he ran decoy for the crew as John Reyer, Metofeaz Litigatti, and James Elton AKA LAZOO slipped out of the war zone with twelve UN workers under

their care. Each of them, with the assistance of Le Mac, took four workers each in another of The *Guy*'s most perfect, foolproof plans, in which some of them, including the crew, were drugged, while others were diseased with viruses The *Guy* had purchased in small quantities from universities, and drug companies for The *Guy*'s mission to lead a group of westerners out of the Middle Eastern war without a single fatality from the enemy, and only the viruses some of the workers received, to which they were given the antidote once they made it to Egypt.

The *Guy* receives a hug from Litigatti. Then Metofeaz and Lazoo board a cab to take them to Heathrow as The *Guy* looks around for his mark and the sun comes out.

The *Guy* scans the street for a glimmer of hope from her; maybe the sun's kind warm rays will catch her camera lens.

He hears the music in the air as Lazoo and Litigatti poke their heads out of the windows of the cab, "The F3quenZor!" As the lads laugh, people on the street look at them, and then they look for whom the boys are calling out to.

The *Guy* takes a step to the side, and no one is any wiser about what the guys in the back of the cab are talking about, or whom they are shouting at.

Lavenda sees him as John Reyer as The *Guy* decides to play up; he looks up at the sun, and then at the shadow from a post.

Inside a parked black car, Ammer says, "Pick him up!" into a walkie talkie.

The *Guy* sees two plainly dressed police coming toward him on his left as a police car screeches to a halt at the other end of the street and out hop two uniformed police.

The *Guy* looks over his shoulder at the diner behind him; then he takes a couple of steps back into it.

Inside the busy café, he finds a seat in the middle of the room, from a desire for the scene to go down in a civil manner.

He sees the plainly dressed police casually walk by outside as the uniformed ones, who aren't aware of the other police's identity, stop running in front of the café.

The *Guy* reaches into his green bag to produce a walkie talkie on which he Morse codes "J-R-A" with the volume turned down.

Soon he sees frustrated looks on the faces of both the plainly dressed cops and the uniformed ones through the window who suddenly realize they're looking at the same guy. And then they disperse.

The *Guy* sees Mr. Businessman in the window; Mr. Businessman looks somewhere up the street where he signs to someone, and then he enters into the café.

Mr. Businessman sits down as The *Guy* sees Ammer appear in the window, where he gives The *Guy* one of his looks.

“Never mind him; he’s probably looking at his own reflection,” Mr. Businessman says as The *Guy* hands over the walkie talkie he picked up in his luggage at the airport.

“I want you to have it,” Mr. Businessman puts a hand out.

“It’s not what I signed up for. I’m aware that not everything’s in black or white, but there are a lot easier ways of ensuring Ma and Pa and their offspring wave a certain colored flag...” The *Guy* says as Ammer pulls out a seat from the table.

PART 3

“Thank you,” The Poet Soldier says to the guards as they let him have his diaries, while he’s led to a cell in a lock up in London.

Two guards flank the person who is said to be able to immobilize as many as eight trained officers at one time if he so wishes. Jon Pierre has his hands cuffed, but in them he holds the two hand-bound leather books, and his placid face makes one of the stories about the entity sound like it’s a myth designed by the Network to keep its poster boy and most successful operative’s name in lights.

Outside the dungeon, one officer turns to open the door, while the other looks up at the fading daylight. Jon Pierre lifts his head to see through the window in the corridor.

Jon Pierre aims for the rolled up *Times* in the back-pocket of the guard opening the door, and then he swings his hands around as he turns to face the dungeon door collecting the newspaper he then tucks in between the two diaries.

The officer opening the door checks his back-pocket to find the paper is gone; he thinks he must have left it back at the office.

Meanwhile, the one who was admiring the dusk gives The Poet Soldier a gentle nudge in the back to move forward into the opening cell.

The Poet Soldier enters into the familiar surroundings of four walls, their acoustics dense and dead. He refuses to turn to look at the guards who offer, “If there’s anything you want, Sir, just call out.”

Jon Pierre remains solemn as he hears the hinges on the door engage, and then the door closes, and what little light is left appears in a square less than the size of the diaries he places on the floor.

Janine opens the door to the cottage; it creaks, but that's okay—it has four walls and a roof for her and her baby.

Mr. Ghattis, who miraculously appeared on the red tractor as Janine and James Elton (or Little Lazoo, the name she was going to call her baby) sat on the side of the road in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin just before the chance of snow forecasted became her and her son's bad fortune.

Mr. Ghattis has gone to drop the tractor off in the barn, but he said he will soon be back. Janine enters into the cottage she saw from where she sat and uttered the words her mother read to her from the STORYBOOK, "*...a scene in which she and her baby shared a cottage on a quarter acre, which a kindhearted widower had offered her in return for housekeeping duties and bookkeeping work....*"

The young mother wants to check in her quilted knapsack whether the hand-bound leather book is still there. But having James in her arms and realizing how hungry he is again makes Janine weepy as she hears what must be the gray radio somewhere in the cottage, playing, "I'll Be Home for Christmas." The song reminds her of one of the many promises made to her mother by The Poet Soldier; in a melancholic yet pleasant sort of way, Janine already feels at home in the cozy cottage.

Janine finds the radio and switches it off as she hears Mr. Ghattis call out, "Anyone home?"

With Christmas looming, Janine finds the kind man's voice to be a gift she and James will cherish forever....

After showing Janine the house and how everything works, Mr. Ghattis cuts the grateful woman off when she tries offering to cook them dinner with the meat and vegetables he's brought back with him.

"Get settled first," the gentlemen says, and then he finds his hat and goes to leave.

"Like I said, cleaning," says Janine, hurrying to find ways to thank the man, "and book keeping, I can do all that...."

James, who lies on the sofa, burps, which makes his mother pause, and then she and Mr. Ghattis laugh.

"You've got him well trained already," Mr. Ghattis smiles, and then he pushes his hat down on his head and leaves, closing the door behind him....

Janine wanders through the place with James in her arms.

She looks for places for the little things she has; The STORYBOOK she sets down next to her and James' bed. Then she takes out the pictures of her mother Janine, and the one of her and Jon Pierre Solomon, the man she cannot hate because of how her mother spoke of the few times she spent with him. She walks back into the living area and places the pictures on the mantle.

After dinner, as Janine washes and cleans baby James, she hears the radio come on again.

She lays James on a towel while she goes to turn off the radio, which plays the same Christmas song that, if her memory serves her right, was the song Jon Pierre and her mother heard at the same time when both of them were in London working the same job for the Network.

She returns to find the happy baby kicking his arms and legs from the cold instead of crying. And when she bends down to pick him up, the little fellow passes wind again.

"You're a gift," the mother says as she holds James up in the air to look at him, and then his smile makes her want to hold her bundle of joy to her.

The radio turns itself on again; James appears almost aware of his mother's dislike of the radio as he clings to her with his little limbs to let her know the radio is not a bad thing.

With each step Janine takes, piano music lays the path to where the hand-bound leather book waits beside the bed that, earlier in the day, Janine feared she and James would not have.

The music fills the emptiness its listeners once had as it surrounds the mother and child, blessing them in a way its singer could only have wished.

As the mother pulls back the covers, she hears in the singer's voice what Jon Pierre must have felt, having given her beautiful mother enough through his letters to her for her to forego any meaningful relationship with any other man with whom she came in contact.

Janine puts James down, and then she turns the dial on the lantern by the bed to dim the light.

She hops into the bed and lies facing James, who smiles into the rafters as the music cascades through the secondhand memories to which Janine clings.

The baby continues on in his contented world as Janine now feels the need to capture the moment in eternity for her son when she reaches for the hand-bound leather diary, the only thing her mother left her.

Janine finds the page with The Poet Soldier's poem to her mother that he wrote to her when he was picked up by MI5 in London.

Janine wonders whether, had he realized the woman in the third floor window was the woman he longed to see one more time, he would have written the poem she looks at?

To Janine,
This is a book
With few entries
It smells of you
Like you hold it
Is so dark I can see your eyes
And I am so hungry I taste salt
Like that of our tears.
Tidings that will never be as fair as you
John PS,
Write at daybreak therefore read at sundown

Janine finishes reading the poem in her mind. The tears of their tragic love have once again drowned her voice as she hears his wish in a London Dungeon....

“I’m dreaming tonight
Of a place I love
Even more than I usually do....”