

LIRA TOWN COLLEGE

P.O. BOX 125, LIRA

S.3 ENGLISH PASSAGE

READ THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE.

The wedding was in December and so I could attend it. Some dates stick out. December fifth. A week before Kenya's independence. Two great ceremonies for the neighbourhood to look forward to.

I was not to be left out. I polished my pointed shoes and put on my sleek jeans. I put on a hat and a scarf. Always dressed to kill, that was me. My dream-girl was being married to a fellow whose face I did not like, but there were other birds to kill.

I joined the crowd at their home. Tradition said that she must wait in the house with her pretty little maids until he came for her. She was in there now, surrounded by them and waiting. I heard someone say that the bridegroom and his party were one hour late. Someone else replied that the distance from Murang'a to Kangemi was not like that from the nose to the eye. We must be patient. He would come for her.

What if he didn't turn up? I thought. The neighbourhood would give a hoarse laugh and disperse. And she would kill herself from shame. The goat with a broken leg.

"Are these people from Murang'a coming or not?" an impatient woman cried. She was dressed in traditional goatskins, dressed for her part, which was a bargain with the bridegroom's people. For a child does not leave her home just like that. Those people from Murang'a would have to pay dearly for being late. Kangemi people were very *particular* about time and did not like to be kept waiting.

Peter Mboca, who was going to give away the bride, paced around and looked at his watch. He was a grey old man in a smart suit, and he was one of the richer uncles. He paced around his hips moving. He was rehearsing the speech he would make after. How good Liz was...

At last they came. They announced their coming with the aggressive blare of car-horns. Popooooo. Pipeeeee. Were not very *impressed*. Although we could not see over the hedge and the tall maize we could tell, from the sound, that it was a small procession. I hurried to see them arrive. A Peugeot, a Toyota, a Volkswagen.

A woman spat into the grass. "Three filth cars. Not even decorated."

"It must have been raining in Murang'a," someone said.

True to custom the Peugeot with the bridegroom stayed outside the gate while the other two cars came in. the bridegroom wais in dignity while his best man gets the bride for him.

The cars stopped their *ineffectual* blaring and out of the Toyota shot a young man. He wore a three-piece suit and had a red flower sticking out of his breast pocket. Smart but muddy, we thought. The rain must have been terrible a Murang'a. This must be the best man. Very young chap. Very smart but very muddy. We could see that he had done his best to wipe the mud off his new shoes.

Another fellow came out of the Volkswagen, leaving others inside. A murmur of astonishment passed through the crowd. This chap was so muddy he should have stayed in the car. He was shot and stocky and looked crude.

Our women closed in and asked *sarcastically* what these muddy people wanted. The shy best man, trying to look as cocky and as brave as a best man should, said they had come for the bride. Two muddy brave warriors, come fro the bride! So!

“Is there no water where you come from?” our women shot back. “Is our girl going to a place where there is no water?”

The short-crude fellow said, “This is mud, not just soil, mother. It means Murang’a is not as dry as people say, but full of water.”

Smart answer. Some women nodded and approved. Murang’a was full of water. And water was good.

The slender best man began to explain how “in fact ...”

“Don’t speak English to us. We are not Europeans.”

He coughed and smiled disarmingly. He was quite a charming young fellow but this was obviously the first time he had got mixed up in these things. He started again. Without *resorting* to English words like “in fact” and “actually” he explained that they had got stuck in the mud and had had to pay a tractor to haul the cars out of the mess.

Questions

1. It seem that the people who were waiting were uneasy because they though
 - A. The write might not turn up
 - B. The writer was jealous at his “dream-girl” being married to someone else.
 - C. The girl might not agree to the marriage after all.
 - D. The bridegroom might not come.
2. When the bridegrooms part at last arrived, the people were amazed that
 - A. They had so many cars
 - B. They were dressed so smartly
 - C. They were so muddy
 - D. The bridegroom stayed outside the gate.
3. Which is the best summary of what was said on their arrival?
 - A. A woman sneered at the fact that they were covered in mud, but the best man replied that it was soil, not mud.
 - B. The woman sneered that that there seemed to be no water to wash the bridegroom’s party; but the best man replied that since they were covered in mud, not soil, there was plenty of water in Murang’a.
 - C. The woman insisted that they should have brought some water; but the best man replied that they had brought mud instead.
 - D. The woman asked why they had not washed first; the best man replied that they had been so busy working that they had had no time o wash.

Look at the words in italics in the story. Which of the following alternatives could best replace them in the way they are used here?

4. *Particular*
A. exact
B. special
C. fussy
D. detailed
5. *impressed*
A. oppressed
B. pleased
C. angry
D. favorably influenced
6. *ineffectual*
A. distracting
B. loud
C. pointless
D. incomparable
7. *sarcastically*
A. bitterly
B. jokingly
C. tauntingly
D. full of hatred
8. *resorting to*
A. resulting in
B. using
C. insulting with
D. referring to
9. discuss the following:
sleek
dressed to kill
rehearsing
aggressive
10. The writer used a number of unusual phrases and expressions. Some of them are probably translations from his first language, Gikuyu. Can you work out what they mean? To what extent do you think this kind of translated expression is justified in English?
other birds to kill
the distance...was not like that from the nose to the eye.
the goat with a broken leg.

Now read the rest of the story. Reluctantly, the people of Kangemi accept the story of the men from Murang'a.

“All right, since you have gone to so much trouble coming here we might give you the bride ...”

But there were *strings*. Little things to be paid for. She had broken her mother's pot once, and it must be paid for before she was allowed to go.

To our astonishment the two muddy gentlemen *sheepishly* said they had no money. They had spent their last cent on the tractor, whose driver had taken advantage of the situation to demand a lot of money. Every cent they had.

“We did not come empty-handed, we beg you to understand. But what we had was used up in our battle against the Murang’a mud.”

What could one do with such people?

“We set out in much bigger force to come for the bride. But luck has not been with us. Two cars were defeated and are still on the road, stuck. Please excuse us.”

The women were annoyed, but Peter Mboca pushed his way forward to calm them. He reminded them that the sun was still but moving. And the preacher was waiting. *Rekei tuhikahike*, he said. Let us hurry.

We let them have her. The women unlocked the door of her father’s house and Liz came out. She was already his, but the marriage had to be sealed in church. Her head was bowed low, and I wondered if she was only acting her part according to tradition...the sad new bride mourning the passing of the old life. I wondered if at best she felt deeply relieved and happy that it had ended well. I wondered if she loved her man.

We had a few cars standing by and so there was no embarrassment. Joshua and his wife had somewhere to sit. Peter Mboca too. All the bridesmaids had somewhere to sit. But as the rest of us followed on foot to church we could not help feeling that Joshua’s pretty daughter deserved a more *glamorous* show.

Questions

1. Discuss the following:
strings. What word could be used to replace this one? The common expression “*No strings attached*”.
sheepishly
glamorous
2. What do you think of the tractor – driver’s behavior?
3. What four things offended the people of Kegemi? Under such circumstances, do you think they should have allowed the wedding to proceed? Give reasons for your answer.
4. How would you have felt if you had been the bride?

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