

coup 1 d'état 0 1



A FICTION by
MOMO
Bertrand

TO all Cameroonians, hungry
for change in their country, mboa.

Preface (*Mboko Version*)

Mola, Weti be the reason why pays nidi change?
Na because say all man di dream for change,
but no man want bolo true true for dat change.
For we mind, neighbour dem get for change,
but we, we be too perfect for change.
if all man wantam say neighbour dem change,
then, for end time, pays no go change.

Preface (*English Version*)

Dear reader, why is that our countries don't change?
It's because EVERYONE dreams for change,
But NO ONE is committed to work for change.
In our minds, OTHERS need to change,
but we are too perfect to change.
If EVERYONE keeps waiting on OTHERS to change,
Then, in the end, NO ONE will change.

Momo Bertrand,
Buea, Cameroon,
March 2016.

I THINK IT WAS ADAM WHO FIRST ATE THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT, because men are too stubborn. I am sure Eve tried to hold him back, but Adam persisted, because guys always want to try, to *tenter*, to do the things that are forbidden.

Tongolo, too, was a stubborn guy, perhaps more stubborn than Adam. As he went to that secret meeting with his darling, Fotso, he already knew what he would do afterwards.

The secret meeting had just one point on its agenda, “should we join the riot or not?” It was hot! Youssouf was on one side, encouraging members to revolt and Fotso was on the other side, trying to calm things down and preaching non-violence.

Fotso’s appeal didn’t convince anyone. She could not even convince her darling, Tongolo, not to join the riot.

“*I di beg*, Tongolo, don’t go out there. Striking could be dangerous, baby boo, don’t go, *subsub*,” Fotso pleaded, but her *angoisement* words were not enchanting enough to retain her man.

It is true that at some point, Tongolo was tempted to stay back with Fotso, but the dream which he had every night since two weeks dissuaded him. In this dream, he saw himself starting a revolution in Africa. “I am sure that it is through this riot that my dream will come true,” Tongolo whispered to himself.

He loved Fotso, but he was obsessed by Africa. “May be it was destined to be this way, A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS GIRLFRIEND TO FOLLOW HIS DREAMS,” he thought.

Youssouf and 9 members of the African Student's Association present at the secret meeting marched towards the door, like brave soldiers going for a great battle. Tongolo followed them, leaving Fotso behind in the meeting room.

They all joined 2,024 rioters in Paris University square chanting, "NO TO THE FRANC CFA! NO TO NEO COLONIALISM! Yes to an independent African currency!" It was during this riot that, for the first time in his life, Tongolo felt like a superhero, marching to save Africa. This feeling got him into a deep trance.

Perhaps this is why he could remember neither when he fell nor when he fainted. Youssouf later told him that when the riot got violent, a tear gas had hit him on his head's *ngopo*, and when he collapsed, the police carried his lumpy body away to the court. The judgement took just 15 minutes and Tongolo was sentenced to REPATRIATION. By morning, he would be on the first available flight to his home country, Cameroon.

Tongolo's flight was scheduled for 6 am the next day. Sitting in the CAMAIRCO lounge at Charles de Gaulle Airport, he had no regrets. When Youssouf came to tell him good bye, Tongolo told him with a smile, "I will certainly miss my darling Fotso, but I feel like a heroic *Mbére Kaki*. I have fought a great battle in a foreign land and now, I am returning to my lovely home."

"*Konfam*," Youssouf responded. The only thing that troubled Tongolo was how he was going to tell his old mum that he was being repatriated from France for protesting against the Franc CFA currency, because of its crippling effects on African economies.

“I hope your Mum understands your action. If a man omits to stand up against an act of injustice, then he supports that injustice. That’s what the God she taught you to serve says,” Youssouf said.

He finally gathered enough courage to call her. “*Yey, mon père*, is there a problem? It’s not yet Christmas time, why do you say you wish to come back tomorrow?” she asked worryingly. “Nothing, *Rémé*. It is just a surprise visit *nabbb*,” Tongolo responded.



Huge was his Mum's surprise when he came out of Yaoundé's Nsimalen Airport with no luggage except from one tiny bag, barely big enough to contain 2 chocolate bars and 1 small *bobolo*. Tongolo, too, was surprised, “how did my whole family gather in just 24 hours to welcome me? *Palava* African solidarity...”

It was as if the whole village had showed up to welcome him back to Cameroon, like a long awaited Messiah coming to earth with lots of goodies. Tongolo had no such goodies.

The village greeting, “*Yamelah*,” sounded and resounded like the drum beat in a *Makossa* song.

Countless hugs and kisses followed. His grandmum, Mammy Nyanga, was there in her flashy green *Kaba* gown and red high-heel shoes. She kissed Tongolo's cheeks 16 times, leaving thick yellow marks of lipstick on his face saying, “*na you don cam so, ma pikin?* Is it really you Tongolo?” In many African languages, ‘Have you really come’ is said to mean ‘welcome’.

Some of the relatives were whispering in the village language. Relatives enjoy *kongossa* commenting on our lives, AS IF THEY WANTED TO LIVE OUR LIVES FOR US.

"Is it not the child who won that *big big* scholarship to study engineering in France? How can he come home empty-handed like that? Where have you ever heard that a child goes to the stream to fetch water and comes back with empty calabashes? *Nge nkwo!*" Uncle Mengrita murmured.

"Don't worry Mengrita! He didn't bring much luggage. That's how *Benguistes* do nowadays. He will give us cash, Euros! A cup full of cowries brings more pleasure than a pot full of palm oil. *I get nkon for dis petit,*" Aunt Nyango retorted confidently.

Aunt Nyango's confidence and the whole family's excitement suddenly appeared short-lived when Tongolo narrated the ordeal that brought him back to *Mboa*, the cradle of his fathers.

"Those French people chased me away like a dog, '*nkele, sort*,' because I STOOD UP TO FIGHT FOR MY CONTINENT," Tongolo uttered, with a wailing voice. The sighs in the dimly lit parlour carried feelings of pity and disappointment. "*Yemaleh!* Where have you seen engineers do politics? Where? You are stubborn Tongolo, *too-o-o* stubborn! *Wehkee,*" his mother said, her face drowned in tears.

After a long series of "*Ashias*" and other consolatory words, all the *ndogmangolo* uncles and aunties departed disappointed to their respective homes, as empty-handed as they had come. That night,

Yaoundé was unusually silent, as if Cameroon's capital city had zipped its mouth, to share in his family's grief.

In Africa, extended family can be very supportive and tightly knitted, but family also tends to put so much pressure and expectations on its brilliant younger members that they feel defeated each time they fail. Family forgets that failure is key to succeeding; **THOSE WHO NEVER FAIL NEVER LEARN.**



Tongolo had been back to Cameroon for two months already. During the first week, he woke up every morning with impetus to battle against the choking heat and slow traffic of Yaoundé, hoping to find a job or even an internship.

At the end of his long motivation letter, he had written "Please, if no engineering job is available, any job you have will be ok for me." 60 days of job search yielded nothing but disappointment.

"*Pays strong!!*" he said to himself, sounding hopeless. He didn't know that companies don't want to hire people who say "I want a job" in their motivation letters. **COMPANIES WANT PEOPLE WHO PUT IMPRESSIVE PROPOSALS IN THEIR MOTIVATION LETTERS AND CVs.**

You can imagine how frustrated Tongolo was, returning from Europe and not being able to find a job in his own country. *Chai!* The previous night, he had the same dream like in the past 4 months. He saw himself bringing a radical change to Cameroon,

but he didn't know clearly how this would happen. When he woke up, he had forgotten his dream's details. This vexed him.

The heat in the parlour was excruciating, as if the sun was sitting on the bench right next to him. "Global warming," he thought.

He was bored, so bored that he turned on the TV before boredom could murder him. Only the free state-owned CRTV channel was available since mum had not paid for cable TV for over a year. CRTV's *telenovelas*, narrating happily ever after dream love stories, choked him. They were just *one kind one kind*. "I am a man of action, not a *lekeleke* soft dreamer," Tongolo thought, "I will certainly find more pleasure walking in the streets of Etoudi."

As he lingered in the streets of Etoudi, he came across a weirdo *nanga mboko* with sagging destroy jean trousers. His left eye was missing and he was popularly known as Chef Kartier.

Despite his strangeness, Chef Kartier was a calm dominant male and the 3 *padimen* in his gang followed him like lost sheep.

He spent his weekdays playing *jambo* cards with his *padimen*, weeknights harassing *lycée* students to get the few coins their parents gave them as pocket allowance and weekends refereeing quarter *santé* football games. Chef Kartier and his *padimen* were known in Etoudi and in all the surrounding quarters of Yaoundé, but this popularity was stained with disdain. POPULARITY DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN ADMIRATION.

Tongolo, however, wasn't of this popular opinion. He had a soft admiration for Chef Kartier and his *padimen*. Their rebellious attitude and steadfastness in the midst of police repression reminded him of his own stubborn revolutionary spirit. It was this spirit that thrust him to say "Yes, I am in" when Youssouf invited him to join the riot for an independent African currency.



He approached Chef Kartier prudently and handed him 4 sticks of cigarette. "You are the real boss, *Mola. Sûr!*" Chef Kartier said, as he gave him a chuck knuckle salute. Tongolo had learned long ago that giving someone a product or item she/he truly likes is always more appreciated than giving money.

He then greeted the rest of the noisy gang in order of their ages. First, Tangaman, who was the oldest and always had a toothpick stuck between his lips. Then, Don Kumba, whose huge belly spoke lengths on the amount of alcohol he consumed. Finally, Professor, who was the most talkative, and spoke with assurance even on subjects he had dubious knowledge of.

When Tongolo narrated his story to the gang of 4, he saw a sparkle in their eyes. They regarded him like hero, a *mbom prêt* like them. For the first time since his return, he felt important. "Africa can never emerge if its currency is printed and managed from abroad. This Franc CFA is rubbish!!! It is as if you have a shop in a market, and you give your purse to one of your competitors to manage," Professor said, as he passed him a joint to take a puff. Tongolo had never smoked marijuana before. FRIENDS CAN MAKE US DO CRAZY THINGS.



Tongolo spent more and more time with the gang. In the beginning, they just sat there and chatted on mundane topics. But as days went by, Chef Kartier began inviting him for special operations: minor racketing in Etoudi shops; and selling marijuana to any interested buyer, to kids as well as grannies.

Steadily, the special operations grew in complexity. THIEF: STOLE EGGS YESTERDAY, STEALS COWS TODAY.

One night, they set out on a thievery mission to a neighbouring quarter, because it is a taboo for thieves to steal in their own quarters. Chef Kartier dragged a young girl's bag and dashed into a nearby bush. Tongolo and Don Kumba ran too.

Looking behind, Tongolo saw Professor and Tangaman holding that girl to the ground and raping her violently. The girl wept.

Tongolo felt pity for the girl. He was bewildered by the fact that the next morning, Tangaman and Professor didn't have an iota of remorse. They just smoked thick joints of marijuana, listening to Amazing Grace music from the old radio in Alhaji Moussa's shop.

This cold heartedness, *coeur noire*, took him aback. "It is shocking the number of people in this country for whom doing evil is the normal ways of life. Shocking!" he whispered to himself as he quit their presence.



Tongolo had lingered with the gang on the streets of Etoudi quarter for several weeks and throughout this period, he seldom slept at his family house. But no street can be as sweet as home, home sweet home. Home was calling him. Home was calling.

“Time in crime flies. My *chefbang* son returns,” Mother said, as her eldest son entered his home’s hot parlour that afternoon. “Don’t disturb me, Woman! Could you not just hold me in your arms and tell me ‘I missed you?’” Tongolo responded violently. His mum stayed quiet, focusing on the *canda* stew she was preparing.

Deep within however, he loved her. A MOTHER’S LOVE FOR HER SON IS HOT LIKE THE SUN, BUT A SON’S LOVE FOR HIS MOTHER IS HOTTER THAN HELL. The difference is this: the mother tells her son she loves him, but the son only tells her back when she is 6 feet underground. Life is...

Tongolo sometimes felt a sense of guilt for not being able to provide for his two younger brothers and his old mother, leaving them no other choice but to depend on their old *wasawa* family restaurant as sole source of income. The last born, Paapi was still in primary school while Dogmo was in his first year of medical school at the University of Yaoundé I.

Despite being just 19 years young, Dogmo always attended all kinds of professional gatherings including the Cameroon Leadership Academy and Africa Progress Alliance Summits. Every time Dogmo invited Tongolo for these seminars, he just said "DOES IT GIVE MONEY?" and rejected the offer.

Tongolo didn't know that money is the result of practical learning and that seminars are great ways of meeting serious partners, investors or even future employers.

That night, Tongolo had that dream again. This time, it was a little bit clearer. He could see himself on a podium, talking to the whole of Cameroon and passing a message of change to all his compatriots. He woke up, sweating profusely and realised he was still in his boring home. Just imagine how he felt. *Chai!*



The dullness of home sent Tongolo to the streets of Etoudi before the sun rose on the next day. The gang was there, chatting loudly, as they usually did. "My dear compatriots, don't you see that Boko Haram is too bad? How can they just bomb and kill everybody like that? Can't they just take money and spare innocent lives?" Professor said, mimicking one leader's faint voice.

"*Je wanda ebb, mola Prof,*" Tangaman responded, "those Muslims are too wicked. That is how one Hausa man stabbed my aunty with a poisoned dagger because he caught her in bed with their gateman. *Kai Walai!*" Professor and Tangaman laughed. Tongolo wasn't amused by this.

"Boko Haram is indeed evil, in fact, they are a stoichiometric unbalanceable equation with unstable electrons," Tongolo responded calmly. "Note however that Boko Haram, Islam and Hausa are all different things. Boko Haram is a terrorist group.

Islam is a religion. Hausa is an African tribe and language. We don't have to mix them. Besides, **TERRORISM HAS NO PLACE IN ISLAM**, as Allah says in Quran 5:32 *'Whosoever kills an innocent human being, it would be as if he had killed all mankind'.*"

"I hear you, oga Engineer. Another thing e de wonder me for this pays, na the way some of this ngah them de craze. They get affair with person yi massa then when their ticket burn, they wantam make all man know. Now papa Eto'o di suffer because of some prostitute!" Don Kumba said, degrading women in *mboko* language.

"Shut up!" Professor shouted, "Those girls are children of God like you and I. Don't call them prostitutes."

Tongolo agreed with these words, but he was disgusted with the person who spoke them. "Now you know God e-h-h? When you raped that girl the other day, you didn't know she was God's child?" he said, looking at Professor. Professor didn't respond.

That girl on the floor looked like Fotso. But it could not be Fotso. She was in Dakar and since their Paris separation, she refused to pick his calls. For him, the fact that he missed her bitterly meant he still loved her. As an engineer, he crafted his love equation: **THE STRENGTH OF LOVE IS DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO THE DISTANCE BETWEEN LOVERS**. Simply put, true love grows stronger with distance.

The arrival of the one-eyed Chef Kartier halted the discussions and Tongolo's thoughts. With a cling of the right eye, he summoned

them to the gang headquarters, which he called QG. QG was an old shed where all kinds of locally brewed liquors were sold.

Chef Kartier drank three glasses of palm wine, locally called '*matango*', in quick gulps and ate 2 slices of kola nut. Then, he cleared his throat, "we will do the coup tomorrow," he said in his characteristic calm and self-assured voice.

Tongolo was lost when the other guys smiled widely and nodded in approval. "What coup?" he asked worryingly. Chef Kartier was silent for a while. "The Bank, Tongolo. We will rob the Bank tomorrow. That's our coup," Chef Kartier responded.

Tongolo was troubled. He had never expected breaking into a bank in his life time. He watched, petrified, as Chef Kartier gave the evil white details of his plan. "Cameroonian police are so lazy that they will show up 3 hours after the coup," Chef Kartier said with poise. They all laughed, but he remained silent.



When the sun was in middle of the sky on the next day, they dashed into the Bank's lobby armed with rusted guns. Tongolo didn't know where the guns came from, but he knew what a dreading feeling it was to hold a cold berretta pistol.

In 75 seconds, Chef Kartier had collected 3 huge bags full of bank notes. Everything was proceeding according to plan. Suddenly, they heard police sirens from a distance. As they rushed out, deafening

gunshots followed. In a second, Professor was shot in the head and he fell prostrate. The others escaped helter-skelter.

“*C'est ici que le chef-bandit meurt?*” Tongolo thought. He realised that even THE SHARPEST PLANS CAN FAIL and one needs to be ready to freeze, fight or flee. He could neither freeze nor fight, so he managed to jump on a bike and flee away hastily.

Tongolo reached their hiding point at Mfou, at the outskirts of Yaoundé, and lay flat in the tall grasses. He was so shaken that he didn't feel mosquitoes biting him or ants creeping up his legs into his pants. He removed the SIM card from his phone and switched the radio on.

The journalist's voice was shrilled and loud, "the failed robbery in a bank in Etoudi quarter today left one robber dead and three robbers were caught. One of the *chefbandits* is still on the run and the police is actively searching for him." The confidence in the journalist's voice made Tongolo to shiver.

He cursed the day he met Chef Kartier. HE REGRETTED.

Lying there, he thought about the failed coup d'état that happened in Cameroon on the night of 5 - 6 April 1984. The journalist's voice sounded like that of putschist Yaya Adoum on national radio, speaking revolutionary words on behalf of the J'OSE putsch movement. This 1984 coup failed and it is good that it failed. A successful national coup in the 1980s would have plunged

Cameroon into a chain of coup d'états in the likes of Nigeria and Ghana.



After two days in the bush, Tongolo returned home. No one bothered about him. Mum was preparing spices for the restaurant food. Paapi was reading. Dogmo was certainly at a seminar. Tongolo felt like a stranger in his own home.

He raced to his room. The *ssbb* sound of the cold shower resonated like the journalist's shrilling voice. He heard a siren from outside and quickly slid his soapy body under the bed. "*I don die!* They have come to arrest me!" he said to his shivering self. He was relieved when he realised it was just the alarm on the neighbour's car.

He laughed at himself for being so scared. More often than not, we are scared of things that don't really matter: FEAR IS in fact ***FALSE EVIDENCE APPEARING REAL.***



Days sank, nights sprouted and Tongolo's tension grew. He prayed that Chef Kartier, Tangaman and Don Kumba would respect the solemn oath of secrecy which they had all taken two months ago at the QG, "we will never steal, hurt or denounce a brother, even if our own lives are at stake."

Sometimes, he had psychotic episodes where he saw Professor's immobile body on the floor, with fresh blood oozing from the bullet wound on his forehead. It was boring to stay at home, but he preferred being at home rather than at Kondengui Prison. NOTHING IS MORE VALUABLE THAN FREEDOM.

Everyone left home daily. His younger brothers went to school and mum went to the restaurant. The restaurant: a dilapidating room where his Mum sold *Jollof Rice* and Mami Ntong sold water *fufu* and *eru*. (*Did you notice that the Cameroon map on the cover of this book is actually eru stew? 😊*)

Tongolo was versed with the restaurant. Before travelling, he used to help out in the evenings after classes. He hated washing plates for scores of strangers. This was one of the factors that had motivated him to apply for a scholarship in France: to flee from the burden of kitchen work. The things we hate generally motivate us more than things we like.

When he was deported from Paris, mum had advised him to come and work at the restaurant, "it will occupy you for while," she said persistently. But he did not see himself, a fresh *Benguiste*, going to do *pambe* work at a restaurant, and a shabby one for that matter. Now, however, he was no longer a fresh *Benguiste*. No! He was a *ngémé* jobless wanted criminal!

WHEN CONDITION CHANGES, PERCEPTION CHANGES TOO.

In the life of every African, and perhaps every human, generally between the ages of 23 and 38 years, there comes a time when one realises that she/he has been living senselessly. At this point, one witnesses a great need to change, to give meaning in her/his life and have a real impact on her/his community. Everybody feels like this at some point and this is exactly how Tongolo felt. "It is never too late to change and if God saved me from prison and death, it is for me to achieve a great purpose on earth," he convinced himself.



Mum was astonished to see him get into the restaurant that morning. He sat there and watched people taking food on credit, eating and arguing.

On subsequent days, he began to clean dishes, mop the cracked floor and serve food in worn out stainless steel plates. His friends mocked him, "is that not the guy who went to *Mbeng*? See him washing plates!" Tongolo gave a deaf ear to these illicit comments. "WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT ME IS NONE OF MY BUSINESS," he convinced himself.

One thing preoccupied him: the restaurant's business outlook.

Its wooden chairs and tables had once been new but termites had bored so many holes on them that they now looked like graters. The awful smell in the air attracted swarms of flies that never hesitated to take a sip in your drink or perch on your eru when you weren't swift enough to cuff them away. The service was sluggish

and impolite. The restaurant was scarcely visited and on peak days, it was filled to only half of its full capacity. In one word, it was WASA-WASA. Everyone, including Tongolo, criticized it. One night, a young baby girl appeared in his dream and told him something inspirational. “Your ancestors have seen your family’s troubles. They have sent me to tell you 5 things you need to do to win their favour and bring blessings on your family:

“1) STOP COMPLAINING about everything. 2) Realise that you are in problems or challenges because of YOUR OWN FAULT and not anyone else’s. 3) Look deep into and around you to IDENTIFY USEFUL SKILLS that make you unique. 4) Identify HOW THESE SKILLS CAN BE APPLIED to change or start a community, a business, a job or an initiative. 5) START applying these skills immediately, give no excuses.”

The words of this baby girl sounded like those which his Aunt, Dr. Nyango, used to justify why she had become a doctor, “there are 3 types of people with regards to diseases: those who observe, those who diagnose and those who heal. In the end, the world remembers only the healers, because they create real impact.”



Tongolo was determined to heal the restaurant of its ills. He met his brother Dogmo, the one who loved seminars, for advice. "MARKETING IS ALL ABOUT SEDUCTION: define a *nyanga* strong brand; build an *angoisement* sweet customer service; and provide a *ncheng* product that answers a genuine market need."

Dogmo spoke conversationally, feeling proud that his brother had sought his opinion.

Tongolo jotted carefully as Dogmo spoke. Using these points as a substrate and visiting www.MomoB.biz for more marketing tips, he brainstormed throughout the night and developed a 10-page change plan for his restaurant.

He waited till sunset to present it to his mother. When he did, she just made a long *tsuuuipp* and told him that it was not possible. Tongolo was saddened. He consoled himself, “sometimes, when people whom we cherish kill our dreams, it is not out of mere jealousy or hatred, it is just because MOST PEOPLE DON’T OR CAN’T UNDERSTAND OUR DREAMS. When God inspires us with a locked dream, he gives us and only us, the key to unlock it. Others may show us how to use the key, but we alone have they key to unlock our own dreams”

That night, he had that same dream again, where he saw himself talking about a major change in Cameroon. The dream turned into a nightmare of police arresting him for the bank robbery and locking him up in Kondengui prison. The nightmare turned again into a dream where he saw himself managing the restaurant and implementing his 10-page plan.



Sometimes, dreams come true in strange ways. His mother fell gravely sick and Auntie Nyango, who was the family doctor, advised

her to stay home for 2 weeks. Tongolo was sad, yet pleased. He would take over the restaurant and implement his change plan.

On his first day of command, he dismissed Mami Ntong and her old *eru* flasks. He believed she had *lost the hand* of cooking over the years. He made negotiations and brought in Mami Bessem, whose *eru* he had tasted during an impromptu *dogmangolo* visit at a friend's home. Her perfect mix of spices, *canda*, *congo meat* and smoked fish made her *eru* obstacle-full and truly memorable. This was the **UNIQUE BRAND MOVE**: he was ready to do whatsoever it takes to sell Yaoundé's most exquisite *eru*.

He used his sweet talk to negotiate with the quarter carpenter, Paa Tito, for new chairs and tables. Tongolo gave him an advance payment, promising to pay the remainder in two months. Paa Tito was an old family friend, so he accepted. Tongolo made arrangements with Tagni, the *quincaillerie* owner, for cement and tiles to fix the cratered floor. Tagni was a stingy Bamileke and he refused to release materials on credit. Tongolo had to borrow money from Auntie Nyango, the doctor, to pay Tagni. He bought paint and called a few guys in the quarter. Together, they painted the four walls light pink and wrote "Bon Appétit" on them. He took the flatscreen TV from his room at home to the restaurant. **THIS WAS FLASHY FLASHY MOVE**: rendering the restaurant into an outstandingly attractive place.

TONGOLO LOOKED AT WHAT HE HAD DONE AND HE SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD.

His excitement was brief. The night he put that TV, thieves broke in and stole it. At first, he felt bad, but then he remembered how he had bought that TV, by selling Marijuana with Chef Kartier's gang. This karma-driven downturn did not discourage him. He persisted, pushing and putting *la cale*.

He knew GREAT CHALLENGES ARE SIGNS OF WONDERFUL TREASURES AHEAD.



When his Mum recovered two weeks later, she almost had a heart attack as she stepped into the old-made-new restaurant.

Everything was altered. It was clean and full of customers. A fine smell of vanilla had replaced the old stink. The customers smiled. They were happy. Mum was overwhelmed. She burst into tears.

She regretted a little that Mami Ntong was gone but she was most amazed by the new service rules which her son told her. "I hired Ondoa, Paa Tito's son to serve food. When he asks money from clients, he tells them 'please' and they put the cash in those pink boxes you see over there. Before customers leave, he tells them thanks and says he hopes to see them soon."

For the first time since Tongolo had returned to Yaoundé, he saw a glitter of light in his mother's eyes. She respected him. EVERY CHILD'S DREAM IS TO MAKE HIS MOTHER PROUD. From then on, she left him to manage the restaurant and came in occasionally to give a helping hand.



The restaurant's fame grew exponentially. There was one evil white spot however: the RESTAURANT HAD NO NAME.

Some people called it *Mami Eru* Etoudi, because it was located in Etoudi quarter. Others called it Mami Ntong restaurant or Mami Bessem restaurant, the names of the former and present *eru* cooks. Others called it Einstein restaurant, because of the wall portrait of Einstein which Tongolo (an engineering fanatic) had put with the equation $E=MC^2$ written on it.

Tongolo was anxious to end this nameless era because A STRONG NAME BRINGS A STRONGER REPUTATION.

On that Saturday, a wide white board hung outside the eating place with 'COUP D'ETAT RESTAURANT' painted in red on it. Yes, Tongolo named it Coup d'Etat Restaurant. Soon, the curiosity which the name aroused was attracting more customers to the restaurant than its food.

Curious people from Bastos, Mvan, La Poste, Briqueterie, Tsinga and all other quarters of Yaoundé converged to this eating spot in Etoudi due to its provocative appellation. It went viral. "A crazy name can be a great source of grapevine or *Kongossa* marketing for business," Tongolo realised.

There were rumours that government had sent spies to verify that this was really a mere eating spot, because, being in Etoudi, it was

just a few miles away from Cameroon's presidential residence, Unity Palace.

Tongolo was eventually invited on CRTV's Monday Show to talk of this nomenclatural issue. "Why Coup d'Etat? Do you plan to overthrow our president through this eatery?" the journalist asked in a worried tone.

"What is a coup d'état? I think it is a sudden removal of a power in place," Tongolo responded steadily, "I was deported from France a few months ago for protesting against the Franc CFA. Reaching Cameroon, I did all kinds of silly things on the streets of Etoudi and other quarters of Yaoundé in general. I was getting lost and this restaurant saved me. It was a personal coup d'état. In the past, my body was led by a king called lust whose sole aim was to sleep with all the girls in the Centre region. My mind was led by a chief called laziness who enjoyed straying on the streets and selling drugs to school children in Yaoundé. My heart was led by a CEO called anger, whose sole aspiration was to bounce and beat the hell out of any person whom I disliked in Etoudi. This restaurant overthrew all these evil leaders. By labouring here, the king of my body became hard work. The chief of my mind became inspiration. The CEO of my heart became truthfulness. This restaurant marked the end of the rule of evil in my life and a new beginning in righteousness."

"Ok, but if this restaurant is a coup d'état for you, why not keep it to yourself? Did you have to put it up so publicly and scare the sh*t out of peaceful Cameroonians?" the journalist asked.

“Yes, I had to,” he retorted firmly. “I mean no harm to our lovely country. However, I think so many times, we Cameroonians aspire for the wrong coup d’états. Most Cameroonians will tell you that our country’s problems are caused by the government, community leaders, CEOs and other prominent figures. ‘*Na big big people di suffer we, make dem comot office,*’ they would say. But in reality, we notice that many of our country’s problems are caused by all of us, not a particular group. We steal electricity and wonder why there are black outs. We drink beer excessively and wonder why we don’t have enough money left to eat. We evade taxes and wonder why there are no roads. We offer bribes and wonder why our country is corrupt. We urinate on roadsides and wonder why our towns are dirty. We spend whole days on Facebook, Whatsapp and Insta and wonder why there are no jobs: will android jobs fall from space and find us in our rooms? It is true that our leaders have several lapses, but before calling on them to remove the dust in their eyes, we need to remove the timbers in our own eyes first. Daily challenges caused by we the people can be solved by we the people, because if every villager sweeps his front yard, then the whole village will be clean. TO CHANGE OUR COUNTRY, EACH INDIVIDUAL PERSON MUST CHANGE. In android terms, our country will change if the person in the selfie changes. One thing is certain: the better Cameroon each person hopes for can only come through a personal change, a personal coup d’état, by killing our own evil practices like blaming and developing positive practices like smart work and volunteerism. Each person needs to do a personal coup d’état: to kill her/his old self and become a new person, a *nyanga* person, a *ndolè* person.

Tongolo spoke these words with energy and passion, like a great leader speaking to an audience of thousands.

“That’s true. If every person in every quarter changes, then every village and town will change, and then every country, and before we know it, Africa will be brighter and stronger,” the journalist said with a smile.

“Exactly. And this change should be continuous. We should keep improving ceaselessly, striving for perfection like our Father in heaven. On my part, I will keep improving the restaurant, trying to conquer my darling Fotso’s love and fighting for a freer Africa.”

Every African who heard of Tongolo’s story found a reason to believe in her/his dreams and work hard to continuously change her/himself and hence change her/his country.

The dream had come true: Tongolo had changed others by changing himself.

And you, do you (still) want change? It’s simple: BE THE CHANGE! START THE CHANGE! SPREAD THE CHANGE!



Help spread the change!

I am happy you enjoyed this *nyanga* short story. Please, email it to or share it with four (04) of your colleagues, friends and relatives who dream of change 😊. You may choose just to send them the download link www.MomoB.biz/Coup.

Thanks in advance, 😊

The Author.





MOMO BERTRAND

Momo writes and speaks publicly on Africa, leadership and innovation. He lives in Buea, Cameroon, where he runs www.MomoB.biz, a spectacular marketing firm.

Having served as president of CUIB's Student Government and founding leader of Africa Progress Alliance philanthropic movement, his key leadership principle is humility. His father's death in 1998 when he was aged just 4 made him tougher and the tireless efforts of his single mother bringing him up assiduously built his feminist conviction.

Though he emerged as Valedictorian with a BSc in management from CUIB, he believes life is a school whose graduation is death. He dreams of (and works for) an Africa which is strong, united and at peace with herself.

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♥ Thanks ♥

Merci to **Ghoms Alvine** who sparked of the writing of this story. I appreciate **Nkwain Carlson** for his in-depth review of this work. I am grateful to **Diene Ludovic, Pangop Yves and Nzonda Fotsing** for reading the first drafts.