

romantic strategist, and perhaps the sweetest human being in African literature. The man perspires with evangelical commitment. His nose alone deserves its own chapter, possibly its own passport. This is one of

collapsing an empire, yet he cannot win on any level. Mbataui is essentially

midnight. It is the sort of novel that young school readers will definitely recommend to each other.

OOPS!

Eat first and talk fast: Tales from Abu-Road

BY STELLA RIUNGA

Living in a culture that is not your own can lead to interesting, funny, and at times, downright embarrassing moments. I will share a few with you here today.

The first incident happened to my husband. The organisation he works for had an exchange programme going with a sister organisation in Dubai. He and a colleague spent three months

there, hosted by different host families each month. One day, their host, an American, called him and his colleague aside and shared that they were expecting guests for dinner on a certain day. Now, because of the guests, they were asked to make themselves scarce and to know that they were not included in the meal.

When he told me about it, my jaw swung wide open, *phwaaaaa* like my people say. The audacity!

The meanness! Yes, I know food is expensive there but would feeding two extra people have driven them into bankruptcy? Goodness!

Here in Abu-Road you cannot take food for granted. If you are invited anywhere, eat first and eat well. I was at a social gathering last weekend where two people were not able to make it. The host informed us that she had prepared something for us to have (it was

a dessert as the meeting was past dinnertime) but because the two were absent she would not serve it. I was baffled. So why tell us then? What was the purpose?!

Food aside, everything here is done by appointment. Only death happens randomly and even then, they are busy passing laws to help them die at their own convenience. I remember meeting with some friends, who we have grown quite close to, for lunch. What they did not tell

us is that they were operating on a strict two-hour window of time, calculated to be sufficient for lunch and conversation. At hour 1.75 they started getting restless. They had to start leaving for their next appointment and that is how we found ourselves gulping down our water and wearing our shoes in record time as they locked the door behind us and jumped into their car.

Abu-Road! It is not easy.



Stella Riunga Rop

Disputes, bias, and the struggle for justice