

# Excerpts: Flora's Love Colony

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## Opobo, Notebook Island

In the beginning was the rafting, too, before the empty ships made of conquest arrived at the shore where Pepple was the king, where the world was one world, as soft as silk moving the air. We, the sea-dwellers were capable of love in the way the waters flow endlessly on their own axis. We often look at the palaces that light the opposite beach, with sea-white eyes, the abundance of literate fishermen, the scent in living the present, the African sail smelling of good history. We know history not read in classrooms that fall asleep in the dim lights & are forgotten. Jaja didn't forget this. He was born in a boat to row the island he was given as a piece of gold. He played politics with joysticks & hollies, a flight of the actuality of dreams.

He stepped on the oceanfront to meet the Royal Niger Company. Neither handshake nor did

he look  
in the faces of those who came with chains to lift his place of birth into a cargo.  
Where he stood was where the Old Harbor was built, where he fought, valiantly,  
against the things we were not taught  
in school. How he sold as captives the sons of the man who raised him on the bay he  
was captured. How he suffered the waters which surrounded his obduracy, his love for the Englishmen seen when he looked at the post-colonial image of himself in a mirror.

### **Sea, Voyage, Love**

History is pre-colonial Britain, Nigerians in a room lit with oblivion. We, the Queen & I, are holding on to the stern of the ship going back to the times that were Noachian. I am headed to the ark, she, as royal, faced heaven. The dove on the rings on her fingers, laying as the turtles do, the eggs that will hatch the empires made of the golden lights. I, in the dark belly of the blue whale plowing the ocean, deliberate as a man stuck on his own political waters, muddling the depth of the small streams rigging his own dreams. The man arrived at the New Elmina Fishing Harbor, in 2030, in the likeness of skyscrapers built with tax-payers money. A crowd of emigrants, American, embodied the poetry of the sea, leaving. I wanted it too. I wanted the big fishes to spurt me on shores that are not shores, they are the houses in Tenerife in which Jaja was once a slave, the king of Spain bent under his obeahs, this love was all he had to give. Worship.

### **First Falls**

It started with the house by the shore,  
the coming of the ship bound for wreckage, the arrival of Flora, her childless looks,  
the green end of the year, the light of conquest which signified love. In the garden, man is given dominion over the Niger. I am less of a man.

I picked myself up & walked out of the river

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**Tares Oburumu** is the author of *Flora's Love Colony*, which is shortlisted for the 2026 The Nigeria Prize for Literature.