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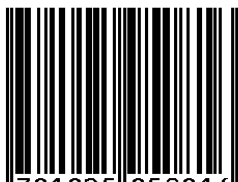
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CHINONGWA

Lucy Mushita

My only dream that's ever come true, and one I relish with a vengeance, is being able to whistle like a man. I was told a woman fit to be married should not whistle. I don't want to be married so the more they point at me, the louder I whistle. My load is still heavy on my head, but my heart is light, for I know, like the sun, that I shall rise every morning. Be it cloudy, cold or wet, I shall not fail to rise. And I shall whistle as loudly as I like. To me, it is the sound of freedom.

In the village where Chinongwa lives, her family, displaced from their lands, are very poor. One desperate solution to hunger is to trade young daughters into marriage. At first, to their shame, her father's and aunt's attempts to marry off their youngest child fail. No one is interested in this small, thin girl. Eventually, a childless woman, Amai Chitsva, offers Chinongwa as a second wife to her own husband who is old enough to be the girl's grandfather. Chinongwa is forced to grow up very fast and rely on her survival instincts. She does her best to do what is expected of her and become a good wife and mother, but being very young, very alone, and a girl, the odds are stacked against her. Eventually, after spending her whole life doing the bidding of others, all Chinongwa wants is her independence. But how can one gain such a thing as a woman? Will she ever truly be free?

Key Selling Points

- Lucy Mushita's powerful novel is set in the early twentieth century - sadly child marriage still occurs within Zimbabwe, driven by poverty, patriarchy, or faith in the healing properties of purity. The book will help readers understand and explore the effect of marriage on very young girls.
- A South African news reviewer compared her book to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*
- Lucy will be in Australia from June to November.

About the author

Lucy Mushita is a novelist, essayist and speaker. Born in Zimbabwe, she grew up in a traditional village before going to France at the end of apartheid. After a short stay in the USA she went back to France where she taught English in primary school, university and to multinational executives. With a University of Sydney MA in Creative Writing, Lucy writes full time and lives between France and Australia. She is published in English, French, Italian and other languages.