



## CHINONGWA

*Lucy Mushita*

*The only dream come true I relish with a vengeance is whistling 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 not fail to rise every morning. Be it cloudy, foggy or rainy, I shall not fail to rise. And I shall whistle as loud as I want. For 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?

*Lucy Mushita's* powerful novel is set in the early twentieth century, but sadly child marriage still occurs within Zimbabwe, driven by poverty, patriarchy, or faith in the healing properties of purity. ***Chinongwa*** will help us to understand and explore the effect of marriage on very young girls.

**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 multinationals. 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.



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