

The Extraordinary World of a Professional Photographer

By Chitsanzo Changa

WHY WE LIKE IT: *We like the way the character of Mbujala gradually emerges and how with each assignment he is drawn deeper and deeper into a sinister underworld. A twilit literary gestalt that gets creepier and creepier as the story progresses. The slightly naïve prose with its touch of ‘outsider-ism’ only adds to the magic. This is the author’s first published story in a literary journal. It won’t be the last. (Font size is author’s own).*

The Extraordinary World of a Professional Photographer

Mbujala was the first born in the family of 5. He was born to a middle class family that stayed in a small town called Laselina. His parents bought him a small low resolution camera for his 14th birthday. He took pictures of people at his high school and made them pay. This gave him an idea and he started going around his town taking photographs of people as a business. He managed to save the money he made from that business and bought a camera of better quality. After finishing high school, he studied photography at Makha College which was in the capital city of the country called Sabwana. He continued his business and saved up capital to start a professional photography studio. He opened a small studio in Sabwana after he had finished college. He had acquired much experience over the years so within 2 years his business grew. He moved to a bigger building and his studio was top-tier. He hired additional staff so that he could offer music videos and documentary production services. His studio also produced short films.

Over the years, Mbujala realized that most of the jobs that brought in much money were not the traditional ones he had expected. For instance, a politician from a major political party in the city hired him to secretly follow opposition politicians and take compromising photographs of them. Mbujala got paid so much money and also negotiated with the politician and secured a 10 year contract for his company to be the official photographer for the local government. Mbujala worked at so many exclusive parties and events. He was exposed to so many different, strange, private and remarkable things. He collected all this information knowing that he might use it as leverage in the future.

He was hired more than 5 times to take photographs and videos of couples in their bedroom private moments. He tried explaining to them that he did not do such types of jobs. They told him that they understood but they were going to pay him so much money. They just wanted someone exclusive to do the job. Mbujala stored such types of pictures and videos safely in terms of the contract and in case he would need them in the future.

Mbujala was once asked to take photographs and videos of a woman giving birth. It was one of the strangest experiences he had ever had. He was extremely freaked out when the baby was coming out. He felt disgusted and almost fainted. In addition, the labor period of the woman took about 14 hours. He had to wait in the waiting area of the hospital. He vowed never to do a giving birth shoot again. Fortunately, the payment for his services was good. Mbujala had always known that his photography career was going to be challenging but he had not anticipated it to be like this.

Mbujala posted photographs and videos he took at various social events, like nightclubs, on his social media pages. So many people would contact him privately and ask him to remove them

from the sites. This was usually because they were worried that their partners would find out about their various scandalous activities. Other people were embarrassed by the things that they would have done whilst in their intoxicated state.

Female social media models and influencers gave Mbujala so many problems. It was a good thing that he had self-control. He was also aware that such people could easily ruin his reputation. Most of the models and influencers did not want to pay for professional photos. They usually asked him for free photo shoots in exchange for sexual favours. Beautiful female celebrities were also challenging to work with. Most of them did not receive enough attention from their partners. They were usually depressed, wild and unpredictable. By virtue of being a photographer, he paid much attention to detail. He passed them compliments time and again. Some of them started to develop some feelings for him. They regularly tried to sleep with him. He politely indicated to them that he was not trying to complicate their business relationship.

Mbujala received a call from an association that was called, “Nata Nata Devil Worshippers” one Wednesday afternoon. They wanted to hire him for one of their events. The day they requested was going to be on his birthday. He wanted to decline because of that fact but the money they offered was too good. His friends had also told him that they would not be available to celebrate his birthday on the actual day. They would only be free the following day. So he accepted the job. They gave him the address and he went there at 19h00. He entered the building and was led to a conference room by a man in a black mask and robe. The room was very dark. There were red candles that were lit all around the room. There were possibly about 20 to 30 people in the room. They were all putting on black masks and robes. The man advised him to resume taking pictures. There were weird chants being made by the people in the room. He realized that some

of them were female because of their voices. It was weird atmosphere. There was a wave of fear that ran across his body. He started regretting taking the job.

There was a man that had a red sash around his waist that was leading the procession. He said that they were going to perform a sacrifice. There was something that was covered on the table in front of the conference room. He uncovered it. It was a woman that had been tied and gagged. The leader took a knife and said some chants and stabbed her. Mbulaja freaked out and started running towards the entrance so that he could leave. The people started laughing and screamed, “SURPRISE, HAPPY BIRTHDAY!”

AUTHOR’S NOTE: *I was inspired to make this submission to FOTD for 2 reasons. I have always wanted to be able to tell stories. Eight year old I would be proud looking into my future and seeing that I am pursuing my ambition, at last. I have always been a, “Not so quiet person “but also not as expressive as I thought I ought to be. However, things took a drastic turn when I started my tertiary education. I became talkative! I transformed from a person that did not say much, to saying too much! Whenever I am telling any story to anyone, I take my time so that I build it up well. Some impatient people rush me to just get to the point. The thing is I feel that every detail is important because it gives a clear and complete picture of the story. Therefore, every detail needs to be part of the equation in order to balance.*

The second reason builds up from the first. When I was younger, I was full of ideas that made sense to me in my head but when I voiced them out, people neither understood nor grasped what I was trying to say (I hope you are finally hearing me!). So, I think I am making up for all those times that I was misunderstood or not heard (LOL!).

There are so many issues I wanted to explore in this story. I will only outline 4. I was inspired to write, "The Extraordinary World of a Professional Photographer "after I made a realization that numerous professions are not as straightforward, boring or exciting as we perceive them to be. We can only realize this through some sort of analysis or experience. Secondly, many of us do not fully understand the, "Ins and outs" of the professions we venture into until we are fully vested into them and most of the times, we end up being miserable. Thirdly, most of the times, we do not take our professions as seriously as we should. The result is that we jeopardize the very thing that we have invested so much into, and our lives are dependent on. Finally, we are often motivated by monetary gains. This factor usually blinds us and we fail to scrutinize things. We then end up making uninformed decisions.

There are so many themes that I aimed to explore. Firstly, I wanted to show that so many professions are intertwined and reliant on each other. Secondly, I wanted to explore the beginnings, challenges, surprises and benefits of the entrepreneurial journey. Thirdly, I wanted to outline how our relationships with people, like friends, affect our lives and decisions we make. Finally, I wanted to show how we give fear so much power over us to the point that we fail to find out the truth about something before we disengage or run away

I do not think I have any literary influences in my writing or at least that I am aware of. I hope this does not sound silly but when I am writing anything, it is like I am watching a movie in my head. I paid so much attention at building the story up and giving it so many different dimensions. I did this in this manner with the aim of giving the story an ending that was unexpected. As you read, please be aware that this is my first ever piece to

be published. I am still on my journey of learning. So, please take it easy on me. I hope you enjoy it. Thank you!

AUTHOR'S BIO: My name is Chitsanzo Changa. I am a single 32 year old Malawian male. I reside in Blantyre, Malawi and Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. I started writing fiction this year, 2020. I have only been self-publishing e-books. I have not been published by any magazine or media house.