



JUST LIKE THE OLD TIMES

by: **RENNEL S. OGBAC**

Forenoon when I set foot on this familiar place where the fields in their ploughing season seemingly stretch to the mighty mountains capped with thinning clouds yonder. Still in my collars and sleeves, I treaded my path. Sultry radiance touched my forehead and scent of earth mixed with the humid breeze.

Leaping on the way of hardened mud and clay, I missed my footing and slumped on the nasty earth. I was so annoyed. Yet, I couldn't help but smile.

In a glimpse, I felt time travelled me back. I heard soft giggles which eventually turned to laughs. Warmth enveloped my being as I realized whose chuckling voices soft as angels' were those. It was a distant memory.

To my left where a ragged shed made of bamboo, coco lumber and poorly woven coconut leaves as roof, was standing under a juvenile narra shade, I noticed a teenage lad trying to act as a grown man guiding a younger boy who looked almost identical with him. He gave him a little push to dip in the muddy field after their short break from work. Acting so young and innocently, the boy obliged with reluctance written all over his face.

As wind breezed gently eastward, molds of clay came flying, landing on either side. As though their work was set aside for some minutes, the battle of molded clay heated up. More and more catapulted in the air. After the encounter ceased, groaning started as the younger then sobbed his loss, going back to work with heartily frown.

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To console his brother, the older one acted as a clown and promised to let him win next time around. His face brightened up as he heard his words and asked for a pinky promise cheekily before continuing their task at hand. Dried earth smeared on their faces and wet thickening mud all over their shirts. Evident weariness in their young frames, but gladness was in their smiling eyes. It was halfway through the noon sun where sweat and earth jibed with fun.

Suddenly, while I was still lying drenched in the mud, a familiar voice I heard. It was particular with me, authoritative and baritone. Yes, the voice I was longing to hear for some time ago since then, my one and only, my older brother.

I glided a little and asked, "Pardon?!". He chuckled and with that particular annoying yet soothing tone, he repeated, "What are you doing mudwrestling?"

I couldn't resist but grin and snapped "Just like the old times."

I raised my hands to his directions as though I was still that little to be pulled up. He reached mine and wayward as I was, I dragged him down to the sprawled mess. Then we both laughed with the wind refreshing the rice field.

It is nice to win this time around, knowing that the hands who helped me reach wherever I am at the expense of his own wins, are always there to embrace me whenever I get back.

Just like the old times.

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