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Hadiza

For the first time Mountain Sabinyo had failed him. Kamau stumbled through its wild bamboo groves, seeking to cast his pain into those long heavenly shoots like he had always done. But today, the mountain rejected him. The air was too close and the sodden ground was prickly at his feet. These once benign shoots now glared back scornfully, smacking him into a tangle of bushes higher up the mountain.

As he climbed, he kept thinking how cruel it was that the most beautiful of emotions could spawn this most terrible feeling. That love could give birth to something so painful and insidious, it would drag you down a bottomless pit of despair. For Kamau, a young man on the cusp of his coming-of-age ceremony, it was this evil spawn of love that seemed to welcome him into adulthood. This thing that belonged nowhere and yet was everywhere; this thing called grief.

Higher up the mountain, he wandered into a patch of withering trees. Each time he brushed against their frail branches, beard-like leaves and twigs would wail down upon him. Thick mists lay on this part of the mountain. The air smelled of age and decay, and the trees drooped in a constant state of mourning. For a little while Kamau felt soothed; everything here seemed to wallow as he did, trapped in the same misery that clasped almost lovingly to his soul.

But the cruelty of grief was often in irony. At times such as these, he wanted all to share in his pain. And yet now that he had found the perfect place, Kamau felt besieged; wanting to be left alone in his own sorrow.

He moved on from the weeping trees and swung higher up the mountain. It was easy in his current form to move quickly, and soon Kamau was in a clearing beside one of Sabinyo's five peaks. Up here amidst the clouds, the moun-