



## FIRST BORN SONS

**Juliane Okot Bitek**

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### Abstract

*It was a glib slide, a quick pass, a little lift at the corner of the mouth, an almost smile. It was a quick look, a glib remark about places to live, to be safe, away from this darkness. It was a little lift at the corner of the mouth, a glib smile, a quick pass over, no bloody cross at the door -- it was an invitation. It was a bloody smile, a little lift of the curtain, a glib pass of spittle that flew over in an arc, hang in the air and burst into colourful stories of contested land in faraway places.*

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### Author's Affiliation

**Juliane Otok Bitek** is the daughter of a poet father and a story-teller mother. She was born to exiled parents in Kenya, came of age in Uganda and now lives in Canada. Juliane's work has won writing awards in Canada, the United States and Europe. She is an essayist, free-lance writer and poet. She graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art (Creative Writing) in 1995 from the University of British Columbia.

## **FIRST BORN SONS**

**Juliane Okot Bitek, BFA**

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It was a glib slide, a quick pass, a little lift at the corner of the mouth, an almost smile. It was a quick look, a glib remark about places to live, to be safe, away from this darkness. It was a little lift at the corner of the mouth, a glib smile, a quick pass over, no bloody cross at the door -- it was an invitation. It was a bloody smile, a little lift of the curtain, a glib pass of spittle that flew over in an arc, hang in the air and burst into colourful stories of contested land in faraway places. It was a little lift of the curtain; a glib slide past years, and years of washing that faded the bloody mark, which meant that the angel could stop. It was a quick pass, a fiery Passover, flames and flames licking thatched huts as far as the eye could see. It was a sly remark, a bloody hand, an angel, a small chance, a faded cloth that was both curtain and door fluttering in the breeze just in time to catch some spittle. It was an angel with a snide remark who did not catch the spittle as it curved in the air in a sparkle and then burst before landing on the faded piece of curtain, now door. It was an ignorant angel with a glib smile and a bad eye. It was a little lift at the corner of the mouth, a quick pass, a small arc in the air, a yellow jerry-can, corn seeds hanging from the roof, a water pot, the smoky smell of last night's cooking, a reed mat, some rags on the floor, sometimes clothing, sometimes blanket for the night. It was a quick spark, sunlight catching an angel's eye. It was a grass-thatched hut, ten huts, a hundred, a few hundred, a thousand, maybe more. It was a fiery afternoon, a week, a couple of months, a decade, two, a quick pass, a faded angel, a bloody cross that marked the land again and again. It was a glib slide, a little lift in the breeze, a curtain, now door, a camp, a sly smile, a snide remark, a miracle, a place that ignited all on its own, they said.

*September 9, 2008*