

Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun.

Sarah Ladipo Manyika.

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Sarah Ladipo Manyika is a British-Nigerian writer. Her second novel, *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun*, is a stunning exploration of memory and recollection. We meet the protagonist, Morayo, who is a retired English professor living in San Francisco with the yearning for smells, experiences and sights long past.

As a womxn who was born and raised in Nigeria and later married to a man 19 years her senior, she grapples with life as an older womxn. She actively lives as a soldier of a small revolution that will not let old age determine the trajectory of her life. This revolt occurs through maintaining a youthful body, a battle to not shrink herself but to rather walk tall, adorned in colourful cloths that still carry the lingering smell of a Nigerian market place. She flirts openly and is well

acquainted with the way in which her body can meet pleasure. There are some things in her life which are characteristic of old age such as the staggering accumulation of bills, the thousands of dollars donated to a non-existent charity and the mystery of money stashed everywhere in the house, to the horror of a young friend and the delight of mice incisors.

Morayo seems to have a grasp on the past, through contemplating how her current situation would unfold if she was twenty years younger. It is a living memory, the voracious manner into which she delves into the past and wills it into the present. At a glance, this is another story about an old womxn holding on to dust and torn pages, however Morayo is a womxn who feels and experiences. Sex and sexuality are themes which are pervasive in the book, which is extraordinary in a world that bundles the bones of old folk into closets of asexuality, their desires and orgasms topics of taboo that are locked away. Morayo, however, speaks of sexual intimacy in a less than ordinary way which subtly robs the reader of the ability to be cognisant of the age of the character. However, the ever-present anxieties remind us of her age and the plight of a 75-year-old womxn whose independence is threatened by a letter from the DMV demanding to know her fitness as a driver. Again, her anxieties manifest when she suffers an injury characteristic of people her age that forces her to spend time in a rehabilitation clinic with people her age and older. However, Morayo fights to keep her youthful demeanour by defying expectations and sulking over the oversized hospital clothes that are devoid of the colour and intrigue she is constantly building around herself.

The beauty of San Francisco does not fall on blind eyes as Morayo recognizes the way in which she is greeted by kindness, the boys who have green nail polish and are often the first to compliment Morayo on her colourful outfits and regal nature. It is through the eyes of different characters that the reader is also afforded the luxury of seeing the protagonist. She regards herself as a worldly person, once married to an Ambassador and having lived in many places. The voices of these various characters reflect the diversity that she speaks of. Her lost books end up in the hands of a homeless white womxn, her favourite exchanges happen with the Chinese mailman and more than a lingering glance is shared with a Caribbean man.

This novel is riddled with charming sentimentality and has a way of reminding the reader of life not being over until it really is.

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