

Adwoa loves protecting the environment. She and her family move back to Accra, Ghana where she faces plenty of challenges while settling into her new life. Adwoa gets a chance to continue caring for the environment when she joins a green group that helps to fix Ghana's greatest environmental issues, like poor sanitation, galamsey and too much garbage. Learn how she triumphs, while you discover what Adwoa, a ghostly forest and a curse have to do with plastic garbage.

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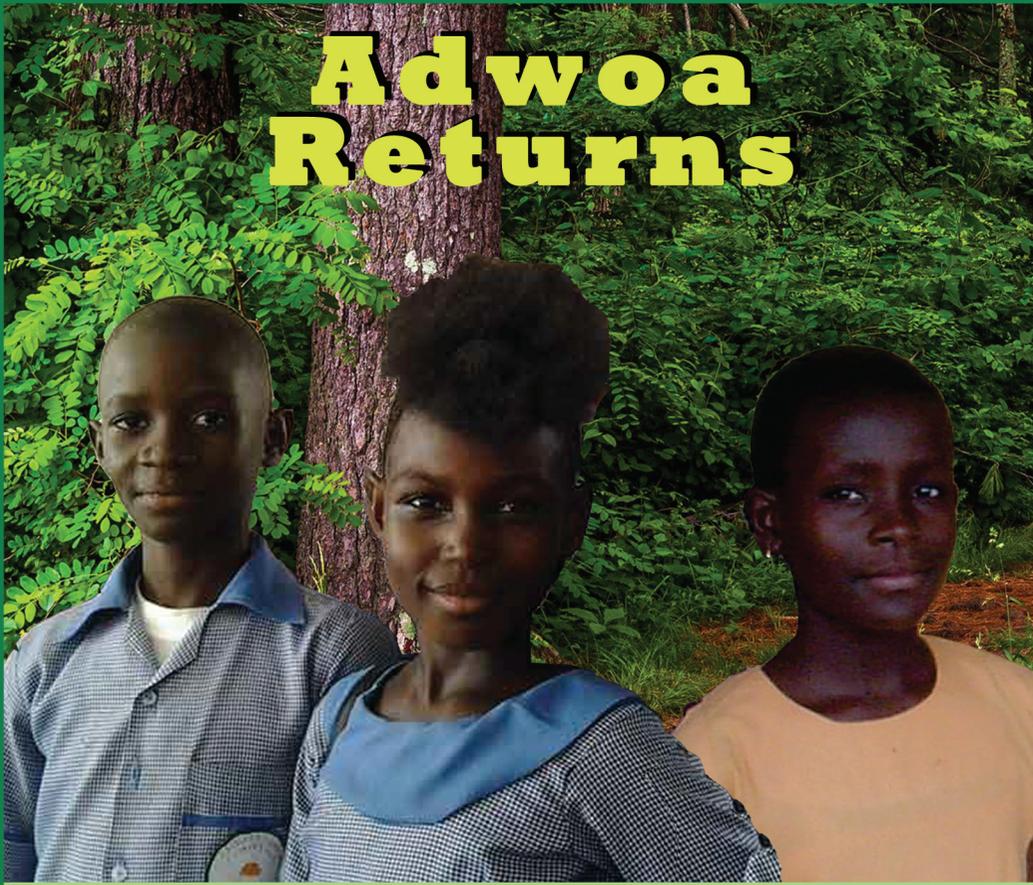
Judith Green

SHADES OF GREEN

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# SHADES OF GREEN



## Adwoa Returns

By Judith Green



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# The Journey Back Home

The months had turned into weeks, then days, and finally the time came for Adwoa, her mother Faith, her father Sam and her brother Ebo to return to Ghana. Adwoa wasn't sure if she was ready for the trip back to Ghana. She would miss her friends and living in Toronto a lot. She was leaving a place that she loved and where she had spent the greater part of her life.

The family was scheduled to fly from Toronto via Washington, D.C. to Accra. Once the family arrived at the airport, they printed their boarding passes and then checked in their luggage at the airline counter. Afterwards, they went through security and then headed to their designated gate.

Once on the plane, Adwoa sat in the seat next to the window. One thing that she was

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excited about was to see the sights outside of the plane. Adwoa was too young to remember when she left Ghana and travelled on a flight with her family via Amsterdam to Toronto. She checked out how the seatbelt worked by fastening, tightening and loosening it. She noticed the small television screen overhead and the tiny monitor that was affixed to the back of the seat in front of her. She saw people adjusting their seats and with Ebo's help she was able to recline her seat.

Adwoa asked, "What are those things for?" pointing at some knobs above. Ebo demonstrated how the knobs worked. "This one is to control the air and the other one is to turn on and off the light. You push this button if you need assistance from a flight attendant," he explained. Adwoa plugged her headphones into the armrest of the seat she was sitting in and flipped through the radio stations and TV channels.

It took about thirty minutes for all of the passengers to put their carry-on luggage in the overhead compartments and under the seats and to settle down. The flight attendants readied themselves, the plane and passengers. Outside

on the tarmac, workmen loaded luggage into the cargo hold while other workers put fuel in the plane. Meals that would be served later were brought into the galley of the plane on trolleys. The door of the plane was finally closed and all of the workmen and vehicles moved away from the plane so that it could prepare for takeoff. Everyone was asked to fasten their seatbelts and sit in an upright position.

The plane's engine revved up and finally, the plane started to move. It reversed slowly from the jet bridge and taxied towards the runway. Meanwhile, the passengers were briefed about safety on the aircraft. The captain spoke through an intercom and welcomed the passengers aboard the flight. He told them how long the flight would take, the altitude at which the plane would fly and the weather conditions for the flight path.

The plane taxied on the tarmac and waited in line behind other planes to takeoff. After about fifteen minutes, the plane got into position on the runway. The plane halted, its engines were cranked up and then it thrust forward with great force like a sprinter taking off on a one-hundred-metre dash. It sped down the runway faster and

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faster and then lifted into the air. The plane quickly began to ascend and soon pierced through the sky.

Through the window, Adwoa saw Toronto below basking in the soft, summer-evening sun. Splashes of green lawns and trees between high-rise buildings lined the orderly network of streets and intertwining highways. Adwoa tried to see if she could locate the position of her home for one last look—a final farewell—but the plane turned and headed south over Lake Ontario to the US border. It was a smooth and short flight which lasted just under an hour and a half.

At the airport in Washington, D.C., hordes of travellers moved hastily to catch connecting flights or to head home after returning from trips. Other travellers waited patiently at their scheduled gate areas. Adwoa and her family waited for two and a half hours in the passenger lounge. There was a fragile-looking elderly woman with a medium-sized frame sitting next to Adwoa. Rhythmically, she glanced at Adwoa—every few seconds, it seemed. Eventually, their eyes met and Adwoa smiled. Adwoa intently looked back and had a chance to study her face. Her eyes

looked kind and her wrinkles, from years and years of smiling, were endearing.

“What’s got you so down, young lady?” the woman pried in a soft and sweet voice.

“Nothing ma’am. I’m okay, thank you,” Adwoa said.

“You know, everything that happens on this earth happens for a reason. Everything has its purpose,” the lady said. Then she excused herself and was off.

*That’s nice! Adwoa thought, but how strange? That lady doesn’t know about my life. What did she mean?*

Adwoa was nervous when the agent at the counter next to the boarding gate announced that it was time to board the plane for their flight to Accra. It was pretty much official. She was Ghana-bound and couldn’t look back. Adwoa and her family grabbed their carry-on luggage and got in line to board the plane. When they boarded the plane, they all sat in the same row. Adwoa sat in the window seat, Ebo sat next to her and Faith sat in the aisle seat beside him. Sam sat in the seat across the aisle from Faith.

The plane left on time at 11:30 p.m. As the plane took off, Adwoa looked at Washington below, with its brightly lit sky scrapers, streets lined with lights and vehicles driving back and forth on distant roads. The bright lights and enchanting view afforded by the plane's window were not enough to cheer up Adwoa. Within a few minutes, Washington faded in the surrounding darkness outside. The plane continued to ascend steadily to its intended altitude and then forged ahead towards its destination across the wide Atlantic Ocean.

During the long flight, it began to sink in that it was a time of great change. Adwoa wasn't going on a vacation where she would return home to Toronto after a few weeks. It was goodbye to a way of life that she enjoyed and loved. Thoughts of her friends and their last get-together flooded Adwoa's mind. *What a crazy bunch! How I'll miss them!* she thought. There was Amma, the wisest because she was the oldest—by a mere two months; then there was Joy, the funny one; Shawn, the know-it-all; Sarah, the fashion queen; and Pam, the shy one. Tears began to trickle down Adwoa's cheeks. There was something else

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also tugging at Adwoa's heart. She had a love—a passion back home in Toronto.

As she turned to peer through the window of the plane to let her thoughts travel as far and wide as the plane in the air, she saw her own reflection. It mirrored her inner feelings of a sense of loss, sadness and an uneasy quiet. She skirted around the real issue in her mind. *I will have to find new friends in Ghana. Everything will be new. That's intimidating and scary*, she thought. Just before she pulled the window shade down, Adwoa saw the bright, full moon stationed in splendor in the sky amidst twinkling stars. She likened it to a bride surrounded by her cheerful bridesmaids on her blissful day.

Soon after, meals were served. The warm, tender chicken and seasoned potato balls just the way she liked them begged Adwoa to crack a smile, but she wouldn't budge. Adwoa knew she could get used to a new life but the love that was tugging at her heart as she thought of leaving life in Canada was her passion for preserving the planet. Adwoa had found a special place as part of the **green** group at her school back in Toronto.

Canada had a number of issues to be improved and she knew about them all. Ghana on the other hand, was natural and pristine—or so she thought. Just what would she do to help the planet there? Adwoa thought and thought until she drifted off to sleep while trying unsuccessfully to focus on a movie that was playing.

About four hours later, Adwoa woke up to the muffled sounds of chatter as passengers began to stir. The flight attendants were moving up and down the aisles, getting ready to serve breakfast to half-awake passengers.

“Did you have a good sleep, Sleepyhead?” her dad leaned over and asked.

“I had a little bit of sleep but I am still very tired. I wish that I could get some more,” Adwoa replied.

“We will all have to catch up on sleep later,” Sam said.

Ebo though, was still fast asleep.

When the captain announced that the plane was descending as it was approaching Kotoka International Airport in Accra, he asked the passengers and the flight attendants to

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prepare for landing. He said that the weather in Accra was bright and sunny at a temperature of 27°C.

When Adwoa pulled up the window shade, she saw a blue and sunny sky full of inviting clouds of differing shapes and density. Adwoa remarked, “The fluffy white clouds and blue sky look like the playground of angels and fairies.”

It was just moments later when Adwoa saw that the plane was approaching a landmass. It was Africa, the Motherland, Ghana, home. She actually began to feel excitement just like her parents who were happy to be arriving back home. The plane descended gradually, bobbing a little while passing through a layer of thick clouds, a dense mist, and then through some thin cotton candy-like clouds. Closer to Accra, it was a clear and sunny day. As the plane approached the airport, Adwoa saw reddish-brown ground below. It suddenly looked familiar.

The plane continued its steady descent until it touched down on the runway, vibrating as it was reined in to reduce its speed. Thankful passengers cheered to celebrate the safe landing of the plane at its destination. The plane then



# Heading Back Home

The next morning everyone was up bright and early. The temperature was cool overnight and it was misty early in the morning. The mist gradually cleared as the sun rose.

While they were having breakfast together, Mrs. Frempong reminded everyone, “Our plan for today is to drive back to Madina Heights. It will take just as long as when we came, roughly seven and a half hours. We are going to travel further inland via the major route from Awaso and drive northeast through the Ashanti Region to Kumasi, its capital. We will stop for lunch at Juaso in the Ashanti Region and then continue through the Eastern Region on to the Greater Accra Region.”

Mrs. Frempong briefed the students about the Ashanti Region. She told them that like the

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Western Region, the majority of people who lived in the Ashanti kingdom were Akans. She shared that the head or king of the kingdom was called the “Asantehene.” Adwoa took special interest in travelling through these regions because her mother was Fante and her father was Ashanti. Both were part of the Akan tribe.

They boarded the buses and the caravan drove past a section of the Tano River. Adwoa said, “Look how muddy the water is. How can people ever drink that water without getting sick?”

Mrs. Frempong said, “It is not just mud that gives it that colour. It is all the contaminants in it too.” She pointed out, “Look way over there at the riverbank and you will see some mining equipment and illegal miners busy at work.”

Kofi asked, “Are many other rivers polluted like this?”

Mrs. Frempong replied, “Several of our rivers are contaminated. Some of them are the Pra, Daboase and Ankobra. They are here in the Western Region and there are the Birim and Densu rivers too. That’s quite a lot and many of them like the Pra River, pass through large areas. The Pra River ends up in the Ivory Coast next

door. Water pollution is a very big problem in Ghana.”

A student asked, “So why isn’t anything being done to stop it before there is no clean water left anywhere in Ghana?”

Mrs. Frempong replied, “The solution seems simple but there are a lot of parties involved so not until Ghanaians and our leaders take the problem seriously and do something about it, will things change, I am afraid.”

As the caravan entered the Ashanti Region, it passed signs leading to operations of some international companies who were mining manganese and gold. In just over two and a half hours they reached Kumasi, the busy city which was already crowded. The caravan stopped for a lunch break at Juaso.

When they were having lunch, Nii Isaac asked Adwoa, “What will you do with the ghost fruit that you brought with you?”

Adwoa answered, “I’ll probably just keep them for a while to see if anything happens. I know they will just rot.”