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### Zeroed Out

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This piece is written from the perspective of a “hard” woman who expresses the rationale behind that adjective and how her hardness came about. She also illustrates her discontentment about what happens to her and other female species caused by men’s inactions.

Moreen Akomea-Ampeh

Personal/reflective prose

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## ZEROED OUT

You wonder why on earth men will be highly favored than women.

You become drowned in your thoughts and wonder why on earth a man will sexually abuse a woman but will only face a few years in prison. He will return to the street to walk on the same path either you or another woman take.

Then, that bitterness grows in you and makes you sometimes think we should just go back to the period of *apampa*<sup>1</sup>—when rapists were castrated. Their balls were displayed so that everyone knows of their iniquity and how they could not control their libidos.

Rapists hide behind women wearing inappropriate dresses to justify why they raped them. People blame victims and they along the rapists say that women dress indecently and that entices rapists, but they forget to chastise the men for not having self-control in the first place. These people forget women equally dressed in *hijab* and baby girls dressed in rompers are still raped.

What all do these rapists even see in babies? What is so attractive in babies that make men defile them? What at all makes these rapists or pedophiles do the unthinkable and unsayable said?

For all you know, this son of a man will call himself a father one day. You question yourself why society should even allow him to be one? Your conscience kicks in and makes you wonder if he has already sexually abused his daughters or will sexually abuse any of his daughters. In the end, you just fear for their safety.

It is impossible to tell the difference between all of these men and the rest as they are all the same.

They make your life miserable, and when you decide to become harder than life itself, those same people will be on your neck and question you why on earth you have soft skin but a cruel heart.

To hell with them, the burning hatred you have for them now started long ago after abuse episodes. It grew into venom and climbed up your esophagus into your larynx.

You spit it out when they tread your path.

You bite them when they attack you.

Because you learned at a young age that when life knows that you sting, it will never devour you.

The thing is that you are surrounded by vipers and cannot differentiate between any of them. Along the way, you learn that the best thing to do is to metamorphose into a viper yourself. So that you will no longer be the sweet little girl they once knew you to be.

You become a viper and refuse to stoop low.

You set boundaries and refuse to bow. You become your own boss lady and refuse to either be a doormat or succumb to unhealthy masculinity. You raise your expectations and know what you want. When they realize they cannot break down, they call you a hardened and difficult woman.

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<sup>1</sup> A Twi word (from Ghana) for wooden tray.

They try to hunt you down because all they know is how to pull a successful woman down. Little did they know that you have already braced yourself for this battle from a young age. It is no surprise that you are immune to all of their arrows they shoot at you. You are so armed to the teeth with their *pull her down agenda* that you have used all of their *arrows* to build metallic plates on your back.

One thing they forget to realize because they are engrossed in scheming plans against you, they do not realize that crocodiles can never die from being stabbed in the back.