

**Kioni**

## Synopsis

Kioni is just a girl, spending her days in peaceful solitude at the heart of Africa's savannah – at least, for a short while. Kioni is the child of a prophecy, stating that her destiny is to restore the savannah to a glory that had not yet been witnessed at any point in history. In this enthralling and thought-provoking novel, Kioni embarks on a journey of searching for free will and control over her own destiny and questions the very fabric of our existence. Will she succeed in forging her own path, or does fate rule above anything else? Find out in this captivating tale of love, control and power.

### Full Synopsis:

The story begins with an image of Kioni, a young and likeable girl, living in a peaceful solitude of the savannah. She is surrounded by nature and a routine that fulfils her and is content with her way of life. It is revealed that Kioni's father, a powerful and strong man who is the leader of her tribe, possesses a unique power that was granted to him when unveiling an ancient legend of a Guardian, a once-thought mythical creature that taught fire to the early generations of humans, with power so great he scorched the land he lived in, the savannah, so that it remained barren and dry. The legend foretold that Kioni was to possess a fracture of his spirit, giving her the power to undo the damage that was done over a millennia ago. Kioni was reluctant, and in defiance of her father, she refuses to go with him to learn how to harness her power, and instead chooses to leave Africa to shape her own destiny. Things do not go to plan for Kioni, and she ends up in a torturous battle against her ancestors and the power within her. Eventually, she cannot take it anymore, and ultimately ends her own life.

### Character Studies:

Kioni – a free spirit, her essence of being originally tied to the savannah. She is a young girl of about sixteen, with a defiant nature against the course of life that has been chosen for her. Kioni is presented as an anti-hero of sorts. She has tenacity and courage unlike most people, but a frustrating unwillingness to conform to her fate.

Kioni's Father – an older, tall, and stoic man that wields a lot of ancient power. He is a leader of a large tribe, and uncovered an ancient prophecy that foretold his daughter was to possess the power to bring prosperity to his land. He becomes infatuated with this idea, to a point where he would mistreat Kioni in order to achieve the result he wanted.

### Chapter Summaries:

The first chapter acts as an introduction, especially to the main character and the setting, which appear to be intertwined. The story of a young girl, Kioni, is told, how her father had received a special prophecy that his daughter was to be the saviour of their land – the savannah. Because of this, Kioni was placed under a lot of pressure, sent to live alone in the desert in order to harness her powers. Instead of this, she learned to connect with the land how it was, and developed a mindset that made her choose free will, to determine her own path, and to defy her father's wishes.

The closing chapter is also written and acts as a complete juxtaposition to the first chapter. It begins with Kioni in extreme pain, broken under the power of her own ancestors demanding her to return to her destiny. She slowly realises that she is not in control, and never had been, which sends her

quickly spiralling into a dark place. Finally, she writes a letter to her mother. Here, she explains that her spirit is unlike anyone else's, and that the world is not kind to those who wish to be free. She writes an apology, and as the chapter ends the reader realises her intention to take her own life.

**Setting:**

The setting of the novel has extreme relevance to the story. The savannah acts as a character of its own, a type of powerful entity connected to the main character. It was important that it was demonstrated in different lights: one, as a beautiful, vibrant landscape that thrives and is full of light and spirit. The other, a terrifying void with power beyond human comprehension, a beast that holds on to life by a single, fragile thread, and is not afraid to sacrifice its creatures. This contrast is used to create conflict in the readers mind, and to create a bittersweet afterthought about the journey the novel takes.

**Writing Conventions:**

The story was undertaken by a third-person narrative with a formal yet descriptive undertone. I kept the language fairly simple, primarily for my target audience, which is young adults, but also as to not distract from the storyline.

## Reflective Commentary

Writing Kioni was a challenge from the start, and admittedly it was largely my fault. Undertaking the fantasy genre was a complete step outside of my comfort zone, and not something I had even written about before. I was in pursuit of a fresh style of writing, something where I could be more creative and daring, and tell a story that is both entertaining and thought-provoking.

My inspiration for writing Kioni came from my love of Africa. I really wanted to emulate the good and bad parts of it in a creative way, while touching on some of the cultures and religions that reside there. In a way, I felt as though by empowering my main character, I was also empowering Africa. Because of this, it was important that I wrote in third person for the entirety of the novel. I did not want the reader to question the validity of the narrative, especially as the story learns that the main character is unreliable.

I was hoping to achieve confidence in an unexplored genre, and to learn more about certain cultures that I am connected to. I have always been empowered by female poets; Maya Angelou and Carol Ann Duffy have a large inspiration in my work. I have always admired their independent thinking and powerful words, and I wanted to create a poem at the start of their story to honour their contribution.

The story was quite difficult to write, mainly at the end. I knew the first chapter was always meant to be a beautiful introduction to the character and the setting; I wanted both to be likeable, even aspirational. However, I also knew that I wanted a conflict at the end of the novel, so that the opinion of the reader has changed completely. Knowing how to go about it was the biggest challenge. The one aspect of the story I was set on was the idea of free will and destiny. I wanted readers to question this throughout the novel; at the beginning, believing that free will does exist, and we are able to choose our own path. At the end, I wanted the readers to believe that we are tied to our fates, whether we like it or not.

I am satisfied with my final piece of work, and I believe I managed to deliver the results I wanted. My main drawback was that I pushed myself on time; I took too long in the planning process, and changed my idea too many times before I finally wrote the final piece, meaning I was concerned that I had rushed it.

If my novel were to be published, I think it would be reasonable to go to a publisher that specialises more into the coming-of-age genre than any other. I likely would consider Young Adult (YA) Imprints such as HarperCollins, with their HarperTeen imprint, or a fantasy publisher such as Bloomsbury or Scholastic, which were responsible for publishing the *Harry Potter* novels.

In terms of competition, I would consider popular novels in the same genre. *Harry Potter* would be a well-known alternative, as well as Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*, or even Phillip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*.

I think that the concept of this novel would reach a few different target groups, including young adults to enjoy the relatable content, fantasy enthusiasts, and realist readers who enjoy fiction with mention of real-world issues.

Overall, upon reflection of work, I am content with the story and how I delivered it. I thoroughly enjoyed the process of writing it, and I hope that someday I could perhaps take it to the next level.



## Draft

*Dear Mom,*

*I hope this letter finds you in good spirits.*

*In my time of solitude, I've been pondering the meaning of free will and destiny. More than anyone on this earth, my life is subjected to follow a predetermined course, a path set by legends and fate. But I have started to believe that my existence is only determined by my purpose.*

*The essence of who I am is not defined by others, and the pull of my own heart beckons me to step out of the Savannah, to carve my own path like all the women in the generations of our family.*

*The journey I am embarking on is not a disrespect to you, to my father or our traditions. It is a journey to find my own destiny, to venture into lands we do not know. I hope that will time, you will see the value of my pursuit.*

*I will see you again.*

*All my love,*

*Kioni*

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## One Month Earlier

Under the bright and vast African sky, Kioni felt at peace. The sun reigned supreme in the cloudless sky, broken by the shade of a towering acacia tree. The savannah was a patchwork of gold and green, a never-ending vast of untamed beauty. For Kioni, the savannah was her sanctuary. A warm breeze rustled through the tall grass, whispering untold secrets and legends in her ear as she watched the mosaic of light and shade dance between the rustling leaves.

The tree she lay against stood stoic in the breeze, like a sentinel protecting her from the vastness, its gnarled branches adorned with thorns and life. Her fingertips grazed the earth, the sun's golden tendrils burning the unprotected earth. Dust devils danced around her, twirling like playful spirits on the canvas. She closed her eyes, and listened to the symphony of cicadas, twittering of birds and the distant rumble of a lion's roar.

In the sun-soaked landscape, the land rippled and breathed in the heat. Dressed in garments woven from the fibres of the land, a tall figure emerged from the terrain.

*Father.*

He walked with a decadency and grace that only exists in her father; a man with the power to control destiny and fate. As soon as she saw him, Kioni knew it was time to leave. Her days picking sun-kissed fruit, tending to the small garden she nurtured, and listening to the soft whispers of the wind that told stories of lost generations were over.

What Kioni's father hadn't realised was that her time in the savannah grew her to its likeness. Her spirit remains wild and untamed, such as the animals and creatures that call the savannah home.

She had lived in rhythm with the rise and fall of the African sun for too long, her solace had been found in the simplicity of her existence.

“The Guardian is ready for you now.” Kioni’s father now stood above her, looking down with the fire and crackle of a burning sky reflecting in his eyes. To Kioni, she saw herself as a wildflower, thriving unrelentlessly in the unforgiving land of the savannah, an embodiment of its essence of life. Her father saw Kioni as a shell, her body like the acacia trees that exist only to survive, with only her soul having significance, a soul as old as the existence of time.

Kioni stood, brushing the hem of her skirt without breaking eye contact with her father. She was ready.

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The Guardian was an untold legend, its existence only spoken of by the whispers of soft savannah winds. Kioni’s father had been the one to unveil the truth of the enigmatic tale, his discovery granting him the power to control the destiny of another being and empowering them to hold the soul of the Guardian. This fate lay on Kioni.

The legend Kioni’s father uncovered was an ancient myth of a creature known as the ‘Shimmering Guardian’. He was said to be an ethereal being which manifests in no particular form, but instead as a body of glittering light, blinding anyone who dared to look. Scripture suggests that the Guardian is the only immortal being who has the ability to transcend the realms of life and death and holds dominion over the element of fire.

Before Kioni’s father, the story of the Guardian had been a fairytale, an old story used to enchant children, telling them of a time when fire used to rule the land. But with the fire, the land of the savannah was scorched and dry, hindering the presence of life. And so, the Guardian retracted, the consequences of his time still scarring the land.

The Guardian’s soul lay fractured, vowing to return to undo the damage that was done.

**Final Version**



## Kioni

Trees entwining with a gentle grace  
Sun sets upon a holy place  
Wind whispers untold secrets  
Dust devils dance in an endless chase

The land lays dry and clouds have no place  
Wildflowers rise in a desperate race  
Kioni is the saviour  
Her intentions, misplaced

Branches of acacia trees interlace  
The thorns gnarl as they feel displaced  
The earth is scorched and ruined  
Only one can reinstate  
The savannah and its glory, only she can replace.

## Chapter One

Kioni was a free spirit. She often felt her essence of being was tied to the savannah, her home, much like the wildflowers that grew there, thriving relentlessly in its harsh landscape. She had spent her whole life there, much of it alone, picking sun-kissed fruit, tending to the small garden she nurtured, and listening to the soft whispers of the wind that told stories of lost generations. Kioni knew she was special, the only girl born into her tribe in over a century. Her father was its leader, a tall, stoic man who walked with decadency and grace that only existed in him; a man with the power to control destiny and fate.

For as long as she could remember, Kioni had been told that her life had a special purpose, and that it was her journey and goal to fulfil it. Before she was born, Kioni's father uncovered an ancient myth of a creature known as the 'Guardian'. He was said to be an ethereal being which manifests in no particular form, but instead as a body of glittering light, blinding anyone who dared to look. Her father told stories about uncovering the ruins of the site where people once worshiped the Guardian, and how a vision of him had appeared in his dreams that same night.

"Now, Kioni," her father used to say, "the Guardian had appeared to me in a realm beyond what we could even comprehend. He renounced a prophecy, saying that the next baby girl to be born would be the saviour of the savannah." At the time, Kioni's eyes would widen in excitement, and she would beg her father to continue the story.

"The Guardian had long been forgotten, its existence being nothing more than an untold legend that only the elders had ever heard of. His reign began before our existence and was worshipped by humans in our most basic form." Her father's eyes would narrow as he continued: "The humans at this time only knew the power of fire, and the Guardian ruled with it. It brought order, peace, and hope for a better future, but it was not without its consequences. With the fire, the land of the savannah was scorched and dry, hindering the presence of life. And so, the Guardian retracted, the consequences of its time still scarring the land.

"In my dream, Kioni, and it's important you understand – I was told that when the Guardian relinquished its power, it vowed that one day, he would choose an unborn child and gift them a

piece of its fractured soul, so that one day, they can undo its mistake, and bring peace and prosperity to the Savannah once again.”

“That’s me, father?” Kioni asked with wide eyes and a dreamy expression. Her father always just nodded, returning to his silent, stoic self.

As she grew older, Kioni realised that she was not like anyone else in the tribe. Her father was like a King, her mother was born in a different tribe, and she was the only female child. She was alienated, made to feel as though she was unwelcome in her own home. So, as she grew older, her father sent her to live in the most rural part of the Savannah to harbour her powers.

She liked it there, the peace and tranquillity of being surrounded only by nature giving her comfort. She spent her days in the same routine, feeling at peace under the vast African sky. She knew that the time for her to leave her sanctuary was closing in, that her father would soon come to help her complete her mission.

What Kioni’s father hadn’t realised was that her time in the savannah grew her to its likeness. Her spirit remains wild and untamed, such as the animals and creatures that called the savannah home. She had lived in rhythm with the rise and fall of the African sun for too long, her solace had been found in the simplicity of her existence. Kioni had been struggling with the idea of being unable to choose her own path. After all, everyone else had the freedom to do so. She was unwilling to accept that her father’s stories were true, belittling it to a fairytale that was taken too seriously. After all, the powers she had always been told she was blessed with had made no obvious appearance.

On the day that she was to be taken back to the tribe, Kioni made no preparations. She lay nonchalantly against a tall Acacia tree that stood stoic in the breeze, like a sentinel protecting her from the vastness, its gnarled branches adorned with thorns and life. Her fingertips grazed the dry soil, the sun's golden tendrils burning the unprotected earth. Dust devils danced around her, twirling like playful spirits on the canvas. She closed her eyes, and listened to the symphony of cicadas, twittering of birds and the distant rumble of a lion’s roar.

In the sun-soaked landscape, the land rippled and breathed in the heat. Dressed in garments woven from the fibres of the land, a tall figure emerged from the terrain.

*Father.*

“The Guardian is ready for you now.” Kioni’s father now stood above her, looking down with the fire and crackle of a burning sky reflecting in his eyes. He saw Kioni as a shell, her body like the acacia

trees that exist only to survive, with only her soul having significance, her mission being incomparable to anything she may feel.

Kioni stood, brushing the hem of her skirt without breaking eye contact with her father.

"I'm not going." Her father's stance remained unchanged, an incredulous look on his face.

"What do you mean, you're not going? You must." Beads of sweat began to line his wrinkled forehead. Kioni took a deep breath, preparing to give a speech she'd practiced over a hundred times:

"In my time of solitude, I've been pondering the meaning of free will and destiny. More than anyone on this earth, my life is subjected to follow a predetermined course, a path set by legends and fate. But I have started to believe that my existence is not only determined by my purpose.

"The essence of who I am is not defined by you, and the pull of my own heart beckons me to step out of the Savannah, to carve my own path." Her father's expression changed to surprise, confusion, and finally anger. For a moment, Kioni was scared, realising that she had spoken against him for the first time in her life. She expected him to shout, to hit her, or even drag her back to the tribe. Instead, he composed himself, the unreadable expression returning to his face.

"You cannot control destiny, Kioni, you have no free will." With that, her father turned back, leaving Kioni and her sanctuary without another word, each step echoing a quiet rebellion against her. She sat there, not knowing what would happen to her next.

She was free?

## Final Chapter

In the end, Kioni was left only with a fracture of her being, her rage and her fight was gone. She knew it was time to accept her fate, to allow the shackles of her destiny bring her to the home she was meant to be in; the Savannah. She feared of returning to the land she once loved so much, to her family, her father – the thought struck her like a bolt of lightning.

*Your ancestors are ashamed of you.*

The voices in Kioni's head beat against her skull like a symphony of drums. She was screaming, without making any sound. Her skin felt as though it was being stabbed by a thousand sun-spears, her eyes felt as though they were being melted to the back of her skull.

*Go, the voices whispered, or we will seek retribution.*

In one, shuddering breath, the pain was gone. Kioni was free. She sat in the corner of the wet, dark shelter, her head lay in shaky hands. Kioni was distraught. She knew that the savannah was beckoning her back into its unwelcoming arms. She imagined it now, at night, as black as the devil's heart and corpse-cold to the point where its darkness sank into one's bones. She imagined its grumbling and rumbling of life, the noises of unwelcome creatures plaguing the midnight air, the thunder of the cacophony of noise rumbling like the stomach of Gods. Kioni knew what she had to do. She knew that it was wrong. She scuffles across the ash-covered floor, scrambling frantically for the notebook and pen she had strewn across the room.

*Dear Mom,*

*I know you are disappointed. But I hope you will hear what I have to say. Our fates are determined by pieces on a cosmic chessboard. The Gods control our paths, our will, our destiny. For so long I yearned to break the pattern, to go against my fate, and for a short while, I was successful.*

*The journey I embarked on was not a disrespect to you, to my father or our traditions. It is a journey to find my own destiny, to venture into lands we do not know. I was not prepared for the repercussions from our ancestors. I should have listened; I should have believed what you said. But my spirit is a defiant one, one that turns against the essence of nature itself.*

*I do not have the power to control the currents of my life, and I am unable to navigate its flow. This destiny is meant for someone who can accept it, and unfortunately that person is not me. It is time for someone else to steer this ship, but I cannot be here to see it. I hope that will time, you will see the value of my pursuit.*

*I will see you again.*

*All my love,*

*Kioni*

