A KANSAS TALE

By Ubi Raymond

The author

Ubi Raymond (pseudonym of Ubirajara Ramos) was born in 1963, in Brazil. At the age of four he began his literacy with a retired teacher, who lived across the street from his home. One year later he was already able to read and write full sentences. At that time, the true carioca (how people born in Rio de Janeiro are known) culture began to gain an original format, although it still imported the foreign rhythms. At the height of the Beatles, Elvis and others most radio networks of Rio de Janeiro played their hits, making it clear that the cariocas lacked an identity of their own, which its basis was on samba and football only. Such foreign influence on radio explains the author's fascination for the English language in the early 1970s. Although his parents had attended the old primary school, he was able to absorb from his father the knowledge of the English language, and his mother, born in the state of Paraíba, to inherit the rich regional vocabulary. Greater than this legacy was the efforts of his parents to give him the books he needed, because they believed in their son’s potential. He ceased his studies after completing the technical administration course with the efforts from his father, who used to bring home extra books from which he extracted valuable knowledge. Only in 2006 is he absorbed by the desire to write to the world, perhaps to protect

himself from bitter thoughts about an uncertain and bleak future. In that year the first pages of Heart of Ice are born as an easy-to-read tale, where the author himself is seen in a surreal adventure that takes him to the north-east of England. Sometime later, in 1/4 of Memory, the author narrates his moments of prose with his grandmother and mother, both presented as witnesses of a time of

great transformations. It simply chronicles the trajectory of a family, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the turn of the millennium, the most significant period in history.

This time with A Kansas Tale, the author draws a dry land and the struggle of a family who dared defy natural events with their most deep strength. As a fictional story, any similarity with names of persons mentioned in this work would have been a mere coincidence. Names of places were extracted from geomaps and have no connections with any true facts or real persons.

A Kansas tale

Kansas, 1963 – Chapter I

The corn will perish in the field within a week if rain does not come. Help me, Lord! Bed River Valley is no more a good place. –Mr. Wally thought. Carl Wally was a twenty-five-year aged country man clung to his past and the kind of man who digs hope deep in his heart. May hadn't begun as he planned, for the drought was taking too long to finish and the season before ended with the land cracking under his feet. The sound of his feet touching the ground and the dusty breeze blowing over the field had put him down to his limits, showing clearly how hard it was for him to bear it all in silence. Hope became a life word in Mr. Wally's heart since he was a child learning farm work beside his mama and daddy in the cornfield. A farmer's lesson would usually start in the early hours before sunrise until late at night. His lesson was already full complete when he became a boy of teens. Although too young, he learned from his parents that hope was all they had in bad times.

He kept his eyes staring at the field, lit a cigar and blew the swirling smoke in deep silence. Memories of his

wife filled up his mind, memories of the day his wife passed away right after giving birth to little Margareth, whose name was given by her mother long before knowing she was pregnant. Quite soon, Margareth came to become Little Margie, as Wally used to gently call his daughter during the whole pregnancy of his wife. And so it was, after and after. Margareth Wally Deedle had brought to life the signs of a winner on her struggle for living, perhaps just the same struggle of her father years ago, standing defenseless with stoned eyes before the devastation caused by a tornado. It was an ordinary day just like many.

"It's been a long time we ain't have a good crop like this, Mama." –Wally's father said, while holding to the nose one big crop, smelling the vegetable happily, then threw it into a basket. He then turned to the kids. "It's getting late kids; you better go feed the animals at the barn. They must be starving by now. Gonna count one, two three…now, go! I bet you cannot beat the girls, Wally!"

Wally's father shouted as the kids had begun running to the sound of his command. Junior Wally, his two cousins, Susan and Margareth started a race on a dispute to set who would get to the barn at first place. No more than half an hour later the sky grew gray above the field and the warm breeze had begun blowing south at

noon. A sudden twister made touch down silently behind the crops mama and papa were doing the picking up. The mule that carried the baskets felt the smell of danger in the guts of her instincts and desperately departed from them as fast as it could. When the couple had found what that sudden move meant it was too late. Though they had struggled for their lives in a runaway across the plantation, they could not reach the safety of the basement in the barn. Young Wally could do nothing but take the dogs to the shelter with him and look after of his cousins while waiting for the storm to pass. Hope was all he and his cousins had during their prayer to the Lord, but hope came to fade completely when he saw the devastation caused by the twister. Holy blessed were Wally and his cousins for obeying his father's command to go to the barn in order to feed the animals. Although he had not seen the twister's tail grab his mama and papa, he deeply knew what it had happened, he knew there was nothing one could do. Alone in the world they felt, sat on the stairs of the barn, the only piece of the structure the twister had left untouched on a trail of destruction, Wally began to cry. That day Bed River Valley had become the path of destruction of a 155 miles per hour twisting wind, which is yet in the memories of its inhabitants as the day the world had almost ended. A day they shall never let go. His grandparents inherited a huge responsibility that day.

Two precious lives were gone in the wind, leaving behind three kids for them to raise with the help of the Lord.

Of a sudden, he got his thinking interrupted by the sound of a horse wagon bell coming not far. That was a relief to him, for his thinking was incredibly sad.

“There is Tom and the mail at the very same hour. I Hope he is bringing good news this time”. – said Mr. Wally to himself in a faint voice as he moved towards the mailbox to wait for his mail. Tom has been Bed River’s mail agent for over thirty years, time enough to be friend to everyone all around the valley, to whom he carried out personally the mail service every Monday. However, if the mail had an urgency demand, he would make all at his power to deliver it, no matter the time, no matter how the weather was.

“Wo! Wo! Hold on Mon Cher!”

“Hi, Tom! Beautiful new wagon my friend!”

“Morning, Wally! How are you doing? Mon Cher is not used to it yet.”

“I see. Things are going no good. I need rain, you know.”

"Times have been no good for everyone, too hot here, too dry everywhere."

"What you have got for me this week, Tom?"

"I don't know, I never read the mails, but here you are." –Tom replied while giving Mr. Wally three envelopes.

"Come down, let's have a fresh lemonade, Tom!"

"Sorry, Wally! Time flies quickly. I must finish before high sunlight, you know, it is too hot on this wagon's seat. Who knows next week, my friend? See you next week."

"All right, Tom! See you next week then."

"Let's go Mon Cher, let's go!"

Mr. Wally looked at the three envelopes in his hands, then, watched the mail's wagon take speed making a cloud of dust along the road until it disappeared at the corner behind the fence. Only two envelopes were the center of Mr. Wally's attention, one had the brand of the state bank, and the other, the Nation's Eagle brand. He folded both mails into his trousers' back pocket and put the other back into the mailbox after a short look again. Visibly worried about the mail sent by the bank he walked

back to the front door, took the mail out of his pocket, sat on a rocking chair and opened the bank mail.

"I knew it. Damn it! I knew it!" – said in a low voice and folded the envelope into his pocket again. "I can wait for rain, but they cannot wait for their money, dam it!"

Now again, his eyes turned out to the horizon staring at a mass of clouds, hoping it would move south and become rain, though it seemed too late now for the corn field. He had the animals to feed: five cows, a horse, some chickens, a dozen pigs and two friendly pointer dogs. The corn was no good for sale, but it was good enough for the animals, at least.

"Carl! Come have breakfast!" –Miss Susan said from the kitchen.

"I'm coming." –replied Mr. Wally

Milking was the first task of the day quite before sunrise, taken by Miss Susan at five sharply, who had a room in the house since her sister's death. She was there on that day by fate and there she remained to help Wally on raising little Margie. Miss Susan was at the farm by her sister's bed on the day Little Margie was born, placed there by destiny, which gave her no choice on that day when her lovely sister lost all her strength after a whole night struggling to give birth to the baby. Death knocked

on the door in the first hour by sunrise to trade one life for another as Miss Susan's sister stopped breathing. Susan felt horribly angry with the Lord for having pushed her against the most difficult decision of her life. Baby Margie wanted to live, but life would not be possible without her aunt's help. Susan truly knew what she had to do for saving the child. She fell in tears because the pain of her loss was about to duplicate if she failed. She had to do it fast.

"Come on, Wally! Go fast to the bathroom and pick the razor that is on the shelf. – Wally got to his feet and ran fast to the bathroom. His steps on the planks of the floor sounded loud and desperate. He was back to his bedroom in a flash time to hand the razor to his cousin. Susan took it with her shaking hand, her body was all shaking from head to toe and her tears rolled down her face.

"Help me Lord, please help me, Lord!"–she said in deep voice while she stared to her sister's face.

"You can do it, Susan! God and I know you can do it, dear. Please, you must do it." – Wally stated it calmly though he was shivering inside for the nightmare he had had a week ago was come real.

"Gimme a drink Wally, I know you hide a bottle."