

# WRITERS SPACE



AUGUST 2024 EDITION

AFRICA



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# EDITORIAL

Comfort Nyati, SDB

Chief Editor

Dear reader,

One of the unforeseen human instincts is that we have a certain obsession to be obsessed. This implies that underneath our inclinations we are inclined to some things, peoples, food, places or activities/habits that govern our levels of concentration in our day to day lives. As Mason Cooley puts it: “the cure for an obsession is to get another one.” Because it is inevitable to arrive at a point of no obsession. For what is life without obsession?

Today we live in a maniac world, a world that

applauds any form of innovations be it cogent or illogical. There is so much regard in liberalism, consumerism and activism in our everyday life. It doesn't require you to look far, just observe around you, you will – I am absolutely sure – notice that we are merely and nearly gripped with platforms, especially social media and seeking possible procedures on how it can make our lives way better.

Whereas there is this binary one would pick when engaged in discussions of such form. What one calls

obsession to the other is a fact or something that I would call a pleasure beacon. For example, in some philosophies, sex is an obsession while in others it is a fact.

Consequently, in this 92nd edition, our esteemed poets alluded that obsession is the unquenchable fire within. It is that which we wish our eyes could turn blind so that it is the last that our eyes lay upon. The grip of obsession turns possession into desolation. Yet I still can't let go.



**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Empowering African Writers

# Call for **Submissions**

Theme: **Redemption**

Writers Space Africa (WSA)  
is accepting submissions  
for its 94th edition  
(October 2024 Edition).

We accept Children's Literature,  
Creative Non-Fiction, Flash Fiction,  
Poetry, and Short Stories

To Submit:

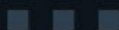
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For Enquires

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# Children's Literature



# BEATRICE'S OBSESSION

Joy James  
Nigeria



Once upon a time, at the edge of a kingdom called Amari, nestled a village known for its peaceful and harmonious way of life. Everyone lived kindly and respectfully with their neighbors.

A twelve-year-old girl named Beatrice lived with her parents in this village. She was known for her beauty. Her sparkling round

eyes held pupils like black diamonds, and her long, flowing black hair shimmered in the sunlight. Her long eyelashes fluttered like butterfly wings. Despite her parents' ordinary looks, Beatrice was blossoming into a beautiful young woman.

However, the villagers' constant praise filled Beatrice with arrogance. She believed her-



self to be the most beautiful girl in the entire kingdom. Often, she would sashay around the village, dressed to impress, asking everyone if they thought she was beautiful.

Her dreams of being the undisputed beauty were shattered when traveling merchants who visited the village for their yearly trade spoke highly of the princess's appearance. Apparently, she was so stunning that some even considered her to be an earthly goddess.

Consumed by jealousy of the princess, Beatrice decided to seek out the village witch to make herself even more beautiful than royalty. The journey to the witch's forest was fraught with danger, but Beatrice wouldn't be deterred. She repeated a mantra to herself, "I must be the most beautiful in the kingdom!" Her determination grew until she finally spotted the witch's ramshackle hut which was on the verge of collapse.

The witch was an old woman, undeniably ugly. Her nose hooked downwards, and her eyes resembled a hawk's. Despite being the ugliest creature Beatrice had ever seen, her obsession with beauty drove her to seek the witch's potion. When the witch saw Beatrice, a wide smile spread across her face, a smile Beatrice found incredibly unsettling. Nevertheless, Beatrice took the potion from the witch and returned home, determined to follow the instructions precisely.

The next morning, a bloodcurdling scream pierced through the village, emanating from Beatrice's house. Everyone who rushed to

the scene could not believe their eyes. They were unsure if it was even Beatrice standing before them. Her face was marred by a horrible scar, so frightening, it terrified the village children. The witch's potion, instead of enhancing her beauty, it had the opposite effect.

Devastated, the villagers pleaded with the witch to reverse the curse. "Oh, the potion is permanent," the witch said without a shred of remorse. "There's nothing I can do."

An evil glint flickered in the witch's eyes as she continued, "I merely taught her a valuable lesson."




"A valuable lesson?" The villagers cried out in disbelief.

The witch cackled with delight. "Her obsession with beauty led to her downfall."

The villagers left the witch's hut, their hearts heavy with sadness for Beatrice, the village beauty who had become so very ugly.



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**RWANDA**

OCTOBER 22-27, 2024.







**Creative Nonfiction**





# THE SYMPTOMS OF AN ADDICTION

Carmi Philander  
South Africa

Even as I stretch my mouth into some semblance of a decent smile, my spineless lips curl in on themselves, re-treating towards my throat the way the ocean recoils from the shore and slithers back to the horizon.

I always carefully greet my family and friends with the most pathetic excuse for a grin—the greatest travesty of spontaneous delight—all because I fear that they might see my pitch-black gums and charcoal-stained teeth. Afraid that they would realize that I'd ingested more ink than “actual” food.

But my struggle to sustain a casual façade does not merely end there. No.

I am also forced to shove my hands into my pockets so that passers-by would not catch a glimpse of the magic glittering at my fingertips or the pencil shavings frantically tucked beneath my painted nails. I have no choice but to ignore the weight of a thousand worlds and a million words dangling from my wrists like literary bracelets.

Because if anyone were to discover how deeply dictionaries have buried themselves inside of me—and I inside of them—then they would inevitably try to tear the pages from my grasp, claiming that it's for my own good when their interests clearly revolve around

their own selfish concerns. If they knew that lavish libraries, with their dusty shelves and books, have built their palatial homes inside of my lungs, then they would split open my chest and strip me of my stories.

This is why I dip my head towards the ground, pressing the tip of my nose against stone and sand, so that nobody would notice my bloodshot gaze and the dark crescents beneath my eyes—the side effects of late-night perusals.

The symptoms of an addiction.

But it was not the kind of drug I first became acquainted with and then decided to take it in small, experimental dosages; I was not magnetized to in stages.

No.

I fell for it all at once, as it had been threaded through my existence since birth. Although, when I was much younger, I had been oblivious to my obsession. But like the seductive sirens that they are, innumerable stanzas of poetry had shamelessly

seated themselves upon distant rocks that jutted out of the sea and sang my name so sweetly across the dark ocean. As I was being lured into the mist, volumes upon volumes of rhyme schemes and extended metaphors had swept my entire body beneath their suffocating waves... yet I had not tried to escape their infinite embrace.

I allowed fiction to engulf me.

Ever since then, my passion for reading and writing has become a blazing blind fire that burns through my veins, its eyes long-since gouged out by that irrepressible desire for more and more and more—and my faithful blood is the gasoline that feeds its roaring flame.

It is an insatiable craving that cleverly carves itself into my bones. Its knotted roots twist inside of me like gnarled claws, sinking into my thirsty soul, seeking fertile soil and permanent anchorage. And like the desperate fool I am, I soak its thick wooden fingers in water instead of letting them shrivel up into

splinters. Like an incompetent (yet committed) gardener, I have irrigated the wild plants that have invaded my heart until I could no longer find it in me to smash my knuckles against my sternum and rip out the weeds that I've weaved throughout my ribcage like flat green pythons.

It is the thief that steals my mind—and due to its burglary, my thoughts are not my own.

It is a killer and I am its devoted victim.

It is a parasite and I am its loyal host.

It is a poison and I devour it daily.

And as I consume it, it consumes me.

So, I kill myself slowly, steadily, sadistically—savouring every single second of my suffering. For I would rather peel back my skin piece by piece than rip it off in one sitting.

I would rather fall into my grave before my pen falls away from my grip.





**Flash Fiction**



# THE YELLOW PAGE

Francis Mkwapatira  
Malawi

He latches the solid wood door behind himself and sends his jacket flying onto her armoire. He nonchalantly glares through the dark to make up how she must be lying on the King-size. With his right foot, he shoves off his brown oxford shoe off his left heel. "Fast asleep. Thank goodness. I love you," he says, carefully sinking into the foam, that the sighing of the pillows and mattress toppers doesn't wake the lying mound next to him. It's going to be one of those rare nights without a nag, he hopes.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the morning, he opens the blinders, and turns to the lying mound. It is as still as the previous night, but she is already up. Her phone is no longer on her bedside table. Neither are her meds and hand cream, but her pen and a yellow piece of paper. "Where could she be?" he rubs his eyes and reads its contents:

Dear Zack,

I apologise for being a constant pester. You are a hard working and successful man that ladies admire. Today, let me make amends for the following: the times I've made you sad, shouting at you when you cancelled our romantic dinners last minute to meet a deadline, for the day I walked out on you for looking up a work email when I talked about my mom's sickness, for freaking out when you forgot to pick Ann from childcare when I prepared her 3rd birthday cake. I am sorry for the nights you left projects untouched because my body demanded a touch too. I've finally decided to make it up to you by leaving you to your work. I am sure Ann will miss her dad's presents, but she won't have to miss a father, anymore.

Lovingly,

Grace.



# EVEN THE SUN SETS

Nathaniel Z. Match  
Nigeria

‘What can I do? I’ve tried everything,’ said Isabella, her voice choking with sobs. ‘Have you tried nothing?’ Asked Dr Matthew with a kind smile

‘What do you mean?’

‘In the four months you’ve been working on this musical composition, how many days have you taken off?’

‘I can’t stop thinking about it. Whether I’m eating, lying down, on the bus, in the bathroom, I’m always finding new ideas, always working.’

Dr Matthew looked at his watch. ‘Is our session over?’

‘No, I want to show you something. Come with me.’

They walked up a flight of stairs to the concrete roof. A cool breeze blew. The sun was setting.

‘Have a seat.’ He gestured to a pair of rocking chairs.

They sat down.

‘Isn’t that beautiful?’ He rocked his chair.

‘It’s nice but my piece will premier...’

‘Shhhh. Listen to the birds.’

A group of sparrows chirped as they swooped. Isabella listened, then sighed and stretched her legs

‘Without the sun, we wouldn’t have any life on earth. But even the sun sets. If it didn’t, we’d be dead. We all need cycles. Sunrise and sunset. Your creativity is desperately in need of a sunset.’

‘There’ll be plenty of time to rest after I finish.’

‘Yes. But if you don’t rest, you may never finish. Rest, and you may do more in a day than you did in a week.’

The sun slipped behind the horizon. ‘Try this: No more work until you watch tomorrow’s sunset. Forget all about the project. Cover your piano and have some fun. Watch a movie, have a long sleep, visit a friend, go for a walk. And after sunset, you continue the composition. Sounds good?’

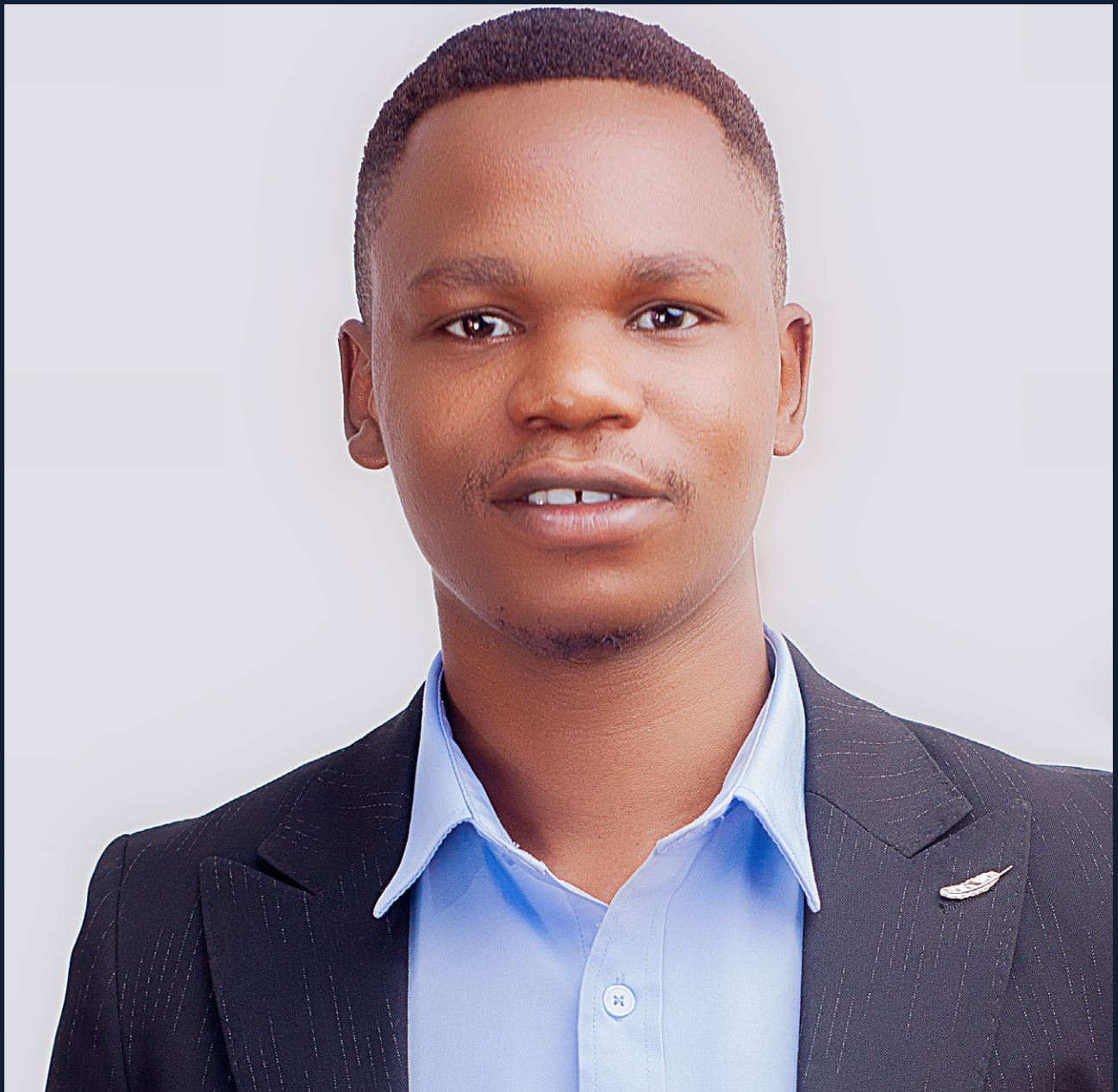
Isabella smiled. ‘Yes. Easy enough. I can do that.’

‘Want some ice cream?’

‘Totally! I feel better already.’

Creative  
**SPOTLIGHT**

*Chipo Chama Moono*





*In this edition, Liza Chuma Akunyili speaks with Chipo Chama. He is a Zambian creative who strongly believes writing is the best way to preserve and communicate the present to the future generations to come. 'If you don't write it, time will erase it'.*

**Hi Chipo,**

**It is such a pleasure to meet you. As I prepared for our tet-a-tet, I couldn't help getting excited about today.**

**How are you doing? Tell me how your day is going**

Hi Liza, thank you for having me. I'm doing great, and I hope you are as well. Interestingly, my day has taken a turn for the better after a chaotic morning. Maybe this interview is just the thing to brighten up my day!

**Awwwn. That's so lovely to know. Nothing makes the evening more restful like knowing you have no carry-over chaos. I'm glad.**

**Let us talk about you.**

**I love your name Chipo Chama M. What does it mean? Because a lot of Zambians have the same name and I got curious.**

I should actually mention that the 'M' stands for Moono, so my full name is Chipo Chama Moono. I am a child of an inter-tribal union; my mother is Bemba and my father is Tonga. 'Chipo' means 'gift' in my father's language, and 'Moono' is a clan name derived from the name of a traditional fishing basket called 'Moono', from my father's side too. On my mother's side, 'Chama' is a name that I haven't yet found a direct meaning for, but in other translations, it's said to mean 'intelligent' or 'sharp'.

**So, you are essentially a sharp gift! I totally could work with that. Consider the intelligent work you've been doing in the creative space; I think your name tracks.**

**Tell me: When did you first fall in love with creative writing?**

My passion for creative writing began to take shape in high school, where I was inspired by my teacher of English through composition assignments. However, my love for words and language started much earlier, as I fondly remember reciting poems and memory verses during Sunday school meetings as a child. Although I wasn't able to write my own



pieces back then, those early experiences laid the foundation for my future interest in writing.

**Considering how tough composition was for some students and how difficult memorizing for recitals usually are, what made you explore that love?**

As an ambivert, my extroverted side only emerges when I'm with people I'm comfortable with or in situations that require me to be outgoing. Memorizing; reciting verses and poems covered up my shyness, I felt free and at ease whenever an opportunity to speak was presented.

I'm mostly an introverted person. Engaging in creative writing has been incredibly beneficial for me, as it allows me to share my thoughts, fears, and aspirations. You see, from those composition days, every piece I

create is inspired by one of the following: my personal experiences, surroundings, inner conflicts, or opinions on specific topics. I find that writing is the most effective way for me to communicate with the world and express myself, far more so than if I were to be placed in the spotlight on a stage.

**Oooh! I think every writer can relate with communicating effectively through their writing. When you're upset or excited, do you write letters to people (on a personal level)?**

When it comes to personal expression, I don't typically write letters to others, even when I'm feeling upset or excited. However, I do have a unique approach to processing my emotions. When I'm overwhelmed, I channel my feelings into poetry. Most of my poetry pieces are infused with strong emotions that



Chipo Chama shares his insightful review on the book of the month at the Zambia Book Club

I'm trying to convey. Writing has always been my go-to venting strategy when I struggle to express myself verbally.

**That makes perfect sense. If you could start your writing career from the beginning, what would you do better this second time?**

I would publish my first book that I wrote while I was in primary school. I think that would be great. But learning more about the craft can be the path I would take.

**That's interesting. You sound very sure of this book. Did you have a book idea in primary school and what would the book have been about?**

That's an interesting question! While I didn't have a fully formed book idea in primary school, I can recall a spark of inspiration. If I were to write a book back then, it would have been about my childhood experiences. The title might have been "She Still Cares", which reflects the unwavering love and support my grandmother showed me despite my mischievous behavior. She played a significant role in raising me, and I'm grateful for her influence. Looking back, I realize that my childhood was a defining period that shaped me into the person I am today.

**Oooo! We love Grandma already. Send out love to her. Your latest book has a phenomenal title: Behind the jokes and stories. What inspired the anthology?**

I believe that we are acting about 90% of the

time when we're around others, rarely showing our true selves. This is the idea behind my title "Behind the Jokes and Stories". Even when we share stories and jokes, there are often deeper, more personal stories that remain hidden, known only to the individual. These unseen stories may involve fears, secrets, shame, fantasies, convictions, and more. While we may not openly share these things, writing allows us to express them honestly.

I'd like to mention that I have other titles to my name, including "Tales of a Drunkard", "Silver Lining", and "I am my Own Painting"

**For the sake of those outside of Zambia, where can we get your books online?**

My books can be accessed through Amazon and Utushimi platforms. Follow the links below:

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B0CTTQNDML>

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0CTTQNDML>

Utushimishi Platform: <https://www.utushimi.com/?storyId=556&share>

**When did you make up your mind to monetize your writing skills?**

It wasn't until someone asked me to write a poem for them and inquired about my rates that I considered monetizing my writing skills. That's when it hit me - I could actually get paid for my writing! From then on, I be-



gan publishing books for sale, offering freelance writing services, and completing paid projects such as articles, essays, research papers, and business concept papers. My rates are Godly, so feel free to engage me!

**That is so fantastic! People usually ask writers to write for free. Again, where can we book your services?**

I couldn't agree more! It's time to shift the narrative and recognize the worth of our craft. Writing is a skill that demands dedication, creativity, and hours of hard work. As such, it's essential to place a fair value on our services and avoid writing for free whenever possible. Let's cultivate a culture that respects the worth of our craft and provides fair compensation for our expertise.

If you're interested in booking my services, please feel free to reach out to me on WhatsApp at +260979484262 or via email at [chipochama94@gmail.com](mailto:chipochama94@gmail.com). I'm eager to explore potential collaborations and bring ideas to life.

**How has a writing community shaped your creative skill?**

The writing community has significantly contributed to my creative skill. As the African proverb goes, 'It takes a village to raise a child,' and this is truly reflected in my craft. I've learned more from others in the writing community than I have through personal research. They've challenged me to improve my writing and maintain ethical standards,

and I'm grateful for their guidance and feedback. Although, I must admit that sometimes I can be stubborn and resistant to change my writing style, I'm working on being more open to constructive criticism and direction than I have been in the past.

**How many writing communities have you been a part of since you started writing professionally? Can you recommend some to our audience?**

Throughout my writing journey, I've had the pleasure of being part of various writing communities that have contributed significantly to my growth as a writer. Here are some of the notable ones:

1. Zambia Book Club
2. Writers Space Africa
3. International African Writers Association
4. PoeticAfrica Magazine
5. UNZA Catholic Magazine
6. The Nib Hub Community
7. Southern Writers Bureau
8. Support Zambia Literature
9. Closet of Mixed Minds
10. Colour Culture Community
11. Global Platform Zambia

I highly recommend these communities to our audience, as they offer a wealth of knowledge, support, and opportunities for growth.

If you're looking to hone your craft, consider joining Writers Space Africa, Support Zambia Literature, or the International African Writers Association. Book enthusiasts and those who enjoy reviews and critiques will find Closet of Mixed Minds and Zambia Book Club to be excellent destinations. For those interested in performance poetry or other creative expressions, Colour Culture and Global Platform Zambia are great options to explore. Most of these communities, you can search for them on Facebook.

**If you were mentoring a young writer, what top 5 advice would you give that person?**

- a. As the famous saying goes, "If there's a book you want to read and no one has written it, write it yourself."
- b. Learn to accept criticism from others if you want to grow as a writer. Constructive feedback is essential to improving your craft.
- c. Understand the rules of writing, but also know how to break them effectively. Don't be too rigid with yourself - creativity has no limits! Explore and experiment extensively.
- d. If you're passionate about a particular topic or genre, recognize that there are others who share your enthusiasm and may be more experienced or skilled. Seek out those communities and learn from them.
- e. Finally, read widely and write regularly. The more you read and write, the better

you'll become as a writer.

**I've enjoyed every part of today's conversation. Thank you very much for obliging when Writers Space Africa reached out; you've honoured us greatly.**



Chipo Chama at the 2023 Ngoma Awards ceremony as a nominee for best poetry of the year.





PoeticAfrica is Africa's first trilingual poetry magazine published quarterly. The magazine showcases rich and diverse poetry in English, Kiswahili, and French from all over Africa to the world.





**Poetry**



# EMBERS OF **DESIRE**

Comfort N A Okyere  
Ghana

---

The unquenchable fire within,  
A passion too powerful to ignore,  
Breaking boundaries, shattering walls,  
A force leading to both triumph and downfall,  
A desire so wild and daring,  
But beware, dear friend,  
This power can lead to a bitter end,  
Seek harmony within your soul's depths,  
Let love and passion dance their duet.





# SOLITUDE

Oladapo Johnson  
Nigeria

Away from the boisterous barging of the day  
 And melancholic musings of the metropolis,  
 Byways, highways, roads, and streets, trucks, tricycles, sedans, vans,  
 Motorcyclists, tans, sweated brows, and frowns.  
 Illicit and legitimate souls, all on the prowl,  
 Everyone, every day, ever religious, the Exodus,  
 Movement, and spirit, all so ubiquitous, coming from all directions,  
 Precariously meeting at traffic lights and confluent intersections.  
 Law Enforcement and offenders on guard,  
 Bus-stops littered with reckless pedestrians, and bystanders  
 Lingering on Boulevards. In close juxtaposition,  
 Affluent Pavilions, Sky Scrappers, Concierge Condominiums,  
 Drape the skyline, side by side with overpopulated low-cost housing,  
 Noise amplified, some abandoned projects waiting only to be gentrified.  
 Victors, Victims, and the Vanquished, a dirge for the dead,  
 While the living pray and wish, singing songs of justice with freedom chants,  
 You don't need clairvoyance to understand the recalcitrant.  
 In a rat race where reality bites and regurgitates, like a prude I wait  
 In my place of Peace, where I sought Solace, Gratitude in Solitude.



# AS OLD AS TIME

Clare B W Okhabi  
Kenya

---

My lips dine on your words  
Oh, sweet divine thee  
An angel from the sky-fall  
How much guilt do they who let you go?

My Aphrodite, do you suit this cliché  
For your beauty leaves men senseless  
Even in depths of war you're a cause  
Their last breaths a prayer to you

With just the sight of you  
I wish my eyes would turn blind  
So that you're the last  
My eyes lay upon.



# FANTASY

Genevive Ahumuza  
Uganda

Quite often than not,  
Fairy tale thoughts invade and conquer my sparse crown,  
Uplifting my entire being  
Into pseudo glory,  
A realm, where I am exalted,  
A noble laureate,  
A world's best...  
Embedded in the world book of records,  
Flying on the wings of accomplishment,  
Accomplishment itself...  
A beautiful world.  
A beautiful life.  
I live, touch, breath its surreal scent...  
And yet...  
In a blink, in half a blink,  
All vanishes through a solitary vanishing cabinet...  
I fall and crush excruciatingly hard,  
Back into the treacherous reality,  
the double aged sword of reality,  
Straight into my inconspicuous space  
Where I am the emptiness in an empty space!  
Yet I still can't let go.



# THE VEIL OF OBSESSION

Rebecca Eduah  
Ghana

The soil of the fathers has been soiled  
 A soil for which they toiled until it became their possession  
 They wrestled with lions for the children of their loins  
 The redness of their eyes was mistaken for the grapes of the South

As people, the past foiled their division  
 But the children of the fathers coiled their conscience to bring division  
 Their love for coins turned their soil into oils of turmoil  
 Ill-decision has devoured their possession

An obsession with gains blindfolded the children  
 Quest for spoils clouded their foresight like a voile  
 They gave no heed to the call of discretion  
 The veil of obsession led them yonder

Hither and thither, the land now wails  
 It wails, wails, wails for the children's children  
 They have no soil to call their possession  
 The grip of obsession has turned their possession into desolation.





**Short Stories**



# MASTER ODINAKA

Nkegbe C Joshua  
Nigeria



Master Odinaka kept suppressing the impulse which had begun to transform into an overwhelming force with every passing second, and coercing him to go berserk. Even as he tutors the I-want-to-know-more SS2 class

– as they are widely known in the school for their penchant for learning and throwing questions at teachers after they were done teaching. Of course, no teacher dares enter the class without adequate preparation.



He is almost through with teaching and is now being hurled with questions like stones by the students. At this point, the impulse seems to burst out naked. Yes! Naked it does burst out. Master Odinaka since 2017 when he secured teaching appointment in Rockview Secondary School, has not been seen falling out with any student at the course of asking questions by the student. But right now, he is not just annoyed but extremely pissed off at Sopuru, the student questioning him.

“Two adverbs can co-occur together and qualify a verb in a sentence,” Mr. Odinaka said coarsely.

“But sir... I thought it's only Adjective and Adverb...”

“Shut up! Take what I said and be still. I won't strangle myself here over the peanut they give me in the name of salary,” Mr. Odinaka blurted unequivocally. Sopuru is flabbergasted, as well as the other students. This is strange and unlike Mr. Odinaka: one teacher who is darling to more than half and quarter of the students. The atmosphere seems to

take cognisance of the odd situation and becomes still, the gentle breeze seeping in through the partly opened glass windows recoils and halts. Sopuru's eyes jam with those of Mr Odinaka with sobriety and then glance through the class — who are as well watching him and Mr. Odinaka — in one swoop. Mr. Odinaka is taken aback at his outburst and blinks his eyes to be sure he isn't dreaming. Heavy silence akin to that of a serene mortuary has pervaded the class. Every eye beam on him including that of Sopuru who has taken his seat in the deadbeat of silence. Bereft of what next to do, he dashes out of the class and heads towards the staff room.

In the staff room, he gulps some water from the Eva Can Water he has been using for close to two weeks now, and wipes his mouth with his hankie. He stares around and to nothing in particular, his head is so beclouded to decipher the conversations among the few staff who are not in their classes for whatever reasons. What a mess of him! He ponders and sulks. It's been over four months

now he has been writing the school director to increase his salary of 30 thousand naira to 45 or at least 40 thousand naira to meet up with the prices of commodities in the market --- which have skyrocketed and keep skyrocketing on each passing day --- but the director keeps turning him over with cock and bull stories: he agrees to reshuffle his salary but at the end of each month he will pay him the usual 30 thousand naira and promise to start paying him the new agreed amount in the coming month only to repeat the old method of payment with the attendant empty-promise. He is in his early thirties and still lives with his family --- his parents and younger siblings. His two younger brothers Chinonso and Tobechukwu are both working in pomade producing company and are receiving better pay than him. That his younger brothers who are just O-level holders are receiving better pay and are contributing more to the family welfare than he is a slap on his face. A graduate! He feels something damp run across his chin, drop on his shirt and disappear, leav-



ing a spot of wetness. Lo! It's a drop of tears. Quickly, he bends on his desk and whimpers softly, being wary of other teachers who are laughing over their jokes and conversations.

It's 3:30 pm, and by 4:0'clock the school bell will jingle as usual announcing to all and sundry of the school dismissal. Mr. Odinaka's anxiety waxes stronger with each passing second; he wonders if the SS2 students have not reported his absence from their class to the school director --- even after Ugochi, the class prefect reminded him of having them in the morning. Of course, his absence is not unconnected with what transpired yesterday. He taught in other classes he had today, but avoided SS2 class. He is yet to get rid of the cloud of shame that descended on him that moment he trotted out of the class --- in confusion --- like a man with a little touch of madness. He was rummaging for words with which to justify his missing SS2 class today to the director when Ugochi strode in. "Master please we want to see you," she said more like a whisper. Mr Odinaka becomes apprehensive, 'Master please we want to see you' re-echo in his brain and jolts his heart.

Master Odinaka's pulse beat faster when he discovers almost the entire SS2 students were the 'we' that wanted to see him.

"Master we're sorry for what happened yesterday. We understand the stress you're having. You're one of the best teachers if not the best teacher..."

"He's the best teacher," Eberechi, a dark skinny girl chipped in.

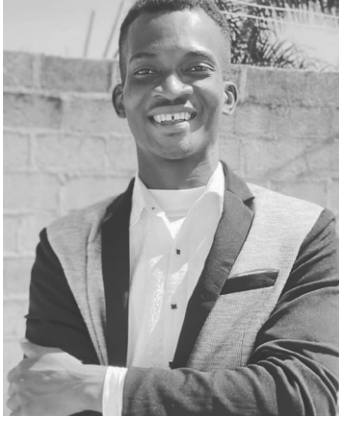
The rest of the students affirm, "Yes! He is

our best teacher"

Ugochi continued. "You have been teaching us well with love and care. Never have we seen or heard you fall out with any student in this school for asking you questions. What happened yesterday is just an indication of what you are passing through, and we can't stay by and watch you suffer without stretching out a helping hand in our own little way."

"Yes," others affirm.

"Please take this little token from us and supplement your salary," Ugochi slips an envelope into Master Odinaka palm. Master Odinaka reluctantly grasp the envelop and feels its fatness. Certainly, it contains wads of naira notes. He opens his mouth but no word comes out; he is flabbergasted. Before he could gather himself to express his immense gratitude, the students have almost half gone from him, heading towards their class.



# MY CASE IS **DIFFERENT**

Celestine S Reuben  
Nigeria



A catalyzed, malnourished, and self-evident coldness from the grief of his father's recurring waist-down paralysis he accidentally encountered before the toll gate massacre, and his brother's death after the toll gate massacre – a disastrous, unhinged season alongside the coronavirus pandemic. Once

the episode was triggered, everyone stood on their toes. It didn't matter to him but to his sons. "Your father cannot die like this. He sacrificed everything for you and your twin brother before he died," his mother would say; an emotional blackmail to carve in and out his choices. June knew his mother knows

something about his father's paralysis. But she never mentioned it. Perhaps, her case was also different. Their cases were different.

"My case is different," June's father would recite. A few years before paralysis, it became his watchword. On a warm Friday, he applied for the position of receptionist at a prestigious hotel in Lagos. Fifty applicants were shortlisted for the interview on a Monday, and the Sunday sermon in church, a day before, was tagged 'My Case is Different.' His faith rose to the highest pinnacle and then his case was eventually different. He was rejected for the role. Months later, he became a Federal Road Safety Corps Member, posted to Ikare in Ondo State.

He was loved; dedicated, and punctual at the highway checkpoints. After tedious administrative strategic brainstorming with the police officers and the soldiers, the checkpoints mounted to three on the Ikare highway, five kilometers from one another.

"Mummy!" June yelled. "Please come to the locker

room. I am here." The concrete floor rumbled at the sporadic steps of his mother's gait from his father's room. "Why didn't you tell us that Daddy was a thief?" He pointed at a roughed, dust-ridden newspaper, emblazoned with a headline – The Federal Government of Nigeria dismissed three Federal Road Safety Corps Members for theft and murder in Ondo State: Page Thirty-Four. He opened the page and saw his father's image alongside two other unknown faces. June's mother was aghast and she imagined disappearing into his brain and discarding the discovery.

"Do not call your father like that," June's mother snapped, adamantly, and smacked his right shoulder.

"Keep hiding your husband. I am going to school. Keep hiding him until the truth blows up. I do not understand the reason you keep hiding him," His voice shook and his eyes became laden with unsolicited tears. After Ken was killed at the toll gate by those soldiers, whose children will also be killed, nobody made the case for us. Ken just died like a chicken.

And now, your husband has a history of theft," June recited, held the dust-ridden newspaper, and gestured with his left index finger at his father's face. The locker room became a justice court. June's father heard from his room and then called.

"Your father is calling you," his mum said and grasped his left hand. "Are you deaf? I said your father is calling you."

"Never! I will not go in there and talk to a thief, who always told us never to keep anything from him and you. But he kept this from us."

"Are you out of your senses, you this boy?" his mum snapped at him with groaning in her voice and tears in her eyes. "Get out! Always behaving like a bastard son." June angrily dropped the newspaper on the floor. The pages flipped swiftly in the air and landing on the floor, page thirty-four was glamorously opened.

June walked to his father's room and saw him in the bed. He imagined dazing him with some slaps to reset his memory for committing a crime that, who



knew, bounced back at his twin brother, Ken. There was something outrageously boring, interesting, and beautifully sad about the discovery of his father's history as a Federal Road Safety Corps member at Ikare, who assisted highway automobile accident victims – drivers and passengers – of both private and public traveling vehicles at, or relatively close to his checkpoint. His faithfulness, compassion, and empathy for the victims by calling for an ambulance, garnered fame at the headquarters. Everybody knew about his loyalty to the saving of lives. A few reports would emerge, subsequently afterward about the missing of either driver's or passengers' phones, pieces of jewelry, accessories, money, and other valuables. June's father and his two colleagues at the checkpoint, before legal interrogation on each omen, would share the stolen belongings after each ambulance paramedic intervention, and then call for a towing vehicle.

The police officers were known for collecting what was called 'Pay your tithe

to the police. Police are your friend.' Then, the soldiers joined. No one thought about the Federal Road Safety Corps because they did not look like one. But June's father became one; his case was different. Once, he attended a crusade at his church's provincial headquarter, also tagged 'My Case is Different.' A month later, salaries were delayed and his colleagues wrote letters to the office administrative head. He was admonished to write but he declined. "My salary cannot be delayed. Don't you know that my case is different?" he would say. His colleagues laughed at him to scorn at each headquartered meeting.

'My case is different' when the posting came out. 'My case is different' when the toll gate protest became acidimetrically heated and took his son's life. June's father's case was indeed different when salaries were paid but not his. And instead of writing, he prayed and cast out the demons involved in the delay. Were the demons not aware that his case has always been different?

"My son," June's fa-

ther said and hand-directed him to sit at the upper edge of the bed. His mother stood at the entrance. "It's not what you think. It is the devil's handwork."

"There goes the national anthem again," June said, dismissively.

"Will you shut up?" his mother snapped. June's father waved his right hand, to tranquilize his wife. "Omo buruku. Stupid boy."

"I did all because of you and your brother," June's father recounted, regrettably. "I wanted the both of you to have a good life. I did not want you to suffer as I had. I did not want you to depend on salaries because I knew that salaries can never and will never make both of you wealthy. I don't want you to be complacent. I want you to be independent."

"The reason for your theft?" June asked. His eyes were sunk into exasperation cuddled with desperation and curiosity. The combination of past, present, and perhaps the future. "Wait Daddy, how did you come about this paralysis? I only came back from school and then met

you like this.”

“Should I tell him?” June’s father looked at his wife, and she abruptly tilted her head in refusal for divulgence. June caught his mother’s refusal. “Mummy. So you don’t want him to say anything about it right? No problem. Keep it to yourself.”

“Sit down my son,” his father said. “Your anger is different from mine. I was angry at everything when I was your age. I had an accident while driving.”

“How?” June asked. “You don’t have a car, daddy. I never saw you driving a car and I only met you like this last year, when I travelled back for the coronavirus pandemic lockdown, before the toll gate protest against police brutality. So, how come?”

“It’s enough, my husband,” June’s mother interrupted. “The time is far spent. My husband, please enough of this.”

“Allow me to tell him the rest of the story,” June’s father insisted as if he was cooked some fatigue and asked to dissect it with a fork.

“I said enough of the story,” June’s mother dissented. “Both of you will continue later. Mr. June, I need to attend to my husband. You can start going back to school.” June left the room in haste, upset. There was an unfinished task, an unaccomplished mission basking inside of him.

“Honey,” June’s father said to his wife. “Why didn’t you let me just tell him that I had an accident on the same Ikare highway road, with a stolen vehicle we had apprehended at an accident scene?”

“June is too young for all these. Please, when the time comes, you will tell him. By the way, the governor called for parents of the toll gate victims. I will attend the meeting,” June’s mother said.

“I miss my son, Ken,” June’s father sobbed. “I miss him so much. He should not have died.”



# WHEN OBSESSION TURNS **TO MURDER**

Micah Angel  
South Africa



A body has been found.

I, Detective Constance Nkosi, loom over the body of a young female, dumped in a field near a quiet street. Between the smell and the state of the body a foul taste fills my mouth.

The forensics team scamper about, looking for any trace of her identity, and collecting everything they deem worthy of evidence. If only this part of the suburbs were taken care of. South Africa has really gone back-



wards. You can't tell what's evidence, and what's trash.

Our medical examiner, Dr Veronica Crowley, is on her knees working tirelessly. I snap on my medical gloves. The first thing I notice is that there is not a shred of clothing on this poor girl.

Her long blonde hair is now matted and crusted with blood. Multiple patches of scalp can be seen. Her face is smashed in so badly to the point where she is unrecognizable. Broken skin and intense swelling clearly visible. Her throat brutally slit. There are several stab marks covering her broken body. Her chest area is violently mutilated. This suspect however likes to use a multitude of items to inflict this amount of torture.

Dr Veronica adjusts her legs for a closer look.

"This poor girl." She sighed.

"Assaulted?" I enquire bitterly.

"Multiple times, with multiple items." She was horrified.

"Jesus..." I ground out.

"Is it the same suspect?"

God, I hope it is...

"In my honest opinion, judging from all this mindless mutilation, yes." She states.

I hold out my gloved hand which she graciously grabs, and I pull her up. We stand in silence staring at everything and everyone around us. Our little tradition.

I have known Veronica even before she landed the title. We were in the same high school. Once we graduated, I went off to pursue the military and I suppose she stayed behind to further her studies.

I curse loudly.

"Indeed." She agreed.

This is a freaking nightmare.

Bodies of young children keep popping up wherever this individual goes. We have worked with other precincts in this country and established that the suspect prefers to target girls between the ages of 9 and 17.

We have set out curfews, warnings, posters, social media posts, the whole shebang and nothing changes. It's as if the people who live in this

damn place no longer care for their fellow man, or in this case, child. The list just keeps getting longer with not a single shred of info on this damn person.

On top of all the kidnappings and mutilations we are also dealing with random gunshot victims. These seem to be mainly males in their late twenties to early thirties. They are typically found lying in the street with multiple wounds. Probably drug related incidents.

After all, the individual we are after, seems to prefer to use everything but firearms. So, I highly doubt that he is responsible. There is just no way that these two cases can be related. The profile simply does not match.

"Let's get this crime scene wrapped up, so we can get her identified." I sigh.

"Yes, her family needs to be informed." Veronica adds on.

"We will just leave out the gory details, as usual."

Once she has been identified we usually reach out to the family to confirm her identity. I hate those moments.

The despair of the family when they see the remains of someone they loved and cherished utterly decimates part of my soul.

With forensics running double time to process all the evidence, I am beyond frustrated. Bodies keep popping up and we do not even have a single drop of DNA to point us to our unsub.

"This effing case is running cold." I ground out in the vehicle. My partner Detective Steve Willemse is crowding the passenger seat. He is a burly man. He has dark chocolate eyes with a matching bushy beard. In all honesty, the man looks like a fluffy bear. We have been partners for over ten years.

Taking a turn, two cars fly past us.

"JESUS!" I yell, swerving out of the way.

Filled with adrenaline I flung on the sirens and take chase. Before long we spot METRO in the distance which flags off the car closest to us, the other speeding off into the distance.

"Good." I mutter. The bastard deserved it.

"Wait, hold up." Steve states next to me.

"What's up?" I ask curiously.

"Something is not right, pull over." He states, his eyes darkened.

"Gut?"

"Gut."

Pulling in behind the car I can see that the cop and the driver are in a heated discussion. The driver is almost hysterical. Metro spots me and heads back to his car. Shouting his gratitude for the world to hear.

"What seems to be the problem?" I enquire.

"My daughter..." the man sobs.

"Talk to me sir." I try to urge.

"My daughter has just been kidnapped."

I reach into my pocket and take out my dishevelled notebook. "Tell me everything."

"My ten-year-old daughter, Amira, was playing outside. A silver BMW pulled up, a man jumped out and grabbed her, then they sped off." Tears flow down his face. "I jumped in my car

and followed them."

"I will get a bolo out." Steve stated while he rushes to our vehicle.

"I will need your contact details." I need more info, but I will have to get that on the way. This cannot wait. I quickly scribble down his details.

"We will do our utmost best to find her." I promise half-heartedly.

A call comes in soon after and we frantically speed to the warehouse where a similar car was spotted.

The evening sky lights up with a variety of flashing lights. I hope this is it.

"This better be him." I spat.

Our morale will not survive another dead end.

"Look over there." Steve points at something lying in the road.

"Looks like a GSW, we should call it in."

Steve gets on his radio. With my sirens blaring I rush to join the rest of the entourage. Time is of the essence and that poor girl, if she is still alive, won't be for much lon-

ger.

"We will provide backup" One of our patrollers states as the two of us hop out of the car.

"Let's take this man down." I command before barging in.

Checking floor by floor, we manage to find our unsub. He is a middle-aged white man with a psychotic look on his face. A young girl screaming in his grasp. Blood pooling on the floor below the two of them. Bastard.

"Who are you? Why are you here?" the deranged man complains.

"Drop your weapon and let her go!" Steve commands.

"No, I don't think I will." The man states before pushing his knife into her side smiling crazily.

"Girls..." He grinds out. "They flaunt around as if they own the world. Taunting men to become sinners."

"DROP YOUR WEAPON!" I command.

"You know, the voices don't like them either. They want them dead."

What the hell is he on about.

"You are insane!" someone yells from the back.

"I am not insane;" His face filled with rage, "I am merely following orders."

I'm getting rather fed up with this whole situation, so I aim for his leg and let one loose from the chamber. As the man doubles over in pain he loses his grip on the girl and we all pounce, trying to detain him.

"No, you can't do this! She deserves to die! They all do!" He screams while frantically trying to reach for his knife.

A cop manages to grab the girl, and carry her off to safety, while Steve manhandles the suspect to get him cuffed. I snap on some gloves to gather up all his tools which I bag for evidence. Thank goodness I brought extra gloves with me.

"Get him out of here, I will call in a forensic team" I order. With a nod he drags the man out of sight.

"I can't believe this is finally over." I sigh deeply.

His reason for killing them is beyond insane, that will not hold up in court. I grab hold

of my radio and call it in, we need everyone here to process this scene.

The moment I get off my radio I hear a single gunshot.

Shocked I grab my radio. "What the hell is going on? Copy!" I keep yelling hoping for a response from my partner.

Fear consumes me as I wait impatiently.

"It's the girl's father." I hear Steve on the other end breathing frantically. "The suspect has been assassinated."

Lord, give me strength.

"Detained?" I ask.

"Unarmed and detained." Steve confirms.

Bloody idiot just ruined his life and gave me more damn paperwork.





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## Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature



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(Kenya)



**Anthony 'PenBoss' Onugba**  
Chief Judge





Liza Chuma Akunyili  
@iamlizachuma

# CREATIVE EXPRESSION

I heard Neil Gaiman read a story once and I remember thinking; “that is how stories should be communicated!” It was splendid and haunting simultaneously.

If you were forced to read Shakespeare in secondary school, I’m sure you found it boring because beyond reading it, we were supposed to become the characters and own those lines in live plays. The same is true for why poetry was boring to some of us when we were younger; we could not relate with the emotions and the unnecessary theatrics.

Every creative work deserves creative expressions otherwise, it is not memorable and does not feel personal to the reader. There is a reason why platforms like Amazon have space for digital books and audiobooks - learner choices.

Some platforms are beginning to find creative ways to make Braille digital for the non-seeing reader. If you want to write books that make you an enigma, you need to start to consider the most creative ways to package the same content.

If you are creating a poetry anthology, there is no reason

why you are not hosting a live reading and album recording night where people can absorb those words and go home holding copies of your book that they read frequently to recapture every emotion they felt at your reading.

At that point, a physical book is not a sale to them but a testimonial that they experienced first hand, it is a reminder of the laughter and the sorrows they felt in that room. It is a tough point in their personal story of how they clicked with other humans and reconnected with culture, or the theme of your

collection.

Now, put your album on streaming platforms and you've just created another stream of income you don't have to work daily for. Make that one-off event a tour and share all replays to a select audience who are subscribers to your work.

The reason creative work looks tedious is because we make creative work without creative distribution or marketing plans. It's almost as if we create with the intention of watching our work die out. Therefore, create like someone who is affluent. Create the same work in different formats. Create for diverse audiences and create in different locations.

Staying with our poetry example, now let's convert your collection into another popular language. Commit to learning that language for six months to a year and recreate this same strategy.

You think you need twenty anthologies but in reality, you need two anthologies that are reproduced in ten

different formats with the sole intention of increasing your influence as an author and multiplying your income (some of which must be passive so you do not burn out).

Now, tours might not work for every writer as many writers are comfortable with being invisible. Well, have your recordings privately and distribute them both in public and private. You claim you do not like your voice? Get someone else to voice it.

You want a tour but want to be invisible, get a professional to wed a mini jazz concert and have different performers use your writing as part of the composition. Now, bulk sign your books and have it given to the attendees as part of their souvenirs.

Naturally, traditional publishing will offer some of these services such as multiple book formats, book signing events, Book reading and tours. Yet, I need you to think like a thought leader. Get a professional public Relations firm to build your strategic plan.

If you cannot afford this at the start, get your friends together to help you start in your small corner of the world then ensure you record each of those little events so you can amplify with digital media and create appetite in another corner of the world. I need you to not just be an author but to be a business person.

Finally, do not be afraid to collaborate like we established last month. If all these techniques seem overwhelming, pick one or two and move at your pace. Like I said earlier in the year, "Set a Pace" and don't be everywhere at once.

I am keeping this short because I want you to read it as many times as it takes for you to know that this month's article is a comprehensive plan. If this is your first time reading the Affluent Author column, my goal is to help you be influential and profitable as a creative writer. Until next month, stay creative!





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# BARAKA THE BEE

A Children's Literature by  
Shifaa Ibuni, Tanzania

**Reviewer**

Tamunomieibi Enoch  
(Nigeria)



Baraka the Bee by Shifaa Ibuni is a gripping children's story about purpose and kindness. The story anchors on knowing purpose and the place of kindness in fulfilling one's destiny. Shifaa uses superb imagery and simple language to show kindness means in attaining one's purpose.

The story has themes of patience, empathy, kindness and purpose with emphasis on using patience and kindness as fulfilling destiny. Children will learn what it means to be kind while pursuing their dreams and purpose.

The setting of the story is the bee kingdom. Children would learn basic things about bees like the sound bees make and where they live.

The mood of the poem is exciting and fun. The use of poem in the story solidifies that children would remember the story better. The tone is refreshing and the choice of language is simple which best aids the understanding of the story for the readers (children).

Baraka the Bee is a beautiful well thought out story.



# ZOMBIES AMONGST US

A Creative Non-Fiction by  
Herman Owuor, Kenya

**Reviewer**

Funmi Richards  
(Nigeria)



Herman Owuor’s “Zombies Amongst Us” is a powerful piece of creative nonfiction that explores the concept of purpose. The author uses striking metaphors to paint a picture of purposelessness. Those lacking direction become “leaves on water” or “zombies in a silent pandemic.” This imagery effectively captures the aimlessness and wasted potential that can plague individuals without a guiding force.

Owuor doesn’t just describe the problem; he delves deeper. Purpose is positioned not as a vague dream but as the “driving force behind meaningful existence.” It shapes our choices and gives meaning to even everyday tasks. The piece explores potential sources of purpose, from pursuing passions to contributing to society.

However, for some readers, the path to self-discovery might need more illumination. While

introspection is a good starting point, offering practical tools or exercises for finding one’s calling could make the message more actionable. Additionally, the powerful concluding sentiment about purpose being a birthright could be spread throughout the piece. Weaving in a universal call to action earlier could inspire readers to begin their own journeys of self-discovery.

In all, “Zombies Amongst Us” uses vivid imagery and a passionate voice to address the importance of finding purpose. By incorporating more concrete solutions and emphasizing the universality of purpose, it can become an even more compelling guide for those seeking direction in life.

# KHAYA'S SOUP

A Flash Fiction by  
Lihle Ndita, South Africa

**Reviewer**

Francis Mkwapatira  
(Malawi)



Ndita's, Khaya's Soup is a flash fiction which centres on ill intentions and pretence. The story is about a woman, Khaya, who allegedly poisons her husband through a soup she offers him, aiming at nursing him back to health. When she fails, Khaya, contemplates offering her soup to her eight-year-old son.

Ndita remarkably narrates the story using with enough detail to let the readers decipher what is happening at the scene. Readers envision the funeral procession and Khaya's deceitful wailing, to hide herself from the suspicious mother in law. Her thoughts are laid bare and readers understand why she poisons her beloved, just so she can nurse her victims, and doesn't stop even when she kills her husband.

Khaya is the emblem of ill purposes and deceit in the story. It is possible that she poisons her husband to prove a point to her mother-in-law, even though it fails, yet she self-deceives her-

self to try once more, on her child.

The piece portrays Ndila's unique writing style. The prose runs on as a single block, without paragraph breaks, yet leads readers through characters and incidents without fault. Her narrative includes showing, which provides sensory details for readers too. For example, it includes details like, "abdominal pain, nausea, and botte of arsenic" to describe the process of pain and death Khaya's husband undergoes.

Regardless, those reading Ndita's works may think her work is vague. It fails to portray the main character's internal conflict, the reasons why giving her loved ones soup mixed with arsenic acid matters, besides wanting to nurse them back to health. It leaves readers with some questions answered, making it an unfulfilling ending.

# REASONS

**A Poem by  
Unathi Mphiskiswa, South Africa**



**Reviewer**  
Akuei Adol  
(South Sudan)

'REASONS' by Unathi Mphiskiswa is a thought-provoking poem about motivation and purpose. The piece focuses on the reasons that inspire people to keep moving forward despite life's challenges. It explores the intrinsic forces that drive individuals to wake up each day, strive for success, and persist even in the face of adversity. Mphiskiswa uses vivid imagery to delve into what drives individuals to persist, aspire, and find meaning in their existence.

The poem addresses themes of perseverance, purpose, and motivation. It emphasises the importance of persistence, even on the toughest days, and highlights the notion of having a purpose or a "reason" as a crucial element of a fulfilling life. The driving force behind human actions and ambitions is a central focus.

Unathi employs a free verse structure, allowing the natural rhythm and flow of the poem to reinforce its message. The language utilised is straightforward yet profound, with metaphors and similes creating vivid imagery. For example, the line "It fuels our soul like petrol on fires" effec-

tively conveys the intense and consuming nature of motivation.

The mood of the poem is inspirational and uplifting. The tone is earnest and encouraging, instilling a sense of hope and determination in the reader. The author's choice of words and imagery evokes a feeling of empowerment, urging the reader to embrace their reasons for living and striving.

This poem reminds me of Langston Hughes' poem, "Dreams," which also emphasises the importance of holding onto one's dreams and aspirations as a source of strength and purpose. Both poems inspire readers to pursue their goals despite obstacles, highlighting the universal need for motivation and purpose.

In conclusion, this verse is a compelling exploration of the motivations that drive us. It encourages us to find and hold onto our reasons for living and striving.



# SHAKE WELL BEFORE USE

A Short Story by  
Celestine Seyon Reuben, Nigeria

## Reviewer

Rose Wangari Kinyanjui  
(Kenya)

Celestine Seyon Reuben's "Shake Well Before Use" takes readers on a journey through the life of a nonconformist individual, as seen through the eyes of a former schoolmate. This collection of short stories isn't simply a narrative; it's a reflection on the power of questioning the status quo.

The author paints a vivid picture of the protagonist's school days, highlighting their rebellious spirit and insatiable curiosity. Unafraid to challenge teachers and societal norms, this "sinistral" (left-handed) individual faced rejection for their unconventional ways. Reuben's rich prose, filled with imagery and figures of speech, brings the protagonist's experiences to life.

However, the story takes a surprising turn when the protagonist, now a published author, exposes sensitive information through their book titled "Skin to Skin." Intrigue builds as the narrative reveals an unexpected twist: instead of facing asylum, the protagonist is offered a powerful government position within the Ministry of Education.

"Shake Well Before Use" transcends the individual story. It becomes a powerful commentary on the importance of challenging norms and embracing individuality. The protagonist's journey, from schoolyard rebel to revolutionary author, serves as a testament to the power of questioning authority. The very title itself, "Shake Well Before Use," suggests the need for a critical analysis of the "conditions" imposed by society.

This collection is a compelling read for anyone who values intellectual curiosity and the courage to question what they're taught. Reuben's masterful storytelling, combined with his exploration of societal acceptance and the power of questioning, makes "Shake Well Before Use" a truly thought-provoking read.

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