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DECEMBER 2024 EDITION

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Emmanuel Tumwesige  
Uganda

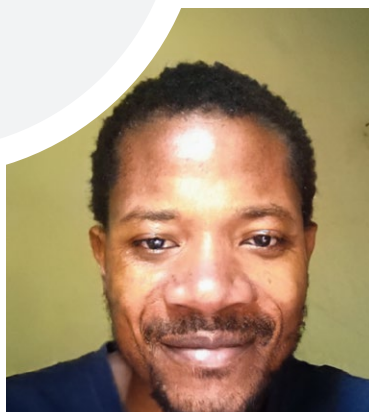
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# EDITORIAL

Comfort Nyati, SDB  
Chief Editor

*Dear reader,*

My esteemed readers, friends and collaborators. As I write this note, I find myself breathing this emotive air, conditioned with gratitude and retrospection. I am thrilled to announce that this has been a special year for me serving as the chief editor of WSA Magazine for the second time (2022 and 2024). It has been a literary journey so educative, adventurous, and laden with avenues of discoveries exhibited by the seasoned works published in the year. Arriving at this point has not been a walk of one but of many. To my editorial team, despite not all being perfect, I owe gratitude to your professionalism and for the un-equivocated sacrifice in shaping the future of African literature.

This issue is dedicated to the theme of Retrospection; a thoughtful examination of our past experiences, achievements, and setbacks. It is a timely select-

ed theme among other lucrative themes one could think of when concluding a certain episode in life. It brings us in the close lens of the past while connecting us with the present given the future; a journey of retrospection so they say. As we stand at the delta of the year, it is essential to glance backwards, introspect, and evaluate the paths we've traversed.

I believe the breath of this theme will encourage you to embark on your journey of reflection. What lessons can you glean from your past? How will they inform your future? This brings me to Matshona Dhliwayo, a Canadian-based philosopher who acclaimed that: "the past is kind enough to give you lessons. The present is kind enough to give you opportunities. The future is kind enough to give you both." This premise ushers one to the conclusion that retrospection is the candid beacon of the resil-

ient. It is inevitable to cast out some pivotal events that are, as such, alarms of our dusk life because their lasting impact tends to become muscles to shield the needless desolation.

As you read our 96th edition, you will appreciate that our contributors share their insights on the significance of looking in the hindsight of oneself. Thus – from personal narratives to historical analyses – these pieces invite you to join the conversation. Dear reader, don't feel left out in this enterprise that navigates us through the creative consciousness and exploration of retrospection unveiled by our writers. To this end, let us guzzle the densities of retrospection in this countdown mood of the year.

The editorial team of WSA Magazine is wishing you a MERRY CHRISTMAS & PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!!



**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Empowering African Writers

# Call for Submissions

## Theme: Weakness

Writers Space Africa (WSA) is accepting submissions for its 98th edition (February 2025 Edition).

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

**DEADLINE** >

December 15, 2024

Submit to:

**[WWW.WRITERSSPACE.NET](http://WWW.WRITERSSPACE.NET)**



**Creative Nonfiction**

# TWO WHEELS, SOUL MOVER

Brianna Matheka  
Kenya



Old dogs can learn new tricks. After graduating in December 2019, I landed a job in one of the posh primary schools in Kenya. It was posh as all the students had a master of the queen's language; unlike the village I originate from, where we all glorify our mother tongue. Many of us learn the queen's language when we are in senior classes and the majority of us are never too comfortable to utter the same in public, even in adulthood. The school was expensive, and a painful joke would run around that one student's school fees would pay five members of staff. Despite the reimbursement part, I enjoyed my job, and interacting with the young

ones cheered my heart. They would challenge us to be better adults.

However, on March 13, 2020, the first COVID-19 case was announced in the country. Learning institutions were affected first. So many people, including me, lost their jobs. The school adopted online learning immediately, even before many in the corporate world would actualize working from home. Since my job description involved being physically present, I was among the first culprits to be laid off. I was devastated. I was unsure of the next move. I felt unlucky. But at least I was not alone.

My housemate, Mutava who

later became my spouse, was then training to be an advocate, and was on pupillage in one of the law firms in the city. People in the legal field took long before adopting remote working. Many were either laid off or maintained with little to no pay. It was an unpredictable time such that we would just be happy to see the next day.

We depended on the little, less than 40 dollars that his employer was sending to him. Our country, just like many others, was on lockdown, and we were quarantined to contain the virus. We could not move from the city to our rural areas. We depended on those who had managed to move, before the government barred movement, for agricultural produce like maize, potatoes, onions, and any other available food that they would send on courier vehicles.

Many marriages and families were greatly affected mentally, financially, and socially by the unpredicted period. Businesses were lost and worse of all, lives were lost. It was during this time that our neighbour lost all

his belongings to a shylock company. His wife and children left and we never heard from them. On the positive, all the neighbours chipped in whatever little they had for him to be on his feet again. We therefore had to look for something to keep us busy lest we fell into depression.

Fortunately, my housemate, Mutava, had a bicycle he had acquired for commuting to the Law School for the Advocates Training Programme, 40 kilometres away—a distance he covered every day. The school had a changing room for those who used the swimming pool so he would freshen up after the long ride and join the rest for the three-hour class session before cycling back for another 40-kilometer.

I had never tried cycling. I had always imagined that I would probably fall and end up hurting my back or breaking my leg or hand. I was so scared that he had to convince me for days before I agreed to push the bicycle, let alone be on top. He trained me, for days, which turned into weeks. Once I mastered the art of balanc-

ing on the two wheels, we pulled resources and bought a second bicycle. It was locally used and unmaintained but we could manage with it.

Cycling became not only a hobby but also our means of transport. We were scared of boarding public vehicles, as the virus was spreading fast, and having an asthma history, we never wanted to take any chance of getting the respiratory virus. Either way, we did not have the luxury of money. The sport was also the only major way we would keep our mental health in check.

We also tried sack farming, not only to supplement our budget but to keep us engaged as well. Our spinach and kale did so well that we would supply our neighbours. We would fill any little space we would see, including containers with kales just to be able to survive. It was a learning experience as well. We played with the neighbour's children at the apartment we lived in. Fortunately, we were just a few, so containing the virus was not hard, or so we thought. Skipping the rope, playing



hide and seek, and playing football among other games kept all of our mental and physical health in check. We would ensure that each member of the apartment had something to eat at the end of the day. All this we did while ensuring that we did not catch the virus as we observed all the safety measures the World Health Organization, together with Kenya's Ministry of Health, had set.

Initially, we began by taking short rides; as the days progressed and we saw no signs of coronavirus ever leaving our world, we trained more and took even longer rides. We made memories, took photos, visited new places, and even joined other cyclists nearby for rides. We saw positivity in a world that was bleeding, losing its sons and daughters to the worst disease that ever affected our generation.

Many parts of Kenya do not have designated cycling lanes and those available are not exclusively left for cyclists. So, one day, we decided to run errands in Nairobi

Central Business District, Kenya's capital city with our two bicycles. We struggled with motorists for more than 18 kilometres. At a busy bus stop with several people struggling to catch the many buses heading to different routes, Mutava thought he had lost me as he was the lead cyclist. Our bicycles did not have side mirrors.

He slowed and looked back to check if I was still in line. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I was following him bumper to bumper with the same pace he had initially set. So, when he looked back, I miscalculated my moves and as the learner I was, I bumped into him on the busy famous Waiyaki way. We both fell on the hot tarmac, inspired by the hot scorching sun of the day and hurt ourselves and the bicycles. We were in so much pain that despite being on the highway, we were not able to stand and seek safety out of the highway as fast as expected. Had the lady motorist behind us not slowed down, we would not have lived to tell this tale. Unexpectedly, we picked ourselves up, rested a bit, and proceed-

ed with our hurt knees to the CBD. We also went through church to thank God for saving us from the accident. Churches were deserted and very few people were present then. Just the men and women of the cloth.

We were so broke that we had no money to pay for a passenger vehicle to ferry us back to our residential place despite being tired and hurt. We cycled back uphill, with our empty stomachs growling, on a journey that took ages.



# IN REMEMBRANCE

Owami Hugo Jackson  
South Africa

On the warm afternoon of October 2, 2020, my mother received a phone call from a relative of my best friend. Instinctively, she tried to hand me the phone, but the person on the other end asked that she hear the news first to relay it to me with caution. After some formalities, my mother was told that my friend of ten years had suddenly passed away. It was the first significant death I had experienced. The weight of grief descended on me in an unexpected way and caused an instinctive urge to try and make sense of life's dissonance and futility. In retrospect, I did not know that the urge to try and make sense of life would lead me to even more

deaths.

The sad truth about life is death looms over us in every waking moment, the slyness of it creeps and hovers over every birthday party, baby shower, graduation and mundanity of the collection of days, months and years we occupy in our lives. It feels like a cruel exchange: we offer our experience of living, of growing, of finding ourselves in this maze of existence. Along the way, we open our hearts—sometimes cautiously, sometimes freely—to love, to our families, friends, and lovers. Yet, we are bartered with the callous eventuality of death. It is a question that sticks like chewing gum onto the boots

of time, “Why is death so cruel?” On that ominous October afternoon, I was forced to ask the same question.

With death comes retrospection. The minute I heard that my friend had passed, my mind flooded with all the things I hadn’t said to him. The things I wanted to articulate with the language I now had because of the grief I was going through. I was going back to a well that had inexplicably dried up, calling a familiar number and hearing the trapped sound of a voicemail that would ironically live on, same message, same voice, devoid of response.

The funny thing is that I believe from the beginning of our friendship my friend had planted seeds of posterity to guide me through the pain of losing him. We first met when I was in eighth grade, searching for transportation to school. I expected an elderly driver, someone who had been transporting kids for years. But instead, a chubby, fresh-faced man in his thirties greeted me with the kindest eyes and the warmest smile. I vividly

remember his eyes every morning actively searching the rearview mirror to try to find my face and gauge my mood. He was the first person to invite me to church and introduce me to kids who had the same teenage angst I had. He quickly became more than just a driver; he was a mentor, a father figure, a mirror of self-realization—and most importantly, a friend. Because he was older than I was, I always felt like I was arriving towards a better level of maturity as our friendship grew.

When I lost him, it felt like a significant part of my identity drifted away from me. I was now swimming towards the rummage of the memories he had left behind and praying that I could find something to speak to, something solid and dependable like he was. I wish I was lucky enough to find even the faintest voice that would guide me through the grief he had left me with, but what I kept on running into was the eventuality that every time I tried to reach out for his being, I was reminded of its absence and therefore

relived his death in a new way every single day.

As I fished for the answers of resolution from the past, life continued its truculent trajectory forward. In all honesty, I do not remember the days leading up to my friend’s funeral nor do I think I was present enough in my emotions to fully grasp the weight of it all, but as the months went on and the realization became clearer, grief with its sticky envelopment started to seep into every crevice of my life. At first, I told myself I would “deal with it” when I was ready to carry the full weight of my emotions. As you can imagine, that plan failed miserably. Grief, no matter how much we try to organize and categorize it, demands to be acknowledged.

All I had left were memories and a journey that seemed to stretch out endlessly. Exhausted by the search, I decided one morning to write my friend a letter. I expected to rant, to vent my anger and frustrations at him, but instead, I found myself remembering something he often said when he felt

conflicted—a personal mantra, almost: “As long as your heart’s attitude is in the right place, everything else will fall into place.” It was a reminder that everything we do should be intentionally guided by doing good and that if we cared enough, it would essentially be enough. When I was younger it made sense from a motivational standpoint but never tugged at my soul until I wrote it down in his absence. I realized at that moment that I cared about someone very deeply and in the search to find him again, I found that He cared about me as well. Retrospection was not just an invitation to wallow in grief, but it was also an opportunity to care about my friendship from an intentional place, to cry about it, to complain, to be angry about it but to always give it the reverence it deserved, because in the short tenure my friend had occupied on earth, he loved me with the right heart’s attitude.

Grief is not a linear experience. The days are almost never the same. Some days, I feel eager to tell him about

my life—my growing relationship with Christ, my new job, the latest show I’m watching, or the new relationship I’m in. On other days, I feel guilty for living my life, for moving forward without him, for forgetting his face at times or for not checking in on his family on his birthday. There’s still so much confusion and a pervading feeling that the further I move away from my own grief, the further I move away from my friend.

I often remember sitting with him in the car, talking endlessly about whatever obsession had captured my attention at the time. He would just sit there and actively engage with a faint smile of approval and confusion. Half of the time he didn’t have a clue about what I was talking about, but that smile gave me the reassurance that someone was listening to me. Life continues to introduce me to new valleys and new journeys of self-realization. I continue to encounter even more metaphorical and real-life deaths. In those times of confusion, when I feel so lonely in my head and un-

loved in my existence, I still long for that faint smile to acknowledge me again, for someone to look at the rear-view mirror and tell me that they see me.



# NOT JUST A **BAD DAY**

Cynthia Ajiboye  
Nigeria

This is not a pep talk from someone who just stubbed her toe on reality. This is a scream from the heart of a young Nigerian girl, writing with the grit of unfulfilled dreams.

They tell us a bad day doesn't mean a bad life. But what about when every day feels like a bad stretch in a never-ending sprint? When "good" is just the absence of worse? Where every day is a gamble, every step a prayer for something, anything, to change? Even good days, if there are any, are tinged with this grey reality. There's no unadulterated joy, just a hesitant sigh of relief, a "Thank God today wasn't so bad."

"A Bad Day Doesn't Equate a Bad Life?!"

Tell that to the child selling groundnuts at 5 am in his school uniform with eyes older than his years. Tell that to the woman hawking tomatoes under the unforgiving sun. Tell that to the artist whose dreams are mocked as frivolous hobbies. Tell it to the woman begging with a baby strapped to her back, her voice a rasp against the city's roar.

This isn't a bad day; this is a bad chapter—maybe even the whole damn book. It's a bad life, and pretending otherwise is like painting over cracks with cheap paint. They say Nigerians don't read, but I read. I read

the stories etched in the lines around my father's eyes. I read the resignation in people's sighs, the quiet acceptance that dreams are luxuries for the privileged few.

I read the stories of dreams sacrificed for survival, of passion choked by the dust of unpaid bills. I graduated, yes, but into a world where dreams curdle in the face of reality. Work, endless work, swallowed the hours, leaving no space for love, for life, for the laughter that used to bubble in my throat.

Online platforms to find jobs slam shut with the message, "Your location is restricted."

Every closed tab, every unanswered email, feels like a brick wall slamming shut on my dreams. So, when they tell me not to let a bad day define my life, I want to scream: What life? The one where dreams shrivel by greedy leaders. The one where frustration hangs heavy like humidity before a downpour? We walk past each other, eyes hollowed by struggle, smiles thin as paper money.

Is that supposed to be my

consolation prize? A pat on the head for surviving another day?

Let me scream the truth: bad days aren't mere blips, they're the chorus of a life where the odds are stacked against you. Don't tell me to ignore the struggle, the systemic cracks that splinter our paths.

Acknowledge it and understand it.



# A LITTLE LONGER

Tarinabo Diете  
Nigeria

There was this poem I read when I was still in secondary school. It was titled, "The Panic of Growing Older."

There's a panic I feel but it's not of me, it's of my parents. Along came an Instagram post that read, "We don't talk enough about the anticipatory grief of watching your parents age." But I do, and sometimes I feel guilty.

When the panic starts, you try to silence it and you comfort yourself with the notion that it is part of human existence. But these people are not just humans, they are Mother and Father. The pair who sacrificed most of their lives to make you where you are. In the gratitude, comes the fear of not getting to be with them like you would want to because their knees

are now weak.

Birthdays pass and you notice something new in their physique, there's a patch in the middle of your father's head which gets wider each year and a wrinkle just above your mum's chin which never seems to fade no matter how she glows every morning.

Let's not get started on the silver strands that form a garden on their pretty heads. They are growing old and with age comes weakness, and falling asleep too early just before the favourite part in the movie comes up. You smile because it is expected, but you can't help but miss them young. Young enough for them to tap you when you fall asleep before your favourite part comes up.

Now the roles are reversed, you remind them to take their meds, their phones are filled with alarms to remind them and they still end up forgetting, and they can't seem to get enough sleep.

The hugs that were too tight are now not tight enough. They are slower in hearing and in speech just like younger you, but you know what doesn't grow old? Their smile and love, which remain just the same way as you will always remember it. Sometimes you stare at them long enough to see what you remember them by. Your giant mum now sits underneath your armpit in the family portrait and your father's once piercing gaze is covered by the lenses.

As a child, you see your parents as these invincible adults. We see our dads as these big strong men who work hard, protect us, and just take care of things; you know, "I'll just tell my dad", kind of stuff, and we see our moms as our caretakers who are always there to make sure our needs are attended to, that we always know we are loved. I mean it's always,

"Mum, when next you go there, I'd like this" and you know you'll get it.

There was a time when they didn't seem to age at all, and all of a sudden, your mum can't see without her glasses and your dad doesn't just look the same anymore. All through my growing up they looked the same age to me. Strong, energetic and young. That is how they have always seemed to me.

Always, that is, until now. Now I see a cute white-haired mom who seems to be chattier and I see a grey-haired father who walks a little slower than he once did.

Both are now in their new age; the realization is finally hitting me that one day (and I pray that it is many more years down the road still) these two people who have been there all my life may no longer be with me. It's that thought that scares me.

I stare a little longer now, long enough to see that my mum counts her steps when she walks, she has more things to say now but it is slower. Her hands are warmer and her eyes are kinder.

I stay a little longer now to stare at them with their friends, their laughs are exactly how they used to sound, but the table looks different than what I was used to. They all look the same, the same stories left their lips. On some days it's about how they could've conquered the world and on other days, it's their fear for the future.

I hold a little longer now when I'm speaking to my mum. I hold her palm a little longer and play with the lines that have formed at the back of her palms. I play with Dad's finger a little longer—it has been a silly habit of mine since I was little.

I worry a little longer now because I know it's not what it used to be.

I laugh a little longer not because I want to, but because I get the jokes now. Either that or they are funnier than they used to be.

I hug a little longer too, it's comforting and just feels good. In reality, it eases the panic and that is all I want.



# MEET OUR WINNERS

CATEGORY	WINNER	PRIZE WON
The 3rd African Teen Writers Awards (Poetry)	'Right to Peace' by Adrian Nyarko-Boateng (Ghana)	\$100
The 3rd African Teen Writers Awards (Prose)	'Five Things Mother did not Prepare Me For' by Sumaiyah Muhammad (Nigeria)	\$100
The 7th African Writers Awards for Short Stories	'When Love Exits' by Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare (Ghana)	\$500
The 6th Edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature	'A Close Call Honoured by Absentia' by Grace Thuo (Kenya)	\$200 1st Place
The 6th Edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature	'Bee: One Another's Keeper' by Cynthia Anjie Nkweti (Cameroon)	\$150 2nd Place
The 6th Edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature	'Nandera the Brave - A Tale of Triumph' by Laura Pettie (Tanzania)	\$100 3rd Place
The 1st Wanjohi Prize for African Poetry	'At Vlekete Market' by Eniola Abdulroqueeb Arowolo (Nigeria)	\$100 1st Place
The 1st Wanjohi Prize for African Poetry	'For Sale, African Drums Designed by Robots' by Gabriel Awuah Mainoo (Ghana)	\$50 2nd Place

# Flash Fiction





# UNDER-AGEING

Tobiloba Owoeye  
Nigeria

It's now a weekly cycle for Mama to adorn me with invectives. That became her new way of addressing my mistakes since the day she saw me with Francis down our street. Mama wasn't wrong for her actions that day, including the slaps I enjoyed, because my effortless smiles at Francis' words substantially reflected foolishness or perhaps, gullibility since I was just fifteen. Each time Mama reacted that way, she'd weep uncontrollably and mutter to herself "these memories aren't growing old" and would weep till she was probably tired and slept off. I never understood the memories Mama always talked about and never bothered asking her. Rather, I often interrogated myself but would end up confused. "Was it my refusal to stay with Uncle?" I'd once asked myself. "It can't be!" I responded as if someone had questioned me. I knew she didn't even want that to happen. "It's the scene of I and Francis" I later resolved. Sometimes, I'd think aloud "That's Mama's

problem. After all, I'll do what I'll do."

However, not only Mama's memories refused to grow. Mama didn't too. She lived in these memories' entanglement; kept them young and fresh. I never knew my father. She didn't reveal the mystery behind his absence. According to my uncle after Mama's death, she bore me out of wedlock when she was sixteen, being impregnated by a man who fled to where-no-one-knows. This formed Mama's never-growing-old memories.

Yet, I have the most stunted growth among all. I failed to see that Mama was only a helpless woman ensnared by past experiences which refused to become past. Now, I am the new Mama to my 14-year-old daughter whom I also bore out of wedlock. It's a daily routine to weep effortlessly and mutter to myself, "these memories aren't growing old."



# HIDE AND SEEK

Abdulsamad Jimoh  
Nigeria

My ears followed the noise of those children playing hide and seek under the moonlight.

Staring through the window, I saw them running and looking for concealment before their seeker finished the count.

I wanted to put an end to it, but my words expired in my throat. I shuddered, because that noise reminded me of you. Our hide and seek game. Our last drama that ended in tragedy.

Water formed in my eyes; I squeezed them shut. When I opened them again, I couldn't restrain the rivers falling down my cheeks.

As I fixed my attention outside again, I hearkened back to that night when we were very young. When you were my brother. Your face remained unforgettable, even though I didn't get to see how it would look now if you were here.

That night, we were playing hide and seek

with other children. You wore a reddish ankara, exactly the same as mine.

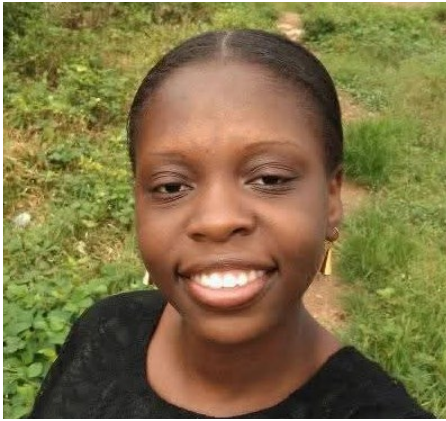
We played far into the night until I became the last seeker. You entered the nearby bush to hide, and I, determined to catch you. I searched, but you were nowhere. The game ended. You didn't return.

The news exploded fast. Soon, the community was out, searching for you. The search continued, night to dawn, dawn to dusk, and lasted for days, until every hope died.

Your mother wailed; your father sought in silence. The air was filled with sorrow.

Everybody found nothing, but that night, I found your ankara soaked in blood. I dreaded the sight, and I wasn't sure about everything. What happened to you? I wept.

Nobody must know. I buried your clothes in the earth and inside me, because this secret would follow me to my grave.



# UNTILTED MEMORIES

Angel Afemikhe  
Nigeria

I leaned on the sagging breasts of my mother, while she rambled the long laces of my dark, thick hair. Her shining face, reflected the bewitching nature of the sun.

After a while, being satisfied from inhaling the heat, the fragrance of her skin, I hopped to the door to watch the play-time of my blossom friend. A bit taller, she scrubbed my hair with her hands, chuckling so, I got the message to join in the newly activated performance right away. We took turns completing our special kind of relay race, known as the “first to finish” game.

My head rested on the pillow on my couch. These flashes replayed in my mind as a scene; a replay of a favourite comedy show. And I smiled like a moron, at the ceiling, at nobody, for no obvious reason. But, this particular one flashed, and stayed a long while unlike the others.

There, I was, at home, on our crystalline

greenish marble.

Tears from my eyes, gradually formed an ocean, and like a fool, I left the cover, untilted. You wouldn’t blame the 7 year old me. Being awarded a medal for immaturity was a ritual.

My smile widened more as my mom stepped into the scene, wearing her lion-like face. A mask she puts on in order to strike a scolding. Instead of holding me to her chest, I received a kick from the back, a type I would have given Bisi, the troublesome brat who caused me hurt.

“Why did you let her beat you? Don’t you have hands too?”

Like a flash of light, they were gone. I, still on the couch sobbed uncontrollably. My mom did no wrong in raising me to be a strong kid, but here I was, once again, leaving the cover untilted.

Creative  
**SPOTLIGHT**

*Elizabeth Chuma Akunyili*





*In this edition, Lise speaks with the multifaceted Elizabeth Chuma Akunyili, a sex therapist, brand visibility strategist, and passionate advocate for wellness businesses. Based in Abuja, Nigeria, Elizabeth wears many hats, combining her expertise in creative writing, poetry, and therapeutic work to inspire change and growth. In this conversation, she shares her journey into writing, her philosophy on affirmations, and her path to becoming a sex therapist.*

**Lise:** *Hello, Liza. It's my pleasure to host you. Kindly introduce yourself to our audience.*

**Elizabeth:** Hi Lise, my name is Elizabeth Chuma Akunyili. I am a sex therapist and a brand visibility strategist for wellness businesses. I stay in Abuja, Nigeria. You want to come over?

**Lise:** *Oh, I would like to, someday. Now tell me in five words, who would you say Liza is?*

**Liza:** Liza is intense and polymathic.

**Lise:** Intense and polymathic indeed. Tell me, how did you know you were a creative writer and what made you fall in love with writing?

**Liza:** I did not know I was a creative writer at first. The first thing I wrote was a song but I was not planning on being a songwriter even though my family was very musically inclined. However, I wrote very good letters. Over time, I assumed I would make a good researcher and even interned at a magazine company before I turned 16.

Then, I went for a writer's meeting called WORD in 2011 and the poetry coach while encouraging me to try poetry said "in my dreams, I be right". You cannot say that in regular English but for some reason, this would be permitted in poetry under the term "poetic license". I got curious about

poetry than I was in secondary school where I first tried writing a love poem. This time around, I did not just try poetry, I fell in love with it and realized I could research, write lifestyle content, write a poem and even flip it into a song. In 2021 when I took a course on how music can save your life, I knew I was always going to be an expressive artist and writing was going to be an integral part of that journey.

**Lise:** *Wow just wow! That's interesting. Do you believe that someone can write their life into existence? I mean, writing things which might end up happening to you.*

**Liza:** I don't just know this.

I have been privileged to write my story and write it forward as opposed to writing it in hindsight. So, at school I had been a careless student. One: because I didn't like my academic major, physics. Two: because I didn't understand the weight of a carry-over I went to school hoping to avoid carry-overs even if I didn't get good grades. After failing multiple courses, I thought to myself "I am more intelligent than these people and these lecturers know. My classmates on campus don't know me. I know myself, I've lived with myself all my life and I know what my academic track record is ", so I woke up and decided how my life was going to be. From 2014 to about 2015 on campus I had statements, affirmations and declarations on my wall about who I was as a student; who I was going to

be in the future. I went to a conference after I made these changes and while the coach was speaking I knew I was on the right path and I open my jotter and wrote "nobody owes me anything not even my parents" I put a date and I signed it. Until today that is how I issue a decree in my life - I say it, I write it and I sign. Then I do the work required to see the manifestation.

*Lise: Ah, I see. You have recently published a book called "Speak Your Change, The simple reasons your faith talk fails." What would you tell me about it?*

*Liza: Speak your change is a personal principle and overflow of the beauty that is my life. I have been given the opportunity to break through addictions, to go from being a*



Liza on the red carpet at her Awedacity Conference



very terrible student to being a fantastic entrepreneur. I've helped coach and grow other people which wasn't something I had originally set out to do. These are all products of words and faith. As a therapist, I get to meet people who come into therapy saying things like "oh! But I tried affirmation and it did not work". There are affirmation videos everywhere. As a matter of fact, I created affirmation content at some point but I realized my affirmational content could not help people because they don't know where they are coming from. Affirmations are a journey so the statement that you make is not the beginning but the end of a journey. Affirmations are failing because we don't believe them but moreso, because we are full of the things that originally stole our faith. So, we often don't have the capacity to believe for what we're saying. The book is a guide on how to begin the journey that ends in an affirmation and how that affirmation becomes the beginning of a new cycle in the direction we want to go.

*Lise: Wow! Everyone should get that book for sure. This just made me want to ask you this. In which ways do you think writing can be used to bring forth change in various sectors of life like politics, religion, education and business to name a few?*

*Liza:* We could write forward, we could write backwards and we could write in the present. Here's what that means: if we write backwards, we write history; documenting what happened in the past but the best

way to document history is not just writing backwards, it is to write it in the present. Our news archives are supposed to look like real time documentation of what is happening in such a way that 200 years from now, someone will pick up our work and get an idea of the fashion, politics or religion of our time. We must write for posterity. For instance, when I write about the government, I'm not just airing my grievances in 2024. I'm also giving someone in 2074 the permission to confront their government when the government begins to go out of line. When we write for the future, it's creative and it makes no sense but those pieces have been known to be strong pillars for scientific inventions and more. We must be comfortable with creating work that doesn't always sell in our generation. the way we will do the work of writing and healing our community as if we write knowing that what we are doing actually counts.

*Lise: Are you an early bird or a night owl? How is a typical morning or night in your life like?*

*Liza:* That's the funny thing. I don't think I will call myself an early bird or a night owl. It all depends on the nature of work I have. I'll be open in the morning if you need me and up at night if you need me. For the last 8 years you could have argued that I was a night owl but 2024 began with me needing to wake up early in the morning. I would say that now I'm in the early bird phase of my life but I used to be more conversant with the



Liza in a speed networking session during one of her Dine and Tell events in 2021

night over version of me.

**Lise:** *Hahah, that's a bit funny as you said. For me, I'm a morning person.*

**Liza:** Oh! That makes sense now considering I always received your messages and updates after my 5:00 AM classes.

**Lise:** *Yeah. Now, Liza, you are a sex therapist. What made you delve into that particular section of life?*

**Liza:** How I became a sex therapist still amuses me because I didn't make a decision and say, "You know what? I'm going to be a sex therapist." I was going to be a medical doctor, a gynaecologist in particular, but then I started working for a magazine. I changed my mind about being a doctor when I realised I loved lifestyle content. However, I wasn't sure what to do with that information.

Then, I began campaigning for abuse victims—trafficking, sex, trauma, and everything in that area—and developed a hypothesis. Mind you, I was younger than 20 years

old when I hypothesised that one rape could affect a woman for generations. I didn't know how I came by that information, but I still remember standing in front of the University of Abuja and arguing that one rape affects four generations.

By the time I finished school, I started podcasting and found more people coming to me for sex-related issues. I've always loved the conversation about sex and read extensively on the subject. At this point, my advocacy work and personal education for victims to heal began to merge. That's when I realised, "Oh, that's a career, and it's called sex therapy!"

That's how I formally entered the career, but I was doing the work long before it had a name. It turns out there's something called generational trauma, where someone's experience and coping mechanisms harm the next generation. That's a topic for another book—something I truly want to explore.

**Lise:** *Wow!! I smell an upcoming book on*

*sex therapy! Anyway, you are a member of WSA. How would you describe your growth from the time you joined WSA until now?*

*Liza:* WSA has been fantastic and nothing but fantastic! I personally feel like I would no longer be writing if I was not in WSA because there was a season where I was really busy...it was an extended period of time that felt like winter season in my life where I was nowhere near books. I wasn't writing, I wasn't listening to podcasts, and I wasn't listening to audio books either. I wasn't even seeing my writing coach as much as I should and I wasn't doing anything really related to writing not in the context of being a poet or being a writer.

However, I was developing what I was doing in therapy and when I spoke to Anthony, the president of Writers Space Africa (WSA), he said that I was growing because I was having real-life experiences. That is, the things I could infuse into my writing when I do decide to return to writing. Later on, I got the opportunity to be on the interview and debate committee in WSA (Nigeria country chapter) and poetic Africa. Since I was serving the community, I was forcefully immersed into what was going on in the writing space in Nigeria, Africa and globally. Had it not been that, I would not have been in the position to sustain my writing for the three or four years when I did not write before I came back to authoring a book this year.

*Lise: Alright. Now tell me, as someone who*

*interviews people, how does it feel to be interviewed?*

*Liza:* It feels interesting. I don't get to be in this position as often so it is a lot but I love it. I love knowing what it feels like when I do it to other people so thank you Lise for giving me the opportunity

*Lise: Thank you too. Is there anything you would like to tell writers before we conclude?*

*Liza:* Writers, write! Write short pieces, long pieces, boring pieces, sad pieces, angry pieces, happier pieces ...just write. Write love notes, poetry, affirmations, stories, letters to your friends or to yourself, just write. Whatever it is, just write and keep your journals active. You cannot edit an empty page, they say, so don't stop writing. Finally, push yourself out of your comfort zone. I understand that there is free verse and you can do what you want but try other things too. In 2024, writing is very emotional so we approve anything that sounds emotional. Try the rules then break them. I think that's the biggest problem we have, we're becoming lazy writers who don't do the work because we can get away without doing the work! What I must say is, know the rules then break the rules. That's all I have to say.

*Lise: I'll have to say that this conversation was insightful, Liza. Thank you so much.*

*Liza:* Thank you too.



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

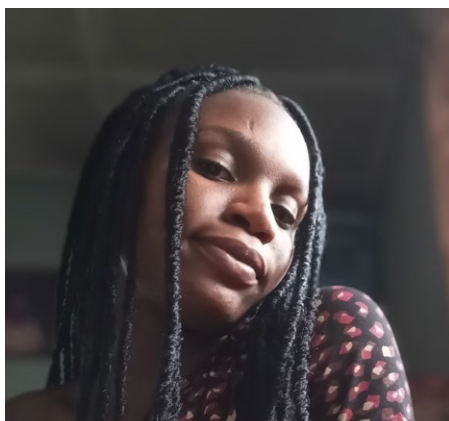




# DANCING IN MY GRAVE

: Emmanuel Tumwesige  
Uganda

I cannot stop thinking about the love of the past  
I lived, The misery of walking discalced.  
Walking crossing rivers, ridges, forests  
Traversing the wilderness with spears and nets  
Carried on shoulders, walking to nowhere athwart paths  
Of the wild.  
I can't stop thinking about that joy of lasting love.  
The time when death was but a long visiting guest;  
So soon gone to remain a memory of the strong mind  
That recalls but put to the front of the modern days  
Where life is worthy a fortune.  
Where laughter is earned at the last breath-  
For leaving a puke-soaked place.  
That brings the tune clear to dance in my grave  
When the poverty stricken wearily wait for their doom  
In happiness of leaving, living in a tattered State where coath is  
Like a war to face in an open battlefield with nowt  
But miserable muscles; as the commandants are whistling-  
Blowing on their flutes. They charge in to levy high with own medics  
And stir more vigour into the battle frontals for hype in casualties.  
Oh no! We are happily dancing in our graves.



# SHADOWS OF YESTERDAY

Faith Olasunkanmi  
Nigeria

The day fades softly into night,  
Summer to winter, with a sigh.

Sunrise to sunset, a golden sight,  
Sunlight to rainfall, then a rainbow bright.

Clouds give way to billions of stars,  
Nature rewinds, from present back to the start.

A fading flower, watching time depart,  
From prime to twilight, an aging heart.

Looking back at all that's been,  
Realizing some paths were left unseen.

Not gripped by the cold hands of regret,  
But full of content, this heart's silhouette.

A journey backward, step by step,  
Through youth, to childhood's last breath.

Taking every turn, bend, and place,  
Meeting my past, face to face.

The night will surely turn to day...  
Winter to summer, as seasons sway.

Sunset births sunrise in its time,  
Rain returns to sunlight's shine.

Stars, once hidden, emerge again,  
But I, a human, can't relive where I've been.



# THE LIBERTY OF IGNORANCE

Senami Ajiboye  
Nigeria

I would recall my wasted years,  
And display my voice on a paper,  
Painting with words, my grief and regret  
Let us loathe those days together.

At birth I was given a gift  
'The Liberty of Ignorance'- A privilege that I could not reject.  
By my will of action and inaction  
I trivialized windows of possibilities,  
Abated my abilities, and became less of who I was made to be.

The only remedy for imprudence is wisdom  
So, I sought it without desperation.  
A genuine desire to rise comes from a cause above oneself,  
But I knew no cause greater than myself.

Everything in existence was made for a change,  
But my impact reached no further than the orbits I tread.  
I exist, but who am I beyond my name?  
What value have I given to the world?  
I exist. Little as I am, but I have consumed and added nothing  
I have taken and created nothing.

I lived each day farther from purpose  
Unyielding to seasons.  
And not wavered by the racing sun  
Still, I fade away.



# TURBULENCE

Junior Thaelo  
Botswana

I still remember the airport scenery  
Filled with hopes and dreams  
Laughter stood in the place of misery  
Unbeknownst to what's coming  
We boarded the plane together  
Held by our love, a golden feather  
I remember the promise I made to you  
I'll be with you forever

Oh, but God had other plans in mind  
Turbulence struck as we took flight  
My world crumbled at the sight  
Of a box vanishing into the earth  
Oh how cruel the days were  
Stuck in torment, chained by pain  
I still remember the days  
Before you left this plane

Now the silence deafens my ears  
Your laughter echoes so clear  
The lights are out, bound by fear  
What will happen now that you aren't near?  
I plead to God, wishing this was a dream  
That I'll wake up, you'll be here with me  
Oh how cruel to be in this pain  
What's the point of living anyway?



# THE MOUNTAIN OF **RETROSPECTION**

Rebecca Eduah  
Ghana

On the mountain of retrospection, we soberly reflect  
The evergreen year of yesterday is now deciduous  
The golden hands of time has stricken it  
The year has gracefully grayed  
Ready to abdicate its seat for a new King to usurp  
The song of the giant clock of life is fading  
Let men climb the mountain of retrospection and reflect

On the mountain of retrospection, we soberly reflect  
How the trails of our uncertain steps remain conspicuous in the valley of the year  
Victory was an oasis in the wilderness of battles  
The well of faith rejuvenated us when we fainted  
Hope was our pasture in the field of despair  
Though battered, we hurdled temptations and heckled struggles  
Our scars remain our testament

From the mountain of retrospection lies a great view of the year's landscape  
Beautiful terraces of hope carved out of our resilience  
A dense forest of unfulfilled dreams  
Sparkling streams of joy satiating every panting soul  
Green lawns of blessings and rocks of disappointment  
When we stumbled and fell on our swords, courage silenced the chaotic noise of failure  
On the mountain of retrospection, we reminisce our growth,  
applaud our crowns and wear the lens of an eagle



# AN ADULT'S MEMOIR

Masroor-Mahmud Adeeyo  
Nigeria

Moments we took with a pinch of salt  
Now leave a bittersweet taste on our tongue  
Engulfed in time's tight embrace  
Only released as moonlight tales.

Words left on the graveyard of lips  
Creating corpses of our deeds  
The timeless pull of friends  
Becomes a shattered clock in the end.

Who would have thought mom would ever look frail?  
Her ocean of energy was where we surfed for days  
Ending only at the riverbank of sleep,  
Harsh reminders of nature's will.

Pools of sternness once resident in dad's eyes,  
Manifested as his belt comes to life  
Have become lagoons of a lethargic spine  
An elderly calm, omniscient smiles.

Weakening winds of aging years  
Strong pull for nostalgic tears  
A longing for childhood smiles  
Memoirs of adult lives.

# REMBRANDT

Boingotlo Keutlwetse  
Botswana

Arrested in flight on a trip down memory lane  
Frozen tears; a windshield to my soul  
A cold cavern of hopes unfulfilled  
While the heart scorches a borne fire in your honour  
Blood lava drips through broken walls of my heart  
Clotting like stalactites on my skin  
Stumbling upon a block  
A restart button in love's image  
I tripped and fell into open arms  
Your arms, a home I always longed for  
As I stand perplexed in your embrace  
Fear tickles my knees to weakness  
My bones melt beneath this electrified skin  
This really feels like home!  
A storm of giggles flood my soul  
I can't help falling for the stranger before me  
Eye to eye we stare beyond our human capacity  
The gardener in your paradise sings ballads  
To butterflies fluttering around my senses  
As the frozen tears thaw into tears of joy  
A new hope burns my soul with pure passion  
Oh! Am in love with love at first sight  
Lips softening; parting for a kiss I longed for,  
For the longest times,  
Mind raising to a tomorrow,  
When we will be one at last-  
To last for eternity.

# Short Stories



ALWEIWEI  
MODERN FORMS

GIFTS  
EARTH

DANIEL LIBESKIND

bauhaus

ALCHEMICAL  
MYSTICISM

MASSIVE CHANGE  
CAPS LOCK

Alberto Giacometti's Yves Klein  
in Search of the Absolute



# THE WEIGHT OF **OUR STEPS**

Christian Emecheta  
Nigeria



We moved like a river of broken dreams across the scorched earth, thousands of us fleeing the eastern borders of our homeland. Once proud citizens of Bermuda, now reduced to wanderers in our own country. The afternoon sun beat down mercilessly as our

procession stretched endlessly toward the horizon.

My daughter Amara slept against my back, her tiny breaths warm against my neck, while my son Kiano trudged ahead, his twelve-year-old frame bent under the weight

of our few remaining possessions. The boy who once chased butterflies in our garden now carried the burden of our displacement on his narrow shoulders.

Two days had passed since we left our village. Around us, children who should have been playing in schoolyards instead balanced bundles larger than themselves on their heads. Their eyes registered memories no child should experience. The thunder of artillery and whisper of approaching militia were the daily routine.

"Mama," Kiano's voice cracked, drawing me from my thoughts. "I need to rest."

"Just a little further, my son," I said, reaching out to steady him. Three months had passed since they gunned down his father, mistaking him for a rebel. My beloved Rabiū died in my arms while Kiano watched, and now I saw that moment reflected in our son's eyes every time he looked at me.

A commotion ahead brought our column to a halt. An elderly woman, Nyota, had collapsed in the dust. Her daughter Zuri knelt beside

her; panic etched across her face.

"Mama, please," Zuri begged, "You must get up. The soldiers are coming."

Nyota's weathered face creased with a gentle smile. "My child, my journey ends here. But yours must continue."

"No!" Zuri clutched her mother's hand. "We stay together or not at all."

The old woman's eyes shone with unshed tears. "Listen to me, Zuri. When I reach heaven, I will speak to God himself. I will not rest until He brings peace to our land, until He returns the light to your blameless eyes."

Before Zuri could protest further, Nyota's body began to convulse. Within moments, she lay still, another casualty of a war that fed on the innocent.

I wanted to comfort Zuri, but the distant rumble of military vehicles spurred us forward. We had no time for proper mourning – survival demanded we keep moving. I adjusted Amara on my back, took Kiano's hand, and pressed on, my feet bleeding

into the rust-colored earth beneath us.

The sun was beginning to set when Kiano stumbled again. This time, his knees hit the ground hard, and the bundle he carried spilled across the dirt path. His thin shoulders shook with silent sobs.

"Why did they kill Baba?" he wailed, his voice raw with grief and exhaustion. "Why are they making us run?"

I knelt beside him, my heart breaking anew. "Some men carry hatred where they should carry love," I said, gathering him close. "But we must keep moving, my brave one. For Amara. For the future."

The sound of helicopter blades slicing through the air made us both freeze. But instead of the dreaded government gunships, a different sight emerged over the horizon – the white and blue flags of the UN refugee camp.

Relief swept through the crowd like a cool breeze. We quickened our pace, hope lending strength to our weary legs. At the camp's entrance, aid workers rushed

to help those who could barely stand. I fumbled with my wrapper to give Amara water, my hands trembling with exhaustion.

When I finally freed her from my back, my daughter's body was limp and cold.

"Amara?" My voice emerged as a whisper, then rose to a scream that tore through the camp. "Amara! Wake up, my baby!"

Aid workers rushed forward, gently trying to take her from my arms, but I clutched her closer. Kiano stood frozen beside me; his young face became a mask of horror. At that moment, I saw him transform from a child into something else – a survivor who had witnessed too much death.

"Please," a woman in a blue vest knelt beside me, her eyes kind but urgent. "Let us help."

But we all knew it was too late. The heat, the journey, the weight of our suffering – it had been too much for my baby's fragile body. While I had focused on keeping us moving forward, death had crept silently up my back and stolen my daughter's last breath.

Kiano's hand found mine in the dust. "Mama," he said, his voice steady despite the tears streaming down his face. "Amara has gone to be with Baba. They will watch over us together."

His words, so wise beyond his years, broke something in me. I collapsed into the red earth, my grief erupting in wails that echoed across the camp. Other mothers gathered around us, adding their voices to my sorrow – not just for Amara, but for all our children lost to this senseless violence.

As the sun set over the camp, casting long shadows across the endless rows of tents, I held my remaining child close. Kiano's heartbeat against my chest reminded me that even in our darkest hour, love persisted. We had lost so much – our home, our dignity, my husband, my baby – but somehow, we had to find the strength to continue.

"We will live," I whispered into Kiano's hair, making a solemn promise to both the living and the dead. "We will live, and we will remember, and one day, my son, we will help build a world where no mother has to bury her child because of senseless wars."

Around us, the camp slowly settled into night, a temporary haven for thousands of shattered dreams. But in our shared breath, in our clasped hands, in our determination to survive, we carried the seeds of hope for tomorrow.





# ONCE

Japheth Gundani  
Malawi



She was roused from her slumber by the loud crowing of the rooster. The rowdy rooster was in the other room, which served as an indoor pen, yet it had sounded like it crowed directly into her ear through a powerful megaphone. She pressed her fingers against her ears in a desperate attempt to salvage a little more sleep. But just as she

began to drift off again, the rooster crowed once more, this time at what felt like a million decibels higher.

Ndazona—for that was her name—cursed under her breath. “This Christmas,” she muttered to herself, “we are definitely slaughtering this chicken!”

Realizing that sleep was now out of the question, Ndazona acknowledged it was time to get ready and head to the maize field. She laboriously sat up on her mat and murmured a brief, silent prayer. Once finished, she groped around for the torch she kept beside her mat and switched it on. The torch barely illuminated the room; its batteries needed replacing, but that, like many other things, was a luxury Ndazona and her grandmother could hardly afford.

Ndazona made an effort to stand, but with her condition, it proved a taxing task. She shone the torch toward the wall so she could lean against it, but even that seemed a planet away. Her plan was to get on all fours, crawl toward the wall, and use it to help herself stand upright. The plan, like most, was simple in theory, but by the time she managed to fully stand, she was panting like a cross-country runner, and her threadbare nightdress was damp with perspiration.

Ndazona stood for a moment to catch her breath, her hands reflexively finding

their way to her obscenely swollen belly. Tears coursed down her once-chubby cheeks. She wanted to let out a loud, gut-wrenching cry but was afraid of waking her grandmother, who was soundly snoring on a mat just a few feet away. She had also been told that such emotional outbursts could be harmful to the unborn baby.

“How could this happen to me?” she whispered, shaking her head.

She thought of him, and the tears came harder. She hated—no, she loathed him. But above all, she despised herself for being foolish enough to trust him. God, how she longed to see him! There was nothing she desired more than to meet him, look him in the eye, and squeeze the life out of him with her own hands.

That bastard deserved it. Barely eight months ago, he had recited romantic poems and sung sweet love songs, promising to “always be there for her.” Now, not even a year later, he was millions—if not billions—of miles away. He hadn’t even had the decency to be

by her side while the rest of her world—a world he had helped to topple like a house of cards—fell apart. She even had to hear from strangers about his whereabouts, that coward!

She had heard there were ruthless gangsters in Johannesburg—the place he had fled to—and she prayed he’d encounter the most merciless of them and that they’d do away with him. But it seemed God had chosen to turn a deaf ear to her prayers.

Speaking of God, she was furious with Him too. How could He let this happen to her when she had only done it once? Once! She knew girls at her former school who bragged about doing it more times than there were stars in the sky, yet He hadn’t let this fate befall them. There were even people out there climbing mountains and fasting for what she had. But no, He had let this happen to her—she who had done it only once! Once! And she hadn’t even enjoyed it!

Ndazona realized she was sobbing. She chided herself for allowing the remorse to overtake her. Regaining her

composure, she wiped away her tears, and, guided by the dim beam of her torch, quietly made her way to the storeroom to fetch her hoe.

She knew she was late; beams of light from Nthanda, the morning star, had already begun to filter into the grass-thatched hut. Her grandmother's field was a full two-hour journey from their home. With her condition, she estimated it would take her at least three hours.

Silently, so as not to wake her grandmother, Ndazona set off for the field. Her grandmother was old—too old to work—but she always insisted on going to the field. That's why Ndazona made it a point to wake up before her and leave without her, ensuring she would have no choice but to stay home and tend to the house.

As Ndazona walked under the starry sky, her mind wandered back to the night she lost it all.

She saw her naïve self-sneaking out of prep under the pretext of returning to her hostel to retrieve a "forgotten" biology book, when in fact, she was going to meet him—the

very son of the devil who would ruin her life.

He was waiting for her under the shadow of the giant mango tree behind the cafeteria.

"What took you so long?" he whispered.

"I had to—"

"Shhh!" he interrupted, nodding toward the silhouette of a security guard making his rounds near the cafeteria.

"Follow me," he whispered into her ear, his warm breath grazing the nape of her neck, sending tingling sensations down her spine.

She had foolishly followed him, ignoring every warning her mother had given her about boarding school and boys.

"Here," he'd said, "we'll split up. Walk as if you're going to your class, but when you see it's clear, double back toward the staff toilets. I'll be waiting for you there."

"In the toilet?"

"Yeah."

"What if the guards—"

"There won't be any guards," he had said with certainty.

"What would they be guarding by the toilets? Look, this campus is manned by six guards: one at the library, two by the hostels, one at the cafeteria, and two at the administration offices."

She knew he was right.

"But the staff toilets have locks."

"Yes, but the last one has a faulty one." She had looked at him askance, wondering how he happened to know that.

"I was sent to mop there this morning—I forgot to do that stupid math homework Pythagorath gave us yesterday." "Pythagorath" was what the Form Twos called their mathematics teacher (behind his back, of course) because he pronounced the Pythagoras Theorem as "Pythagorath Theorem," due to his lisp.

"I'm going now. Meet me there in five minutes, will you?"

Overcome by what she believed were called "butterflies" fluttering in her stomach, she had nodded in agreement. The devil's son then kissed her lingeringly

on the mouth, and away he scuttled.

If only one could turn back the hands of time.

Ndazona wished she'd never done what she had that day. But she had wanted to feel the "magic" that her roommate Liz claimed boys possessed. Unlike Ndazona, Liz was older and apparently knew boys like the back of her hand. Most nights, Ndazona fell asleep to the sound of Liz recounting her numerous "sexcapades."

At first, Ndazona let Liz's stories go in one ear and out the other, but with every tale, temptation got the better of her, until one day she made the mistake of asking Liz what it actually felt like to sleep with a boy.

"You know that sweet bliss you feel when you scratch an itchy ear with a matchstick?" Lewd Liz had asked.

"Yes?"

"Multiply that by a thousand!"

And that night, as she debated whether to follow that son of Lucifer into the toilet or not, those words echoed in her mind. Before she knew it,

she found herself in the toilet, doing the very things her poor old mother had sternly warned her against. The very things that, like a terrible butterfly effect, would lead to her expulsion from the prestigious secondary school she had worked so hard to get into. The things that would induce a cardiac arrest in her frail mother's failing heart, leading to her untimely death. The very acts that would give her poor father enough reason to spend the rest of his miserable life in dipsomania. Yes, the deeds that would see her relocating to her grandmother's village, woken by a loud, squawking rooster each morning to walk barefoot to a field miles away, before the sun chased the dark dawn away.

# THE GENDER REVEAL

Imade Ehigiator  
Nigeria



Pink and blue balloons hung from the ceiling and white roses were set as centerpieces for the tables. Diffusers deflected air that smelt like lavender and strings of sparkling crystals hung from wall to wall.

There was a food station of pastries and finger foods where the guests could serve

themselves from time to time.

The party commenced an hour ago and they'd played several games and heard heart-warming speeches from the guests. People stood around the room, having conversations while calm music played in the background. They were all waiting for the

big reveal.

Osareme sat alone at a table and looked at the beauty that her party planner had turned her regular living space into.

It was magnificent.

The room was filled with laughter and pure smiles. She had her family present, her closest friends and that of Tochi's. She was surrounded by so much love.

She had made t-shirts available for everyone to put on with the choice of picking between 'Team Boy' and 'Team Girl'.

It was her first gender reveal, and the one that'd be her last. The doctors said that her uterus was only fit enough to carry one baby without complications.

And honestly, she was perfectly fine with it. With the amount of suffering in the world, she'd prefer to bring only one child into it.

Besides, there was always the option of adoption or surrogacy if Tochi wanted any more children. At least she could determine the gender of that one.

But for this one, a lot of the guests had chosen pink shirts including her husband. She could hear him talking to his friends right now.

"I want her to look more like Osa facially though. She's going to be too pretty." He grinned in excitement.

"You should hope that she takes Osa's brain too." Ugo, his younger brother teased, causing the rest of their friends to laugh hard.

Osareme hadn't slept properly all week leading up to today. Her nights consisted of sneaking into the guest bedroom and crying unto God to give her a baby boy.

As far as she was concerned, God owed her this one request. After all He had let happen to her in this life, He owed her this one.

A little resentment filled her heart as she couldn't believe how unreasonable her friends and family were though.

Each time, she'd replay the answers they gave her when she had asked them, "Why do you want it to be a girl?"

"Ugh, because I want to be

a girl dad." Her husband answered.

"Ah! Since you don't have my time again, she'll be coming to stay with me. Two of us will be going out together." Her Nigerian mother's voice echoed in her head.

"Trust that I'll be the best aunty. I'm going to make her a popping babe."

"I'm going to teach her how to DJ. Best female DJ the world would ever see." Her brother claimed.

Imagine these people! All flimsy reasons!

"Are they not scared for her life?", Osareme thought to herself.

No one was thinking about the dangers of being a girl in a world like this.

She spent months thinking about how she was possibly going to be a mother to a girl child.

*Was she careful enough?*

*How was she going to dress her?*

*Who was she going to allow around her daughter?*

*Was she going to restrict her house staff to only women?*

*Would that be safer?*

*Was there an all-female-staffed school somewhere?*

*At what age, would she let her go out alone?*

*Was she even going to let her attend concerts?*

*No male friends?*

*No going for sleepovers at Uncle Efe or Uncle Ugo's house? Hell, at anyone's house?*

These were a few situations that Osareme felt she could control but there were many that she couldn't.

*Who can I trust around her?*

*What if we get robbed?*

*What if she decides to take a stroll at night?*

She'd teach her self-defense, but can she fight off eleven men on her own?

She could buy her a taser or a pocket knife but what if she forgets her bag?

She'd teach her to always lock her door before she goes to sleep but what if she gets sick and needs to call out for help?

Osareme swore that she'd teach her daughter the same lessons her mother taught

her:

*Don't sit on any man's lap.*

*Always walk with a friend.*

*Make sure you're not alone with any boy in a room or house.*

*Always cover your body. Dress decently oh.*

*No tight clothes.*

*When you're walking, you must "entice" a man.*

*Never leave your drink unattended to.*

Osareme scoffed as she shook her head.

'I'm a fool if I think any of those would stop my daughter from getting raped. I applied every one of those lessons and I still got raped, so who am I kidding?' She thought.

She looked at her happy mother. The poor woman probably thought that her overprotective nature would prevent her daughter from being a victim. She had no idea.

Osareme remembered going through her phone the other day where she came across an article that read: "At least one in every five women have been raped or molest-

ed."

She scanned the room that held over fifteen women in it and wondered who among these women were victims aside herself. She was one in her five but who were the others?

How would she make sure her daughter doesn't get counted among the victims?

Was there a manual somewhere that she could read, that would teach a mother how to avoid her daughter from being sexualized by a man even as a baby, a toddler, a preteen, a teenager and a grown woman?

Osareme knew that if she had a baby girl, she would live the rest of her life in paranoia because how would she protect her girl?

Osareme was scared.

"Please Lord, just give me a boy. I don't want to live in fear and I don't want to bring forth a child that I'd have to teach to live in fear. Please."

She prayed one last time as she looked at the box that contained the balloons that would reveal the gender of

her baby.

“Right about now, is the time we all have been waiting for. Osa and Tochi, please come over here to the platform so we can reveal the gender of our little bundle of joy.” Daniel, Tochi’s cousin, who was the emcee geeked.

The guests immediately took out their phones ready to make videos of this moment.

Tochi rushed over and helped his wife to stand from her chair and took her hand as they walked over to the large box.

“Oh my God!” Tochi held her shoulders and shook them nervously and excitedly.

“On the count of three, Tochi, you’re going to open this box. Let’s go. 1....2...”

Osareme closed her eyes. She wasn’t ready.

“3!”

Tochi lifted the lid of the box. Balloons elevated into the air as the room went into an absolute uproar with people running back and forth, screaming and cheering.

Damn, she already knew.

Osareme opened her eyes.

*Blue. Wait, what? It’s blue. It’s a boy!*

“It’s a boy.” She repeated it as the realization hit her. She screamed with relief and joy took over her body.

She jumped as high as her pregnant feet could take her.

God hadn’t failed her this time.

Now that she was having a boy though, she had a new plan. She was going to teach her son to respect women.

She’d teach him what she wished her rapist was taught: “No means no.”





Liza Chuma Akunyili  
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## TIME TO GET LUCKY

A while back, I had run into a financial downtime in business and like you, I went online looking for articles that could show me how to make more money as a therapist. I chose to read one of the articles that I thought has a really long list (it was impossible not to find something there, right?). Well, I read through that list and realized I was doing everything on the list. So now, I'm upset!

I went to my business coach to ask for more personalized tips because these online re-

searches were leading to a dead end. When I finished explaining everything my business was going through and what my online searches led to, I expected him to whip out a talisman of some sort that assesses the situation and revealed what I forgot to consider. Have you ever been in a position where you wished someone would tell you how your failure was because you left something out? That was me.

Instead, he applauded my efforts and the lists I had

ticked and encouraged me to wait. I was upset. Tell me I'm wrong. Tell me to take a course. Tell me to send out more cold emails. Tell me to fight. Tell me to do anything else but wait? Wait for who? No one is coming to rescue me.

That single strategy has changed how I execute projects. When you have done everything that needs to be done, stop moving things around - give your plans the opportunity to come together.



Morgan Housel in the Psychology of Money has a similar suggestion that luck and fate have a very important place in financial growth.

This is not synonymous to laziness. Rather, it is the quiet belief that everything that can be done has been done. Now, time must be given the opportunity to run its course. This is a belief in your dream and your big picture that it will work.

When my coach told me to wait, I was distraught but I waited. While waiting, I would ensure my content

had great search engine optimization and I had great visibility (as much as I could afford), I would check up on old clients and pitch to new ones, I would write more content and discard what was shiny but not functional in the picture. Then the magic began like a snowball - an old client referred someone who referred someone who referred someone. We went from "is this working to yes! We were not mad".

Dear Affluent Author,

There is a strong need to dot your I's and cross your

T's. Have you been creating? Have you diversified your creation? Have you carried your audience along? Are you doing due diligence with publishing? Is there a distribution plan? What's the visibility strategy? Have you successfully built a campaign team (fans and experts)? Do you have a structure for making a career out of this?

As you do all these, please leave room for time.

You need time to get lucky: luck is not an accident. The more you do something, the more you recognize the op-

opportunities in that field and the more you understand why you've missed previous ones and how to position for newer ones. More practice equals more opportunities to be lucky.

You need time to build a fallback portfolio: a great advertisement could get you in front of the crowd but if you do not have an archive of valuable and enjoyable resources, you will lose that crowd while you are working on a new book. People are likely to wait for your work when they have something else, they can hold onto as an appetizer or something else they can reheat from you.

You need time to re-strategize: everything in your plan will not work as planned. So, you need to always make time to see how successful your plans will be and make time for course correction if it does not work. For example, if your book launch gets delayed due to some printing error, did you include a time margin for failure? There's a margin for failure required even financially. So, why wouldn't you apply that principle to time?

You need time for success: say you planned for your book to sell one thousand copies in twelve weeks but that happens in two weeks. Did you and your team make plans to coordinate that success if it happens? We are familiar with saying "ugh! It's failing". That we miss the opportunity to just calm down and watch things work out well.

Time to reset: this was the final step I was hoping my coach would take me through; reset. Reset is what happens when everything has failed or everything has succeeded and you take a break so you can relaunch. Without resets, we are at the brink of becoming monotonous and fatigued. Whether it works or not, a reset is necessary.

Dear Affluent Author, the year is not yet over. Thirty days are enough to finish that book you have been second guessing, sign a publishing deal, sign a distribution deal, launch your online presence etc. If you do not want to try again this year, it is enough time to hit a hard reset for the New Year.

Until I see you next year, do not forget to give yourself time to be lucky.



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# MY FRACTURED IDENTITY

A Creative Non-Fiction by  
Angel J. Okwonko, Nigeria

**Reviewer**

Francis Mkwapatira  
(Malawi)



“My Fractured Identity” is a powerful introspective piece that delves into the struggles and realisations of a 24-year-old at a crossroads in life. The author masterfully portrays the emotional turmoil of early adulthood through vivid imagery and raw honesty, making the narrative highly relatable and thought-provoking.

The piece begins with the author staring at a blank page, symbolising the daunting uncertainty of the future. This relatable scene sets the stage for reflections on failed professional endeavours and the haunting feeling of not fitting into the corporate world. The narrative is enriched by the author’s introspection on past achievements and subsequent disillusionment with societal expectations.

The turning point comes as the author confronts their true passions—drawing, painting, and writing—activities that once brought immense joy but were overshadowed by the demands of a conventional career. This reve-

lation catalyses the journey towards reclaiming their authentic self. The narrative transitions seamlessly from despair to a hopeful pursuit of creative fulfilment.

While acknowledging the challenges of pursuing a non-traditional path, the author’s determination shines through. The piece eloquently conveys the emotional weight of tearing up a résumé and drafting a new life plan. The metaphor of shedding pounds with each keystroke underscores the liberating power of embracing one’s true identity.

“My Fractured Identity” resonates deeply with anyone grappling with societal pressures and the pursuit of personal happiness. Its candid exploration of failure, self-discovery, and resilience offers a poignant reminder that true fulfilment often lies off the beaten path. This well-crafted piece testifies to the transformative power of introspection and courage in the face of uncertainty.

# BAGGAGE BOY

A Flash Fiction by  
Winnie Wekesa, Kenya



**Reviewer**  
Funmi Richards  
(Nigeria)

The story has a poignant, reflective tone that effectively captures the protagonist's inner conflict. Its simple yet evocative style draws readers into the protagonist's world, with vivid imagery such as "suitcase wheels" and "glossy magazines" creating a tactile and relatable environment. The dialogue, though sparse, is natural and highlights the protagonist's self-doubt and yearning for more. These stylistic choices successfully convey the emotional depth of the piece.

The story's core theme revolves around the longing for something greater, juxtaposed with the barriers of circumstance and self-doubt. It explores universal emotions: feeling trapped in routine, desiring freedom, and wrestling with inadequacy. The protagonist's small act of rebellion—slipping the boarding pass into another bag—underscores a secondary theme: the quiet ways people assert agency when larger actions seem unattainable.

The linear narrative structure flows seamlessly from the protagonist's present routine to a brief reflection on their past, culminat-

ing in the impactful moment of rebellion. However, the final act involving the boarding pass, while thought-provoking, would benefit from a stronger lead-up to heighten its emotional resonance.

The story excels in portraying the protagonist's internal journey. The contrast between their monotonous reality and unfulfilled dreams is deeply relatable, and the discovery of the boarding pass adds an intriguing element. Moreover, the metaphorical significance of the boarding pass as a symbol of opportunity could be explored further, adding layers to the final gesture.

This narrative aligns with themes in works such as Guy de Maupassant's *The Necklace*, which examines the longing for a better life, and W. Somerset Maugham's *The Verger*, which reflects on finding purpose in unexpected places. The story's quiet yet profound exploration of longing and agency makes it a strong candidate for literary magazines like *Granta*, *The London Magazine*, or *Wasafiri*, which often showcase character-driven narratives with emotional depth.

# FORGETTING AND OBLIVIOUS

A Poem by  
Odirile Aubrey, Botswana

**Reviewer**  
Akuei Adol  
(South Sudan)



Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, in *Decolonising the Mind*, argues that “language...has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture...the collective memory bank of a people’s experience in history.” Odirile Aubrey’s poem resonates deeply with this idea, as the persona laments the loss of heritage and cultural pride under foreign influence. This painful disintegration reflects the struggle to preserve identity amid pressures to reshape it.

The central themes of cultural loss, identity, and generational trauma are explored through the persona’s sorrowful introspection. The cherished aspects of identity, symbolised by “my mother’s tongue,” “my father’s strength,” and “our stories,” highlight the depth of cultural decay. The line “the sun weeps” personifies nature as mourning the destruction of the people’s heritage. The title encapsulates the enforced amnesia

of the persona’s culture, suggesting that the struggle against forgetting is both external and internal.

The poem’s disordered nine-stanza structure mirrors the fractured identity it portrays. Its lack of rhythm symbolises cultural disintegration, while the fragmented lines echo the persona’s psychological fragmentation. Simple yet powerful diction, such as “drummed out,” “sapped,” and “violated,” conveys the violence of cultural loss. The tone is reflective and mournful, with a quiet recognition of the irreparable nature of the loss.

This poignant piece invites readers to empathise with the persona’s distress and reflect on the resilience required to endure such cultural dislocation.

# NOW THAT YOUR LOVE IS BLACK

A Short Story by  
Afia Boatemaa, Ghana

**Reviewer**

Rose Wangari  
(Kenya)



Our pains and desires can transform into hopeless hope, desperation, and loathsomeness. This reality unfolds vividly in Afia Boatemaa's story, as the protagonist navigates a vicious cycle of pain and betrayal.

The protagonist harbours strong, negative beliefs about white people, shaped by past experiences. However, this mindset begins to shift when a young white man offers help. Overwhelmed with excitement, she shares the news with her mother, who warns her to be cautious. Ignoring this advice, she lets herself believe in the promise of love, only to face a devastating twist: she is not loved but used.

The narrative explores themes of betrayal, heartbreak, and self-doubt. The protagon-

nist's fleeting hope for genuine connection is crushed, adding another twist to her emotional wounds. The story reminds readers that appearances can be deceptive and that the grass is not always greener on the other side.

While the themes are compelling, the narrative could benefit from deeper character development and tighter cohesion. The author's exploration of betrayal, however, remains poignant, driving home the fragility of trust and the harsh realities of love.



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