



**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Empowering African Writers

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## **The Allure of Promises**

Blessing Amatemeso  
Nigeria

## **Dreams that Fly**

Laurent Bwesigye  
Uganda

# Promises



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# Editor's Note

Every month a new edition is released, and a call of submission is out, it's a lifestyle we abide by.

For the festive season, we present to you the 60th edition of WSA magazine, as PROMISED. Promises articulated in different perspectives and ideologies, it is not just a Pinky Swear, it goes beyond that.

Enjoy.

**Neo Space-Poet Masetlane**

Botswana

Acting Chief Editor



**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa

# Call for Submission

## Theme: Plans

Writers Space Africa (WSA), an international online literary magazine, will from 20th of November to 14th December, 2021 accept submission for its 62nd Edition (**February 2022 Edition**)

We accept submissions in the following categories:

- **Articles/Esays - 1,200 words maximum**
- **Flash Fiction - 300 words maximum**
- **Poetry - 1 poem, a maximum of 24 lines**
- **Short Stories - 700 words maximum**
- **Children's Literature - Short Stories - 700 words maximum, Poetry, Flash Fiction, Articles/Essays -500 words maximum, illustrations may be attached...**

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# The Devil in a Saviour's Garment

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It was a cool Eke market day in our peaceful but perplexed paradise, a day which every man and beast in our community anticipated its arrival. Birds sang their melodies across the garden, the anurans croaked harshly with wantonness, children saluted their mothers in rapturous faces as a means of reminding them to buy 'akara' at Eke market before nightfall. Less than one kilometer from my father's house was sited the Ezeoka town hall overflowing with hundreds of men and women both young and old. The surroundings of the town hall were colorfully decorated with over fifteen metal poles bearing a yellow-brown Party flag swirling in harmony with the gentle Eke morning breeze.

I sat at the back end of the hall but due to my economized height and the rowdiness of the hall, I could barely see or hear the man standing on the podium. So, I decided to humble myself and move quickly to the front to enable me see and hear him. I tried making my way through the crowd but just half way to the front stood this huge and tall man with six-packs and commando hands. He looked like a descendant of Goliath while I stood before him like a Lilliputian

trying to read his facial expressions. Suddenly, it dawned on me that if I didn't find my way back to my seat, people may likely leave the town hall meeting to tell their neighbors and children the heart touching story of a young stubborn boy who was slapped to death by a bouncer during a political rally that held at the town hall on Eke market day.

I was determined to see and hear what the man on the podium was saying, so I ran out of the hall through the back door where there was no bouncer to restrain my movement. I squeezed myself into the crowd that gathered at the front window of the hall opposite the podium. At last, I heard his closing



remarks as he said *"I will air condition your roads, build you good schools and equip your health centres with modern health facilities. I will alleviate your poverty and create jobs for your women and youths. Your young men will no longer be seen on the streets and corners of Ariaria, Alaba, and Onitsha main market hawking Gala and sachet water, I will empower them. I shall provide free education for primary and secondary school children as well as electricity for your whole community. You are my people, and your pain is my pain. Your sorrow my sorrow and in your joy shall I have my joy."*

Hmmm... that man spoke as if he was the messiah our community has been expecting for decades to liberate us from the shackles of poverty and ignorance. You needed to see him sweating profusely like a woman in labour. He was really pregnant with words! His jugular vein distended as words triggered out of his mouth like the rattling of a gun. His piquant face stretched like a bubble gum and his large appealing eyes bulged out as he read his manifesto with unprecedented passion and oratory. What would you expect of our sincere people who have been eagerly waiting for a change?

On that fateful day of the election, men, women and youths all trooped out in masses, leaving their homes and businesses behind to vote our supposed

"Redeemer-senator" into power. That man's tongue really appeared greenish from a distance, but on a closer look I saw that it was like crimson.

Two years have passed since he became our Senator. Our roads are still untarred let alone air conditioned. Our people still drink unclean water from the ponds and streams despite the rate at which *Loa loa* is damaging our young women's eyes. Both young and old are compelled to visit the bush at least five times a day, as a result of unavoidable stooling episodes emanating from the kind of food and water we consumed. My neighbour's son is almost as weightless as a dry paw-paw leaf due to frequent diarrhea flecked with mucus, pus, and blood stains. I wrote this work sitting beside an 18-year-old damsel, who was helplessly trying to press her hands into her stomach, groaning in excruciating pains. I paid attention to her plight and the war song of a battalion of whip worms in her tummy hollering in ecstasy was all I heard. Myself, I have gotten used to those sounds in my tummy, so whenever I heard them, I always lie flat in total surrender to the whip worm soldiers until the mortal combat was over. I fortunately discovered that tightly holding my pillow under my tommy helped reduce the pain of the gunshots released by the commandant whip worm.

What about the good schools and the



promise of a free education for our children? Emeka's mum was in my house yesterday night. She has been disturbing everyone in the neighborhood to assist her raise 33, 200 Naira as WAEC fee, to enable Emeka take his Senior School Certificate Examination in our own community secondary school. There are many other children in our community who are not in school currently as a result of financial bankruptcy. A typical example is Nkechi, from whom I buy 'pure' water whenever I passed through Eke market to the city.

Nkechi is a moderately tall and beautiful damsel. She is fair complexioned, with an admirable gait. I always love to make her smile because whenever she does, it reveals her dimple and that usually titillate me. Nkechi's smartness never cease to amaze me, her ingenuity in business is quite rare for a child of her age and background. That inspired me to nickname her 'Oprah Winfrey' because I am optimistic that her future is very bright and I know someday her destiny helper will locate her. Severally, I have asked her why she is not in school. Well, her answer is as good as your guess. She stopped schooling after her Junior Secondary School and started hawking sachet water to support her poor widowed mother who sells dry pepper and fried groundnut at Eke market in a bid to provide daily bread for her family.

Don't bother asking me of the modernized health centres because my uncle's



wife – Mama Ebuka was rushed to the city general hospital about 6am today. She was said to be experiencing labour complications and was even screaming at the top of her voice as if she was going to drop dead the next minute. Her husband had earlier rushed to the only dilapidated Health Centre in our community around 3am when parturition started, to see if there was any mid-wife on duty who could help save the life of his dear wife and unborn child. Alas, that antiquated God-forsaken rusted iron gate of the clinic was firmly locked with a very big pad lock. Only God knows if that woman was delivered safely of her baby or whether she kicked the bucket on their way to the city general hospital which is about 10 kilometers away from my village.

Every quarter of the year usually ends with a harvest of death in our community. At least four to five of our ebullient,



well-meaning young men return to us in carved-padded wooden boxes honored with the title "Late" and conveyed by a state hospital ambulance. A majority of these ambulances arrive at intervals of three market days to our village, mostly from Onitsha and sometimes from Lagos. The story is usually that most of these youngsters with enviable destinies and potentials, were crushed by a speeding trailer or an over speeding jeep while crossing to and fro the highway with a carton of gala on their head and for many others a mad-rush to sell off a bowl containing just ten to fifteen sachets of water was all that claimed their precious lives. Unfortunately, most of these young boys and girls hail from the same town with our supposed redeemer who promised to create jobs and empower youths in his senatorial district but at last found fulfillment in

passing his people through a hellish torture.

Now I understand the poem my literature teacher forced me to memorize in secondary school – "The Ambassadors of Poverty" by P.O.C Umeh. Our supposed redeemer is the true ambassador of poverty. He is the corrupt leader whose head is abroad and anus at home. He is the leader who faithfully kept all his electoral promises in the reverse order. He is the rancorous elite whose delight is in looting his own people. He is the devil that came to us in a saviour's garment. Papa told me last week that he even owns mansions in Dubai, in addition to the houses he bought at Wuse in Abuja and at Lekki in Lagos. Indeed, that man is the most honest liar I have ever known. I will tell my children this tale.

# The Allure of Promises

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The Merriam Webster dictionary defines Promise as a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something. It is also a legal binding declaration that gives the person to whom it is made a right to expect or to claim the performance or forbearance of a specified act. Promise, as a noun and a verb, has many synonyms such as covenant, pledge, swear, vow, oath, word, amongst others, all of which portray seriousness. Many make promises, from as simple as promising to meet a loved one for dinner, to promising to love someone for the rest of your life, or promising to take a country out of poverty. When a promise made is not kept, it has a great emotional impact on the recipient. In fact, breaking a promise is seen as betrayal.

When it comes to elections in Africa, the phrase 'promise and fail' seems to have come to stay. Politicians make lots of promises which they fail to keep. Not only do they fail to keep these promises, the economic, social, and democratic atmosphere worsen during their tenures. This is a betrayal of the trust the populace place in their hands. Because of this abysmal experience, a leader who

keeps a few of their promises, no matter how terrible they perform, is praised. Despite the recurrence of this cycle, the promises are so enticing that the populace always has a little hope that 'this time' will be different. Unfortunately, 'this time' has not been different in many cases.

The words pledge and promise appear in most traditional wedding vows. Despite making such vows solemnly and sometimes, I believe, with the purest of intentions, they are usually broken as is evident by the alarming rate of divorce and other 'unloving' acts such as domestic violence, 'ghosting,' etc. To those that have experienced it, heart break is not just emotional, it is also a very real and physical pain. The breakdown of a marriage affects not just the two parties involved but has a ripple effect, affecting all those connected especially children, if any were produced by the union. Even work or business is affected by the breakdown of a marriage. Many a song have been borne out of love, but much more have been borne out of heart break and betrayal.

Sometimes heartbreak comes even be-

fore the marriage. According to the Bible, love is patient, kind, steadfast, it suffers long, endures all things, and believes all things. Maybe it is this kind of love that drives people to give their all to someone they intend to marry, sometimes ignoring the voice of caution of kin and kith. Or is it the desire to 'secure' the partner? Meanwhile, when this promise of marriage is not fulfilled, the resulting emotional turmoil is so great that sometimes it drives one to insanity. When a person experiences this many times (for some even once or twice) they become skeptical about the existence of love and think that trusting another human will only bring regret. Brenda Fassie's song, Promise, says it aptly, '...What you telling me that for you don't mean it.'

Promises transcend not just the physical realm but the spiritual as well. I can't delve into what makes one a devotee of one religion and not another but in every religion or almost every religion, devotees follow doctrines because of a promise; maybe a promise of a better life in the hereafter, a promise of success and fulfilment in the now or not so distant future. Sometimes we hear of people who became atheists because their prayers to God were not answered for a long time, so they reached the conclusion that such a God does not exist.

What binds a person to a promise made? Is it the touching of pinky fingers, the spoken word, the strength of



the person's character, or the legality of a document signed?

We find addicts promising to stop their addiction, spouses and parents promising to do better, employers promising that they are on the matter, only for workers to be laid off weeks later. '...Your promises have never been anything you made them seem.' (Brenda Fassie's Promise)

In times past, when human settlement was in small groups, promises were made verbally with a few 'trusted' people as witnesses. As writing developed and societies expanded, it then became necessary for promises to be written. As human societies continued to expand and evolve, a simple writing could no longer suffice hence it became necessary to have legal systems to authenticate such written agreements. Despite such stringent measures, humans still look for loop holes in this binding contract to escape the promises or declarations made.



Can we prevent people from making promises they do not intend to keep?

In the public sector, promises are made to gain the favor of a position or an office. Their rights of office can be linked to the obligations they promise to fulfill. In simple terms accountability. Developing countries still have a long way to go regarding this. We still hear news of misappropriation of public funds and outright looting of money. Thomas Jefferson once said, "When the government fears the people there is liberty, when the people fear the government there is tyranny." The only way for accountability to be possible is for the people to come together and harness their power to keep their chosen leaders in check.

On a personal level, promises come with a degree of trust. It is for this reason that when someone is promised money, he

goes around with a level of confidence collecting goods on credit. When the promise is not fulfilled, the person finds himself in a fix with more debt than he can pay without trouble. He resorts to pleading with the person to deliver on his promise. Here, it is advisable that one does not spend money until he sees cash at hand. In cases that have to do with love and relationships, what does one advise? How does one protect one's self from the pain of intimate promises broken? What can one do to protect one's heart when the promises are so alluring? The only person everyone of us can control is our self. Others we simply influence or manipulate. So, we can only act in the way we desire and hope that others reciprocate. 'Do unto others what you want them to do unto you.' To love is to be vulnerable. We can love with a little wisdom and maybe a dash of caution.



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# Destination Charti

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My future instantaneously turned bleak the moment I found out I had been posted to Charti M/A Primary School. Accra was my home and the pursuit of my ambitions was a guaranteed smoother process with me in Accra. For that reason, I wanted nothing more than to be posted in a school in Accra to teach. But, in as much as I harboured a strong hope of being posted in Accra, I was also a realist enough to know the chances of that. So in efforts to manage expectations and avoid disappointments, I let go of my hopes of an Accra based posting and lowered my expectations to anywhere with network connectivity and electricity. It seemed a very low expectation and there was no way I would be disappointed. Or so I thought.

Charti M/A Primary School is located in a very remote village in the northern part of Ghana. Specifically the Oti region. The village goes by the same name as the school: Charti. It has no network reception, no electricity, no safe source of water, and the road leading to the place was horrendous. The whole thing seemed like a prank cooked up in hell. I couldn't think of a single thing I had

done in my life to deserve such a posting. My options were either to drop out of the teaching profession or take a difficult leap of faith and go to Charti.

*It is going to be temporary. You would apply for a transfer after a year. It is going to be an adventure. You will come out of this with great stories.* These were all promises I made to myself to ease swallowing my pride and going to Charti. The external promises from the government about teachers in rural communities receiving incentives also helped.

It was after I went to Charti that I learnt that promises are easier made than lived out. Externally, there was no extra incentives from the government. Not a dime. I was completely at the mercy of the villagers. They gave me a place to stay and although I am appreciative of that kindness, a view of the place made me question if the people really cared about my wellbeing as much as they claimed.

The house was arguably the most outdated in the entire village. It was a typical



Ghanaian compound house made of four flats of rooms arranged in a square-like manner. The centre of the house which was open to the sun was its kitchen. There was a smaller kitchen at the entrance which I figured was for the rainy season. The room I was given was right next to that kitchen. The roof above the room had turned black from smoke from the kitchen. There were holes all over the floor and the walls. The floor was geometrically uneven, and don't even get me started on the mice. The more I looked around the room the worst it got. All I could do was smile and say "Thank you."

I was brought to Charti to teach and although the circumstances weren't conducive, I still had to do my job. I probably would have done a decent job if not for the endless obstacles that made teach-

ing and learning next to impossible. The school building is the worst I have seen. It was so horrible, it had no business being a school. The mud classroom walls had broken off all over and its highest points were around three feet high. The thatched roofing was held up by a number of wooden pillars.

Inside the classrooms there were few desks which had been provided by the district office. In front of the class were boards made from worn out plywood smeared with carbon electrode from batteries. The chalk used were mostly broken which made writing on the boards tedious and very uncomfortable. The only text books in the school were very few books from UNIAID. And on top of it all, the entire teaching staff of the school was three; myself, the Headmaster, and one other teacher who had been there a year before me.



Of the three staff, only the headmaster spoke and understood the language of the locals which was Kokomba. The children didn't speak or understand English. The only bridge across the enormous language barrier was the Twi language. My twi was bad and theirs was worse. In between the bad and worse, we found a way to communicate.

I estimate only about thirty percent of the children in the village came to school. They came enthusiastically. I suppose a lot of them came to see me, the new teacher. The headmaster performing his head-masterly duties wasn't around most of the time so the running of the school fell to me and the other teacher. Being new, I taught two classes: classes five and six. The other more experienced teacher juggled the rest.

I was newly trained, inexperienced, and left unprepared for village life by the privileges of growing up in Accra. Most of the time during my early teaching days, it felt like I was talking to walls. The children had no idea what I was saying. I got frustrated trying to get through to them and that only made things worse for me.

Life outside the schools wasn't any better. Adapting to life in Charti was nothing short of hell. Every second was a pain. My efforts to endure stressed me to the bone. It was a psychological warfare I wasn't prepared for. The frustrating days turned to stressful weeks and

the stressful weeks grew to depressing months. Those first couple of months were the hardest of my life. The hardships reaffirmed my belief that the entire experience would make an amazing story I would get to tell one day with me at its centre. So I lowered my guard and allowed myself to get closer to the natives of Charti and that was when everything changed.

I got to learn that the people of Charti weren't any different from the people in Accra or any part of the world. They were mostly uneducated and steps back in civilisation, but at their core, they were humans who loved, laughed, cried, danced, and did every other thing humans across the world did. Most importantly, I realised the people of Charti have stories too. Stories that unfold day to day as their lives go on. Due to the unintentional isolation brought upon them by the settlement choices of their ancestors, their stories die with them.

As I adapted better to Charti and got to see its raw beauty, I felt compelled to make myself a promise to do my possible best to call attention from the outside world to Charti. It may be a long shot and may take an even longer while but this write-up is the first of many steps towards the fulfilment of that promise.

# Promises – Easy to Make But Hard To Keep

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Stephen Richards once said, “Promises are only as strong as the person who gives them.” By this, he didn’t mean physical strength. After all, a promise isn’t a dumbbell. A promise is, in its simplest term, a commitment. It is a person committing themselves to do something for someone or even to do something for themselves.



We have to understand what a promise is. It is you giving your word to a person that you will do something, or a particular thing will happen. But it is so much more than that. They are actions that affirm our love and connection with others. That connection may be through friends, family, or even strangers. A promise affirms that we want to pass our compassion to others. It lets the other person know that we will do whatever it takes to get that one thing done. To say you will do it is one thing but to promise that you will get it done is another. It is thus quite sad that the world we live in has forgotten what giving your word and making a promise is really about; we have forgotten the meaning behind it all.

A person can be the strongest in the

world or the weakest, but that does not matter when it comes to keeping a promise. You see, when Mr Richards spoke about strength, he was speaking about inner strength. He was speaking about a person with strong integrity and unfortunately, such people are rare to find these days.

Back in the past it didn’t matter what a person was. Whether poor or rich, good or bad, once they made a promise or gave their word, it was kept. Nowadays it seems promises are just made for lip service. Just for show, or to put someone at ease. A promise is hardly taken seriously anymore these days. In the past it was. A person who could keep his word was seen as one society could trust,

a person of honour, of integrity, and if we look around today it is evident that trust, honour, and integrity lie in but a few honourable people.

We make promises every single day. Some are major and others minor. The latter are the ones we tell people every day. Something like promising to buy bread or do the dishes or wash the clothes. These promises are easy to keep because they require little to no effort. At the same time, these little promises we make build trust amongst people. For example, maybe you promised your mother countless times that you would do the dishes, but you never did. After all those broken promises, what are the chances that she'll trust you to keep a major promise? It is very unlikely. She knows that if you cannot keep a minor promise, she will not be able to trust you to keep a major promise. That is life, that is how promises work. It builds trust between two people if it is kept and equally builds distrust if it is not.

We often make promises we know we can't keep. We make them simply because we feel we can always bring up an excuse later on to explain why we couldn't keep our promise. We believe that the other party will happily take that excuse because they would feel we tried our best. That is our hope. Although we should remember that the more important the promise is to a person, the more devastated they will feel when it is broken regardless of the

fake excuses we may give them. We may choose to break a promise, but it would be wise to remember that a broken promise leaves a hurtful memory for those we love. Memories are all they will have of us at some point in time, and it will be unfortunate if memories of broken promises are the only memories that linger in their mind long after we are gone.

In the end, the saying is right. It is easy for any man to make a promise, only those with character can keep a promise. Before we start making promises to others, we need to make sure we can keep the promises we make to ourselves. The little ones and big ones. We need to start with ourselves. That is the first step.

Here is one thing you should remember about making promises; never make a promise when you are excited, angry, or emotional. Let your emotions subside before making any utterances, for promises made during these moments are often those that lead to heartbreak.

# Where Do Broken Promises Go?

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Promises are concrete assurances that one gives as proof that one will definitely do something or that something will happen. It tends to be a commitment of following through on your word. A promise stands for affirmation of love, friendship, fervent human connection, a sign of eminent commitment, hard work, and a given level of intimacy. Promises by definition are supposed to stand the test of time.

It is impossible to dissociate promises from trust, the same way, it isn't possible to isolate breakage of a promise from disloyalty. The more you trust someone, the more their promises mean the world to you. It is as though trust lays down a stronger foundation over which the promise builds its house so firm.

So, at what point does one walk away from a promise or confess their failure to meet it? What is the ideal time for one to declare their inability to hold oneself to one's word? How does one take away the sensational anticipation and joy of expectation without risking a throbbing episode of emotional destruction and a sobbing manifestation on the face of the one looking forward to the fulfil-

ment of that promise? Furthermore, how does one deal with the news of a broken promise or a non-fulfilled pledge? How does one maintain their plight and move forward with the one going against their word without a possibility of resentment and mistrust? Or even more radically, does one get to blame the one who has broken their promise or gone against their own word? Perhaps, understanding if one should hold the other accountable in the first place is a great place to draw our verdict later in conclusion.

Well, perhaps the question is more philosophical than one may anticipate. For all we know, philosophy has a strange way of representation of facts. For starters, it is vital to question the state of affairs. Whether the same person who promised is the same person who is breaking the promise.

The thought experiment of the Ship of Theseus, a paradox from the field of identity metaphysics throws more light on the matter if not more complication. The ship of Theseus was an artifact in a museum, kept in memory and honor of the legendary king named Theseus

who supposedly founded the city of Athens. Over time, its planks that would rot were replaced with new planks of the same material and the same dimensions. When no original plank remains, is it still the ship of Theseus? Secondly, if those removed planks are restored and reassembled free of the rot is it still the ship of Theseus? This philosophical narrative becomes interesting when superimposed on human vs change perspective. We may not be the same person we were several years or days ago. Nevertheless, we are still considered the same person so that we are even held onto our promises.

Noson S. Yanofsky, in his article "The Ship of Theseus and the Question of identity" contemplates that "We each have different bodies and can say that every person is identified with their body. By postulating that a human being is their body, we are subject to some insoluble questions that we face in the Ship of Theseus and other physical objects. Our bodies are in constant flux. Old cells die and new cells are constantly being born. In fact, most of the cells in our body are replaced every seven years." This in ideal sense points to a likelihood of one being a different person. In our case perhaps, even a different person from the one who made a promise in the first place. In fact, later in the same article, Yanofsky, poses a question "*Who is the real you? The one who is madly in love with someone or the one who is bored with the same person*



*two months later?"* Or more vividly in our situation, Who is the real you? The one who promised someone heaven and earth or the one who is bored with the same person hence promise, currently seeing no value for its fulfilment and deciding to break it two months later?

Regardless of what side one might be on, one ought to stand at a place of cutting another some slack, knowing well that as much as they need to hold the others by their word, there is room for withdrawal and non fulfilment, without triggering disloyalty sensations nor unleashing emotion debris over the one withdrawing it.

# Call for Submission

Poetic Africa, a quarterly online poetry magazine published by Writers Space Africa, calls for submissions from poets for her February 2022 edition.

*An African country's anthem ends with "peace and unity". Can African countries boast of being peaceful and united? Have we (not) lost the humanity in us? Write and submit your poem under the theme **UBUNTU**.*

The editorial team is looking for poems of a maximum of 24 lines, creativity and originality. Please note that the poem titles should not have the word "Ubuntu".

The submission window is from November 10th until December 10th 2021. The edition will be released on **February 10th 2022**. Only poets of selected entries will receive feedback due the huge volumes of submissions.

To submit, please visit <https://writersspace.net/poeticafrika>. Submissions in French or Swahili are accepted but must be accompanied by equivalent translations in English.



# Daydreamer

Kwasi Adi-Dako | Ghana | Idako90@gmail.com

Halim's knees were bleeding again. He touched a finger to the scratches as an angry voice filled the air. A scrap metal merchant was picking up rusted aluminum rods off the ground and cursing at the top of his lungs.

"The stupid child wasn't watching where he was going!"

Halim glared up at him but held his tongue. He hadn't been looking where he was going. Even now as he glanced up at the merchant's angry face, he could see the silhouettes of tens of hawks turning slow arcs in the Dakar sky behind him. Halim's eyes followed one bird that had broken off from the group and was locked in an aerial dance with a crow.

"Are you listening to me? Talibés are ruining this city."

The merchant had picked up one of his rods and was shaking it in the boy's direction. Halim shot up and gave the merchant a wide grin before turning and sprinting down an alley.

He was used to adults being angry at him. Sometimes it was because of his dirty clothes. Most of the times, it was because he was bumping into them

he craned his neck, looking up.

He didn't want to go back to the Daara tonight to give his coins to Serigne Moussa. He didn't want to sleep in the stuffy room with all the other boys, but what choice did he have? He had slept on the street enough to know all the dangers of being outside. Thieves and stray dogs were worse than the small room where twenty boys lay head to foot. Then again, Serigne Moussa wasn't on the street. Halim hadn't been pulled out in the middle of the night yet by the old man, but it was only a matter of time. Every night he went back could be the night he was chosen.

He would give anything to fly with the hawks and look down at Dakar from above for once. Every day at sunset, they filled the sky like silent sentinels of the city. The only thing they cared about was catching a mouse before they vanished to their nests on the roofs of the tallest buildings.

Tonight would be different. He wouldn't go back to the Daara, or find a street corner to sleep on. Tonight, he promised himself he would be a hawk.

Halim wandered the streets downtown, searching for a tower to climb, but any

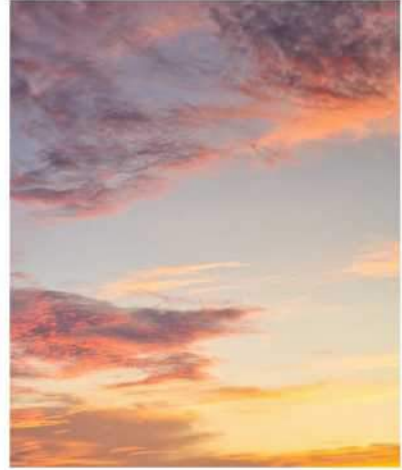
building that was tall enough had security guards who hurled abuse at him whenever he got too close. He almost snuck past one guard before he was caught and knocked on the head for his trouble.

As the day wore on, Halim became resigned to the fact that he would have to take a chance on the Daara and hope that he would make it through the night without Serigne's hungry eyes following him. He had reached the oldest section of the downtown area, with decrepit half-completed buildings scattered around like hollow stalagmites. He was about to give up his search when he saw it, the perfect building.

It was a burned-out concrete slab that rose twelve stories, with the doors and windows boarded up. There were no guards in sight because there was nothing to guard. It would have to do. The Imam's voice was floating through the city as people paused for Maghrib prayer.

Halim shot a furtive glance around to make sure no one was watching him, then darted to the side of the building to find a way in. He circled slowly and found a wall that had uneven cement blocks jutting out that could make a ladder up to a hole that never became a window. He scrambled up, putting a few more scrapes on his legs.

The sky had an orange tint as the sun



began to set, and Halim peered in by the glow. Empty paint cans and water sachets were strewn around. From the smell, someone had used this place as a toilet at some point; or something had died inside.

Halim tumbled in and checked his pockets to make sure he still had his things. One matchbox with three matches inside and the last few bites of a lamb sandwich he had been nibbling on since morning. His stomach rumbled as he looked at the sandwich but he stuffed it back into his pockets and looked for a way up.

He stepped through the room into the hallway and could see an elevator shaft, with thick cables that snaked up into darkness. He inspected it with apprehension and looked around for another way up. Further down the hall, a jagged cement staircase curved up out of sight.



The windowless stairwell had been built in the very center of the building and was so dark that he climbed as much by feeling as by sight. Loose rubble and trash nipped at his feet, trying to trip him up.

He stumbled a few times on his climb but went up the first five floors without issue. On the sixth, a feral cat hissed and darted into a room. It startled him and he almost fell back down, just catching himself.

By the eighth floor, the rubble was grabbing at his ankles and cackling every time he tripped. He stopped to strike a match and get a better look at the path. His heart sank. The staircase ended there. Whoever owned the building must have run out of money before they could finish the stairs, and now they stood like a haunted cliff in the center of this giant shell.

As he stood thinking about what to do next, the match burned down to his fingertips. He yelped and dropped it, watching it fall for a few floors before it vanished. He lit his second match and looked around the space. There was the elevator shaft, grinning at him.

He sighed and stepped toward it for another look. If the hanging cables were strong enough to hold him, he could probably shuffle up with his feet on the walls. The thought of entering the elevator shaft sent shivers down his spine and

he turned around, dejected. At the thought of heading back down, Serigne Moussa's face filled his mind and he stepped up to the hanging cables.

He cursed and reached in to grab a cable. A shower of dust rained down and he stepped back coughing, but it held. He mumbled a Fatiha and began to climb. After one floor, he felt confident.

Only three more to go.

By the tenth, his arms were starting to burn.

Two more.

At the eleventh, his whole body trembled from the effort and his foot slipped on the wall. He caught himself, chafing his hands on the wire, and made a final push up and out of the shaft before collapsing on the floor.

He looked up at the rusty blue door that led to the roof and dragged himself up, hoping it wasn't locked. It creaked open at his touch.

The sky was filled with hawks. He had never been this close to them before, and at this height, he could see each one clearly in the last of the day's light. A pair of them spun together in play, while another dove out of sight to catch something on the ground.

They all floated on the wind, heads snapping back and forth in search of



prey.

He heard the chirping of chicks nearby and crept slowly toward a dried-out water tank that was lying on its side. He saw a nest inside with three chicks, still blind. He took the sandwich from his pocket and crept toward them. He got as close as he dared and tossed the meat into the nest while he ate the last of the bread. The chirps grew louder as the chicks began pecking furiously at the gift. Your mother will help you with that when she comes back, he thought.

He walked over to the edge of the roof and looked down at the city for the first time. Taxis fought their way between cars and groups of men sat by the roadside, sipping on café touba. A sea of rooftops spread out before him, dotted with

sheep that were being prepared for Eid. Everything seemed so distant.

He didn't want to go back down. This rooftop would not solve his problems but he felt safer here than anywhere else he had been in a while. He stepped back from the edge as hawks began to land on the roof around him. He walked as quietly as he could back to the blue door and sat just inside it, watching them return home. He felt a pang in his chest as he watched the older hawks feed their young. They looked like real families. Halim leaned against the wall and watched the raptors until he drifted to sleep with a smile on his face and a tear in his eye.

# Between Friends

**Nkabinde Ntombifuthi** | South Africa | [futhi.nkabinde1@gmail.com](mailto:futhi.nkabinde1@gmail.com)

I listen as Katlego's footsteps pound the hallway coming toward the dormitory room I share with my best friend, Nomzamo. My heart starts beating like a thousand drums as his footsteps get closer. I say a silent prayer before slowly getting up from the couch I've been sitting on since I got his text this morning. He didn't explain the reason for the visit, but I instinctively knew.

I draw a shaky breath as I watch the door handle wiggle and give way. I can hardly hear myself think now. The speech I've been rehearsing in my head is all gone. His scent enters the room before he does, and I smell him before I can see him. I can feel his presence now, his aura. To say that Katlego is angry with me would be an understatement.

In a split second, he's standing right in front of me, fury written all over his face. Droplets of sweat trickle down his left temple as he looks me dead in the eye. His eyes are filled with rage – mine with fear and terror. Adrenalin is pulsating violently through my veins as I take a series of rapid breaths. My head is buzzing, and I can hardly feel my body.

He takes his jacket off and throws it on the floor, never taking his eyes off me.

"Start talking, Zinhle!" he barks.

I take a few steps back and he takes steps toward me then I freeze.

Katlego and I met at university and I remember being mesmerized the first time I laid my eyes on him. He was talking to his friend, BK, when I turned around to investigate who the dreamy scent from behind me belonged to. Our eyes met and I couldn't take mine off him. I remember asking myself what he was doing in the registration queue of a university when he had the face that belonged in the cover of GQ magazine.

"Kat, please!" I whimper, trying to sound as apologetic as I possibly can. "It was a mistake. We didn't mean for it to happen."

"You didn't mean for what to happen, huh? Tell me what you didn't mean to happen, Zinhle?"

"I...I" my bottom lips quivers and I shut down.

"You can't even say it, can you? It is so despicable even to you who did it." he says, tears brimming in his eyes.

I've known Katlego for five years straight and I've only ever seen him cry once - The day he buried his father after his battle with cancer. I remember the long night he cried on my lap when we got back from the cemetery. I held him very tight, making him remember that I would always be there for him when he needed a shoulder or lap to cry on.

Now, here he is in front of me. Crying. I can't make him feel better this time because I'm the one who's caused this pain.

"Katlego, I'm sorry."

"Stop saying that. You don't mean it."

"But, I do. I'm sorry, Katlego. I love you and I never meant for this to happen." I repeat, tears cascading down my face.

I haven't cried like this since I failed my first year of medical school. Katlego is my first boyfriend and I think I was just so smitten with him. I even forgot what I had come to school for. Coupled with being young and immature, I forgot that I wasn't the straight A student Katlego was. But, I quickly made the necessary changes that have got me to where I am right now. A fourth-year medical student.

With his index finger on his chin, he shakes his head slowly. "I think you're only sorry you got caught." And then, after a short pause, he says, "What I can't wrap my head around is, why him? Why BK?"

My heart skips a beat as soon as Bokang's name escapes Katlego's lips. The mere mention of his name sends shivers down my spine and sends my throat begging for some precious refreshment. The simple mention of Bokang's name shakes me to my core and I take a seat on the couch upon realisation that my knees might buckle under the pressure.

See, Bokang – affectionately called BK by all his friends has been haunting my very soul since about six months ago. The love I feel for him is different from the love I have for Katlego. His is the love that has taken me by surprise. It's the kind of love I never saw coming. The kind that has kept me up at night since, refusing to let me rest.

BK and I got trapped in the elevator one day six months ago. Yes, we had known each other for quite a long time before then and I would say that even though he was best friends with Kat, I considered him my friend too. He was always the clown in the group, the one with all the jokes and a thousand friends. Everywhere we went, there was always a bunch of people who knew BK.

The two hours him and I spent in the elevator changed my view of him completely. We connected on a deeper level, a soul level. Him and I felt each other in a way that we had never felt one another before. Mentally, emotionally and psychologically. I felt in tune to him. I felt like I had found my equal. That day, he reached for my hand, but touched my heart instead.

Though I love Katlego, I never felt we connected the way BK and I connected that day in the elevator.

Right before the maintenance people rescued us, BK and I looked into each other's eyes and I could read the words etched in his heart. I could feel that even though we both knew we couldn't stay in that confined space forever, we didn't want to leave. I felt like our souls had met before, a long time ago and had made an agreement to find one another once again in this lifetime.

"I knew from the first day I saw you, that you were the one my soul had been searching for." Bokang said, right before we stepped out of the elevator.

Since that day, I don't think I've slept peacefully through the night. His soul tortures mine in a way that I can't even express. I see his eyes every time I close mine trying to find sleep. I can hear his heartbeat every time I try to quiet mine especially around Katlego.



I can't and have not told this to Katlego because I know that first of all, he won't even understand what I'm talking about. He's intellectual – not spiritual.

I'm about to open my mouth to say something to him when I hear movement from outside my window.

My heart thuds in my chest as I look out the window and see Bokang come up in the direction of my room. I turn around to hear the sound of a gun being cocked right in front of my face. I didn't even realise Katlego had a gun with him.

"What are you planning to do with that?" I ask, my voice trembling from sheer panic.

"You'll find out when your boyfriend gets here."

"He's not boyfriend, Kat. We haven't done anything, I swear to you."

There's a knock on the door. Kat shouts for BK to come in.

"Sit down!" He shouts as soon as BK enters.

Bokang's hands shoot up into the air as soon as he realizes what's going on.

"Bro, what's going on here? What are you doing?" Bokang asks.

"Shut up!" Yells Katlego, "I'm asking the questions."

"Zinhle, are you hurt? Are you okay?" asks Bokang, trying to move closer to me.

I want to respond but I've turned into a statue as tears pour down my face.

"She's fine. Don't speak to her. Don't even look at her." Katlego shouts, also trying to move closer to me. "Does Zamo know about you two?"

My heart skips a beat.

"We can talk about this, bro. Put the gun away and let's talk." Bokang pleads. "Let Zinhle go so you and I can talk things through like men." He continues.

Katlego chuckles. "Now you want to

talk." He says, "If my real friends at campus hadn't told me about you two, when where you going to talk to me?"

This is the moment that Nomzamo barges into the room not realizing what's going on inside. BK reckons it's the perfect opportunity to try and wrestle Katlego for the gun while we're distracted by Nomzamo. They go at it as Nomzamo and I watch in terror.

"Guys, stop it!" I shout, but, they don't.

The gun goes off almost deafening me. The wrestling on the floor comes to a halt and blood starts flowing from under the two guys.

I gasp for air. Nomzamo screams.

# Unbreakable Bonds

Tukupashya Ally Kasongo | Zambia | [tukupasyaally2004@gmail.com](mailto:tukupasyaally2004@gmail.com)

Mbawemi and Wanipa have been best friends since they were born. Sisters born two years apart making Mbawemi older. Wanipa wets her bed, this bothered her a lot, that at the age of 8, she still peed on her bed. She tried to stop, but then dreamt of water and peeing and found herself wet on the bed.

"I cannot stop peeing on the bed mum," Wanipa says, with tears almost dropping from her eyes. "I don't like it when I urinate on the bed. All my friends my age have stopped peeing on their beds."

Mum hugged Wanipa, with an assuring smile. "You will stop peeing eventually; everyone's time is different."

"But I want it to stop now Mum," Wanipa bursts

into tears.

"Oh, don't worry, Wanipa," Mbawemi reassures her, "I will help wake you up every day."

"You promise?" Wanipa asked her sister in excitement.

"Oh yes I promise, pink promise and kiss command my promise." The girls tangled their pinkie fingers together to seal the promise.

On the first, second and third day, Mbawemi was super excited to wake her sister up, "wake up! Wake up Wani!" She shook her sister frantically until she opened her little eyes. Grabbing hold of her hand, they exchange turns on the toilet and go back to sleep. This made Wanipa very proud that she did not wet her bed.

"Look Mum, I have stopped wetting my bed," Wanipa said as she hugged her Mum and Dad good morning. After breakfast the girls ran to get ready for their friend, Abigail's party.

They swam and jumped all day which made them so tired that they fell asleep right in their Dad's car before they even got home after the party. That Sunday morning, Wanipa peed on her bed. She was filled with tears and could not stop crying.

"You broke your promise Mbawemi, you did not wake me up," she sobbed. "Now I smell and have urine in my hair."

Mbawemi felt bad for her sister and tried to explain that she did not mean to break her promise, she was just tired. But Wanipa ignored her, she did not

sit with her when they went to Sunday school. After church, Mbawemi offered Wanipa a lolly pop.

"Look Wanipa I got you your favourite coloured Lolly pop, red. Here! you will love it," Mbawemi continued. But wanipa did not take it and looked away.

"Why won't you get the lollipop from your sister?" Mum asked Wanipa

"Because she broke her promise mum, she let me wet my bed today, she promised she would wake me up so we go pee together every day."

"What happened?" Mum asked Mbawemi

"I forgot to wake up yesterday too mum, I was tired from the party , so I could not wake up till morning."

"Oh Wanipa... Mbawemi didn't mean to break her promise; she was just too



tired as you were from the party. Promises are only broken when one intentionally breaks them."

"What do you mean Mum," asked a confused Wanipa

"What I mean is, if Mbawemi had woken up herself and purposefully did not wake you up, then she would have broken her promise, but in this case you were both tired and you did not wake up. So she did not break her promise."

All of the sudden a bright idea popped, "I know how

I can make it up to you?" Mbawemi interrupted her Mum.

"How?" Wanipa asked

"Mum, can you get us an alarm clock? An alarm clock never gets tired and always keeps its promise to wake us up."

"Heheheheh," the girls both giggled while hugging each other. "I'm sorry I ignored you Mbawemi."

"I'm sorry I overslept and did not help wake you up."

"But the alarm will now wake both of us up," Wanipa answered in excitement.



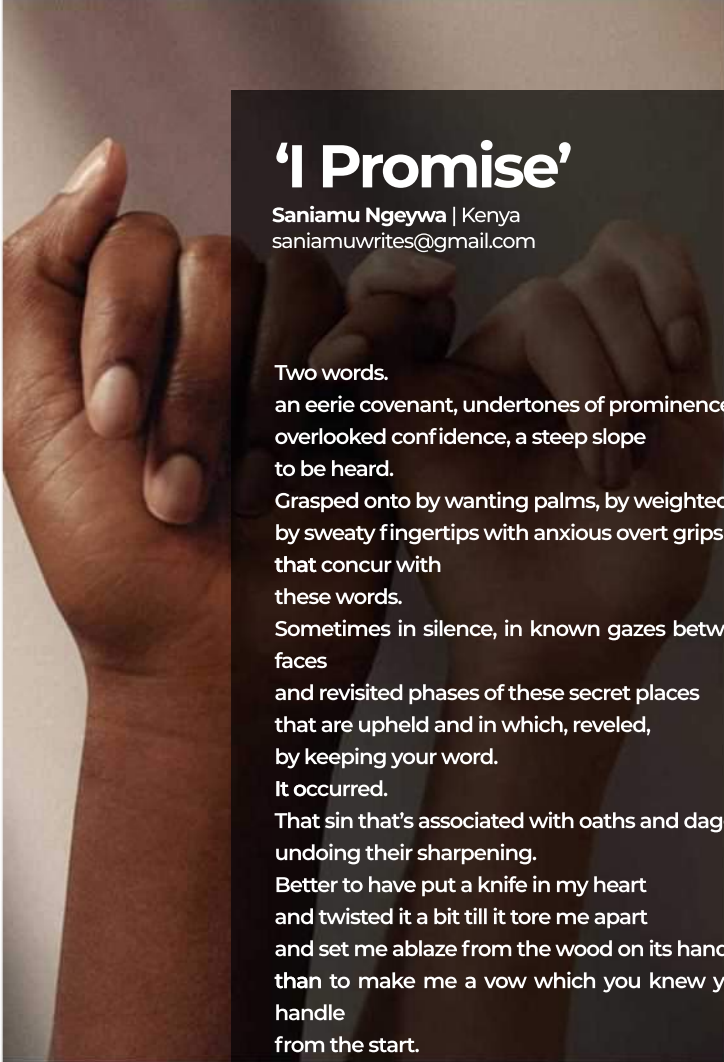
# The Golden Rule

Patricia E Peace | Uganda | [triciaSpeace@gmail.com](mailto:triciaSpeace@gmail.com)



Little boys and little girls  
Pay attention to words of the old  
As you walk through this life  
There is but one golden rule  
That will keep your friends close  
And earn you respect  
Do as you say you will do  
Stick to the truth, always

Little boys and little girls  
Pay attention to words of the old  
As you walk through this life  
There is but one golden rule  
That will make your parents happy  
And earn you trust  
Do as you say you will do  
Every time you hold out your pinky.



## 'I Promise'

Saniamu Ngeywa | Kenya  
saniamuwrites@gmail.com

Two words.

an eerie covenant, undertones of prominence,  
overlooked confidence, a steep slope  
to be heard.

Grasped onto by wanting palms, by weighted arms,  
by sweaty fingertips with anxious overt grips  
that concur with  
these words.

Sometimes in silence, in known gazes between known  
faces

and revisited phases of these secret places  
that are upheld and in which, revealed,  
by keeping your word.

It occurred.

That sin that's associated with oaths and daggers,  
undoing their sharpening.

Better to have put a knife in my heart  
and twisted it a bit till it tore me apart  
and set me ablaze from the wood on its handle  
than to make me a vow which you knew you couldn't  
handle  
from the start.

A promise, a debt, whose pay is due  
for the worthy, you have to do.



# If You still have me on your mind

Brook Abebe | Ethiopia | ethiobrook@gmail.com

There is a soft breath under this roof,  
Darling, it is not yours nor your kind.  
I alone wander the ground aloof,  
Wondering if you still have me on your mind.

Trapped I am between these tall white walls,  
Inside the shelter that once hid us from the world.  
They whisper how far you have moved  
Away, and how long I sat waiting by the hours.

By the fireside, I sit, and by the window, I lookout  
And I hope you would appear at the alley that lays  
narrow,  
Before the dark conceal and the fire goes out,  
Before the hours fade and the days become of sorrow.

Darling, today is but another day for me.  
A day made simple with the craft of your fingers,  
I have waited for a couple of stones to be.  
A heart, where you sit lifeless.

At the corners I see the droplets forming a puddle,  
The horse crossing the field without a saddle,  
The lilies of the vase moaned and died,  
I sit here and wonder if you still have me on your mind.

# A Place of Hope

Josh Pampam | Nigeria  
pampamjosh@gmail.com

In this place, I tarry.

In this place of shiny darkness,  
Of creepy crickets filling my ears  
Of sweating smells suffocating the air,  
Of geared snores setting lour on my face.

In this place, I tarry.

Where bones are smitten by sleep:  
Transportation to the other realm  
Where senses are softened by sleep,  
Scavenger of strengths, locker of eyes.

In this place, I tarry.

With my eyes not iced by the stygian sky,  
Rather like the summer-noon sun, open  
to dry the mud I sit in, the slick floor  
outside the door, and to thaw.

The frozen hope of feat the dawn brings  
to me, in this place I tarry.

# Second Hand Sentences

Lushaju Gervaz | Tanzania  
gervazlushaju@gmail.com

There is something untrue about your words,  
About how they feel.  
There is something that makes me feel foolish when I  
listen to them,  
As if all the wonderful things they are exist in the haze of  
a memory,  
As if they do not really exist, and i am merely dreaming  
them.

They leave a hint of pleasure in my ears  
Then quickly become ethereal and quietly disappear.  
They are words with soft edges and abstract meanings,  
Moist words that are intangible,  
Bittersweet nothings.  
Words that now seem empty, spent,  
Words made to be enjoyed from a distance,  
Not to be held, not be leaned against.

They sound like they have been said before,  
They are stale,  
They have been used many times,  
to spread falsehoods and spin tall tales.

And now however eloquently you put them,  
They cannot escape their past,  
They are rocks with smooth edges thrown very gently  
But I,  
I am still glass.



# Broken Oath

Edith Natacha Lamne | Cameroon  
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I vowed to love you,  
To make you my nutter butter  
Until darkness do us part.

Another sunrise, but you're turned to dust.  
Your soulful laughter reverberates my room;  
Tears brim as I reckon heated moments we harboured.

When heading off to war  
A smooch we shared, "sayonara," you said  
Promising me to come back safely.

You vowed to give me faith when I feel wobbly,  
To lend me your shoulder to snivel,  
A chilliad pledge you made.

When I glimpse at the speculum today,  
A wrinkled 60-year-old with wispy white hair peeps  
Who missed pass her jejune,  
Rejected suitors, waiting for you.

You made me grasp that nothing can last,  
Your absence makes me play  
As I close my eyes, I dim away  
Where just two of us exist.

The game must end,  
My eyes must open for reality, to see  
You have broken your promise darling  
I vow to love you, till I get wings for nirvana.

# Cellophane

Benedict Hangiriza | Uganda  
hangithechampion@gmail.com

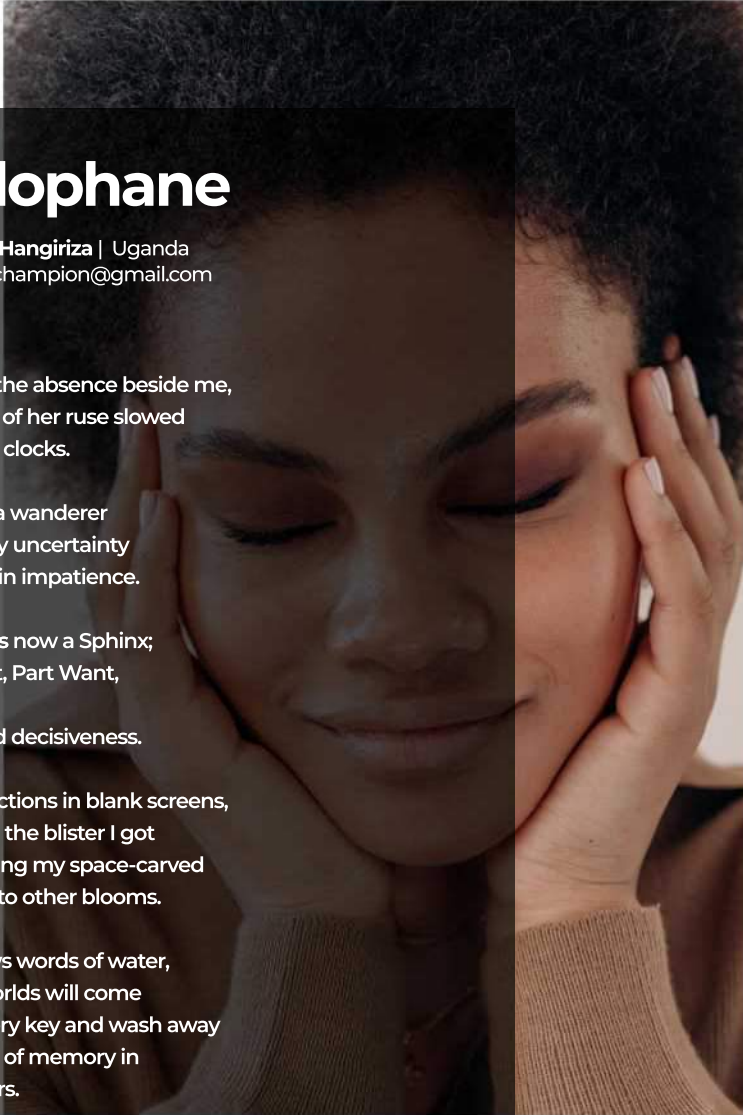
Once, by the absence beside me,  
Elements of her ruse slowed  
down the clocks.

My trust; a wanderer  
waylaid by uncertainty  
wrapped in impatience.

My body is now a Sphinx;  
Part heart, Part Want,  
Promised  
desire and decisiveness.

I see reflections in blank screens,  
Talking to the blister I got  
Announcing my space-carved  
Silence into other blooms.

She knows words of water,  
War of worlds will come  
out of every key and wash away  
The scent of memory in  
Her fingers.





# Will you be My Phone?

**Justin Nagundi** | Uganda  
jtnagundi7278@gmail.com

I'll wrap you in fine leather  
And glue you to my fingers.

I'll ditch food, friends, and water  
Each time your face shines brighter.

We'll travel my world together:  
Bedroom, kitchen, and shower.

I promise to spend sleepless nights  
So you can hum beside me.

I promise to panic every time  
Your heart runs out of battery.

I will sleep to songs you play me;  
I will laugh at the gifs you show me.

If ever you are drowning  
I'll bury you in rice to save thee.

I'll drop all things once dear to me  
at weddings, funerals, and meetings;

For all of me will cease to be  
The moment you start singing.

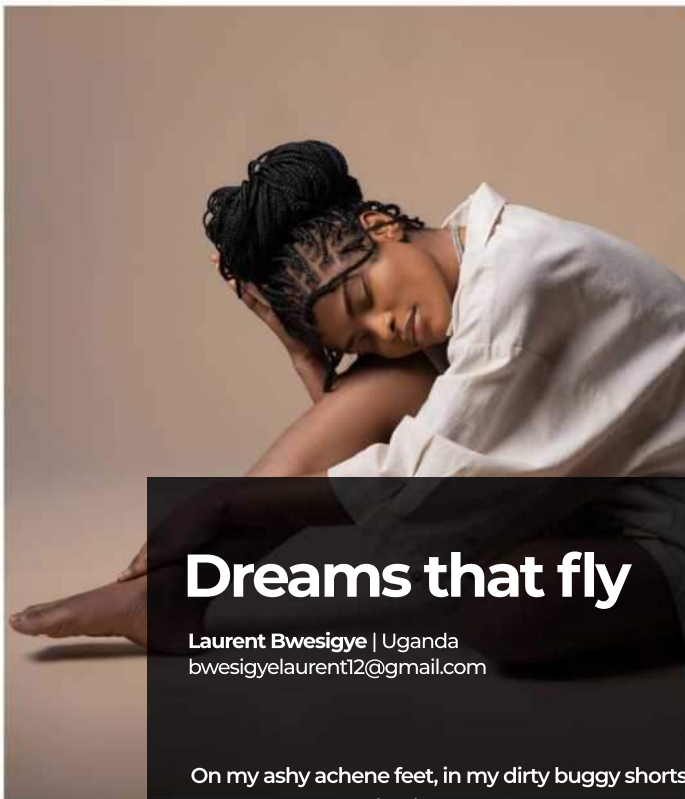


# My Wedding Vows

Ann Maina | Kenya | annahmaish98@gmail.com

I promise to hold you  
Like the sky does the moon  
Through its darkest times  
Allowing her  
To change and grow  
To reflect and glow  
Through the night  
To stand strong  
And be seen  
From horizon  
To horizon  
She follows different paths  
In her different phases  
From the new moon  
To the waning crescent  
Yet still every night  
The sky leads her home  
Till death do us part  
I promise to hold you  
Like the sky does the moon.





## Dreams that fly

Laurent Bwesigye | Uganda  
bwesigyelaurent12@gmail.com

On my ashy achene feet, in my dirty buggy shorts  
I see but seem to find incandescent dreams that  
Fly but never stop to perch

On this brown baked ground, with my witty wacky brains  
At the tactus of this day  
I vow to catch the dreams that fly  
In this hazy maze.

**GENRE: SHORT STORY****TITLE: OUR BRIEF HEAVENLY HOUR****WRITER: KENDI KARIMI, KENYA****REVIEWER: HALIEO MOTANYANE, LESOTHO**

Captivity is one of the biggest achievements that a writer should rejoice in whenever their story masters it. For a story to be a masterpiece, the reader should be captivated to the point of not wanting to stop reading while wishing the story should not end. This is what Kendi Karimi's story has done to me.

Rather than call 'Our Brief Heavenly Hour' a short story, it would fit perfectly as a 'Personal Letter'. This letter not only acknowledges the love and acceptance between two lovers, but it also portrays the life of these two from just when they started dating up until the day they are old and with kids.

This is a story of a woman who once was shy and lacked self-confidence; the woman who found fulfilment through love and acceptance. Throughout the story, Karimi uses metaphor and first-person speech to praise the one person who made her whole and beautiful.

It is from this story that we learn the power of love. Through love, we can believe even things that we thought were the ugliest scars on earth. And by believing in such, we reach a certain fulfilment that makes us be at ease.

**GENRE: ARTICLE**

**TITLE: YOUR LIFE, YOUR CANVAS**

**WRITER: GITARI NYAWIRA, KENYA**

**REVIEWER: JOSEPH ODURO, GHANA**

Age has always served as memorabilia to the things we hoped and dreamt of achieving at the budding stage of life. As a cockroach experiences ecdysis in its life cycle, so do our aspirations respond to the tides of time. "YOUR LIFE, YOUR CANVAS" highlights this phenomenon of life. Growing up with our wildest and limitless dreams, we become very oblivious to scepticisms of life. Society presents to us the beautiful stories of life and hinders the true eco-chambers that may deprive the seeds of our dreams of fructifying. It is only when age has subjected us to bumpy roads that we tend to become aware that the glitters of life conceal beneath them the drills of mines.

"YOUR LIFE, YOUR CANVAS" is an introspection into the writer's life after she realized the bus to her wildest dreams had left for its destination and it was becoming impossible to reach the impeccable aspirations of her youth. Fulfilment at this stage, she asserted, may transform to take different paradigms. We acknowledge the viciousness of our youthful aspirations and begin to reconcile the most important aspects of life and what true happiness and fulfilment mean. At this stage in our lives, we yearn for comfort over luxury and sanity over our ambitions. Nevertheless, the beach house dreams and vacation into the Maldives form part of the list but there is a shift in priority of these dreams which contrast with what we would have strived for in our youth.

Fulfilment has been defined in this age to be the pursuit of the flowery ventures of life with social media serving as a catalyst in changing the narrative. Fulfilment is relative and behoves every individual to dive deep into the innermost sense of their life to unravel what makes them fulfilled.

The writer reflects the theme with the contemporary happenings of our time. The age where the media sets the tone for how life is supposed to be lived and what gives it meaning. This creates a toxic environment and preempts us from gaining fulfilment. No matter how persuasive society defines the purpose of life, we can be only fulfilled if we reconcile to our deepest selves.

**GENRE: POETRY****TITLE: ARTISTIC BUBBLES****WRITER: ODIRILE ODIRILE, BOTSWANA****REVIEWER: CHIDIEBERE UDEOKECHUKWU, NIGERIA**

Odirile's "Artistic Bubble" is a seismic foray into a multiverse of creators; the world of art. The poem inspires a wholesome discovery of "gratification" as the reward that lies in any artistic venture. In fact, the 5 stanza poem is a testament to the aforementioned point.

Consider the first stanza and appreciate the creative power and potential of a poet, playwright, novelist or creative who creates by writing. It becomes easy to imagine how tasking it can be, to reduce (a) cloud(s) of ideas into words before they vanish. And when the cloud/clouds of ideas must have been captured on a sheet, gratification at such feat is sure to follow.

Similarly, the ensuing stanza portrays the world of an artist who creates by painting. A rhetorical poser demands to know whether drawers, painters and the like, find happiness in the use of their tools.

In the third stanza, the poem leads an exposé into a musician's world; or particularly the circumstances of a vocalist. Consider great singers of today and the past and realise how fulfilling it is for them to know how much their fans support and appreciate them. To make the picture even more vivid, think of Maria Carey who is famous for her five-octave vocal range, melismatic singing style, and signature use of the whistle register.

In the penultimate stanza, the world of the dancer is laid bare. The use of imagery in lines 1 and 2 of this stanza invokes a memory of (Columbian singer) Shakira's famous dance moves in the music (video) "Waka Waka" (This Time for Africa) which is the official soundtrack of the FIFA 2010 world cup. In the video, one can witness the mesmeristic side-to-side sway of the dancers' hips whilst hands are clasped in a praying posture. The dance steps are magical and fulfilling for both the performers and perhaps more especially for the over 2 billion viewers on YouTube. Art is truly magic.

In the last stanza, the artist as a sculptor gives a hint of how he/she finds fulfilment through the trade he plies. The devotion to the intricate details of the work being sculpted or moulded inspires profound gratification when the work is done. This, of course, is a wholesome feeling of fulfilment!

Notice how the last line of each stanza plays a forerunner to the subsequent stanza. This commentary will be unavoidably incomplete without a commendation of the skills employed by the poet here. These lines though on the level of superficial appreciation will (perhaps) indicate dread by one artist for the tools and trade of another who is of a different artistic walk, they serve a higher purpose of calling to consciousness, the wealth of variety that thrives in the world of art. Stanza one speaks of the writers, stanza two talks of painters and drawers, stanza three is an exposé about the musicians, stanza four introduces the mesmeric dancers, and the last stanza talks about the stone artists, sculptors and the like.

What better way is there to preach the beauty and wealth of artistic varieties and the watery promise of fulfilment that lies in wait?



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