

# WRITERS SPACE

AFRICA

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'Blinded by Love' by Rycha Heemachal Devi, Mauritius.

**CHANTELLE  
CHIWETALU**

WINNER, WAKINI KURIA PRIZE FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE



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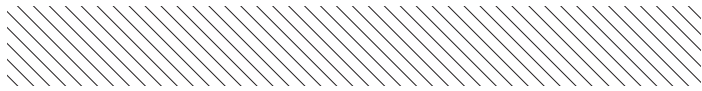
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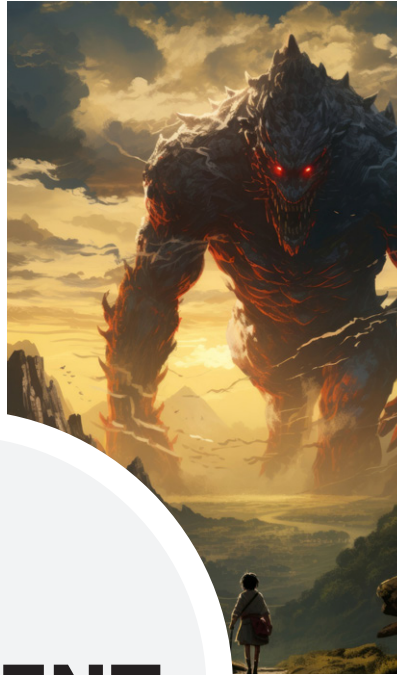
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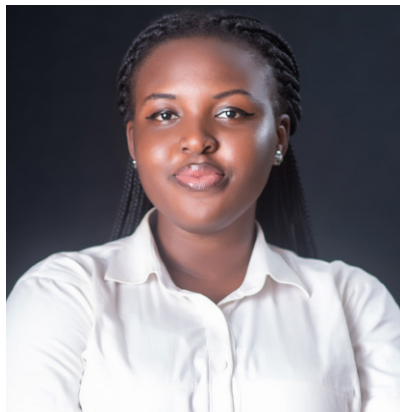
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# EDITORIAL

Comfort Nyati, SDB  
Chief Editor

Dear reader,

In the cooperate world, February is leisurely quantified by love; the month of lovers. It sounds mind restrictive to tag love into a time object because it is a reality that goes beyond measure.

In this 86th edition our esteemed writers pilot the reader along the horizons of sublime love seasoned with summer, winter and spring. It is a portrait of a manifold dissections and interpretations of the reality of love. We encounter an explosion of emotions; dynamic and involving yet

soul therapeutic.

At the heart of it, the reader realizes that none of us is immune to this, at one point in life we have subscribed to the thorny and rosy spell of circumstances. In fact, love isn't only a rose garden, neither is it only a garden of thorns. It is a nursery that ought to nurture broken pieces.

Most of us are products and agents of love, not even to mention how much we have victimised love. It is so ironic and absurd to think of a unifying factor becoming a defying actor. How possible can

light produce darkness?

One would quickly dive into a philosophical leap of deprivation. Such is a thought baiting theme in this month, reflecting on the juxtaposition of love and blindness; marrying and divorcing the two, how possible?

The substance of this issue unearths rudiments that affect people on a daily basis. More so, at the flip of every page, one encounters many possibilities to celebrate one of the unwritten gifts in Africa. The gift of love, love for literature.



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Empowering African Writers

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**THEME: SMILES**

**WRITERS SPACE AFRICA (WSA) MAGAZINE  
IS ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS FOR  
ITS 88TH EDITION (APRIL 2024 EDITION).**

**WE ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING:**

**CREATIVE NON-FICTION – 1,200 WORDS MAXIMUM**

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February 15, 2024**





# **Children's Literature**

# THEY THOUGHT SHE **NEVER GOT HUNGRY**

Mugabe Christopher  
Uganda

She loved watching her kids feed,  
"You must eat that food and finish it"  
Her voice went out loud and her eyes wide  
Whenever she mentioned that statement.  
She would only let you go and play if you  
By all means showed an empty plate.

Her joy and love couldn't stop her  
From giving up her own plate to  
the three children for their greed to be satisfied.  
Most times she was not eating as often  
as she would have,  
She couldn't remember to take care of herself.  
At a risk of developing ulcers, she put herself!

This love got her children an illusion.  
They couldn't see beyond the lovely  
Eyes of their mother staring at them feasting on  
a plate she won after a long day.  
They kept thinking that she never got hungry.  
Their mother loved them but they should have  
watched out for her.  
They needed to care and love their mother back  
to keep her healthy.



**Flash Fiction**





# THE KNOTTY PLOT

Bradley Mayuba  
Kenya

I watch as Maria sleeps, snoring gently.

I look at her then, kiss her cheek gently. She stirs. I would have gone for the lips, but she sleeps with her mouth slightly open as if in half-surprise; snoring.

I have been plotting something for her for a month.

“Good morning,” I greet her. She had confessed it before, how my morning voice turns some knobs in her.

“Hmm?” she grunts, half-awake now. From the corner of her eyes, she peers at me, then closes her eyes. No smile, no nothing. Not the usual.

Ever since we met and chose each other’s side on the same bed, she has been the one who was an early cock, rising at first light. For the past week or two, something has changed, or so I feel. Maybe it is the feeling in my stomach, the knot that I have been feeling growing inside my belly like an erec-

tion does in the pants. But an erection has a good feeling to it, not this knotty feeling in my stomach.

It has kept me up at night and woken me early in the morning, yet, when I lock myself in the toilet, nothing comes out apart from the sweat of trying.

Yet, I’ve kept on plotting.

This morning, right after I kissed Maria, the knot tightened, sending spasms of pain right through my core. It made me jump out of bed, towards the toilet, only to fall at the door. The knot, rising to my throat, was choking the breath out of me. A cackle breaks behind me. Maria.

“Sneaking around with my sister for a month, you thought I wouldn’t know?” she implored, arms akimbo.

While I plotted for her... Maria was plotting against me.



# THE GIRL

Adrian Fleur  
South Africa

She said she'd never had sober sex, and at the time we laughed, but six years later I wondered where she was in what they used to call Yugoslavia. I'd seen photos from Bled and Ljubljana, her hair longer and blonder than ever, her men all handsome, strong and angry.

As girls we'd quoted Lonesome Traveller, held hands as we hopped off buses, panting—all streets leading to the beach, no—rather, all days leading to a night of stoned laughter. And occasional kisses, cheeky tongue flickers in between childish, over-loud whispers.

One day she wrote to me of the Adriatic sea, of how it was the most magnificent of seas, of how there was no place more meaningful, transcendent, and how she had finally found some semblance of permanence, and I thought of how she had forgotten me, and our Indian ocean sea-salt breeze, and our grainy skins creating fire and urgency, and

our lips that spilled secrets, our hearts that clasped up tightly around our sweet, messy memories.

Although, then, I was overcome with loneliness, with the loss of the girl, the littered life I left behind as a lonesome traveller, hopping off buses onto streets that all led to the beach, and the nights of stoned laughter and occasional kisses, I still wrote her back: about my husband, my flat, my job, my pregnancy.

Six months later I wondered where she was in what they now call Croatia. I'd seen photos of a lake, a mountain, her hair shorter and darker than ever, her men unloved and undone and her, the girl, the whispers, the laughter—gone.

Creative  
**SPOTLIGHT**

*Chantelle Chiwetalu*





*In this edition, Lise Nova Berwadushime (Rwanda) had a conversation with Chantelle Chiwetalu, the winner of Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature 2023.*

**Lise:** It's a pleasure to have you, Chantelle. How would you introduce yourself to people who do not know you?

**Chantelle:** It's great to meet you! I'm Chantelle, pronounced shon-TEL. I'm a dynamite girl. If you stick around long enough, you'll find out why. Okay, that's a joke. It's more...elevator-pitch-y. But I always mention that I'm a lawyer. It opens doors.

**Lise:** Wow! Dynamite Lawyer indeed! How would you describe yourself in 5 words?

**Chantelle:** Brilliant. Creative. Witty. Bold. Resourceful.

**Lise:** Perfect! How long have you been writing Children's Literature?

**Chantelle:** About two years. Ghostwriting, mostly.

**Lise:** So many people struggle with Children's Literature, saying that it is hard to write. Would you say the same?

**Chantelle:** Not hard, just restrictive. That delicious moment at the end of regular stories that puts the whole plot in perspective. You can hardly employ that in children's literature. Children's stories are, more often than not, a little on-the-nose, and for someone that hates clichés, it was a bit of

a problem, starting out. But children's stories have an enduring beauty, and they're purehearted and devoid of the world's complexities. That itself is a gift.

**Lise:** Tell me about the prize you won (Wakini Kuria prize for Children's Literature) was it your first prize?

**Chantelle:** No. I've won a number of prizes. If we're restricting it to writing though, this is my second prize. I came second in the first World Intellectual Property Organization (Nigeria) essay contest. I was also a reader-in-residence for one issue of Smokelong Quarterly, which is a dream magazine that other dream magazines as-

pire to. And my work was nominated for the Best of the Net Anthology in 2022.

**Lise: Allow me to congratulate you once again.**

**Chantelle:** Thank you!!

**Lise: What motivated you to go for Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature?**

**Chantelle:** The desire to win, simply. It's a genre I'm well acquainted with, and I was moved by the late Wakini Kuria's biography.

**Lise: And you won! That's awesome. What prompted your love for CL (children's literature?)**

**Chantelle:** I like children's literature because it's simple and pure. All you need is creativity and a heart. Yes, a heart. You don't have to weave complex stories. Your characters and plot just have to be compelling enough to leave a mark, to resonate. Your audience is not a tough one. Children are not jaded. They open books or listen to stories with the intent to be entertained, no more, no less. I also like the fact that children's literature transports me to my childhood, when things were much simpler.

**Lise: I agree with you. Now, children's literature really transports most adults to their childhood. Judging by what I see either in my country or other African countries especially in East Africa, we have few people who write CL. What do you think is the reason why we have few CL writers?**

**Chantelle:** I feel that people think that it's not a 'serious' genre. Not everyone can write children's literature because of what many may perceive to be its confines. Reducing your thoughts into elementary language can be quite challenging. And then there are words that you cannot use, personal values that you cannot apply. The first children's story I wrote made me laugh because I knew that it did not really reflect reality. But that's the idea, isn't it? To transcend reality?

**Lise: Definitely**

**Chantelle:** Again, the idea of a story having a moral lesson or being motivational may also be a discouraging factor. That's what I think. Also, there aren't many prizes for children's literature. In addition, I don't imagine that the children's literature market is very profitable- especially if you do not have the resources to have them added to a school's curriculum or something. Again, these are just my thoughts.

**Lise: I see. Anyway, I loved *Tato*, the story that won a prize. Now, imagine you are *Tato* in a room full of children. What would you tell them/like them to know?**

**Chantelle:** Thank you so much! I would tell them that they can do anything. They have their whole lives ahead of them, and the only thing that can stop them is themselves.

**Lise:** Do you perhaps have children of your own?

**Chantelle:** No, I do not have children.

**Lise:** Do you think there are enough safe children's stories out there for children to read?

**Chantelle:** Yeah, there are a lot of safe children's stories out there. But then I've also seen children's stories that enraged me. Children are children, and exposing them to content far beyond their years is beyond reprehensible.

**Lise:** Sure! Chantelle, what do you like to do in your free time?

**Chantelle:** Explore new places and sleep.

**Lise:** Exploring new places while sleeping hahaha!!

**Chantelle:** Hahaha!!

**Lise:** Is there anything you would like everyone who will see our conversation to know?

**Chantelle:** Yes. Tato's only a potato, but he's got the right idea. Don't let people's opinions define you. Don't be held back by limitations, perceived or real. It's impossible until someone does it. Within the confines of good values and legality, try everything.

**Lise:** Noble advice this one!

**Chantelle:** Also, when you can, catch me on Medium. Just type my name in. It's chaotic, but you'll love it!

**Lise:** Alright. Thank you so much, Chantelle

**Chantelle:** Thank you for this interview!





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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**





# BLACK HOLE

Isaac Kilibwa  
Kenya

For a decade I've loved you with the ardour of a dying star  
And everytime I went out to look for a poem it was your name  
I whispered in unsight

Before sleep takes me where dreams are kinder  
I've spoken our evolution into a yawn as soft as we've spoken to each other  
Across a chasm of waking stars.

I'll find you when the sun empties of all quarrel, a husk but I'll find you  
To fill with the lettered dust of heaven, to crown with a wig of clouds  
I've hidden for you across flights

And maybe you'll have me if you're waiting at that place you speak to me  
Every solstice and we'll at last not be afraid of whirling portals  
And dissolving gas

And in a child's tale of hope for what would they be without it?  
I shoot after you across their eyeballs panting and burning out in squealing joy  
For another decade, for I've loved you.



# BLINDED BY LOVE

Rycha Heemachal Devi  
Mauritius

I wandered like a lost soul on a velvet dark night,  
searching for the moon to illuminate my life.

The past came crashing against the shore,  
As waves of old memories rose in my mind.

Tears slowly cascaded down my cheeks,  
As my eyes yearned for dawn to heal my scars.

Cupid's golden arrow struck me,  
Love overflowed from my frozen heart.

Everything felt right after so long.  
As my knight in shining armour was here,  
to save me from the dragons.

I felt my hopes rising like the sun in the sky.  
As my doubts drifted along the soft clouds.

In the blink of an eye, I had escaped from reality,  
To find solace in the world of dreams.

Only to find myself being blinded by the love,  
That was never meant to be mine in this lifetime.

# THE TEACUP'S BANTER

Edwin Mamman  
Nigeria

Yesterday I heard the teacup's banter  
Violating the dawn with a slow violence  
Love is not enough and soon you'll learn.  
It reaches only as far as patience goes,  
And closeness does not mean affection.  
Relationships assume the luxury of time  
But, like a mayfly sometimes love lives  
A full life in a day and then it's gone.  
Nothing nice about lukewarm tea.  
It's like premature orgasm on the tongue.  
Like a love unrequited, not very beneficial  
Like this teabag steeped in ice cold water.



# WHAT AM I? **DON'T ASK**

Adejoke Adekunle Alagba  
Nigeria

I dance in the shadows, oblivious to the distinctions that reason imposes. | Like a blindfolded wanderer, I navigate the labyrinth of souls, guided solely by the echoes of shared laughter and whispered confessions.

In my presence, sight surrenders to the unseen, rendering the superficial judgments of the world mere illusions. | I embrace imperfections as strokes on the canvas of connection, crafting a masterpiece where flaws become strokes of beauty.

I am the artist who paints verses on the canvas of the heart with strokes of passion and shades of vulnerability. | I tiptoe along the precipice of uncertainty, trusting the invisible threads that bind two hearts. | I am an art form painted in hues beyond the comprehension of mere mortal eyes.

I am Love, The Blind Reality.



# DREAMING REALITY

Nanyanzi Leticia Hope  
Uganda

In the tapestry of dreams,  
Where illusions unfold.  
Love and its mysteries untold  
A dance with shadows  
A tale of dreaming reality.  
Eyes closed yet hearts wide awake,  
In love's embrace, a blindfold worn  
Eyes that see beyond flaws  
Yet must heed to love's silent laws.

Blind to reason, guided by the heart  
Imperfections fade in passion's glow,  
As whispered promises gently sow.  
Soft whispers of promises  
Tender and sweet  
Yet truth obscured in dreams.

In each tender touch,  
A truth untold,  
A story written  
In the language of the old.  
For the blindfold of love,  
Becomes a guiding light  
To where souls forever abide.



# PERVERT

Matrida Phiri  
Zambia

The pathetic excuse for a man my lovesick mother married  
 He has engraved a lewd semblance of himself on my essence  
 An obscene figure etched upon my very soul in crude detail  
 The vile leering smile exposing permanently stained teeth  
 The spitefully explicit craving lighting up his untamed gaze.

His habitual scheme to hoodwink my naive mother is employed  
 A repulsive gift is forcefully placed into my trembling hands  
 A revolting cheap piece of second-hand apparel for me to wear  
 The obscene offering swathed in old newspapers leaking threats  
 She swallows the lie, hook, line and sinker, and worships him.

He has rigidly set and adheres to an abhorrent roster of terror  
 The sick routine is jump-started with a signature dress code  
 The snug, loathsome, ill-fitting trousers, straining at the seams  
 The repulsive sleeveless hand-me-down shirt thick with grime  
 A standard precursor to the nocturnal evil he has planned.

The vile rigor established by his customary ritual is crippling  
 He has never failed to make good his obnoxious promise, ever  
 The dreaded soft scratching, hardly perceptible, announces him  
 He enters and after him follows the foul stench of a pit latrine  
 I bemoan my youth as my petrified heart leaps into my mouth.



# EYES THAT SEE BEYOND

Akuei M. Adol  
South Sudan

In love's sweet haze, my vision is impaired,  
I see through lenses tinted with desire.  
I'm lost in a world that's falsely fair,  
A tangled web spun by love's gentle fire.

Beneath the moon's shadow, *Marrimi* danced,  
Her glorious beauty is an illusion of wild grace.  
Her starlit gaze held secrets in its trance,  
Her touch, a poison masked by love's embrace.

Her words, like honey, dripped with false desire,  
And I, a moth is drawn to her burning fire.

Oh, my wandering eyes, led astray, they stray,  
Captivated by her beauty's mystic spell.  
I cannot see the truth, though it may lay  
Before me, like a tale I cannot tell.

My heart, a foolish puppet on love's string,  
Dances to her melodies of false delight.  
Yet deep within me, a voice begins to sing,  
A haunting song, a plea to set things right.

But love blinds, deafens, and binds,  
Leaving me lost in the ashes of my plight.



# AN OPEN BOOK

Larona Tlhobogang  
Botswana

---

An open book read only  
With a sense of touch  
And more of logic.

My eyes were lured  
But had no capacity  
To comprehend the style  
Of his writer's writing.

He whispered softly  
With a warm breeze at my neck,  
Instructed me to close my eyes  
And feel him, with the tips of my fingers.

"I'm a book written in braille  
A fine paper with jumble dots  
Touch me and reach for my soul  
The dots are codes  
That's how I'm understood."

They make words and lines,  
A story I now had to learn  
How to read to understand.





# TWO STRANGERS

Mustafa Khan Abdurahman  
Uganda

---

It is lovely that we kiss  
It is just this kiss that I hate.  
From the kiss\_ the lips, the tongue\_  
The grip, the cuddle, the mingle.  
  
After tonight, this kiss will be pain.



# DELUSIONS

Ogooluwa Jayeola  
Nigeria

I sensed its demise from the outset,  
As I peered into his profound brown eyes,  
A shade unfamiliar, captivating my thoughts,  
An unreal hue, blending beauty and charm,  
Yet, twinkling with a subtle deviousness.

My curiosity persisted despite my reservations,  
Drawn to his magnetic presence,  
His very being exuding a sensual allure,  
A force that proved to be my downfall.

His lips spoke beguiling words,  
Tinged with deceit and practiced artifice,  
Yet, they warmed my heart,  
Gradually entangling me in his façade,  
Like webs patiently woven around the unwitting prey.

Voluntarily, I relinquished all my understanding,  
Becoming blind to his lies and deceit  
Until all that remained was the illusion of our love,  
Yearning for that illusion to materialize into reality.



# LOVE'S UNFEELING ROOM

Laurent Bwesigye  
Uganda

---

Selfish  
nonchalant  
Like a fly  
    Landing  
on a well  
    garnished  
meal

What a waste!



# THE BREAKING SOUL

Abdullatif Khalid  
Uganda

Love has been like sweeping  
It's my own pieces scattered  
which I collect as I walk around  
without giving up on her!

Sometimes stepping over myself  
breaking myself while getting stabbed  
By my own fragments on the ground  
leaving behind the crimson marks  
But I feel I should not give up because  
I... Love... Her!

I keep doing the chores,  
Yes! I mean providing for her  
Only for another gust to come and  
Scatter me all over in wider area  
Than before in more crumbles than ever  
But still I keep walking in the circles  
Of agony because I can't give up on her!

I keep sweeping around collecting me  
Until the ground under my feet is no longer dry  
No longer dead, no longer it is colorless  
I remain just a mere fragment  
Of the great nothingness as She in the end  
marries my own brother  
But I... can't... Give up on her!



# Short Stories



# ANONYMOUS **ANGELS**

Ali Akawu  
Nigeria



I was fourteen and had just written the JSCs. I had nothing else to do so I spent all my time in my room, playing video games and perusing sultry paperbacks whenever the power went out. My father disapproved and sentenced me to my grandparents in Zaria. It felt like I'd fallen from a spacecraft and they were the natives of a planet with whom I had nothing in common. I struggled but couldn't translate myself into a language they could comprehend.

I read the novels I'd brought, listened to sad American pop songs and attended Islamiyya, where I was enrolled for Islamic tarbiyya.

The days crawled on.

I arrived late to masjid one maghrib and had to pray alone. I caught the eyes of a boy about my age praying into his palms which were lifted and cupped before his face. He smiled. I froze and dropped my gaze.

He caught up with me as I was leaving and started talking to me like he knew me from before. He said he'd seen me around, asked who I was and what I was doing in town. I told him. He said he lived just up the street from us but was mostly away at boarding school in Kaduna. He told me his name. He had a lisp and spoke so fast I thought at first, he was spitting bars. He wore glasses and had baby curls in his hair. His hairline was almost to his brows, which were full and arched in a way that would have made most girls jealous.

We bonded instantly and were soon inseparable. Every day we walked to and

from Islamiyya together. When I was with him time didn't stand still, it ceased to exist altogether.

He opened the city like a book and roamed its pages with me. We toured the Emir's palace at the heart of the city; trailed Queen Amina's legendary wall; raced up the Kufena rocks; hurled stones over the dam at the university; where a boy's body had been found a few months before, went to the polo field where I learned to mount and ride, took long walks past the old factories at Sun Seed, watched the sun sipping from the river along the old Jos road, followed a parade of liveried horses; mounted by solid men in turbans, the day after babban sallah; stole cabbages (so green they were almost blue), from a farm and got chased by hunting dogs, dined on Arabian tea and beef from the sticks at Zaria Suya Spot, snuck into his older brother's room to smoke shisha from his pot, and threw up after.

Sick for home, I swore I could kill for a chicken, grilled and doused with lemon which my mum made. At PZ, we

bought a bird from Mr Biggs and lemons from a vendor. From the kitchen he fetched a knife, carved the chicken, sliced the fruit and drizzled the still steaming chicken meat with the juice.

My love, my love, anything that keeps you satisfied, he crooned the old tune like he was joking, but also like he wasn't. There was a look in his eyes that made the knife seem puny: like he could cut; like I needed to be careful; like things were about to take a turn I was unprepared for. I told myself it was all in my head, that my brain was playing tricks on me. We ate, our eyes making contact, giggling for no reason.

Propped against the wall, I lost myself in Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*. Beside me, he lost himself in his Gameboy. He spoke my name like a question. I turned and his lips seized mine. He tasted like flesh and acid and spices, and I sponged it all from his tongue. He palmed my nape and I hummed; a deep and desperate sound that made him stop and stare searchingly at me.

Are you alright? he asked.

Did I do something wrong?

All at once I wanted to say yes, no and I don't know, but couldn't move my mouth. I tried to swallow, but my saliva took a wrong turn and I started choking. My eyes reddened. He beat on my back. I chugged until I thought my throat would overflow and my stomach flood.

The cough settled into a wheeze.

He asked if I wanted to lie down. I didn't trust myself around him and said no, then said yes, then I said I just needed to be alone. His face fell, he said he understood, said he was sorry in a way that suggested he didn't mean about my predicament. I ignored him, I felt sick. He extended fingers as though to stroke my face, I recoiled and he left.

For almost a month he didn't visit or call. At first, I was relieved, then afraid. I was so sure I didn't want to see him again then all I wanted was to see him again. Asleep I dreamt of his mouth crushing mine, awake I felt the tingle of his hand on my neck. He stirred waters inside me I didn't even know were there, let alone asleep all this while.

Returning from Islamiyya, I stopped at a store. I needed a Coke badly. Throughout my lessons, my head felt like it was filled with molten magma, like if I didn't consume something cold, I'd erupt in liquid flames. I gulped the first bottle and demanded another, which I pressed against my skull. I looked up and there he was.

Oh, he said, solemn and unsure, then he relaxed, Agha—He never called me by my name, only Agha, or Shah, saying I remind-

ed him of ancient royalty. Said it was as if the essence of nobility had been crushed to powder and pressed so deeply into my skin at birth that it soaked into my blood.

I asked what he came to buy, he said, Wallah the moment I saw you, I forgot.

I laughed and so he laughed.

The weight of recollection, heavy as a hill, lifted then landed again upon us. You shouldn't have stayed away, Shaheed—which was what I in turn called him, a jab at his piety. He looked sad and pained. We walked, quiet as an empty bracket, until we were outside the house.

He said, Rumi wrote: 'Open your hands if you want to be held,' and Allah knows mine were never closed. I thought—no, I hoped yours were, too. I crossed a line. I'm a fool and I love you. Can you forgive me?

He looked so fragile I feared he'd fade away. I said, follow me and find out, leading the way, without waiting to see if he would.

I sat cross-legged on the carpet in my room. He sat facing me. I sipped the Coke I was holding then said, Share a Coke with Shaheed.

Liar, he said, it doesn't say that.

Some have hearts but cannot see, I said, thrusting him the bottle.

He slid closer on his butt and sipped. Share a Coke with Shah, he said, returning the bottle.

We carried on like that until we were knee to knee.

Kiss me, I said.



Where? he asked.

Here, I said, touching my forehead. And he did.

Where else?

Here—my temples.

Where else?

Here—my cheeks.

Where else?

Here—my Adam's apple.

Where else?

Here—my clavicle.

He kissed me there, buried his head in the crook and drew breath then whispered, I want to hold you so badly it hurts.

What the hell are you waiting for? I sang in my best Linkin' Park impression.

He chuckled and pulled my chin to him and moved his lips, light as a breeze, over mine. The carbonation, the sugar—he licked it all then using his tongue, parted my mouth. He taught me how to kiss, lazily, then ravenously. I had no idea how long we were like that, only that it must have been a long while. I wanted to become his tongue or a tooth or his saliva, even a bacterium; whatever would keep me inside his mouth.

I wanted to remain that way till the last day, till the very moment the Archangel Israfil blew his trumpet and the earth rolled up like a rug, depositing all humanity before its maker's feet.

This was how I wanted to meet God: wrapped around this boy who made me laugh for no reason.

We came apart for air. He stretched on the carpet and pulled me over him, said, it must be true, angels must exist; must roam, anonymously, among us. Malaik, have mercy on this mortal.

What else could I do but cancel the thin line of his lips with mine?





# THE PURPLE JAR

Tracy Egbele  
Nigeria



Remember when you told her “You will keep this love story for a long time if we’re to do this. “She stored your love story in a tightly lidded purple jar placed carefully in her bedside cupboard. She sometimes opens the jar and peers into it in search of the glittering of your eyes - eyes that mirror the lighting of a thousand fireflies. Most times she hears the whispering of your voice and is reminded of its deep texture - like the rumbling and thun-

dering of the sky before a heavy rainfall. On such moments she hungers for your laughter and soft but firm soothing words of comfort, and its earthy and mellow feel as you sing to her.

Today though, she doesn’t peep into the jar. She sits in a cab heading for the mall, her therapist had told her it was the right thing to do. Heart racing like a thief who just had a near-death experience at the hands of furious mar-

ket women, she nervously pulls at the fringe of her kimono.

“ I’m happy the sun decided to grace us with its warm face today,” The driver says.

“mhmm,” she replies.

The smell of the car reminds her of you. Of that one time she met with you and your cousin at Mama Chop Life’s bar.

You had insisted she try out the sauced snails which at

first she hated but later came to love. While leaving the bar, she had gotten a whiff of your scent and told you, you smelled like fresh rain-fall beating the dusty ground after a humid day. You made her dance with you to 'Lo-jay's Monalisa'. The bar's neon lights cast your shadow over her, like a protective shield, the men in the bar throwing angry glances at you, but your heart swelled with pride, and she felt like the most important lady in the world.

"See how that man is flirting with that lady."

The driver draws her attention to a couple standing at the entrance of the mall. She says nothing to his persistent friendliness, all she wants is to get to her destination.

You had flirted with her the first day you both met. She thought you were the sort of guy into Internet fraud, who for unknown reasons loved putting on tasteless coloured socks, palm slippers and knickers with oversized polo shirts. But you weren't dressed like that, instead of dreadlocks, your hair was woven into all-back corn-

rows, and rather than shorts, you were putting on Jean trousers that weren't ripped and a white polo shirt with black sandals. You were heavily drunk but still kept on downing cans of black bullets. You mistook her for a tall Urhobo girl, but on closer look decided she was too light-skinned to be Urhobo, she had to be an Igbo girl from Anambra State you concluded. You caught her attention when you told her she was meant to be your wife.

"Haven't you heard that the bar isn't the right place to find a lover?" She asked.

You replied to her, "I believe the saying is, the club isn't the right place to find a lover. But who cares, I never called you, my lover. I called you, my wife."

She was amused by your boldness, a boldness she accredited to alcohol. When you demanded her phone number, she gave it to you."

"Aunty as you fine like mami water so, you sure say I nur go carry umbrella escort you enter the mall?" The driver asks.

Your cousin Emeka had told her the same thing the evening you told her to come to the bar at the Continental Hotel. You both waited for her for two hours. But the moment you saw her, whatever agitation and anger you felt melted away. Emeka could not stop staring at her.

"You be mami water?" He asked.

She blushed and smiled at him.

Remember when you told her," I want to marry you, I want legal rights to call you, my woman." Her heart did a series of Zanku dance steps that her feet could never attempt. Despite being worlds and continents apart, she felt close to you. You both made your vows that same day.

It was a normal afternoon for her, she had closed from her work at the advertising agency she worked, aboard a cab on her way home, you video-called her on WhatsApp, while she told you about her day - a co-worker who kept trying to take her on a date, her bosses' rude behaviour, her envious cubicle partner poke-nosing on what her skin care products

and routine entailed and the heavy workload. She talked like a little child on her way back from school unravelling the day's experience to her parents. When she got home, you told her to exchange vows with you.

"Stop being silly. How can we exchange vows over the phone?" She asked.

"Why not?" You answered.

"So, who's the officiating minister?"

"Who said we needed one? The Big guy upstairs is enough."

"Wait! Are you serious? Why are you doing this?" The scepticism in her voice reverberated back to your ears.

"Damn! Woman, you ask too many questions. I'm sinking into depths of emotions for you."

She exchanged the vows with you, while her heart's rhythm followed the pattern of yours.

The driver drops her at the second entrance of the mall, and she hurriedly alights.

"Do not forget to rate me a five star on the app," he calls after her.

She replies with a waving of her hand without looking back.

She heads to the food court where you both had your first real date.

She was meant to travel back to Abuja but cancelled her trip to see you. On your way to the mall, you both played a game of calling each other food names. She got to the mall first and waited for you at the entrance

to the door leading to the cinema. You tiptoed behind her and picked her up from the floor. The attention of everyone in the mall was on you both, but you couldn't care less. She blushed a deep red something you were surprised a Nigerian girl could do. She poked you to drop her down, but you were not fazed, you were enjoying watching her squirm.

Watching the seat where you both sat, she sees a couple laughing and holding hands, the same photographer who had captured that short moment with you, shows the couple a copy of their captured moment.

You had both ordered M&M alongside strawberry and vanilla-flavoured ice cream. She kept playing with her ice cream, so you took a scoop from your bowl and shoved it in her mouth. At that moment, you both looked up to the clicking sound of a camera. The photographer complimented you and showed you the pictures he took of both of you. She declined the pictures, while you asked the photographer to print the copies you needed.

She takes a seat behind the couple and orders the same ice cream flavour you both had. She takes her phone from her purse and tries to call you but you still do not pick up. She watches as the couple kiss; the lump that has threatened to tear open her chest all these months rears its head again fiercer than before.

Almost choking on her emotions, she wishes she had the purple jar with your love in it, it's all she's ever wanted.

# BOOM

Damian Jeremiah  
Nigeria



Life was unpredictable until Egbon swept her off her feet like the giant walls of Jericho never meant to be rebuilt. When she fell in love, it was a painful but educational experience. And, it was not

her fault, for the young man was Egbon Makinde, an idol of women all over the campus. At twenty-four he had a fearful masculine beauty, genuine charm. A true fisherman. But Rosemary knew

she was just a lesser partner. When they had dates, Egbon would always call her to say he would be a bit late and then would arrive two hours later. Sometimes he would cancel altogether. She was

only his fallback position for the night. Also, when they made love, he would always insist she use cocaine with him, which was fun but turned her brain into such mush. She could not work the next few days and what she did write in class, she distrusted. She realised that she was becoming what she detested more than anything else in the world; a woman whose whole life depended on the whims of a man.

He was the son of the minister. She was in love and, for one of the few times in her life, terribly unhappy.

When Egbon called to say he would be thirty minutes late, she told him, "Don't bother babe, I'm leaving your house."

There was a pause, and when he answered, he didn't seem surprised.

"We part friends I hope," he said. "I really enjoyed your company."

Rosemary hung up. For the first time, she didn't want to remain friends at the end of an affair. What really bothered her was her lack of intelligence. It was obvious

that all his behaviour was a trick to make her go away, that it had taken her too long to take the hint. She moped around, but in a week, she found she didn't miss being treated like trash. It was a pleasure to get back to class with a head clear of cocaine, but she missed the idea of love.

She got herself two waist beads from Baba Saura's Shrine. Life was once again predictable, but this time with Egbon. She didn't sweep him off his feet like he did; she entrapped him in her web. A month later, she got pregnant with him. News got to the university's management when she slumped during lectures, that one Rosemary, a student of Mass Communication, was tested pregnant in the sick bay.

"How could you be so stupid?" Egbon told her two nights after their expulsion.

"See what movies have done to you," he added. She was mortified.

"Don't talk to me like that. I didn't get myself pregnant..." she broke down. Her father told her never to step foot in his house. He warned

her mother not to reach out to her too. The minister had publicly disowned Egbon on air.

After exhausting the options open to him, Egbon decided it was time to meet Baba Saura. He was going to prove to their parents, the university, and the whole of Kaduna that love is a powerful force that cannot be subdued. Baba Saura had asked him to bring a black duck for application.

"In fact, make we just go ahead," Baba Saura said. The duck was robust. It pleased him.

"When do I start getting money?" Egbon demanded. Baba Saura laughed in bits.

"You never make the main sacrifice," Egbon was losing his patience. That duck already cost him a week of site work.

"For you to fit earn the money, your girlfriend go die as she wan born but no worry your pikin go dey alright."

"Never, I cannot do that. I love her. She's the reason I am doing this. You can go to hell." He didn't leave without carrying the duck.

"If you no come back complete the ritual, na three of una go kpai." Baba Saura informed him.

He resorted to site work with his little to no experience. But he knew how to hand over bricks to the masons. He was tired. She was tired. But love must win, he reminded himself.

"How can you be away the whole day but return with just one-two?" she demanded, obviously offended. The other day she had told him that he was too lazy.

"If you don't acknowledge my efforts, I will dump you as most men do. I am not the first, and I won't be the last."

"I double dare you, Egbon." She called his name for the first time in her life. He understood what she felt, but she was a child in thoughts. He wouldn't let her words fuel him to fail love.

"Hey, I am not used to this kind of suffering too, but just be more understanding. We would be fine." He said. "And, please never call me Egbon, what happened to babe?" He flashed her a smile. Butterflies fluttered in her belly. He was sweet, she acknowledged but their situation wasn't.

When she was eight months pregnant, she began to nag heavily for his failure in getting her shawarma, chips and egg, every morning before he left home to scavenge for chicken change. Their off-campus rent was expiring in a month. He went back to Baba Saura some days after with two ducks to ask for forgiveness.

"No vex Baba, I don gree."

Baba Saura had sized him up with disgust.

"Big English don finish for your mouth abi? I cannot do that. I cannot do that." Baba Saura released a hiss.

"Everything get e consequence. For the time wey you take, your pikin go only get him basic needs. You no dey allowed to give am money carelessly. Na you cause am."

It was Egbon's turn to look at him with disgust.

"No problem. Wetin be the next thing?"

"You go come collect any food wey she ask you from my side."

"Hmm, I hear you Baba."

Their love life got better. She was happy with him but he was depressed for her. Each time she ate from the shrine, he'd cry and she would hold him, urging him not to cry, that his best was enough. He lost sleep the night she informed him their baby was nine months old.

"Wow, wow. That's great news. The idea of losing you stings. I won't lie."

"Babe just chill, I will be fine. Our baby would be fine," she said all sprawled on the medium sized mattress. Egbon was seated on the floor, his back against the wall.

"I have a confession to make," Egbon said. It was clear that he had to open up to her if he would ever feel any peace inside of him. What was the essence of continuance if he

would keep a secret from his own person; the only human being that wished him well in life. Unlike the foremen who deducted a thousand naira from his wages, the management of his school condemned him as though what he did wasn't a common thing—Baba Saura who was not only a medicine man but a wicked man.

"You have gotten another girl pregnant abi?" Rosemary demanded. He looked at her irritated. The other day she had woken him up to get her well water to drink. He stretched his arm to get a sachet of water from underneath the bed.

"I said well water. It is what the baby wants," she said as she sat up.

"You have suddenly become wicked and annoying," he said as he got out to fetch water from the well outside.

How he managed to stay with her was surprising to him. On an off chance he pardoned her with the fact that pregnancy was mostly like that.

"What's your problem? I mean, where are you getting your guts from?"

"So, I don't have the liberty to ask questions now?"

"I didn't get any girl pregnant. Forget about it."

"I won't beg you to tell me. You're not the only one with pride."

He banged the door, unturned a bench at the corner and sat on it, deep in thought for

what seemed like an hour.

"Ahhhhhhh," Rosemary cried. "Ahhhhh." He ran into the room. Furrows on his forehead, his countenance masked with worry.

"It is our baby. It is our baby. I am coming, baby." He bolted out.

The women in the neighbourhood were with her. One was boiling water, one was fanning her and reciting verses, and the last one was urging her to push.

"She is tired and if she doesn't push, we might lose both of them," the woman announced.

"Baby, please push. Remember Maldives, how you have always yearned to go on a vacation there. Baby, please."

"I am trying. I want to be alive for you. Mmmmm!" she pushed. The baby cried softly, gracing the room with his presence.

"We made it! Baby, we made it." Egbon jumped, did some clapping, and then embraced Rosemary, but she had fallen asleep.





Liza Chuma Akunyili  
@iamlizachuma

## PICK A PLACE

The problem with having multiple options is that you think you should have them all just because you can.

I totally understand the urge to make a service of social media graphics design that shows you are on seven social media accounts because you want to look trendy but it is not realistic most often.

Every account you create is a new responsibility. If you decide to focus on LinkedIn for example, you will realise LinkedIn posts are considerably different from LinkedIn newsletters and those are different from LinkedIn articles. That is a comprehensive

package.

If you do decide to focus on Substack, you will realize Substack sends your emails out using an RSS mailing system so, all your subscribers instantly get each post as a newsletter.

Consider the frequency with which you want to post. If you intend to populate your blog daily, will the average follower be able to receive your work daily without feeling like you are spamming them?

This is why this month's episode is important. I want you to choose a platform but I want you to choose a plat-

form strategically.

### **List your top three favourite platforms**

These are the platforms you typically visit to read, listen and watch. For me, that would be Google search blogs, YouTube and Instagram. For Images, it will be Pinterest every day.

How does this affect your content curation? You are more likely to consider posting on platforms you enjoy consuming content from because you understand their potential for success than you are likely to create content for platforms you cannot stand.

For me, the platform I struggle with the most is Twitter - very powerful but not for the slow burners. Every few hours, there is a new trend and those trends go away really quickly so if you are looking to trend on there, you need to enjoy other people trending so you can know how to recreate viral content.

Why does this information count? You need a platform you are at least comfortable with even if you do not love it absolutely.

### **Analyse your platforms**

This is where your sentiments die. Your love for a platform does not mean it deserves the energy long term. I create content because it is good for marketing but I also create content with a certain lifespan in mind. I intend to stop creating certain content types at 35 and I have some targeted for 50. When I create content, I am projecting longevity and I am thinking of repurposing them.

I realized the platforms I

love do not necessarily give me that coverage so I had to set my goals - I only focus my energy on platforms that have the potential to be content libraries, that have great search engine optimization and require no sign-in to be used.

Until very recently, Instagram did not meet all three criteria even though it was my comfort zone. Instagram would show you have an account on Google but it will not let the users view your content without sign-in. It also was not as visible on Microsoft Bing and other search engines. LinkedIn on the other hand showed on other search engines even if it required a sign-in.

If you want to write, Instagram is not a primary writer's platform which means you spend more energy designing instead of writing like you would have on Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter. Medium on the other hand had all three functions as readers never had to sign in

and a simple Google search of your topic will add your host to the search page.

If you went above and beyond to create video content, no social media can recall your topics as quickly as YouTube would because each video is given tools to be recognized as a separate entity instead of hidden in the shadow of the account name.

Be factual in your research, and decide your goals and which platforms meet those goals without sentiments.

### **Choose where you can be consistent**

It is amazing to jump on a platform because it works but is that platform one where you can be consistent? You need to be honest with yourself and decide if it is.

In January of 2022, I started daily affirmations on TikTok and the affirmations were beginning to gain traction however, it required me to log into TikTok every morning as the scheduling tool was not yet functional on

mobile and the song selection option did not work on desktop.

This meant I spent the weekends scheduling by desktop and then deleting them on the appointed day (if I was unavailable at 5:00 am) to re-post them with sound. It was messing up my day's schedule and I started to change the timing and it was no longer fulfilling what I wanted.

*I made three mistakes:*

1. I should have used my sound list so I could still schedule with the desktop regardless after all, TikTok would always highlight the title of the sound I am using.
2. I could have chosen a different time - the night before people went to bed so I also did not mess up my schedule and resent the new task.
3. I could have used YouTube shorts and Instagram which I was familiar with temporarily to test the workload.

The only thing more annoying than an invisible creator is an inconsistent one.

I am writing for WSA Magazine because this is my home brand as a writer but I am also writing for them because they have a schedule that will keep me consistent when I am fatigued.

### **Build a consistent plan**

You would naturally think every creative is looking for an opportunity to show up well but that is not true. Most creatives just want to enjoy their work and do not like the administrative part of things which is where this fails.

*There are three ways around that:*

Hire someone who loves the administrative work to do it for you. They will show up online and make you look phenomenal; they will bring all proposal suggestions to your table and tell you what types of portfolios are trendy so you can recreate yours.

Join a platform that keeps

you on a schedule to deliver, like I am doing right now. Apply to be a columnist on a couple of magazines and blogs. Do not just submit an essay and walk away - apply for a one or two-year slot to build your visibility and strengthen your consistency muscle.

Create a new routine for yourself - an easy-to-follow one. This is exactly 4:12 am in Nigeria and it is the writing time slot on my calendar for the first quarter of this year. I have not written consistently in almost three years and I am just now pushing myself. As of this morning, I realized I have churned out 30, 558 in 10 days by attempting to write just 4,000 words daily. It is not much but my writing muscles are returning and my grammatical errors are reducing drastically.

Do more than merely writing for writing's sake, rather write visibly and consistently. Until next month, stay visible.



# **CALL FOR SUBMISSION**

**THE CRUSADERS**, an online nondenominational Christian Magazine, is calling for submissions in Christian poetry, stories, and articles for its 6th edition.

**There is NO THEME for this call.**

**We accept Christian articles, poetry, and short stories.**

**The release date for the magazine is April 7, 2024.**



**CLOSING DATE  
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# WSA Magazine

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January 2024 Edition

<https://www.writersspace.net>

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# MANDLA AND HIS NEW BICYCLE

A Children's Literature by  
Moipone Thandeka, South Africa

## Reviewer

Akuei M. Adol  
(South Sudan)

Success comes from perseverance and refusing to give up on one's dreams amidst overwhelming challenges. Reading "Mandla and His New Bicycle" by Moipone Thandeka reminds me of Rikki Rogers' words: "Strength doesn't come from what you can do, it comes from overcoming things you thought you couldn't do." This children's narrative captures the essence of childhood curiosity, determination, and the power of resilience.

The story is set in Frankfort, a small town in the Free State province. It revolves around Mandla, a brilliant and enthusiastic six-year-old boy who receives a special gift on his birthday: a stunning blue and white bicycle. Filled with excitement, Mandla soon realizes that he doesn't know how to ride a bike. However, his loving father steps in and offers guidance, promising to teach him in the following days.

With his father's direction, Mandla begins his journey of learning to ride the bicycle. Despite facing failures, Mandla's determination shines through as he continues to practice even through moments of frustration and physical pain.

The themes of resilience and perseverance

make this story highly relevant and relatable to children. Through Mandla's expedition, young readers are inspired to embrace challenges, learn from failures, and find the courage to keep trying until they succeed. The story also emphasizes the importance of parental support, as Mandla's father encourages him at every step and ultimately helps him achieve his goal.

Moipone's simple yet engaging writing style captivates juvenile readers, allowing them to connect with the characters and their emotions. The author's astute storytelling skills are efficiently employed to convey the tale through the use of vivid imagery. Moreover, the story flows smoothly and is written in simple language that is easily understandable by youngsters.

In conclusion, the story instructs kids on the virtues and significance of resilience, determination, and perseverance in the pursuit of one's dreams. The story is easily impressionable in the minds of early readers, reminding them of the power they possess to overcome obstacles and reach their goals.

# WRITING CAN SET YOU FREE

**A Creative Nonfiction by  
Rosieda Shabodien, South Africa**

**Reviewer**

**Mathew Daniel  
(Nigeria)**

Rosieda Shabodien's essay is a progressive revelation of a writer's odyssey. This piece is remarkably unique for its effective utilization of the "show, don't tell rule" in writing. Through this artfully employed technique, the essay invites the reader to see the contemplations of the writer, the fascination with language—the amusement and its inadequacies to fully represent feelings and expression, her admiration of other writers, and the frustrating feeling of self-condescension. In reading this essay, one is quick to eagerly recall Michael Aromolaran's "The Writer's Dilemma: The Anxiety of Influence and Originality" (in *Afrocritik*) which briefly touched on the writer's anxiety oscillating between admiration (in aspiring authors), jealousy (amongst contemporaries), and inspiration (for resolute aspiring authors). Rosieda described herself as a "...lazy-ass wanna be writer", albeit a voracious reader constantly and consciously evolving and learning.

Rosieda drives the reader through her writer's experiences by making a metaphorical parallel between herself and an automo-

bile—which sometimes, significant progress is made when charged and ignited, or sometimes just static.

There is also the subtle drift into her writing and her interaction with past events, notably her childhood and its impact on her writing, how she found love, and her experience of South-Africa's apartheid era. This is perhaps one of the most relatable points of this work in the way most writers are almost certain to write about themselves and their social/environmental experiences at certain stages of their development.

Rosieda's essay allows one to peer into the life of a writer. It reveals the non-linear process of a writer's becoming and also showcases how writing can help one to untangle the knots of one's frustrations and contemplations. Essentially, I believe (in agreement with Roseida's work) that writing can set one free.

# SNOW

A Flash Fiction by  
Pelekani Lwenje, Zambia

## Reviewer

Prudence Gakedirelwe  
(Botswana)



From the inception to its ending, Snow is draped in bouts of hopes for a future and communicates the magic that affirms evidence of abundance being recognizable after loss. Despite the loss, one minor achievement yields fulfillment to a joyful heart.

This work of flash fiction is both figurative and literal piece of writing that depicts clearly the inner workings of the mind of an individual and the reality we live in. It comes through the paradox of limitless limitations where in reality, life is filled with limitations but within the walls of the mind even the dead are alive.

Hope of a future, Snow, is the ultimate desire that supercedes rationality, which the character holds in high regard above all manner of things and even a basic need since snowy weathers are cold but now think of a homeless man within such climates. To one who

doesn't understand the essence of desires it is just ridiculous.

Greatest treasure and stature is manifested through strong minds and overflowing hands. The absence of both is a fallacy-filled existence, as picked from the character in this piece.

It gives us remnants of a life lived abundantly and a short fall from grace. Its opening line insinuates circumstances of life beyond human control and the effects that they bring by the catch phrase "Life under the bridge..." Feeble minds that have been weakened tend to desire more and hold greater hope making much room for phantom-fantasies.

The warmth within fulfillment is far much hotter than the cold weathers of the real world. And such is great satisfaction to one whose wishes are fulfilled.



# DISSIMULATING SKELETONS

A Poem by  
Carmi Philander, South Africa

**Reviewer**

Taiwo David Olamide  
(Nigeria)



The poem explores the complex emotions and universal experiences that capture the fragility and ephemeral nature of life, whilst delving into the darker aspects of existence. The poem reflects a visceral and haunting picture of inner turmoil, deception and the unavoidable decay of life. It mirrors the complex and often contradictory emotions associated with mortality and the fragility of human existence.

The speaker vividly describes a skull immersed in roses and a wreath of velvet red, which symbolizes the allure and fragility of life. Albeit the heartbeats are frozen, and the breaths are bedridden, which shows that something is amiss.

The use of the metaphor of a garden in the speaker's ribcage is particularly powerful, creating a visceral and intimate connection to the emotional and physical experiences being projected. The contrast between the

"beautiful blossoms" and "sweet graves" and "dirty coffins" immediately sets the tone for a complex exploration of beauty alongside themes of death and decay.

The use of perfume poured onto a corpse and being in the morgue evokes a sense of decay and fragility. The speaker's inability to resume and, feeling as if they are in the morgue suggests a state of emotional and spiritual stagnation.

The imagery of petals losing color and being befriended by beetles and worms conveys the idea of inevitable decay and the fleeting nature of life. The crown of fragrant flowers and bone of beauty and decay, as well as the inevitability of death.

In conclusion, the poem underscores the tentative and haunting nature of existence. It portrays the unavoidable decay of life. It captures the themes of death, deception, fragility of life and decay.

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