

HOW
TO
FALL
IN LOVE
AGAIN



EDITORS

JIDE BADMUS
WISDOM NEMI OTIKOR
OLUWATOBI EZEKIEL POROYE
FUNMILAYO OBASA
TEMILOLUWA OKANMIYO OLUYEMI



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Book Layout & Design: Togra Designs
togradesigns@gmail.com



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INTRODUCTION

This is the part of curating & editing an anthology that I remain clumsy at doing. I find writing prose increasingly challenging as much as reviewing my works. I have spent enough time reading, editing & arranging these beautiful poems from 39 poets to make them feel like mine. My fascination with silence & innuendos also implies that I would rather gift this offering the nuance of poise, teach it the potency of body language & give you the liberty of interpretation.

Love is a question. It is a question that takes a lifetime to answer. It takes constant reviews & reassessments—constant repositioning. Love is a mystery with no universal resolution—it is a bespoke emotional journey.

Of course, there is no manual for love.

The 51 poems in this anthology take you on personal tours into sensitive & emotive territories—a good mix of mastery & vulnerability—with keen attention to language & beauty. Love is probably the hardest theme to write into compact poetry but the metaphors in this collection are surreal—unapologetic & genuinely refreshing.

Jide Badmus,
Author, Obaluaye
CURATOR



*Sparks
& Embers*



Image By **Tajudeen Sally Alaya**

1. **TEMILOLUWA OKANMIYO**
OLUYEMI

Bridge
(for Baba)

I've cried a river
I'm building a bridge
I will get over you

2. **OLUWASEYI OLADUNJOYE**
(CHESSED)

Oceans

As oceans, swirling now and calm later
As the waves, gentle and ruthless
As the depths go on and on
Vast and uncaged, untamed but at its own will
So will my heart always resonate high and low with
yours
Following closely, never, never missing a beat
Like the oceans not relenting.




3. ADESIYAN OLUWAPELUMI

Symphonica

for D.

The darkness stretches in the distance; an eye eclipsing into an eye. I stretch a hand filled with roses towards you in the meadow. Hello, lonely child, let's get lonely together. I promise the mercy of a lip, the grace of a finger and the favour of an ear. I will give you my gentleness and you will give me yours. We will sing a song, and there will be no lyrics. We will dance in the skies, floating, looking down and laughing. I will take you to a small town, write your name in the soil and mould a covenant in stone. I will be your lightning and you, my thunder. Let me heal you, wounded fawn. Let me be your chrysalis and you, my carefree butterfly. Let us burn together, little firefly, your body an ember in my bonfire. Let me kiss you where the wound bleeds the most. Let me touch you where the rottenness shrivels. Let me be the poison to your pain. Let me be the sting to your despair.



4. **PRECIOUS HARRISON**

Take My Heart as a Kora in Your Hands

Take my heart in your hands as a kora,
and make music to my delight.
Melodies dripping softly like water
screen the tender touch of the moonlight.
Weave the songs, blood-stirring,
from the depths of your lungs.
Play tunes untrimmed all night long.
Let me watch your fingers dance
over the strings of my heart.
Let your voice smooth as oil
illumine the depths of my blood.



5. BABATUNDE ADESOKAN

Untitled

How to fall in love is how not to fall in love
It is how to play piano with the parchment
of your skin and not puncture it, it is how
fingers commune with the braille of your
skin and not deafen it, it is a log of love
rolled on a path where the heart is made
wide enough, it is a meadow misting clear
water with veins filled with blood, it is an
orchestra of how you know the sharpness
of poison without tasting, it is
how you allow rain to conquer your drought
and not allow it to drown you, it is how you
allow your sugarcane to sprout
from the bitter soil, it is how laughter
sweetens your cheeks despite neighbours'
sad stories and you again allow new fish
to enter new stream of your once broken
memories



6. **SOPHIA OFUOKWU**

Untitled

Of course, there is no manual. If there was, I would not be here with you. I would not be doing this again—running back into love like a dog to its owner. I would be nursing my cold heart, clenched bird that she is, promising to never put her through that cyclone again. But there is no manual, and so here I am, running into you like wave crashing into wave. After our collision, I found you in me. In the way I laugh, the emojis I love. We become a spool, unwinding, becoming until I do not know where you end and I begin. If there was a manual to this, I would float into love so I could float away when it ends. I would remind myself of the pain of baring myself to the gaze of another and having my imperfections loved away. I would shy away from your touch, avert the unfurling of the bird in my chest, pin her beak shut and avoid the bittersweet pangs of missing a person while they are still around. There is no manual, but here is how to fall in love:

You fall.

7. **ZAINAB ABUBAKAR**

I Still Search for Ways to Say "I Love You"

In the sitting room, I lie on your lap
& you run your hands through my hair.
The world carries with her a sepia warmness, you
smell of melted butter & paint.
When our song comes up on the radio, you lead me
to the centre of the room. I complain
about my tangled hair; you tell me how beautiful it
looks.
Halfway through the music, I ask, again how one says
I love you in your language.
You whisper it into my ears. "It means my love for
you is great."
We stay like that for hours; you, lost in some distant
lands, I, trying to form the words in my
mouth.
On the table at the far end of the room, are papers
scattered, each poem failing to captivate
your beauty.





Image By **Abubakar Ibrahim (Imam Of Poets)**

8. **JOHN KOTE**

Like Grass Grows After Drought

Like grass grows after drought
The earth finds a way to conceive
Binding all the cracks from her romance with the sun
She makes a newborn

Like a heartbeat in silence
The echo is a frightening presence
Bring the beat from the desert of fine flowers
A little orchard wants to dance
A little orchard wants you to dance

Like a song in the cathedral
The penitent and the righteous have different
choruses
One hums and the other sobs
One sobs and the other hums

9. DOLAPO TAJUDEEN

When Love Breaks, It Grows into New Beginnings

It is finding solace in every harsh sea,
knowing that after every storm comes calm.

It is slithering off every lingering memory of
of loss, rinsing it clean with reminisces of hope.

It is realizing that with each day passing by
love is a sweet thing; tastes like coffee, brews like
tea...

Looking out for days the world waits to catch
a glimpse, and being a carrier of light again.

It is knowing that looking back is what breaks
the heart and labelling each piece with shame.

It is the grace to arrange each piece of heartbreak
into peace of mind, by letting bygones be bygones.

10. SEUN AKINOLA

How to Fall in Love, Again

Replace fear with faith,
Let go of doubts and trust.
Answer in the affirmative,
Every question checking
If you are ready.
Then fall!

Fall, like an eagle,
From its mother's nest.
Enjoy the surprises.
It's not a trip like any you've made before.
So, let the newness of the fall humour you
Till you learn to fly high.

Let the butterflies be.
They may go again,
But let them be
That they may pollinate the flowers
That grew from the seed of love.
Close your eyes to savour the scent afresh.

Fall like one from an aircraft,
Geared with a parachute.
Trust that the fall
Is for the good of your heart.
Leave indeed the sad past
And embrace love afresh.

11. OSHAFI RAZAK

How to Fall in Love Again

In the nucleus of your being
Lies the guide to fall in love anew
If you must fall in love again,
Journey through the lines in this poem.

To fall in love again is to become a tourist site
One to be explored in and out by vulnerability
Fling open the gates of your soul
Break free from the shackles of the past.

To fall in love again is to find that sweet soul
Whose smile will be your night drug
On whose lungs you will build your throne
Whose lips you will anchor your future.

Dive freely into the sea of new beginnings
Dazed by the splendour of love

To fall in love
Is to breathe again,
To laugh again
& to be alive.



Image By **Abubakar Ibrahim (Imam Of Poets)**

12. **ADELEKE BABATUNDE**

To fall in love again

You fell for someone who seared your heart through
A jigsaw puzzle you couldn't quite piece together
Scattered your heart, a LEGO of nerves and flesh
To fall in love again is to put your own neck in a
noose
Kick the stool from under your own leg and leave
yourself hanging

To fall in love again is to teach your body that pain is
good
That, doing this in the exact same way leads
to a different destination.
To fall in love again is to look Stockholm syndrome
in the
Eyes and say "not today, you will not have me."

13. **STEPHEN OZOVEHE OMOLORI**

One Spark

Frozen hearts still burn,
Even when frozen for too long:
One spark starts the fire.

When mine got frozen by loss,
You were the spark that set it ablaze.

14. **ABDULRAUF YUSUF OLANREWAJU**

these days

these days,
my eyes are glued to the sky,
I count the number of stars &
monitor the yellow sun
as it grows into become a gloomy night
and I can tell how slow the moon crawls.

these days,
a night wears the garment of a century,
an hour is a masked decade
transformed from a minute
that seems like the portrait of years
and a second becomes the daily shift
of sunrise & sunset.

these days,
loneliness has become a bosom
that comes with a love package
to embrace a heart, cuddle the moment
& remind the roaming thought of its solitude
because they no longer feel the presence
& company of your affection.

15. No More

I see no more,
the endowment
in other birds
ever since I saw a peacock.

I hear no more,
the sweet voices
of other creatures
ever since I listened to the nightingale.

I perceive no more,
the pleasant smell
of other flowers
ever since I perceived the scent of the rose.

I feel no more,
the ambience
of other climates
ever since I witnessed your summer.

I love no more,
the beauty
of other damsels
ever since I saw you—the charming Eve.

16. **RAMON SOFIAT**

Your Gaze

I let myself dive deep in this tranquillity and
land myself in an underneath enchantment.
Your gaze is a warm blanket of water where
the sun sops at dawn.
No wonder it canoodles the skin while rising.

Your gaze conveys more than your mouth.
It calls me, wants me, holds me
Like the sky shelters the moon on a summer night.
To be in love is to listen to your gaze;
it never lies.

17. NKET GODWIN

Your skin

(for Faith)

Your skin is a riddle my eyes cannot break,
nor my fingers run the acres of its mystery;
body of sun on a leaf, greening me out of yellow hue,
with your touch that shoots love out of recalcitrant
earth.

There's something beneath your skin,
hair folded in diamond question marks...
i become sheep in a verdant field,
shepherded from the meadow of your fur;
glorious sight of green glues my gaze for a graze.

There's something beyond your skin;
your hair with legs of fountain,
pouring down mountain of desire,
incessant torrent of lust & passion;
to own this cascade of hair,
just to sit, watch it fall, glamorous.

18. **19 Poeming your smile**

Wing of moth in my eyes,
your ethereal smile breaks me
into a morning of flowering.

My breast is brimmed
with tender wings of birds,
butterflies dropping pollen
on the petal of love.

Just watching you, ether,
let me be fallow soil,
peated to the brink with your smile,
& let love shoot every morning



19. **AJAO ABDULQOWIYY**

My Tongue Knows the Taste of Love

I happen to
love a red rose
whose air heals;
Whose voice
is like the rain
airing the sound
of serenity
My hooter
is a sheriff,
trailing the fragrance
of love.
In the depth
of my heart
I've found a reason
to light a candle
again.

20. **NASIBA BABALE**

Let Me Live

(After Nizaar Qabbani)

Mop up the pieces of you left on my floor
Let me prepare for a new guest
Remove the traces of you lingering on my skin
Let my new lover caress me in peace
Give me a chance at love again
Cut the ropes you tied to my waist
Let me walk to the arms of a new love
Let me walk on paths that do not have your
footprints
And take a rest under shades that do not have your
scent
Give me a chance to look at other men
Without searching for you in them.

21. **Deserted**

He says that I am a poet
So I will always have words
But there are no words in me
I struggle to say them beneath
The weight of his gaze
And the warmth of his hands
His lips on mine and all letters
Run out of my tongue
Leaving me with sighs and gasps
Emptied of words and all they mean
What power do words have
Where love rules?
Where do words go
When a poet falls in love?

22. ELIOT CARDINAUX

Elskersmål

The skin a hood
over white & iris

Hunger a silt on the ocean
floor

A bird with thin wings flies
through summer

Such is the heart



23. Hudsult

Did I spell that right?
Did my language please you?

Summer bird

in our lover tongue

I want

what right now
cannot provide





JUDE BADMUS

24. *How to Fall in Love Again*

Throw a die
Throw a six twice

Throw a song
into the wind

Throw a smile
into the heart
of the market



The background features a complex maze pattern in a light gray color. Scattered throughout are various black and white line drawings: clouds, a cluster of three heart-shaped balloons, a cupid figure with wings and a bow, and an envelope with a heart on it.

Ifihan:

HOW (NOT) TO
FALL IN LOVE



Image By **Tajudeen Sally Alaya**

25. JIDE BADMUS

Bond Again

This house doesn't breathe
when you are away—it loses

its green preserving your portion
of oxygen, waiting for your return.

The air is stale & haunting,
devoid of the yellow noise

of your aura,
your electric ambience.

Home is anywhere
your smile resides,

where your laughter
slivers the sun

& your anger
strangles the clouds

until what remains
of darkness is ashes

—where latent emotions
grow bold, become active.

Home is where love is
a party in perpetuity,

where you teach your feet
the dialect of dance,

where you feast
& get drunk

yet want more—
where you bond & bout

& bond again.



26. ILIYA KAMBAI DENNIS

LOVE: a compendium hide-out to those who hide to seek affection

I felt the urge to love again after I was betrayed.
I wrongly define love as *clutching myself in my lover's bosom*.

But *love no be like that. E big pass big nyash and big breast*.
I'm wondering why my heart still wanders around.

I mean, love is a beautiful place to place your heart—
tells you it can neither be created nor destroyed.
But unfolds into the tiniest things unimaginable when
it sees an old lover,

And exposes your scars to scrutiny like a badly
written poem.
The first time I heard about such games—where
young boys hide between the

Legs of women who are not their mothers—was
from the girl that first corrupted my lips.
She said I could always hide between her legs and
seek haven if her bosom was not cozy enough.



27. **Asylum**

Here, in this poem, I appear in 5 phases:

I My mother forged her body
into the texture of dust 95 days
after my father reshaped himself
into the size of a coffin.

II I am still learning how
to become a city of flowers.
The last time I tried moulding
happiness I almost became water.

III After they folded
into flowers, depression sowed
me into the mouth of suicide.

IV I've considered reshaping
my body to fit a coffin, too
I've tried gasolines and knives
until I stopped dreaming of death
Until I decided to love my body.

V Love is an asylum. Love is the sound
of music. Love is a cry of joy calling
for a feast in a grieving heart.

28. CHUKUMA EKE PACELLA

Fade into you

*'The days come as strangers and leave/ live as memories.
I reborn your mild laughs and silk tongue in white and black
because, sometimes, our memories, like days, don't make it
to the next sunrise. I box your features in metaphor, arrange and rearrange
the details of our first touch, as you break my body in two
as I let your love flow into the open cracks into my open thighs...'*

Ma was a writer. The village could not yet afford tapes when he first touched her—she hid her moans and its colour in a safe. I now read out anytime she forgets what it means to feel, to fall—it was the most magical way to recognise herself—when amnesia forcefully hunts down all of her memories, she runs to poetry for a face, a name, a day.

*'I was called a witch. After your unintentional exit
they washed your still body and made me drink of it. They waited
for the news of my death, but I lived, and waited too.'*


Funny how history always finds a way back to us. I am reliving Ma's life, and sometimes, when I read to her I remember the glory of the mistletoe. I remember the colour of your lips before the storm stole you. I remember. So, I am learning to not know how it feels to forget the face of my lover. I am sketching your tender spot with words, letting the future-me recognise that you always began your *bello* with a clown smirk



and I am sorry with a long kiss on my nape.

'How does it feel to forget the face of your lover?'

she would say. I do not know what it means for one to fade into another,
as Ma wrote. But after the storm, I realised that our bodies would someday reunite. So, I knot my hope with Ma's, read Pa's memories
into her existence and yours to mine. Our bodies, slowly dissolving into the past as the newness of the memories wear
out, and we learn to love a second time.



29. EMMANUEL G G YAMBA

Love without words

this body must live before death comes knocking
that's how you give hope to a dying thought

she says, I love you, write me a poem
as if poetry is the way
no one wins her heart except through it

but it's late now, her feelings belong to another

it's September with heavy rainfall
& you're outside during the political
launch, all wet with her by your side, campaigning.

you wear her hands around your wrist,
tight. like how rain fits your clothes on you
practically learning a language you once knew—
to love is to cleave

you walked along the street & stared in her eyes
you say love me please, loud enough that it stays in your throat

too late for her to return home.
so, she begged to pass the night at your house.

there are some prayers that choke God
with smiles before he answers

& you will never understand how this request aligns
with how unfaithful you've become, like this poem
to assure yourself the night was made to create oneness,


you offered a kiss & it was returned
graciously, your bodies fit into each other



30. OJO OLUMIDE EMMAUEL

Love is A Skydive

That night, I roamed the prairie in search of your eyes
on many walls, my shadow basked into silhouettes
as the moon made paths for my feet
and yes, I learned to chant the music
inside my head to the wind:
music of delicate passion rafting on a carefree wind
love is a distant song which itches a lover's ear
even in my yearning, you were swinging inside my heart
my body morphed into a temple, for you
a worship and an incense
a lamb on your altar &
let love slay me again and again
roast my fat into a burnt offering for you
and like one in disdain of missing his way
I perched idly on the arms of my maker
in the hope not to crash-land as I love-dive
from the sky of this haven.



31. NWEKE BERNARD OKECHUKWU

Sometimes I Hold Your Picture & Sing

(for Pretty—Amarachi)

there is a heavy blockage
a barricading of the heart
in the absence of your soft pillow of chest
& there is no better way to frame a tale
of love & incompleteness than sprawl solitarily
in a room this way
like a stream drained of water
like fingerlings denied of fins
like night sky divorced of terrifying darkness
or voluptuous breasts drawn of milk
& because i'm open to drown in your
effervescent ocean of love
the way a child spreads arms wide, welcoming his
homeward-walking mother
see why whenever i miss you
i reach out for your picture in the pigeonhole gallery
hold it in the palms & mumble
“if I could be where you are”
for one whose picture is caught by the tail
of the eyes is met by half.



32. NDUTA WAWERU

As care, as keeping, as preservation

The last houseplant has died from too much sunlight touching it.

So much leaves when it is unattended. But certain things survive their dying if they are tended to.

Outside, the branches tap on the roof like hands outstretched to invite the warmth of a body.

Inside, a light warmth settles in our laps.

We go over the planting ritual & rehearse with dull hearts the routine of sticking roots properly into the soil.

“There is a way to let the ruin out of our bodies without poking at our skins”, you say as you hand me a broken jar to toss away.

The act of scattering itself is quicker and less violent compared to the act of rejoining.

We go leniently about dressing our wounds.

For our own amusement, we recite the four stages of a healing wound.

You are more interested in the process of the wound developing into a scar.

I am interested in the act of the skin rejoining.

In the evening, we seek a tender God in Psalms 147.

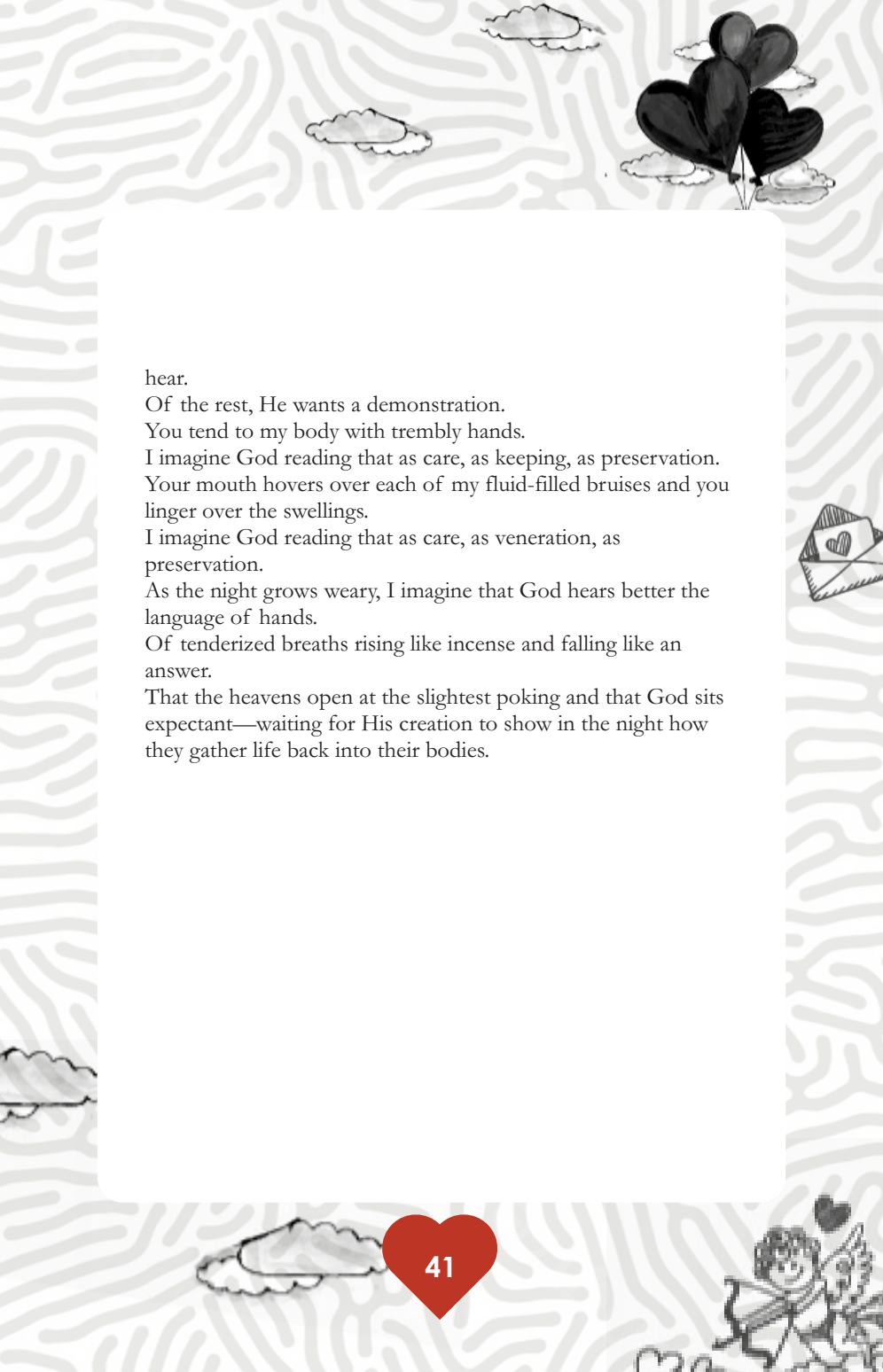
The news reporter narrates once again the ordeal of two youths drowning while holding hands.

Ocean Vuong says that the most useful thing one can do with empty hands is hold on.


You wish they never held hands, and then you wish they never had hands.

I wish, more than believe, that they remember the tension on each other's bodies before the dive, and the thrill of having a hand to hold just before they drowned.

Before we sleep, you plaster your mother tongue sparingly in your prayer and say it is only the beautiful words God wants to



hear.
Of the rest, He wants a demonstration.
You tend to my body with trembly hands.
I imagine God reading that as care, as keeping, as preservation.
Your mouth hovers over each of my fluid-filled bruises and you
linger over the swellings.
I imagine God reading that as care, as veneration, as
preservation.
As the night grows weary, I imagine that God hears better the
language of hands.
Of tenderized breaths rising like incense and falling like an
answer.
That the heavens open at the slightest poking and that God sits
expectant—waiting for His creation to show in the night how
they gather life back into their bodies.





33. We Have a History with Fire

Ocean Vuong says there are things one can say only in the dark.

And yet
I begin with lifting the lantern over your body.

If I have known anything, it is that
there is no fracture or blemish that darkness
cannot limp into.

That one must know where exactly to plant their mouth to quell a fire.

That, to fully grasp the nakedness of a body, you
feed it to a burning and
let it dance by furnaces.

Let us see how it responds to warmth of
anything but blood-warmed hands.

Remember the aftermath, read as its burns. And that it will gladly offer
them to you as entry points.
And that you do not wish to poke the skin where embers first dug their hands
into.

We have a wanting history with fire.
"The fire roars in anger. I hate its wails
of loss. I close my eyes but
my nose, a Judas, breathes in
smoke." Rahma O. Jimoh writes.
If you must know anything,
it is that the flames have always danced on our palms long after the smouldering.

But when you feel my heat,
if you must know anything, it is that I am emptied of anything that burns.
That this is how I sever your tragedy from your silence
and ask that you sing it to me.
That, one must know where exactly to plant their mouth to hear the alternative
of silence.

That, I ask of your openness with this much leniency more than I am dressed in
its mercy.
And that I ask only that you reshape your confession into a tangible thing and
I desire more than need that you sing.

34. **ROSHEED AYINLA SHEHU**

Sandcastle

I remember the day I first tasted love; I was a boy
With exploring fingers that sought beauty in its antithesis.
I moulded mud and gutter squalor into a sandcastle that lasted
days
& I became a museum; the sandcastle, an exhibition.
Even Alake found it a worthy hive for her bee to camp.

I once bought her sweets to hold her hands;
That day, I knew I was palm oil & she, a white attire;
Say, I was an arrow that made her bird flee

But now, we left our hands to caress each other in the
sandcastle;
Adam and Eve in our own Garden of Eden.
This dune, a surging beauty that traces its source to the river.
Who cares it was built with mud and gutter squalor
When its beauty caught a missing rib?



35. **ABIODUN EKUNDAYO**

Patchwork

I
he left, chin up, leaving my soul squashed, pillow stained with
memories.
i never cleaned after him.
left my bedspread unwashed and continued to cuddle his
memories while i smell him
& gradually
i became all i ran away from.

II
to write a heartfelt letter of love, fold it into a plane and fly it
into a realm of fantasy
pretend that love has not at a time been poison.
know, verily, verily I say, the opposite of happiness is you-
grief— that which comes with losing you & falling out of love.

III
and sometimes pleasure may bring death
even happiness may cause tears
& you too may fall prey, yet again, of sweet words
doomed, perhaps saved, by lust or love.

IV
yet, to love is to live;
that which comes with lust
and sometimes a fallout of love
and a break caused by heartbreak.
but what is life if not to love and be loved
again, and again.



V
and if love decides to be poison
or hit a hammer on your heart
cry only when you're in the rain
write a poem or two
start your day with a cup of coffee
& wait for cupid to strike again.





Image By **Sadiq Mustapha**

36. **ROMANS PIUS CHUKWUDI**

it's you i carry in my breast

it's you i carry in my breast, oma
like the peahen carries her plume

you're the smell i carry in my skin
like the firefly carries her light

you shoot your light at my shortcomings
and i see my brawn
through which I know the path
i should go in this labyrinth

i cannot separate your smell
from my memory, fair one
so, everywhere i go it goes with me

i have been what love bedews me to be
i will go where love takes me to

for it's you i carry in my chest
like the spider carries her gossamer tools
it's you i carry in my breast
like the chameleon carries her
clan of beauty

again, let's twinkle, the moon and the stars
do not contest queenship of the sky



37 **BRENDA NWAFOR**

A Bed's Nostalgia

I miss you
I miss him too
I miss the both of you
How you warm me up
And ruffle me
Then undress me
Making sultry mockery of my silky covers
I'm an ally to every pleasure crime you have committed
Without ears but I hear and understand your climatic mantras
"More, more, more"
"Deeper, deeper, deeper"
"Don't stop, don't stop"
Without skin but I feel your warmth
As it increases and decreases, then stabilises
I miss all of you
Your humps
Your glides
Your screws and screams
As you cling unto me for dear life
Blessing me with distilled juices

Come soon
Come quickly
Come now
The sheets are back on
Yearning for you to take them off



Image By **Sadiq Mustapha**

38. EHIOROBO OSAZUWA DEREK

Reading Songs of Solomon at 4am

& a verse compares love with wine, declares it better.
& maybe just like wine, love is born out of crushing.

Look at my pride, trampled, spread bare at your feet.
Tell me, why does your name taste sweet

in my prayer?

Why does your voice make my head spin?
I stay on the phone with you for hours like a drunk

nails himself to a bar. I hear breaking bottles every time
our calls end. I dig through scripture, trying to find words

to describe this longing—I want to love you like Christ first
loved us,
like the sun rises each morning bound by covenant.

I want to settle into a pattern that will leave you at peace.
Think, moon blowing you kisses at even. Think, birds breaking

into morning symphony. Think of your dialect,
how it is sweet for song. & think of wine,

how it turns the eyes.
I am a drunk slurring verses at odd hours.

*How beautiful and how sweet
you are O Love, for delight.*

39. Reading poems to you

I will read poems to you one day. I know I already do, but this time,

I will read them to you in person. We will feel the sunlight crack through the clouds, to touch our faces,

& I will call it a metaphor for hands.

I will ask you, who gave you those hands?

You will squeeze mine, like a child squeezes juice

out of an orange, & it will feel like a blessing just to touch you.

Or maybe it will be at night, when I am most honest.

Maybe, we will watch the moon settle into the sky,

the same way it always does. I will call it a metaphor,

say it reminds me of how I always settle into your voice.

I will ask you, who gave you that voice?

You will laugh & hold the name of our God,

high, like a priest holds up an offering, & it will get

caught in the wind like a dandelion seed. I will say a prayer

of thanks to him for helping me find you.

I will listen to you laugh

in that honey sweet way. I will laugh too, call it a metaphor,

a moment to hold to my chest like a bride


holds her bouquet. I have written too many poems

comparing you to flowers, & you will be the most beautiful

petal I will ever hold. It will be a blessing, no longer

needing to mask your name in my poetry. I will read poems





to you one day, say your name, & watch every syllable land on
my notes, softly, like a hair strand is quiet as it crashes into a
pond.
Like the pond is gentle as it begs it to stay.



40. **TAJUDEEN SALLY ALAYA**

Deep Blue Hour

In the belly
of the ocean
where the mysteries of
the world are veiled,

i take you on a journey
to a place that flourishes with corals
where no city lights
interfere

a breathtaking cruise —
a crescendo of seahorses
gently cradled by the
rising tide's tender sigh

you seek serenity, and I am
cascading
guiding you on a path to black
that cannot be retraced or undone

these words carry a familiar accent
a letter that starts and concludes
in soft hues
this too shall transform into



a verdant view

i, the tingling embraces
that envelop you within
and I shall transcend you into a blue hour

41. Tales in the wind

Beyond the keen edge of winter's cold
where my heart sees cheers
my body rests like an ode to a child
I become the tales in the wind

In your name I say a prayer
you are a god of epithumia
my heart burns calories
in praise and worship of you
and then the sun at noon

where heart sees cheers
the body rests like an ode to children
we become the tales in the wind



42. **DAVID KUNLE AGUNBIADE (DKA)**

Love Soon Returns

I lie on the ocean's bed
smothered, submerged,
oblivious to the surrounding beauty,
of vast realms unexplored, untouched,
of peculiar yet pleasing smells
in these deepest, darkest trenches,
forlorn and fearful.

Loving you was my ritual,
my willing, selfless sacrifice,
the death of me while I yet live
and still, I die to love you,
I feel you but no longer filled by you,
since you left

Like the second coming
I hopelessly await your return,
arms widened,
eyes peeled,
searching, calling, pleading,
knives sharpened to
carve your sacrifice.

43. **IBRAHIM OLALEKAN SALVATORE**

After Sunset

though sunup is almost here, yet
my heart cock-a-doodle-doo-s
before the roosters

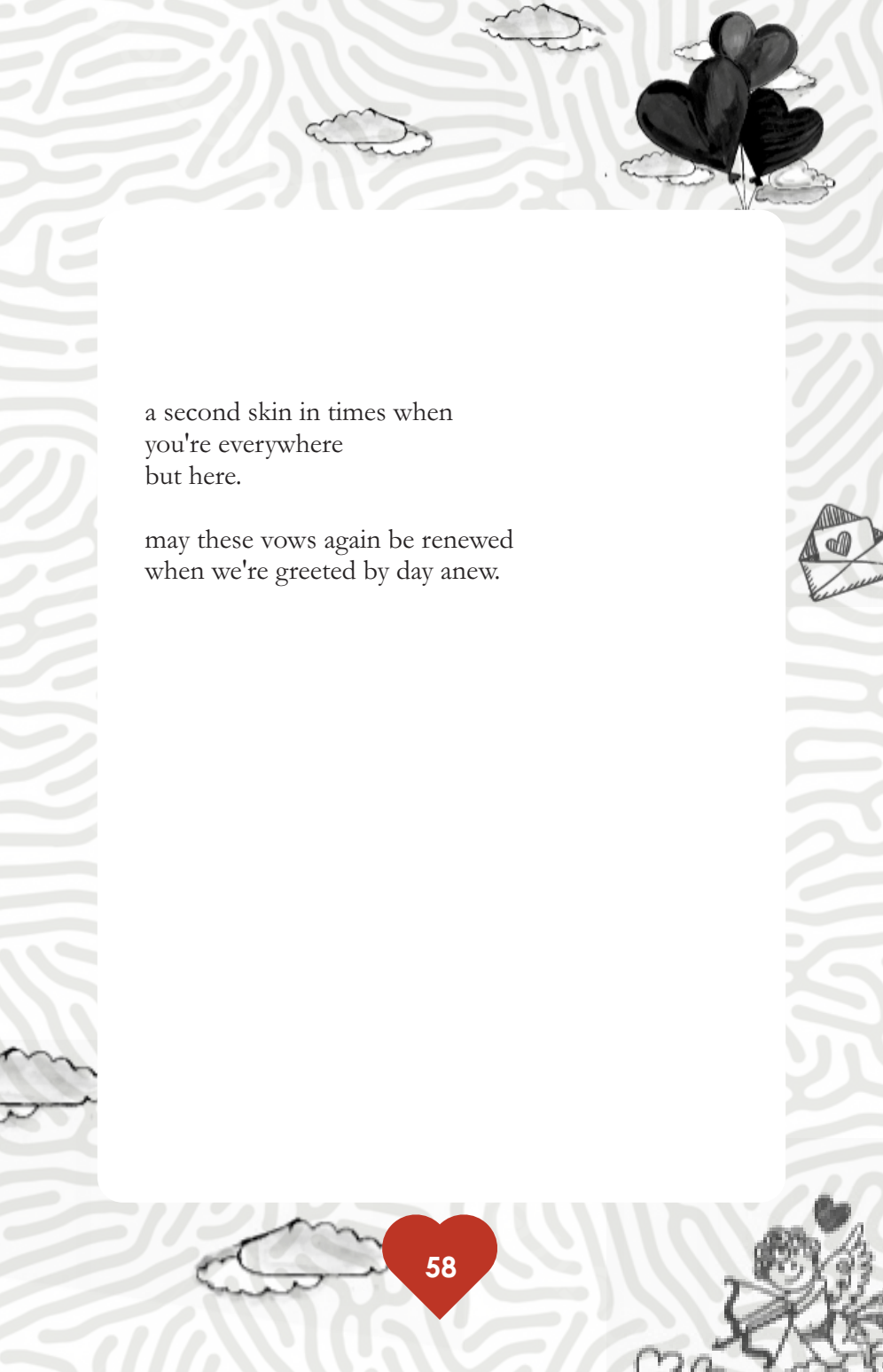
you're not here, yet
i lie, body entwined
with dreams of you.

my pillows scream
of your absence, so i rise,
cup my palms & whisper

wishes to your name,
i counted my *tasbeeh*
invoking your essence, after all

what i offer God during
vigils i get back in brighter
days full of floral smiles, in

butterflies that tease
the lush garden in my stomach,
& in the memories i wear like



a second skin in times when
you're everywhere
but here.

may these vows again be renewed
when we're greeted by day anew.

44. **OLUWATOBI EZEKIEL POROYE**
(POET)

the day breaks on your smile

this poem opens with your love,
like sun sauntering out of
dawn,
yawning away the remnants of night.

this is the design of life:
the day begins with light—
a fertile smile bearing
the energy of air
lush on dewed tulips.

you, my love, are like morning,
the origin of pigeons
cooing cool symphonies
by my heart's window.

all things become new
in your eyes. you see,
love is never blind:
God is never blind.

this poem closes with my promise
of coffee moments with you

on a boat cruise to the point
where the sky and the sea
hold hands at the horizon.



45. love is...

the flutter of fronds
dousing a burning afternoon
with a cold bottle of air;

butterflies flapping wings
on a garden cruise;

sunbeams cradling
in your dimple's couch.

love dies
love rises
again,
like day in the duvet of night
& unfolding by morning;
like the savior's head
drooping on the cross &
elevating in ascension.

the flurry of hope—
the knowing that love,
like time, is evergreen!

46. **ADAORA CHINEDU**

Holy Sacrament

(i)

Surrender.

Die from falling—in love
Take yourself to the stake
a sacrifice of emotions:
Grieve.

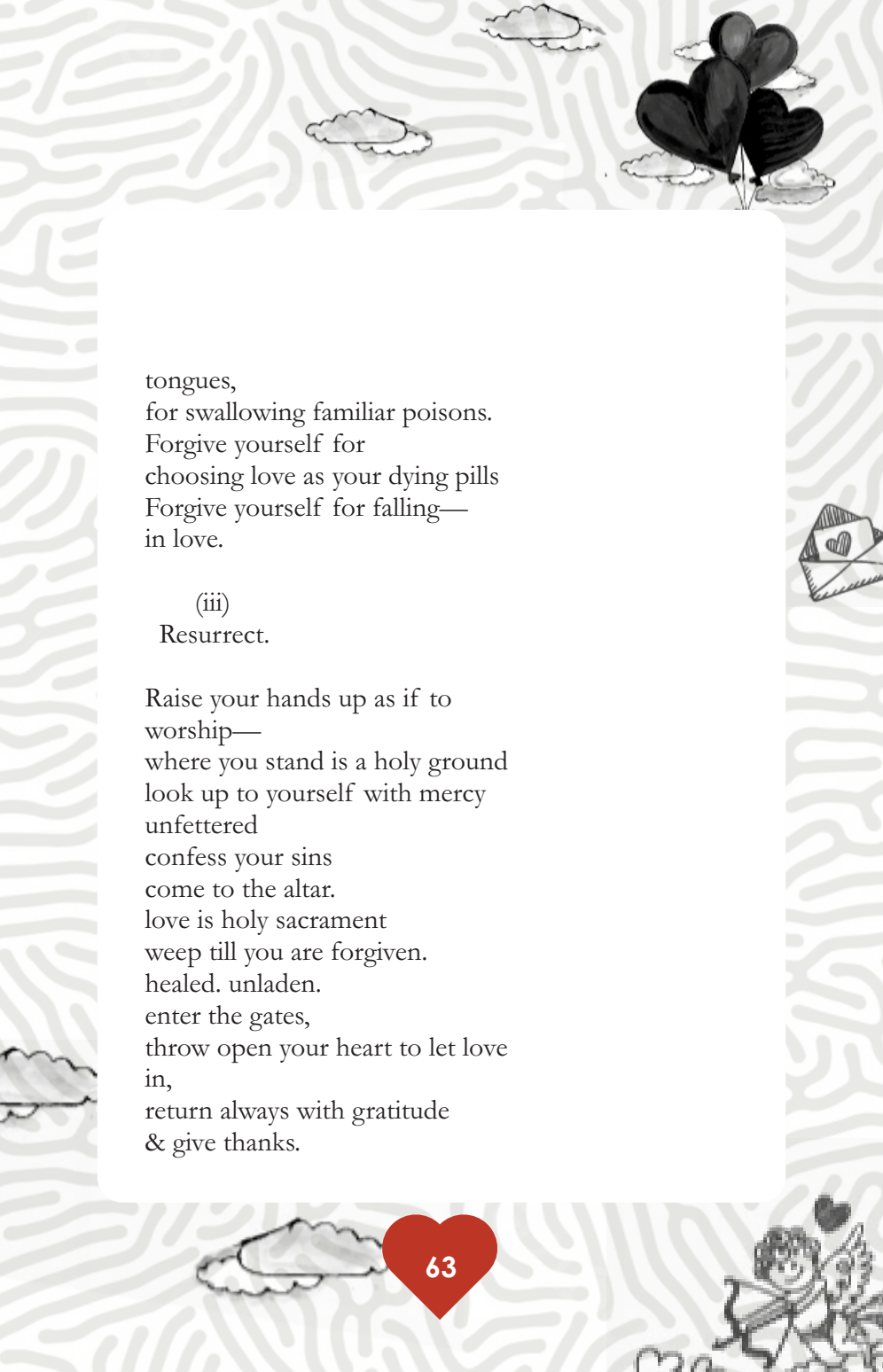
Grieve is a door that opens you
to the voices of truth,
a testament to unformed songs,
psalms buried at
the corridor of your being.
To love is to surrender to
dying.

(ii)

Forgive yourself

Forgive yourself for this
scattering
for agreeing to be undone by certain
hands you once fed with the deliciousness of
your being.

Forgive yourself for living on your knees,
sharing kisses with venomous



tongues,
for swallowing familiar poisons.
Forgive yourself for
choosing love as your dying pills
Forgive yourself for falling—
in love.



(iii)
Resurrect.

Raise your hands up as if to
worship—
where you stand is a holy ground
look up to yourself with mercy
unfettered
confess your sins
come to the altar.
love is holy sacrament
weep till you are forgiven.
healed. unladen.
enter the gates,
throw open your heart to let love
in,
return always with gratitude
& give thanks.

47. **SULOLA IMRAN ABIOLA**

Verses for the Heartbroken

- [i] Behold! thou shall be merged
with a flesh of your own
& ye shall sprout forth.
- [ii] & the days shall come upon you
when ye shall see yourself
falling from the arm of your lover.
- [iii] One of ye whose energy is waned
shall come upon the fore
for the last supper.
- [iv] That ye two shall go separate ways;
that breakfast be served on a platter
of *dumbfoundedness*.
- [v] Behold! that ye seek another love story
in the morning;
& at noon.

- 
- 
- [vi] That ye dab your eyes with the wool
of hope, of getting another nest
to breed a new love story.
- [vii] That ye comfort yourself
with wordings from
a museum of patience.
- [viii] That times & tides would bring
thee to the shore of another lover
& the current of love will sweep
ye both off your feet.
- [ix] That ye both fall into the elixir
of love so thick & contagious
that you swim into forever ever after.

48. OSHO TUNDE

Ifihan

An angel passes by.
Someone is making trees of my legs,
but the sky is dripping, what can a desert do? The
heart must be watered,
but, this road to bread is hasty.
I see this angel again, and again—she sits quietly in
my thought.
This evening, I draw near, bold as seawaters.
May this way lead me out of the market.
May I know your name, please?
Look at her smile so flowery.
I draw nearer.
Her eyeballs—two wraps of charms.
I draw nearer.
Her character is snow colour.
We laugh and walk. We laugh and talk.
Body doesn't run from body—we draw nearer, the
gathering of clouds.
At the back of weeks,
inside my room, you will find a hall inside my head:
There are circles of faces in the hall,
there are smiles on the faces,
there's Nathaniel Bassey's voice rising with us,
there's us holding hands between song and fireworks,
speaking with the pillar of the house of Jesse.

49. PAMILERIN JACOB

If Not You

—*nocturne in adagio*

This regime of blue developing in my heart
like a photograph, reducing all else to shadows —

This mountain through which the river passes
like a voice through silence, leading to you —

This love heating up inside me
like an egg, its shell softening into light —


All the ways I find you at the center
of the saga that is my life — a horse

whose hinds gallop in place, planting its whole
body into the plot, more essential than destiny.

Is the blue of the world truer
than the blue of dreams? If not you,

then, extinction. Catalyst of my adequacy.
Did I not attempt to be remarkable

before your entrance into my life, & failed,
my gait, unsteady as a newborn calf's?



The sonic of your laugh ripples through my blood
like a covenant, stirring, weaving

within me persistence, survival,
joy — words so alien their reality kindled

my tongue, the same tongue you use
as a whetting stone

for your clit. In my dreams,
every leaf, stream, bird is a prophecy

fulfilled by your face
rising out of your pillow, day after

day, arriving in time to deliver a kiss.



50. Anti-Loneliness Nocturne

Asleep, my heart vibrates
in my chest
like a cell phone. You are the one

it ponders. The one who knows
the footpath to my dreams.

Your eyes, my preferred mirror.

I cannot stop dreaming
about your kisses, & the mouth

from which they drop like mangoes
into my hours:

That announcement of air
rising from your soul,

darting through lips to reach me
as the clearest expression of want.

To the whole world, I am this adult
competence, this vast knowing,

whereas beside you, I am a little child
scooping moonlight

into your breasts. Thank God

for loneliness. Through its quiet
halls, your song discovered me.





Editors

Funmilayo Obasa is a Nigerian non-fiction writer, poet, photography enthusiast and Design Researcher. She is zealous about understanding human behaviour and using whatever is learnt to design solutions for underserved and non-average groups. Writing & photographing from wherever she finds herself, her art tends to forge a relationship between society and existence and exhibit the spontaneity of her imagination in clear-cut but in-depth ways. Her passion and interests are fuelled by a desire to make complexity easy to understand. You can learn more about her @ funmilayoobasa.com.

Jide Badmus is an engineer, a poet inspired by beauty and destruction; he believes that things in ruins were once beautiful. He is the author of several books including *Obaluaye* (FlowerSong Press, 2022) and *What Do I Call My Love for Your Body* (Roaring Lion Newcastle, 2022). Jide writes from Lagos, Nigeria. He tweets @bardmus

Olúwatóbi Ezekiel Poroye is a Nigerian poet and Economics tutor. Exploring grief, family, memory and migration, Olúwatóbi is a love rebel—according to Jide Badmus! He is a finalist in the 2020 Nigerian NewsDirect Poetry Prize and a Best of the Net nominee. And his works have been featured in notable publications such as *Agbowo*, *Jalada Africa*, *Libretto NG*, *Perhappened*, and elsewhere. Though Olúwatóbi takes pride in his culinary skills, he is still single. When he's not ghostwriting, he's writing evergreen memories of his mother, Omolola Hannah Poroye (PBUH) in a poem. He writes from Ogun, Nigeria and tweets @yungprinzet

Temiloluwa Okanmiyo Oluyemi writes from the Western part of Nigeria. Most of her writings revolve around human experiences and the pains surrounding them all. She hopes to use this means of escape to open paths for others who are locked in their own pains.

Wisdom Nemi Otikor writes from Lagos, Nigeria, where he also teaches creative writing in one of the city's top Elementary schools. With a Bachelor of Arts degree in English studies from the University of Port Harcourt, he believes that writing is therapeutic and sees poetry as a course to healing. He is a poet whose works have appeared on *Ake Review*, *Libretto*, *Dwarts Magazine*, *Praxis magazine*, *Parousia magazine* and other acclaimed literary magazines. His writing deals with relatable human longings and questions, and makes extensive allusions to Christian symbols. He can be contacted on instagram and Twitter on @Wisdomotikor. He is a bubble of laughter in the city of God




Contributors

Abdulgowiyy Ajao, a literature teacher, a Nigerian poet born in Ede, Osun state . He studied at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, where he obtained his B.A in Literature-in-English. He is Co-editor of Elegance Dreamers, an anthology on the beauty of Ede. He won the Obafemi Awolowo University Student Poet of the year in 2019. His works have appeared in several collections . He sees poetry as a medicament that can heal the world.

Abiodun Peter Ekundayo is a Nigerian poet whose works have been featured and forthcoming in Persimmon Lit, Ponder Savant, Naked Cat, Wripoles, English Writers' Association and elsewhere. Abiodun is known to question anything and everything which serves as a source of inspiration for his writings. He's the author of 'Sodom & Gomorrah', writes from Lagos, Nigeria and tweets @Ekundayo94718755


Abubakar Ibrahim, Imam of Poets, is an Imam, poet, digital artist, & the co-founder of Borgu Caravan. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in journals & magazines at home & the diaspora. In 2023, he & Jide Badmus co-authored IN THE REALM OF DREAMS, a poetry + digital art chapbook (available on Amazon) that explored themes of love, social disorderliness & mental health issues. Imam is inspired by societal dysfunction, self-identity & mental health. He writes, & makes art from Abuja, & tweets @imamofpoets.

Adedayo Ademokoya is a Nigerian poet who believes in the potency of words and writing from the heart. Adedayo is passionate about life, love, loss, family, and anything that catches his fancy. His works have been published or forthcoming in Brave Arts Africa, Inkspired anthology, Thought Catalog, Praxis



Magazine, Kalahari Review, Wild Word, Afrocabin, Ducor Review, Kreative Diadem, Ethos Literary Journal, Tuck Magazine, The Rising Phoenix Review, Indian Periodical and elsewhere.

Adeleke Babatunde, a distinguished Nigerian journalist and versatile writer, emerges as a multifaceted creative force in the modern era. With an eclectic range of influences shaping his work, his writings resonate with the dynamic spirit of today's society, weaving together a rich fabric of ideas, perspectives, and insights. Through his craft, he engages with the pulse of the times, offering a compelling and thought-provoking narrative that captures the essence of our ever-evolving world.




Adesiyan Oluwapelumi, TPC XI, is a medical student, poet, essayist & Assistant Editor of Fiery Scribe Review from Nigeria. Winner of the Team Booktu Poetry Contest (2024), he & his works are featured in 20.35, Fantasy Magazine, Poet Lore, Tab Journal, Poetry Wales, Variant Literature & elsewhere.

Babatunde Adesokan writes from Oyo State, Nigeria. He works with Firstbank. He is a lover of poetry; a lover of everything that breathes poetry.


Chesed is a Nigerian-born and raised writer. She's your typical writer, choosing to stay indoors reading, listening to music, or writing or being alone outside doing these things. She writes mostly poetry and short stories but hopes to finish a complete novel someday.

David Kunle Agunbiade (DKA) is an author, creative writer, spoken word artist, and a Doctoral research student in Creative & Critical Writing. He is the Team Lead of the DKA Creative Writers' Network, which he founded in 2023 to oversee the DKA Annual



Short Story Writing Competition and the DKA Annual Poetry Prize. He is the CEO of the recently incorporated FictionbyDavid Publishers, based in Lagos, Nigeria.


Dolapo Tajudeen, SWAN VI, is a young Nigerian poet and an essayist. He is studying Medical laboratory science at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. He is the runner-up for the 2021 YMCA poets. His works are published/forthcoming in A long House, Akéwí magazine, and elsewhere. He tweets @dolapotajudeen3



Ehiorobo Derek is a writer, poet, and spoken word artist. His work has been published in Praxis, Poetry column-NND, Liquid imaginations and the How to fall in love anthology published by Inkspired Nigeria. You can find him on instagram @derekimagines, where he writes poetry for a small community of literary enthusiasts.


Eliot Cardinaux is a writer, translator, pianist and composer living and working between the U.S. and Denmark. He holds a degree in music from The New England Conservatory, and an MFA in creative writing from The University of Massachusetts in Amherst. The author of one poetry collection, On the Long Blue Night, his poems have been featured in journals such as Jacket2, Fortnightly Review, Spectra Poets, Bloodroot, The Arts Fuse, and Spoon River Poetry Review. His translations have appeared in Solstice, and Tupelo Quarterly. He has taught at UMass Amherst and worked as a bookseller at Amherst Books

Emmanuel G G Yamba writes from Monrovia, Liberia. He is a graduate of the University of Liberia, College of Science and Technology, with a BSc in Biomedical Science and the Spring Advancement Fellowship, learning writing for career



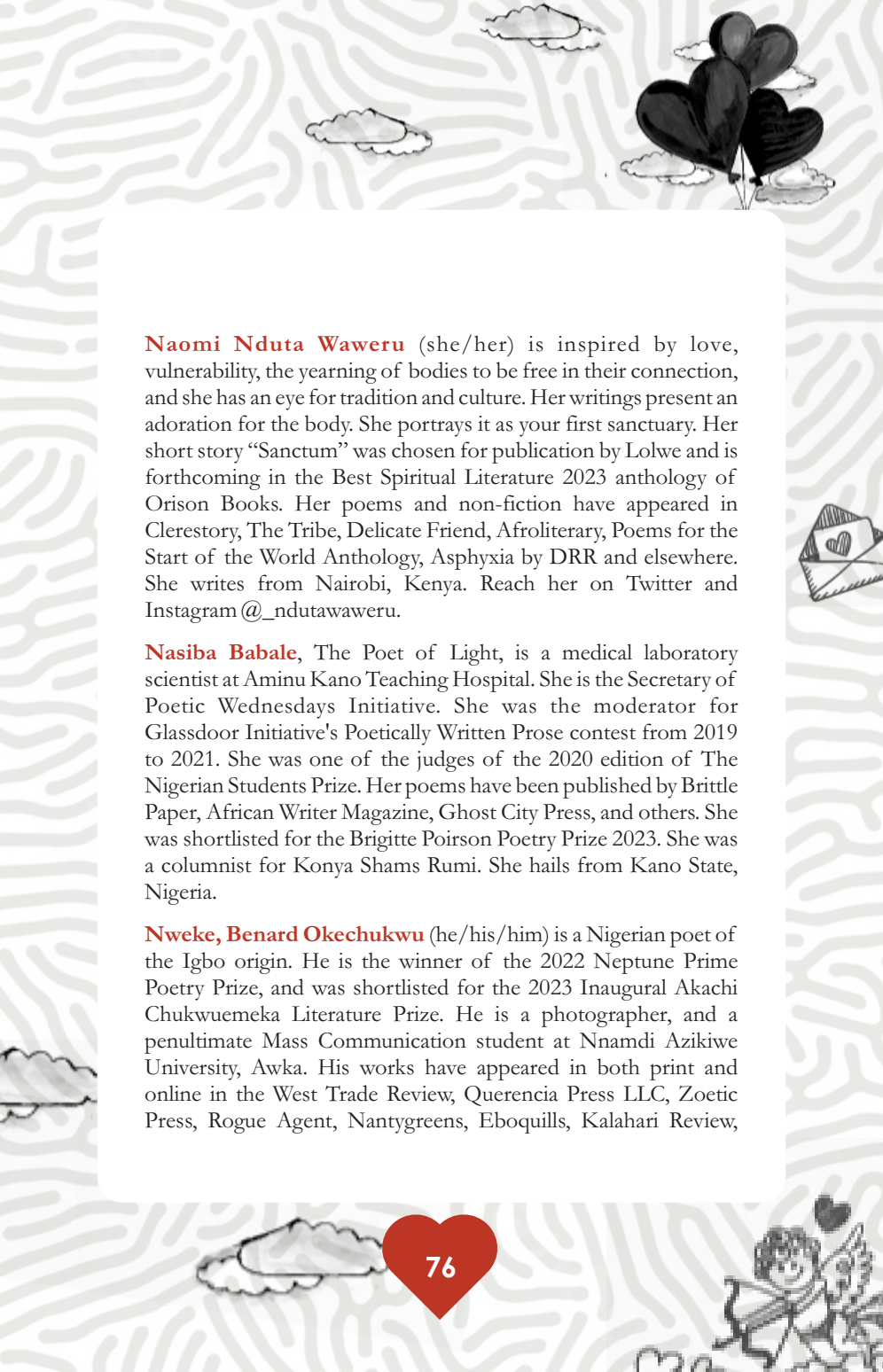
advancement. His work appeared and forthcoming in SprinNG, The Shallow Tales Review, Libretto Magazine, Inkspired, Kalahari Review, Ibadan Art, TVO Tribe, African Writer, Eboquill, Nantygreen, The Light UL, Odd Magazine, WSA, World Guinness Hyper-poem record 2023, Anthology for Abunic and elsewhere

Eziafakaego Brenda Nwafor is a Nigerian writer and has authored two poetry collections, "Ode to a Dancing Pen" and "Eyes Wide Shut". Her works have been featured in some anthologies ink including "Of Shadows and Rainbows: Musings in Times of COVID". She works as a bag and accessories maker at Nebdesigns247 and is the immediate past Vice Chairman of The Association of Nigerian Authors, Lagos Chapter. She loves traveling, editing and sewing.




Ibrahim Adedeji Salvatore is a poet who is inspired by the art, the beauty and the therapeutics of creative writing. Although his works revolve around varieties of themes, he centres them more on the subjects of desires and memories. He lives and writes from Ibadan, Nigeria; and can be reached via the following social media handles: Instagram: @salvatore_on_paper | Facebook: Ibrahim Adedeji Salvatore | Email: adedejiibrahim289@gmail.com

Iliya Kambai Dennis is a writer and poet from Kaduna. He has been published/forthcoming in The MUSE, Persephone's Fruit, Naked Cat, Salamander Ink Magazine, Feral: A Journal of Poetry and Art, Serotonin, Konya Shamsrumi, African Writer, The African Writer Review, Afreecan Read, and more. He is the author of the chapbooks Songs We Sing Before We Sleep (WRR Chapbook Series), and Verses (Inkspired), and Litany of Longing (Konya Shamsrumi). He tweets @SonOfMalpauliya.




Naomi Nduta Waweru (she/her) is inspired by love, vulnerability, the yearning of bodies to be free in their connection, and she has an eye for tradition and culture. Her writings present an adoration for the body. She portrays it as your first sanctuary. Her short story “Sanctum” was chosen for publication by Lolwe and is forthcoming in the Best Spiritual Literature 2023 anthology of Orison Books. Her poems and non-fiction have appeared in Clerestory, The Tribe, Delicate Friend, Afroliterary, Poems for the Start of the World Anthology, Asphyxia by DRR and elsewhere. She writes from Nairobi, Kenya. Reach her on Twitter and Instagram @_ndutawaweru.




Nasiba Babale, The Poet of Light, is a medical laboratory scientist at Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital. She is the Secretary of Poetic Wednesdays Initiative. She was the moderator for Glassdoor Initiative's Poetically Written Prose contest from 2019 to 2021. She was one of the judges of the 2020 edition of The Nigerian Students Prize. Her poems have been published by Brittle Paper, African Writer Magazine, Ghost City Press, and others. She was shortlisted for the Brigitte Poirson Poetry Prize 2023. She was a columnist for Konya Shams Rumi. She hails from Kano State, Nigeria.

Nweke, Benard Okechukwu (he/his/him) is a Nigerian poet of the Igbo origin. He is the winner of the 2022 Neptune Prime Poetry Prize, and was shortlisted for the 2023 Inaugural Akachi Chukwuemeka Literature Prize. He is a photographer, and a penultimate Mass Communication student at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. His works have appeared in both print and online in the West Trade Review, Querencia Press LLC, Zoetic Press, Rogue Agent, Nantygreens, Eboquills, Kalahari Review,



Nigeria News Direct—NND poetry column, Art Lounge, The Ballast Journal, The Muse Journal, and others are forthcoming in the Eucapytus and elsewhere.

Ojo Olumide Emmanuel is a Minna-born Nigerian Poet, Educationist and Book Editor. He is the author of the Poetry Chapbook “Supplication For Years in Sands” (Polarsphere Books, 2021) and “How Flowers Pollinate Before the Arrival of Butterflies (Authorpaedia, 2022). He is the winner of the WeNaija Literary Contest (Non-Fiction, 2023) and first runner-up for the Abubakar Gimba Prize for Non-fiction. His works have appeared and are forthcoming at Shallowtales Review, Ake Review, Feral, Quills, Poemify, Melbourne-Culture, TNR, and elsewhere. He is the Editor-in-Chief of The Nigerian Review (TNR). He Is a Senior Mentor at the Hill-Top Creative Arts Foundation and a Mentor of the SprinNG Writing Fellowship.



Oluwaseun Akinola (aka Star Babe) is based in Lagos/Ogun state, Nigeria. She embodies diverse professional expressions and interests. Oluwaseun is a HR/Recruiter, farmer and social entrepreneur. Her creative side emerged in junior secondary school, where a passion for writing blossomed, leading her to explore performance poetry and spoken word during her university years and on a few other platforms after graduation. While her writing and performing has not been consistent, she holds a deep appreciation for the power of words and enjoys giving expression to them with her voice.

Oshafi Razak is a writer, poet, story teller, event anchor and art enthusiast who hails from Edo state, Nigeria. He has written a good number of poems and stories which have been published on many platforms across the world. He believes that without art is



the foundation on which the world was built.


Osho Tunde is an Accountant and a writer based in Lagos. He is a Poet whose works are up at Praxis, Conscio, the Quills and else where. His Essay is live at The international Human Rights Arts festival pullouts in 2021.

Pacella Chukwuma- Eke, NGP Xv, is Nigerian Writer and student of Physiology in COOU, Anambra State. She has her works published or forthcoming in Strange Horizons, Bacopa Lit Mag, Roughcut press, Haven spec, and elsewhere.

Pamilerin Jacob is a poet & editor whose poems have appeared/forthcoming in POETRY, The Rumpus, Agbowo, Frontier, 20.35 Africa, & elsewhere. He is the curator of Poetry Column-NND.


Popularly called **“Optimist”** is **Abdulrauf Yusuf Olanrewaju**, an undergraduate student of law in the renowned Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Abdulrauf is an upcoming writer, whose poems have found pages in the creative zine, rinnan literary, al-mir'aatu magazines and elsewhere. He's also a tech-minded individual specialised in UI/UX design. You can meet him on; Twitter: @doptimist08166 Instagram: d_utopia_optimist Facebook: Yusuf Abdulrauf LinkedIn: Abdulrauf Yusuf Olanrewaju

Precious Chidera Harrison is a Nigerian poet born and raised in Port Harcourt. He is the winner of the poetry category of the maiden edition of the Pawns Paper Poetry Contest, 2024. He was an honourable mention in the inaugural Rhonda Gail Williford



Prize, 2023. His debut chapbook manuscript was longlisted for the Artling Arena Poetry Chapbook Manuscript Prize, 2023. His writings have appeared or are forthcoming in Arts Lounge, Hot Pot Magazine, NWF Journal, Brittle Paper, FERAL Journal, World Voices Magazine and SprinNG Journal.


ROMANS, PIUS CHUKWUDI is a poet, critic and motivational speaker of Nigerian descent. He is a graduate of English and Literary Studies, from Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, and holds an M.A in English and Communication Arts from Ignatius Ajuru University, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. His poems have been shared on social media platforms, and also appeared in international and national anthologies such as, Love Poems Anthology: Written by 100 Poets, Authentic Authors and Poets Magazines etc.



Rosheed Ayinla Shehu (RAS) writes from Ilorin. He is a finalist of English and Literary Studies, in the University of Ilorin. His work has appeared or is forthcoming on the Kalahari Review, the Muse, the Fiery Scribe Review, Afrihill Press, the Scribes, the World Voice Magazine and elsewhere.


Sofiat Ramon Omowumi is a poet; prose and creative writer. Her works have appeared in Lion and Lilac, The Quills Journal, EWA, Kalahari Reviews, and elsewhere. She's a lover of nature and gets inspired mostly by Mother Nature. She loves reading African Literature, African Sci-fi, Magical and fantasy genres precisely. She hails and writes from Ekiti State.

Sophia Obianamma Ofuokwu is a Nigerian native who enjoys writing when she is not too busy being a midwife. Sophia served as an editing intern with the Kinsman Quarterly team, where she reviewed marketing copy edits, articles, and entry-level contest submissions. Her short story Hold My Broken Boy Together is featured in Kinsman Quarterly's African Diaspora Award as an



honourable mention, and her poem *When Food = Love*, in the 2022 *Brittle Paper Festive Anthology*. Sophia can be found on LinkedIn where she poses as a ghostwriting professional, and as the fiction editor for *Akéwí* magazine. Some days, you might find her laughing manically behind her screen, in oversized clothes, as she gleans pleasure from leading a double life.

A graduate of English and Literary Studies of Federal University Lokoja, Stephen Ozovehe Omolori is a Nigerian poet that sees poetry as a canvas that he loves to paint on. He writes poems on grief and love. He has a poetry chapbook titled “*Verses of the Heart*”.



Sulola Imran Abiola (the official SULOLA) he/him is a Nigerian phone photographer, poet, public servant, an art enthusiast & a student of the prestigious University of Ibadan with some of their work published in *The Quills*, *Kalopsia Lit Magazine*, *Lumiere Review*, *Undivided Magazine*, *Wondrous Real Magazine*, *ARTmosterrific*, *Kaedi Africa*, *Best Of Africa*, *Rasa Literary Review*, *Odd Mag*, *Macro Magazine*, *The Roadrunner*, *Conscio Magazine*, *Review*, *Olney magazine*, *Variety Pack Magazine*, *Lemonsputing Magazine*, *Cool Beans Lit* amongst others.

Tajudeen Sally Alaya is an experienced Chief Superintendent Of Customs, an art collector, a seasoned poet, and a documentary photographer. His works have been featured in various Magazines such as *Malimbe Magazine* and *Black Ottawa Scene*, as well as several anthologies. He lives and writes from Lagos.

Zainab Abubakar writes from Kaduna, Nigeria. She loves to experiment with words, photography and colours. Her poems have been featured in magazines like *Lunaris review*, the *Revue* magazine, and the *Madrigal*.



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