

SONGS OF REPAIR

Pamilerin Jacob



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PRAISES FOR *SONGS OF REPAIR*

A generous gift to the world, *Songs Of Repair* is a map for all of us trying to “survive the desert walk” that often is — life. In it, Jacob allows us sink in and witness the deep blues that is born from the exit of love(r). Haunting, hungry and tender, the poems are no doubt, a testament to his loss, however, beyond that, they are surprisingly, also celebrating the necessity of a goodbye and his refusal to exit his life just because another goodbye has been handed out. Asserting his hope for life and love, with language that has been doused in attention, he says:

“My limbs will dance.

My heart will open like a tangerine...

My life will be wonderful, yes,

this pain will not outlive me.”

- Christtie Jay, Poet & Editor.

Love poems are difficult, Rilke warns, because there's a surfeit of it. On loss poems, he's, however, silent. Despite this, humans still love, or write about love. Despite the emotional wreck of a heartbreak, Jacob incites us to love, to “leap into the abyss / until it spits us (me) out. Again.” But loss isn't always the other side of love's coin, even if the logic of these 13 poems is set up that way, in the analogues of despair and repair. These vulnerable poems

are rooted in the formal resolution that if love is impermanent, so is loss. Their triumph is not in this consolation, but the desire to fill the space or “abyss” between the two with the subterranean body itself.

- O-Jeremiah Agbaakin, author *The Sign of the Ram*.

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*E don cast / last last / na everybody go chop breakfast –
Burna Boy*

DUKKHA

What am I to do
with this
emptiness trailing me

like a dog, picking up
every word I utter,
standing

at the door
of my thoughts?

Where do I turn,
now, that you have
taken back your voice

from my days,
uprooted your melody
from my blood?

How impermanent
everything is,
even joy.

I will never remain the same.

JULY ELEGY

After years of repeating the mantra
I love you, I love you too,
we decided, in July — surrounded

by the echo of rain — to halt,
& I heard commitment break
like bone crushed in a mouth.

July's edge, sharp as a machete,
gutting the heart. Suddenly, despair.
There was a suicide

attempt somewhere in between
when, yanked from a life I recognised,
nothing else seemed to matter.

Now I know the brain was wrong
to arrive at such a conclusion.
With the month about to close

like a door, still full of weeping,
I saw two pigeons eat rice
off the pavement, & in the end

went their separate ways.
I suppose love functions
in that light, sometimes.

DESPAIR SONATA

Life without you seemed impossible
until it happened. We severed the vein
that joined us, miraculous as it was.
I have a box full of clichés
from which I draw my despair
like cigarettes.

We were magical until we weren't.

The days roll like tyres
& I accept their judgment.
My life will move on,
will not end here, I believe.

But today, I weep.

PAREIDOLIA

Because I made it my life's goal
to love her, now, upon her exit
everything is in her image...

My hands were most useful
when holding hers. My voice, notable,
only when it pronounced her name.

Like Christ to his disciples,
I gave every quarter of me,
I admit it was foolish.

Poets swear love is eternal.
I worry I will only grow
more foolish as years pass

because given the chance,
I'd do it again. I'd leap into the abyss
until it spits me out. Again.

MEMORY, YOU FOE

It's a brutal adjustment,
this life without her laughter
lining the hours like algae.

She is omnipresent
in my thoughts, & the world
does its best to remind me

my love is gone. That love
which was an altar of survival,
whose hook in my elbow

held me up above the darkness
of the world. I spent years
in that pose, clueless

of my bleeding. How love
should not be a hook, but
a light touch, as Brooks admonished

in that poem of hers. How
I spent years being the recipient
of a rage I did not incite.

It doesn't matter now.
She is gone & so is her laughter.
Yet, I cannot stop remembering all of it.

INTIMACY TURNED INSIDE OUT

The mouth that used to kiss you
is now weeping into a pillow

is now full of mucus & invectives
hurled at the heavens, its angels

& its elders. Intimacy turned
inside out is loneliness.

The latch on my mind is loose
& monsters fill the arena

of the afternoons. The days bend until
they become scythes for reaping laughter

& glee. Above all philosophies,
sits love, smiling at my toil.

Even if we were an error of fate,
we burned bright enough, beautiful even in ruin.

NIYATI

It was implied — she preferred the pain
of my absence over the joy of loving me.

I preferred to be loved, but wishes
are cruel things we hold dear,

they peel the heart like an orange
yet, it throbs, panting after the knife.

I wonder the shape

of my absence in a room. Does it suck
all air? Or is it merely a shadow one can skip

over like a song? I wish we never happened.
Although, going back to the past,

younger me would laugh off the ruin,
& hold her face in his hands, kissing it,

declaring my prophecy an exaggeration.
You see, we had no choice but to happen.

PSALM 121

I'd tiptoed my way into a bang.
Each hour of the day, a loaded mine
& I happened to stumble

into the one carrying her voice.
It didn't matter that I'd been careful
up till now. I was infected

with anger & perplexity.
Where to turn mid-adversity
but God. That same God who turned

away as his son's blood leaked
from a punctured lung, who, now
I must invoke with psalms

though I know I will be met
with silence & mystery.
He will watch me suffer

until, like his son, I learn
to defeat the dark that ails me.
He will watch me suffer,

He will help me suffer.

thank u, next – Ariana Grande

GATHA

It will probably not stop hurting
this blade on my tongue
this heart, bruised like a mango.

I don't know enough to forecast
all the ways I will writhe, having been
condemned to sunsets

without her. What an instructor, pain.
To know healing you must be wounded.
To enter prayer you must be in need.

So full of yearning you break
into weeping, seated in an impermanent
dark that bluffs, decrees itself eternal.

Nothing is sure, but look, daylight
is gathering in my fist. My blood is rotten
like milk, yet it gleams, yet the dew

of recovery is spread across my forehead,
& I am wearing a wreath plucked
from the meadow of my dreams.

REPAIR SONATA

It feels impossible to survive
this, but I will. My limbs will dance.
My heart will open like a tangerine,
each slice given to the world's endless
hymn. Am I broken? Of course.
When will the weeping stop?
I don't know. I am only certain
of the light promised at each dawn,
into which I must walk, one foot
at a time like a pigeon, head bobbing
to the music of my pulse, & to say,
My life will be wonderful, yes,
this pain will not outlive me.

I PROMISE

Even though I am in so much pain,
I will survive this desert walk.
I will not blend

my meds & overdose. I will cry,
& turn in bed, sleepless. Sunlight
will seem like a curse I crawl

into every morning. Yet, I know
this one life I have I must live
it. Not because of some sacred

need to preserve the soul
or fear of divine punishment,
but because it is the only thing

in this world that is mine
to adore, mould, refurbish,
& this pain, this heavy, heart

wrenching feeling is a reminder
to take my own hand, & say, sorry
sorry, sorry, sorry...

DO YOU BELIEVE?

It will gather on your heart like raindrops
on windshield. One after the other,
the days will grow more devoted to your flowering,
usher your feet into warmth. Nothing is realer
than the heat of sorrow, except the absence
of the heat of sorrow. That's right. Sorrow disappears.
Eventually. Like acne, like a crush, like noon-light.
Of all the things you need to understand
in this world — where light is faster than death,
where fish get hooked on meth, where dinosaurs
partook in an apocalypse more astounding than ours —
how this happens is least important.
One after the other, it will gather on your heart
like raindrops, all the laughter you have been denied,
the bliss you have been searching for like a coin.
Your life, the tail end of a prophecy, dazzling.

HEALING IS NOT FORCED

To do otherwise would be pointless,
like squeezing nectar from stone.
If it hurts, let it. Let the weeping
do its work. Do you not want to be
washed clean? I refuse to be ashamed
of my ache. You should make
the same vow.

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BIOGRAPHY

Pamilerin Jacob is a poet & editor living in Nigeria.

His poems have appeared in Barren Magazine, Agbowó, Palette Poetry, The Rumpus & elsewhere. He is a member of The UnSerious Collective, Founding Editor of EREMITTE POETRY, Poetry Sango-Ota; staff at Olumo Review, Wild Pine Poetry, Pepper Coast Lit, & a mentor in the SprinNG Fellowship.

Author of the chapbook, *Gospels of Depression & others*, he is the Curator of PoetryColumn-NND, a poetry column in Nigerian NewsDirect, a national newspaper.