



JIDE BADMUS &
LOBA RIDWAN TUKUR

ANATOMY OF THE SUN

& everything beneath

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a collection of poems

By Jide Badmus & Loba Ridwan Tukur

INKspired

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INTRODUCTION

“the sun looks like a ball on your finger / from a hundred thousand million miles / away, but you are the one who is really / the size of a granule on her tongue of fire / you do not want to melt like sugar, I guess”
[“lazing at a beach stone throw to my house”, *Anatomy of the Sun* (and everything beneath)]

An eagle is a bird I admire a lot. Besides being a bird of military, religious or royal symbolism, it is one bird that has the guts to look the sun in the eye. The eagle's eyes are so powerful that it can see its prey from a distance of about two miles, eight times as far as humans can see. So, what is the connection among an eagle, the sun, and this anthology? The reader is about to discover a complex experimentation that covers everything *under the sun*. Yes, everything. There is nothing hidden *under the sun*, as it is often said. Yet, we know “Nothing is always wrong with secrets / Kept for you by your stars / We all have our closets.” (“Revelations”) To truly lay everything bare, we need an eye that can look at the sun directly and see everything from afar *under the sun*. The authors of this expository, experimental poetic illumination are kinsmen to the eagle, so nothing is going to escape their vision, and, should I add, their sight.

It is not uncommon to have poets explore multiple themes in their works. However, such polythematic exploration is often belabored by the burden of forced cohesion and congealed fluidity – an attestation to the lack of understanding that such an enterprise requires some great measure of depth, breadth, height and length of the human condition, nature, and the interconnectivity of the complexity of existence and co-existence. A good work readily reflects elevated reasoning, often bordering on intellectual refinement and philosophizing. However, *Anatomy of the Sun* surpasses the description of a good work. It is a masterpiece that weaves the fine tapestry of romanticism, eroticism, existentialism, essentialism, and a choice assortment of the authors' ideological profundity aesthetically presented through the precise admixture of language, imagery, tone, mood, and engagement. The poets are not just telling a story, they are showing the reader how existence is a story told in a web of twists, turns, and thrusts. A story only a master storyteller can conceive. But should one expect less from the duo of Jide Badmus and Loba Ridwan? Only a stranger to great poetry will be wowed by the refinement encapsulated in this beautiful work. Even at that, a certain level of awe is in order!

The collection opens with “Inception: the origin of names”, a poem that hints at the mysticism and mystery of hope seeded in the miracle of time: “from the ashes of rain / ... / from the ribs of calendars / & a souvenir of

memories / we speak flesh to dreams”. It is not a coincidence that this work ends with “Grave of Dreams”, a poem that acknowledges possibilities even in the face of tangible loss and defeat. The authors argue: “You cannot presume / time's death based on / the paralysis / of your wristwatch — / A new battery to life is key”. The intentionality betrayed by both poems signals that, *under the sun*, while individual experiences are valid, there is more to living than exclusive myopia; and as such, “Life is relentless in its demands & / survival is an incessant adventure”, a reminder that “we all have an instinct to fight back for what is ours- / forces of nature we all are”. Like many of the many poems in this collection, the authors reinforce how humans introspect, relate with others and interact with nature.

Nature is both romantic and romanticist, giving humans the opportunity to share in nature's intimacy as well as source inspiration to explore the purest form of love – lust, unbridled, undefined desire and desirousness. To the authors, true lust is a tripartite experience – nature, humanity, and spirituality. This truth is captured in “how to start the day in love's name”:

the wind rattles the sands
whenever I recite my morning prayer
in your name, after you have shown up
in my dreams and kissed me to life

me observe my *adhkarr* with your waist beads
lie in my front without a piece of cloth—
the sacred body of a goddess
soil my prayers || cannot desecrate my temple

seeing you spread across the small space in my bedroom
never feels like a sin
flow across my body like bathwater
touch me | raze me in your mouth like the tongue
like the fingers of air | of fire when you take care of my balls

you are the earth I am planting my life inside
carry me in your groin & be the one
whose name I worship

Anatomy of the Sun (and everything beneath) is a communion exclusively shared with the readers. The authors invite the reader to enjoy living and, like the eagle, be emboldened to face the sun and explore all the opportunities beneath it. However, there is a caveat – this anthology causes a paradigm shift, almost like the blinding of the eyes by the sun or flying on the eagle's wings. The reader will not be the same again!

Thank You

Funso Oris

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1. Inception: the origin of names

from ashes of rain
& bread of love, a name,
sandwiched between seasons,
a glass of hope from dawn's spring

from the lips of god,
a chaste kiss, crisp omen
seeded in humus of time

from the ribs of calendars
& a souvenir of memories
we speak flesh to dreams

2. how to start the day in love's name

day breaks the clouds' shell, the sun beams—
his rays of smiles flash through
to see you before the day embarks
is to foresee brightness

bring your mouth to me after yawning—
the organic smell of a good morning
inhaled by the aloe vera beside our window

let me inhale you before making a wish
unto heavens a good omen you are

the wind rattles the sands
whenever I recite my morning prayer
in your name, after you have shown up
in my dreams and kissed me to life

let me observe my *adhkarr* with your waist beads
lie in my front without a piece of cloth—
the sacred body of a goddess
cannot soil my prayers || cannot desecrate my temple

seeing you spread across the small space in my bedroom
never feels like a sin
flow across my body like bathwater
touch me | raze me in your mouth like the tongue
like the fingers of air | of fire when you take care of my balls

you are the earth I am planting my life inside
carry me in your groin & be the one
in whose name I worship

my hands would spend eternity sculpturing your body
till your juice cleanse my hands in ablution

3. Ikán

I can't with words
what I do with silence.
I have discovered
the wealth of space,
the weight of the unsaid
& the strength of nuances.

For who has no mouth
silence is edacious
—like light, singing
redemption to mist
or fire, refining dreams
or time milking passions
or corruption digesting
a city's intestines!

Because mouthless things
have the wildest appetites.

4. lonely stars

some are just lonely stars across the night sky
trying to reach one another with their five limbs

but the space amidst them remains intact like infinity—
that is reality's insistence of independence for a loner

you are a lonely star who sits here, & stands there,
& walks about, seeking company in a harem of zephyr,
the feminine hands of mother nature rubbing
on your neck & chest like the palms of your dreams

you come back to sit again, the boredom that steams
from your incessant search for love in the air,
the weight of strain in your legs,

perhaps, the air is coagulated with doubts & distrust,
& lots of second thoughts...

I hope you do not wind up || I hope you do not end up
looking for some happiness in the minute spaces left
in the sands like a tall fence between transience & transition
I should tell you that we are all stars across the sky
anyways— I can see through your shine—
the hidden dimness, because you find a way to reflect me

5. Multiple Personality is not a Disorder

I am air— silent,
Mistaken for inaction.
But does the storm not die
With the same suddenness
It was born?

I am water.
I hold hate &
Compassion in equal measure.
My fury takes the form of your cup!

I am an earth—
Lump of igneous unmoved
By the sins of the seasons.
Call me dormant but don't forget

I carry fire in my belly.

6. the burden of identity

at other times,
you are whole from the fragments of your words.

bittersweet—
a tongue of tasty tip & sour skin of vicissitudes.

yet, a snake you are—
leaving your print on the rocks
like a fish drawing your path across the seas,
like a bird tarring a lane in the air.

you write stories 'bout the figure in the eyes
of your mirror, murdering
& resurrecting yourself as a character-
you mock death & question life,

& at some times, you are just

a b
r o
k e n glass—

who cares to pick you up & mend you back?
perhaps...

they fear
that you might burst blood
out of their innocent hands.

7. Rainbow

Imagine God sits on
The clouds, red-faced—
Holding a cup of orange
Juice to douse yellow embers
Of anger.

He clears the clouds
With seven tongues—
Frees blue skies from
Shades of indigo &
Rescues the sun from
The violet claws of rain.

8. evaporation

like microscopes,
we all want to see the tiny face
of God—

this inquisition has led air to soar higher
than gravity.

but what led the nosy tower of Babel
to fall has fallen the air too
in torrential throngs—

science could dare the darkest of mysteries
but never the brightest of heavens,
even when the sun is asleep.
science went blind when the sun woke up
in its fiery duvet.

9. nomenclature of fire

something tugs at your inside.
a knot in your chest begs to be
loosed—a bud in the delivery room.
you wonder where in your body
these emotions are housed or
how a smile from a stranger
across the street can gift
your heart with fiery feet—
here we go again, heart,
mother of metaphors!
you refuse to christen
brewing feelings.
you understand that fire answers
to different names—a spark tastes
oxygen & a flame is watered.
you know that fire is
a glutton, it consumes
everything within reach—
it mutates & spreads &
destroys anything in its way.
you refuse to tag the feelings
growing inside, because like
a kindle, it evolves—infatuation,
attraction, love, lust, fear, hatred,
void.

10. revolution

at our excesses & erring
we take a bit of water in our hands
in our bottles & our buckets

we mix them with whatever allows water
on its body & in its gut

we take glints of fire
making them as balls & flares of heat—
smokes & steams for food

we trap air in the holes of our noses
& dispose of after use

the chunks of earth we hold for safety
& healing, like bricks
as if we own them because they make our homes
like leaves, as if we came before them

but with their wrath & revolt
upside down we all turn—
the tide rises & gulps us into extinction
fire douses us because we have
been burning out of control
angry winds beat us about
without a place to breathe

we must have been in the wrong
places for far too long—
rocks, trees & teeth ambush
& strike, shredding us into pieces
of bones & flesh in a red pool

the brawl between the vastness
of existence & us, the finiteness

yet, in our care, they would yield
themselves like a child to her mother
unless we provoke them to fight back
for their spaces like slaves
who have had enough of their masters

we all have an instinct to fight back for what is ours—
forces of nature we all are

11. The Day the Sun [Almost] Forgot to Rise

The sun came out to play at 4 pm—
Rays, soft & warm like a lover's touch
Or the palms of a masseuse, light on
The skin of erstwhile gloomy earth.

12. seas & shores

mother nature conjures me
into a shore, stretching my peninsula
into your sea—
of eternal juice & vast wetness.
I lay by your tongue all day,
all night & beyond the eyes of total darkness,
where the moons & stars & solar
are lost to the left palm of
a p o c a l y p s e,
brawling to the last hope
for life are our skins & flesh
in the wake of deadening urges.
we feed on each other—
symbiotic. a reciprocal
of two driven forces of nature,
walking side by side. a sea
cannot forfeit the comfort of her shore.
you are my beginning.
I am your end. a shore
would not spite the baptism of his sea.
you overflow & baptize me when I run into you.
we both know where we are heading to...

13. Immortal

The moon climbs
from ashes of the night
—phoenix vein shoots
for aphrodisiac skies.

Shadows twerk.
The earth creaks.
The hours moan.

It's morning again
—limp rays reflate
& the sun dives
through a fog.

14. nights

in a field of darkness are my eyes—
a beaming torch seeing through the veiling
mystery of evil's skin, then
I find what is black
to the thoughts of my brother with the talks
of nights, as harbingers of doom, is light
to he who combs the forest of wisdom
in the wilderness of muse.

I am cosmic too—
a body of universe orbiting shells of logic
around my sun of warm emotions
& when one meets the other like an eclipse
like two sexes sharing shadows & moans
across the room, you feel the heat
that becomes of the morphing—
the poetry of a blind seer in the absence of light.
being blind is bliss, where poetry
is a walking stick. ask Milton.

15. Flight

spread like dew
on parched tongue

drizzle on me, tulips
from looming bosom

bloom like a kite
in a horizon of thighs

breathe, avian hips,
flap in the wind

lend wings to
this fledgling thirst

stretch like a runway,
a tsunami is set for flight

16. Aesthetics

You're a piece of art— call me poetry's hysteric voice. These walls hold the sound waves of a theatre for quartets— our four eyes, four lips, four ears, four nostrils, four nipples, four butt cheeks, four bodies, then our shadows.

We should make a circus without a spectator. A medley of blues & rhythm, quiet storm, jazz, soul, & the kick of hip-hop—flavours of slow-to-mid tempo.

Whatever we dip our bodies into, we chorus the symphony of art. Creative love seeping through our bloodstream as we confluence somewhere down there.

As gods, we are making rituals; as talebearers, making memories. As poets, we make love into a library of words. We can afford to be humans another time, repeating the same things this poem has done for us. But for now, let this poem come with us.

Let it cum.

17. Firefly

In the urgency of night,
konji-propelled,
my feet frolic pebbles
on the path to your house.
I hear the moans of crickets
making out in the shrubbery
& the whistling wind, calling
for its lover. Crescent lips kiss
the sky into pleats & creases.
There's a cloud in my crotch,
vibrant knuckles on nature's door.
Barefooted lungs try to keep up,
I'm running out of breath.
On this wet night,
my gonads glow,
soft blue fire,
earnest & fervent,
whet for your touch...

18. how it feels to be a riddle

earth—
nature's vagina, clean
as a newly built bath before we come

profane in its taste of our dirt
sacred, like shrines' seclusion
from the material world of litters

we live in a deity's wide eyes—
he watches me as a sea
washing my sins & imperfections away

wearing new fabrics of flaws
& some shits that piss me off
from the shameless arse of a human

like a python, I wrangle across my skin
sewn up like entwined strands of hair,
searching for my tail, my end
that I cannot find...

until I have wanderers picking me up
by the bank, taking me along with them
in what they say & what they write—
of my journeys across the same spot

that speaks of purgatory

I am a grave to you // a river with no fin
a jungle with no tail

paralyzed nerves in your limbs—
you cannot afford to play with me
by the shore at leisure

you did not heed warnings
before testing the depth of life
full of quicksand, swamps & quagmires
you came unawares with both feet
what if you go unawares too?

19. A Long Walk

Nature peeled off its dark bark.
Night dumped its braille
& the sun's rude rays
poked my sleeping eyes.
Somehow I could only
taste the staleness of a day,
recycled— yesterday, revived
& renamed.

I've come a long way from home,
through thick forests & hooded hills,
through thorns & anxious rivers.
Fear stalked, stripped me
of strength, doused hope...

There were also times
when my face mirrored
a rainbow, times when
I glided on snow
playfully down slopes
—when my soul left
its prison of gloom
& bathed in the light.

This sojourn is filled with memories.
The many victories I got without
raising a finger.

The many times I fell,
tripped by invisible twigs.
The many times I teased trouble
& paid dearly with wounds.
The sojourn is filled with mixed memories

Sometimes I want to return home,
back inside mother's womb
where light & darkness
are Siamese breeds—
yesterday, today & tomorrow,
a sequence of no consequence.
To return to childhood
days when I had no worries
—I couldn't even interpret
The language of time!
There I can live without fear—
with innocence which knows
neither evil nor good.

20. Cultivating Posterity

Tomorrow is inseminated with what you say
What you do & what you refuse.

We make love to time,
And watch the next dawn usher
Into a new prologue to light.

The summer of fruition would appease you
When you feel dehydrated of hope.

Write your wish on beach sand.
Watch the swerving sea take your words.

You will see that you can't read the alphabets
Again— taken to the shrine of waters.

The cool zephyr envelopes my prayer
In her wings, or how else do you think
I know that I have a guardian angel?

My eyes are crystals.
My nostril, a furnace of carbons
Exhaling the smokes of my cremated demons.

I'm breathing new air,
And my morrows are always fertile,
But I won't rape today with anxiety—
The soil would never forgive.
She would never give you what she didn't take.

21. Loop

I.

The night is dumb loyal
—like a soldier.

Darkness disarms the
sun of its gun, and numbs us

of overwhelming obligations
and expectations...until light

is born again, headfirst,
through the thighs of the sky,

bruising bud of eyes,
snapping twigs of sleep,

awakening dogged ghosts
and nagging worries...

II.

I do not count losses.
I do not count wins either,

for each triumph leaves you
with an arsenal in need of an upgrade.

Life is relentless in its demands &
survival is an incessant adventure.

22. The Vanity of Saturation

For trees
That have lived
Through seasons
Of growth, change
& Rebirth, the question
Lies plainly on their skins—
What is left of life to live again?

23. Gloaming Desires

Trapped suns
in the mouth of dusk

Bleeding songs
on vista lips

Lust-winged sparrows
flap to silk melodies

Twilight breasts waltz
on the horizon of hairy abs

Night hatches
in ecstasy nest

24. when the day's candle runs out of light

the stars wear the hood of darkness
moon guarded against falling into slumber

man seeks light in his nightmarish exploits
& runs back to life
when the tempest almost sinks him.

the day comes like a snail
before the wait of sleeplessness.
& mornings are goodnight to nights.

25. Offing

I look into space,
thinking about our
love's future.

The sky takes a
mouthful of the sea.

The sun's tongue
dives between
the earth's thighs.

Is there anything
else for us beyond
this beautiful twilight?

26. lazing at a beach stone throw to my house

you see, you believe—
you say perception is reality

but I had no one to tell me that what stands far away
would delude me with a veneer

an ocean once bragged at another
sea with her enormity—
two forces of nature, two deities
choosing to bow at your feet
when either of them could swallow you
and make you a beloved memory

the sun looks like a ball on your finger
from a hundred thousand million miles
away, but you are the one who is really
the size of a granule on her tongue of fire
you do not want to melt like sugar, I guess

the bearing of the shore at my feet—
the tips of water touching my toes
with cold excitement

if only the dormitory of mermaids know
they have an august visitor
they would have stripped

and trapped me with their colourful tails
and I may never want to come back home

whatever happens between the sands
whose worth I have been counting in my
microscope of curiosity, and the fluidness
of the salty water, I have no other job
than to watch another beginning unfold

if one of them could swallow the other
like two warring snakes
as proof of omnipotence—
a new start when all has stopped
with the time on my left wrist

I would be going back home soon
after all these elemental events
asking me to write them in my diary

27. The Others

The sun sits
on your left shoulder.

I've seen your eyes dusk
into soft hypnotic gaze.

I've seen the glass
of your smile splinter

a spell of shadows. You
shatter clouds with laughter.

You've got poise too—
but that's not why you

keep your legs crossed...
That's not why you

guard this sacred star so closely.
You've watched successive men

plunder this carnal treasure.
Men who swallow breasts

yet choke on hearts—
who defecate in dinner plates.

Men whose kisses
you are unable to spit,

who rocked your core
& left sweet scars

yet left you empty &
suspicious of others...

like me.

28. redemption

cream your body with dust and clay
sleep overnight in the swamps
you can't contend with the wild pigs
in their game of filth—
you should find your way back
to an unblemished stream far away
for cleansing
you deserve a different habitat
you deserve to swim through the calm waves
and bask in the sun like crocodiles
and become untouchable

29. Whet

I.

On harmattan mornings,
hope is like red oil or shea butter

begging the sun to
walk into your bedroom.

She struts in & throws
knives of words

—unhealing your wounds.

II.

The machete is a man.
A woman is a whetstone.

But when the file's throat
becomes sore,

a poem loses wings.
She was once the palm

that thawed despair
—fountain of benediction.

You were like rock,
unyielding to her seeds—

motivated at dawn,
deflated at the death of day
like an erection
sung into exhaustion.

30. Revelations

I would ask why they all drift away
Like the winds across the desert dune,
And get apparitions as answers—
A whiteboard of revelations, of how I let
These prisoners out of my mouth.
Nothing is always wrong with secrets
Kept for you by your stars.
We all have our closets. We have not
Come to this world to open them all.
If we knew the weight of the world
That wars with time inside our cells,
We would know what more is there
To lose when your mouth is an open
Door. You can be a prison
For your own— a greenhouse for
Your germinations and harvests.

31. Grave of Dreams

(A duet)

How can you tell
that this dream is dead?
Show me a body battered,
bereft of breath— show me
the name on the headstone.

How can you tell
that this unmarked grave holds
the remains of burnt hopes?
Show me the alley where
ambition was ambushed!

I have seen
soldiers wage war & win —
who do not live to witness
the celebrations of victory.

Have you not seen
the fortunes of an old woman turn
in the tomb of rotten pasts — reborn
in the life of her daughter's daughter?

I have seen
a drowned man kissed back
to life, like a withered flower
in the mouth of the dew.

Have you not seen
a hunch-backed palm tree? —
that is 'desire' forcing its way
out of perpetual prison, coffin...

Can you foresee
renewed hopes — redemption,
graves of dead seeds
sprouting fruits of life?

You cannot presume
time's death based on the paralysis
of your wristwatch —
A new battery to life is key.

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& everything beneath

ABOUT *The* AUTHORS



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 *There is a Storm in my Head*; *Scripture*; *Paper Planes in the Rain*, *Paradox of Little Fires*, *Silk Psalms*. *Obaluaye* is forthcoming with *Flowersong Press* in 2022. He has a Pushcart Prize nomination. Badmus has curated and edited several anthologies such as *Vowels Under Duress*; *Coffee*; *Today, I Choose Joy*; and *How to Fall in Love*. He is the founder of *INKspiredNG*, Poetry Editor for *Con-scio Magazine*, and sits on the board of advisors for *Libretto Magazine*. Jide writes from Lagos, Nigeria. He tweets @bardmus



Tukur Ridwan writes from a coastal axis in Lagos Island. His poems appear in *Afro-Eros Anthology*, *Afropoetry Anthology*, *Erozine*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Cordite Poetry*, *The African Writers Magazine*, *Kalahari Review*, *ARTmosterrific*, *INKspired*, *Poemify Magazine*, *EBOquills*, *Libretto Magazine*, *Erogospel* and elsewhere. He won the Brigitte Piorson Monthly Poetry Contest (March 2018) and shortlisted in few others including the Eriata Oribhabor Poetry Prize 2020. He cohorted with *SprinNG Writing Fellowship* and *TRANSCENDE Masterclass* (2020 & 2021). He explores the vastness and finiteness; sanctity and vanity of existence: memories, identity, creation, lust, ruins and loss. Twitter: @Orealzkur