

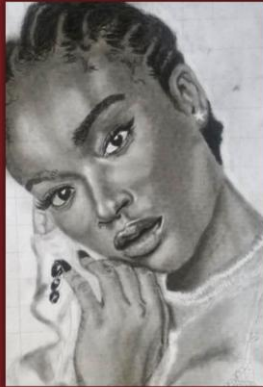
JANUARY - APRIL 2025

Penned in Rage

A Literary Magazine Amplifying
Voices from Sub-Saharan Africa



Edited By Bridgette James.
Illustrated By K. Chawinga.



*A Quarterly Magazine publishing
Stories & Poems penned in rage.*

PENNED IN RAGE

A literary Journal

EDITION

Edited by Bridgette
James. Illustrated by
Kumbukani Chawinga.

Penned in Rage Literary Journal

January – April 2025

Penned in Rage Literary Journal

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About this Edition

Penned in Rage aims to showcase the work of underrepresented creatives. The inaugural edition launches with poems and short fiction on the themes - love, flight, personal identity, loneliness and memory.

This was it! This was the beginning of her own movie's plot!

The protagonist in Lergon's story is on a quest to find love like the butterflies in her lawn but it eludes her, unlike the main character in Micheal's story who falls in love with her sister's husband.

"The democratic world of the innocents" by Chukwuemeka Okigbo: The law stipulated a clear age limit... (I flipped over to the end) exploited by older people.

Love in the January edition of the Journal is full of contradictions- Ajayi's lover needs to be romanticised again, Penuella's heroine is dumped again after a one-night stand. Her allure no longer works magic, and the entrancing look in Augusta's protagonist's eyes hold a secret. The selectively mute unnamed character is suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder/PTSD having witnessed a war. Her memories are not far removed from the emotional trauma Clement's persona in *These Feet Are Not Too Feeble To Fly* has gone through, but Clement's eagle-protagonist has learned for experience:

*an eagle's flight/ from doubt is the
anchorage that fills its belly/ with a surge of fulfilment.*

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We feel for Trycent in his poem where his 'aeroplane' cannot fly due to lack of fuel or hunger. While Abu Bakarr is: *A soul in flight/ Seeing all but tethered to none*. Sola's poem sums it up with the sojourner who must always be on his guard and ignore side chat-

Hold as shield your skin/Against the elements.

Isaac lives in a place that misrepresents its inhabitants. Not everyone in *Small London* is wealthy. But in Ogechukwu's poem, *In the classroom, we are all the same, bound by the spark that refuses to die*. Love is an equaliser, a leveller

I won't forget the luscious poem of Ajayi Oluwasegun this New Year, I leave you all with his lines - *Come, let me spread your velvet coat as my bed sheet tonight*. Love blossoms and one could only wish that all the Eloise and *Rhianna* in us, as in Lergon's and Penuella's stories, wooed by Ajayi's lines, find lasting love.

1. The Plot

Copyrighted, Lergon Parris.

The uncut grass of her yard was a stage, and the two butterflies danced among the blades, a minuscule courtship in the vast urban jungle. Rhianna, on her way to work, would normally ignore the dance of the butterflies, but that morning, it spoke to her. She found herself with an induced longing – a need for a personal story.

It was not just the butterflies and their mating dance. As she walked towards her bus, the day seemed attuned to her mindset. A blaring love song from a passing taxi was a covert nod of understanding, with words making more sense than they ever did. Rhianna, who rarely sang, found herself humming and smiling as she climbed onto the waiting bus and found an empty seat. Several bus stops later, amid the packed ‘sardines’ and the jarring turns from the driver’s erratic traffic and pothole dodges, she saw him.

Standing at the front of the bus and rocking to the whims of the erratic turns was a handsome, professionally attired man, the epitome of her elaborately cultivated fantasy. The moment her gaze became fixed upon him, her eyes refused to dart away. It was only when her brain jolted her with the notion that her awe-fuelled stare was too obvious and could become fuel for the ridicule and mockery of judgmental extroverts, did she manage to avert her eyes. Still, she stole glances, filling her mind with images of him like a smartphone’s memory.

Suddenly, there was no bus, no other passengers, and no abrasive dancehall music. It all melted away leaving Rhianna and this man. There was silence and bliss. If only he

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would meet her gaze, see her beauty, and look beyond her perceived flaws.

*Was my blouse wrinkled? Did I overdo my makeup?
What about my hair?*

She stayed in the fantasy despite the protesting thoughts rendering her heartbeat an unhinged sprint, and her breathing a laboured effort.

Then his gaze finally met hers!
This was it! This was the beginning of her own movie's plot!

He looked away after an exaggerated eternity, but the stare from those eyes...those intense eyes. It spoke desire without the need for mortal words, and she shuddered so violently that the person in the seat beside her seemed affected by the vibration.

There was something there...a connection. There had to be! The movies did not lie.

He was doing...something. Her prince fidgeted against the restrictions resulting from the tightly packed bus. Was he...? He was fishing out his phone from his pocket.

This is it! This is the part where he cleverly asks for my num...

“Yes, baby?” he started speaking as the phone graced his perfect ear. “No, soon reach work. I’m in a bus heading to Half-Way-Tree. Yeah...yeah... Okay, love you too.”

Her heart sank at the reality of the brief phone call. This was not the plot of her movie. This was a one-sided pain.

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As it festered, it became a one-sided anger. Throughout the day at work, Rhianna fought a one-sided war.

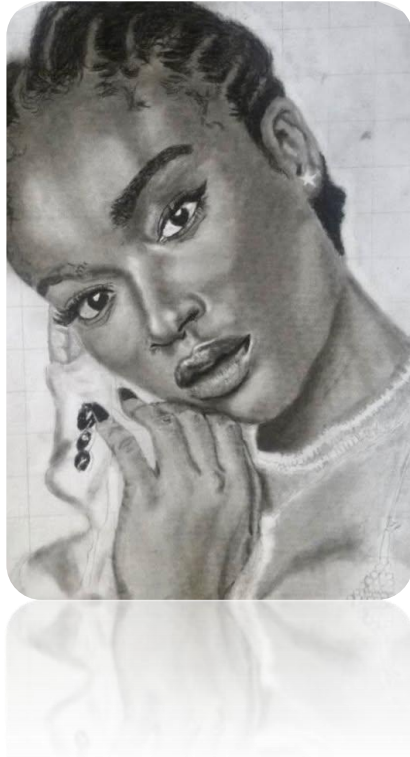


Figure 1 illustrated by K. Chawinga

2. Savannah Serenade

Copyrighted, Ajayi Oluwasegun Samson.

Adésewà mi!

You are the glowing moon among the crowd of stars.
My digits crave clutching the silky softness of your
caramel skin:
the way a hunter's gun covets the velvet coat of a gazelle
in the savannah.
My eyes trail after your lithe torso: the way a hunter runs
after his quarry
in the woods. Lure me into the thick heart of this
wilderness with your
hazel eyes. Until the sun grows gray. Until your swiftness
waned with
the graceful dance of the evening wind. I swear. I can hunt
this game
from sunrise, when your swift feet sweep the morning
dew, until sunset
when the gentle breeze of evening fades into a mild &
tender night.

Adésewà mi!

Shall we sit in the amber heart of the moon tonight,
musing the melody of these silvery rays? Counting the
shooting
stars in sighs, with eyes locked in ebullient signs of
ecstasy?
If you are my Gazelle & I am your Grassland. Do you
know that

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every opening in this body is meant to be fed? Come, bend
your slender
neck on my tendrils, like a crescent moon. Come. Brush
your delicate lips
against my lush grass, nibbling its tender shoots. Come,
gaze & graze.
Each bite is a gentle gesture on my green pasture.
Every graze is a serenade in the savannah.
Every caress strokes a soothing melody in the heart of this
grassland.
Come, let me spread your velvet coat as my bed sheet
tonight.

**3. *These Feet Are Not Too Feeble to Fly,*
Copyrighted, Clement Abayomi.**

A memory of being
mauls
my movement & thaws
out sprouting sinews.

Streaks of searing self-
doubt . . .
unforgiving
introspections
boil[ing] the blood in
my veins.

I'm weary from dreary
pasts—
longing to pall a
pervious
soil of promising
verdure
I gaze at the relics of
decomposing leaves.

I've anchored a long
siege of torments. I
begin
to torture my tongue
with
prayerful syllables to

silence mocking mouths.

But, a sole is not saved
from bruising its own
soul if painful memories
drag its anxiety along
reality's thorny paths.

Hear. Countless
cravings
become feckless
adventures
when burdens begin to
teach

falling & fallen feet how
to
crawl. Crawl & ferry the
body
to an altar of . . . of
fateful prayers.

Risen. I watch this body
of dreams transforming
into an eagle. Backing
on
the wind. Tempting the

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sky
with scalloped patterns
of
forgotten naivety &
innocence.

Dreams are tangled
somewhere in the web
of nature & I build
myself into

a river of desires—
coursing

through the valley of
doubt
& forgetting my fear[s]
in
the abyss of memory.

I've learnt to teach my
feeble feet that an
eagle's
flight from doubt is the
anchorage that fills its
belly
with a surge of
fulfilment.

4. *I am a Peregrine Falcon*

Copyrighted, Abu Bakarr Meek Sesay.

I am a Peregrine Falcon, the sky my canvas.
I dive, I soar, a master of the heavens.
Beneath me, the city unfurls, a mosaic of motion.
Cars and people stream like ants,
Tiny, insignificant from up here.

I focus on one, a lone figure on the pavement,
Her life a thread in this grand tapestry.
She hurries, head down, unaware of my gaze.
To her, the world is a weight,
A burden she carries with stooped shoulders.

But to me, she is a single leaf in autumn,
Falling slowly, uncertain where to land.
I feel the wind's embrace,
A gentle caress under my wings.
It whispers secrets of freedom,
Of the thrill in letting go.

The city is a web,
And she is caught,
But up here, I am free
Bound only by the sky,
Untamed, unclaimed,
unstoppable.

My feathers ripple with
every gust,
The earth far below,
Just a distant memory.
I am weightless,
A soul in flight,
Seeing all but tethered
to none.

5. *The Lonely Passage*
Copyrighted, Sola Ajibogere.

Sojourner, you must set out alone
On your journey down
The passage of life, rid self of
Company pointing you all
Dogs' duels,
Cats' calisthenics and
Voices
Calling out to nothing
Along the sprawled passage running
Into oblivion; rather,

Hold as shield your skin
Against the elements:
Against sun's noon anger selling fever
To the passage girdles,
Against heaven's tears selling treachery
To the earth below,

Sojourner, you must set out slowly,
Lonely on your journey into the storm
Ahead, let your eyes be the mind's windows
Guiding you against the hawthorns
And your ears, mind doors
Shutting out all *side talk*.



FIGURE 2 ILLUSTRATED BY K. CHAWINGA

6. *Small London*
Copyrighted, Isaac Aju.

If someone had any respect for you as an Igbo, he would automatically add more to it once you mention that you are from Abiriba. Many other Igbo communities in Igbo land have a little love and a little resentment for the Abiriba people. Some people see Abiriba as the uppity Igbo people who think they are better than everyone else.

It feels good nonetheless, when you are given that stare of prestige that emanates from many people after you've mentioned that you are from *Abiriba, the Small London*. Other Igbo people often assume that every Abiriba person they come in contact with must have money, because they've been told, or they've heard repeatedly that, *All Abiriba people have money*- which is a false belief -a stereotype that isn't entirely very bad. Just because Abiriba had had many merchants who did very well in business even before the creation of Nigeria did not mean that every single person from Abiriba is rich. Because of their early success in business and their communal spirit they were able to transform their locality from a normal village setting into an urban space boasting of very modern houses and infrastructure you would hardly see in other Nigerian villages, at the time the first Nigerian president Nnamdi Azikiwe visited the community and then named it: "The Small London," because of the things he saw, things he considered as very European. The term *Small London* would later become popular so that whenever you mention that you are from

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Abiriba people would say, “Oh, the Small London,” and then go on to assume a lot of things about you.

Abiriba people are blessed with a good business eye. They did very well in business during the colonial period, doing businesses with white people in Nigeria and abroad, and so transformed the Abiriba Kingdom into a beautiful place to behold, through their vibrant age-grade system. Bloggers often cite Abiriba as one of the most beautiful villages in Nigeria. Abiriba people do very well in business, and thus have made lots of money, organized their town, and become a people respected by other Igbo people. They have a vibrant age-grade system that makes sure there is law and order in the town.

Many times, I feel a fierce pride for being an Abiriba person, but there is another truth – not everyone from Abiriba is rich. Not every family is rich. They also have their own sufferings and flaws.

Today, a Saturday, the Abiriba men in Aba are celebrating the *Afa ukwu*, which now comes round every four years, so they are rallying round the whole town, hordes of people, men and women in traditional attires, singing songs in communal spirit.

I’m in the midst of them. I’m taking pictures. I forget my troubles. I’m happy. And I feel connected to my ancestors.



FIGURE 3 ILLUSTRATED BY K. CHAWINGA

7. Love's Transient Copyrighted, Micheal Bello.

(Episodic.)

The courtroom was filled with the judge, jury, lawyers, my sister, and her husband. But it was her husband's stance that baffled me— Justice and the justice holder. Rotten to the core. I reminisced on the moments: it all began when I was 8 years old and moved to Lagos. Everything was new and overwhelming, including my new school and classmates. But it was my sister's husband, Mr. Meka, who would change my life forever.

As I grew older, I started to develop feelings for him. One fateful evening, four years after we first met, an unexpected moment occurred. My towel slipped, and he saw me in a way that would alter our relationship forever.

He began to pursue me, slipping away from my sister's lack of interest. I became his, and our secret nights became a routine. Until that day. I had thoughts; Maybe, I should take action.

(Few days before court.)

The brightly lit room, magnified, like the opulently furnished room— casting an aura of desolation and euphoria. Discordant. My gaze veered to the essay on the desk, titled, "The democratic world of the innocents" by Chukwuemeka Okigbo: The law stipulated

a clear age limit... (I flipped over to the end) exploited by older people.

The evening naturalism hue stretched towards the windowsill. The cacophony seeped through the window, the Hausas — a jarring melee.

"*Yoh-wa. Oga. Welcome!*"

I recoiled like a cowering snail retreating behind its shell at the sound of the car, looming, menacing, and impending, like a suffocating feeling stifling my heart *gbim gbim gbim*.

I threw the book as it thudded silently on the rough bed sheet, covertly, it rolled into a hidden pose. I fumbled with the key in the doorknob again, creating an embellishment of smooth and low drags.

I watched as Tafa's piercing gaze followed me like a clandestine observer. Tafa's our gateman - and has sought me out countless times on sex escapades.

This idiotic creature.

I commandeered the bags as I forced through the room, dumped the bags on the bed— an envelope slipped open. Brown. And the pictures. Wait! My heart jumped with force, thumping. A current of fear passed through me as I watched the entrance and slumped my body after every pause and footsteps.

Her eyes followed; I knew I was doomed. Her husband kowtowed a pleading stance.

"You disappoint me," her chest heaved up and down as she hollered,

"You're going back," she stormed out with her fists in the air.

(The night.)

Funnily, she left me, and the beast returned. His bare chest and hairy torso exuding a raw sexuality. He climbed into the bed; I inclined towards the bedhead and glaring at him with a grievance pout. He leaned in and snuffed me like a dog searching for something.

"You need to change your ways," he whispered.
"This... thing between us will ruin my marriage and your education."

"What about my feelings?" I asked with question marks.

"Had it been I met you first, I'd have married you." His fingers traced a sensitive path.

"And, now— whattt do you think of me?"

"The Juliet," he looked at me with lust, "I love."

I crowed like a baby until the night rolled over.

{Edited}



FIGURE 4 ILLUSTRATED BY K. CHAWINGA

8. *Geometry of childhood*
Copyrighted, Micheal Bello.

When a child hungers for the taste of her mother,
it's a birthright, a taboo.

When a child crunches on teeth-washing wood
or bitter cola, with a slow and crumpled face,
it's not a taboo.

The feeling is like living centuries of years.
Every night, I'd climb a tree and watch
my shadow slip under the tree's breath.
I'd watch my finger touch the depth of the sky.
I once built a nest with the curves of my palms.

Then, Mother would say: the taste of a mother's breast
inspires the fingers of a child.
And that child crawls again, four years old,
while the plain, once green, now lies grey and desolate.

I'd murmur by the gesture of summer's *ennui* & the *ojuju*
ghost written by the curves of the adults.
Mama would shower me with plenty of kisses, gross and
sickly beautiful.

Perhaps, the more I grew, the draping shade in the
afternoon changed & thatched roofs: sombre brown like
the evening.

&, yes, I was happy while checking the frame of the
roofs, children skating away, cows mowing slowly with

the Fulanis and the chattering when the moon came out of hiding.

But the whispers in my ears are grief-shaken, comfort cuddling and tears pouring. Thatched roofs would bear the rain today while it falls from the scaled sky.

{Edited}

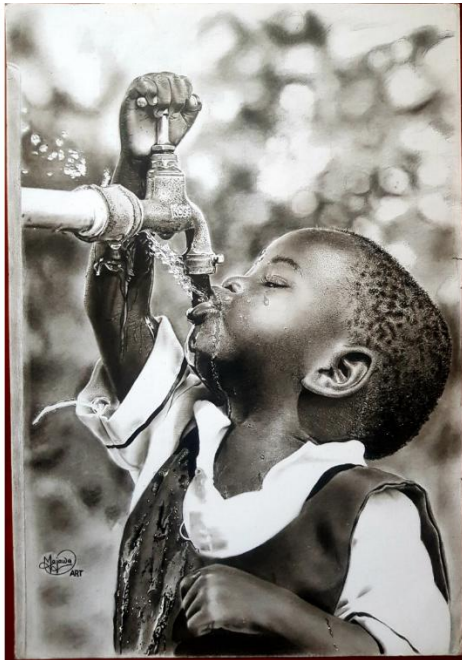


FIGURE 5 ILLUSTRATED BY K. CHAWINGA

**9. *The Library of Lost Memories,*
Copyrighted, Augusta Augustus**

*{Augusta's Story Was Chosen As The Best Submission
This Quarter And She Was Awarded \$10}*

I've never seen eyes as vacant as mine. Rose called them, *The dead pools*. It was the first thing she noticed when she saw me. Declaring that she had never seen a ten-year-old with eyes so empty, she stared into them.

I want to disagree with her, but the mirror in front of me says she is right. It shows me a pair of eyes—large, brown, beautiful and very empty. I wonder why they are so vacant when they have seen so much.

Rose desperately wants to hear the stories locked within me. I have no idea if she is concerned, or simply wishes to gather material for a front-page-worthy article from the only known survivor of the war.

The sound from the explosion which took mum's life might have taken my voice as well. It's been two years since I last uttered a word. My therapist says I'm suffering from: *Traumatic mutism*. I don't care what it's called, I simply want to talk again.

I want to tell anyone who cares to listen about the beauty of my little town before the soldiers came. There were days, especially after dinner, when we had hearty

conversations and laughed. I laughed so hard, my stomach hurt, and tears streamed down my face. Dad was always the storyteller, weaving tales of humorous encounters he had had in the past, some of which mum insisted were greatly exaggerated for our benefit. I can't remember the stories, but I remember the laughter.

My mouth brims with talk of mum's beautiful paintings, which were rarely sold. Even though artwork never held a place of pride in our small riverine town, she never stopped painting.

I still think about mum's last desperate effort which saved my life. I want to tell her how dad's body felt when she covered me with it – heavy, cold, and still. It's strange how I can still hear her last words, whispered harshly into my ears,

"Do not move or say anything, no matter what you see or hear."

I wonder if her hushed command or the sight of her lifeless body dropping to the ground is the reason for my inability to speak again.

Rose tells me that with time, I will forget everything. But I don't want to forget. I'm not in a hurry to let go of the memory of my last moments with dad—both of us paralyzed with fear. I do not want to forget the sounds of the gunshots, the blasts from the cannons, and the screams of terrified people. I do not want to forget what the world has forgotten and urges me to forget. For then, it would

mean forgetting the laughter, smiles, and the joy of little things we took for granted. I want to shelve those memories, keep them safe and relive them like a fully stocked breathing library of lost memories.



FIGURE 6 ILLUSTRATED BY K. CHAWINGA

10. *Love is Transient*
Copyrighted, Penuella Okwu.

Eloise would not have asked to wake up in a way any better than this. The sun is rising but she wasn't going to stand up, not now. She closes her eyes, allowing the happenings of last night to fill her mind and soul once again, or maybe forever.

Andrew. They had broken up since college graduation, but Eloise wasn't going to walk away from this man who had claimed her body and soul. Besides, Andrew's reason wasn't befitting enough to end their relationship. He talked about moving on and their relationship being a fleeting one.

After months, they meet again . He still had his irresistible charm, wit and fashion. Eloise was never going to say goodbye, not while they still walk on this earth. Andrew, however, wasn't going to change his decision.

"We've been apart for too long, Eloise. I have moved on. You should do the same"

Eloise knew that all she had to do was work some feminine magic on him, just like old times. Perhaps she has to show him how far their love can grow. Eloise organizes a meeting at her house. Andrew would have

refused, but hearing it'll be their last, he agreed. Eloise knew exactly what she had to do.

Just as planned, Andrew wasn't leaving anytime soon. He presses her into the bed, his breathe hot against her neck as he tears of the only material obstructing their bodies from touching. Yes! There. The Andrew she had craved for. He knew his way round her body so well...so perfectly. She'd missed this. Shivering under his arms, his fingers rubbing and teasing every part of her body. Without warning, he drives into her roughly. Groaning... moaning. They ravish their bodies till they are worn out.

She then opens her eyes. Whatever happened last night is enough to know that her goal had been achieved. Still feeling too weak, Eloise stretches her hand to the other side of bed, but it's empty. She quickly gets up and looks around the room

" Andrew."

She wraps the sheet round her body and walks to every room in the house. Coming back to the room, she discovers that his bag and car keys are gone. Andrew had left. Eloise could swear that she was going crazy. Every happiness in her is suddenly replaced by rage. She paces round her room, uncertain of what to do next. Who does he think he is to use and dump her like a toy? Yes, he had wanted to leave the relationship, but his reasons weren't reasonable enough to Eloise. All she did was to rekindle their love so that they could be together again. But no. It turns out to be a disaster. Eloise feels like a

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slut who was used to please and then abandoned. At the side of the bed lies a white paper. Eloise runs to grab not minding the sheet that had fallen off her body:

"Love is Transient. Goodbye forever, Eloise"; she reads out.

{Edited}



FIGURE 7 ILLUSTRATED BY K. CHAWINGA

11. Classroom Politics

Copyrighted, Ogechukwu Uzoezie.

In the quiet hum of chalk against board,
we find our rhythm —
a dance of words,
where understanding blooms
in the space between lessons,
the air thick with possibility.

I, the keeper of knowledge,
and they, the seekers of truth,
meet at the crossroads of curiosity
and the silence of their gaze.

No age can divide us,
no season too cold to break our bond.
In the classroom, we are all the same,
bound by the spark that refuses to die.

Through time, we change —
but the love we share,
woven in the fabric of these moments,
remains timeless,
a thread that stretches across generations.

Here, we are more than teacher and student.
We are the future in the making,
always learning, always growing.

And when the bell rings,
the heart still echoes with the lessons we've shared.



FIGURE 8 ILLUSTRATED BY K. CHAWINGA

12. *Invisible Runway*
Copyrighted, Trycent Milimo

I've seen airplanes taking off and landing
on the runway at Harry Mwanga Nkumbula
international airport in Livingstone.
I watched them from the first floor
of a building where I was standing.
Walls were shaking to thunderous sound,
Gruuu! Gruuu! Gruuu!

My runway is invisible,
I once heard airplanes taking off and landing below my
diaphragm.
My muscles lost their strength
just because I had water to last only for a day,
and fire to warn myself at night.

When I visited my brother in the morning,
he made me sit at the dinner table.
On it was the empty cream-white *papier-mâché*
I visualized fruits resting on a centrepiece:
apples, bananas, or pineapples.

I swallowed saliva sending a message to the ancestors of
an unknown.
Worms biting my empty stomach,
then, I heard an airplane taking off once again.
We'll eat when my wife returns from the market, he said.

About Contributors

1. **Abu Bakarr Meek Sesay** is an English Language and Literature student from Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone. He is published in **What the Seashell Said to Me**, held in the National Poetry Library, London.
2. **Ajayi Oluwasegun Samson** is a bilingual poet and teacher from Osun State, Nigeria. He has been published multiple times in *Ila* and other magazines, anthologies and has won prizes for poetry-writing.
3. **Augusta Peter Augustus** recently graduated from the University of Uyo, Nigeria, with a bachelor's degree in microbiology. She was joint runner-up in the *DKA Short Story Writing Competition*, 2024.
4. **Clement Abayomi** won the inaugural Bridgette James Poetry Competition, 2024 with his poem, *These Feet are Not Too Feeble to Fly*. He is presently studying English Language at the University of Lagos.
5. **Isaac Aju** is a Nigerian writer who has been published in *New York City's Writers' Journal – Live and Learn*; *Poetry X*, *Hunger* and *The Kalahari Review*. He lives in the commercial

city of Aba where he works as a fashion designer and writes in his free time.

6. **Lergon Parris** is a national award-winning writer from Jamaica. His short story won a Short Story competition run by Ella's Writing School in 2023.
7. **Micheal Bello's** Story - *Love's Transient* won the Winter Flash Fiction Competition in 2024. Micheal is currently studying computer science and software engineering at JPTS/Joint Professional Training and Support, in Nigeria.
8. **Ogechukwu Uzoezie** is a teacher and writer from Nigeria.
9. **Penuella Okwu** was the runner-up in the Winter Flash Fiction Competition. She's a graduate from Nigeria.
10. **Sola Ajibogere** from Ijesa-isu, Ekiti state, Nigeria, is a B.Sc. (Honours) Microbiology graduate from the Federal University in Oye-Ekiti. His poem, *Sun-plea*, was published in **Eleventh Transmission**. *The Song of the Evening Harvest* was published in **Africa Poetry Magazine**, and another, *Of Farm and Life* was published in **Nigeria Poetry**

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Magazine. His short story *Beyond the Effrontery* was published in 2024.

11. Trycent Milimo is a Zambian Poet. His piece won the Bridgette James Regional Poetry Competition, 2024.