

Poetic Egalitarianism

A CHARITABLE ANTHOLOGY



EDITED BY
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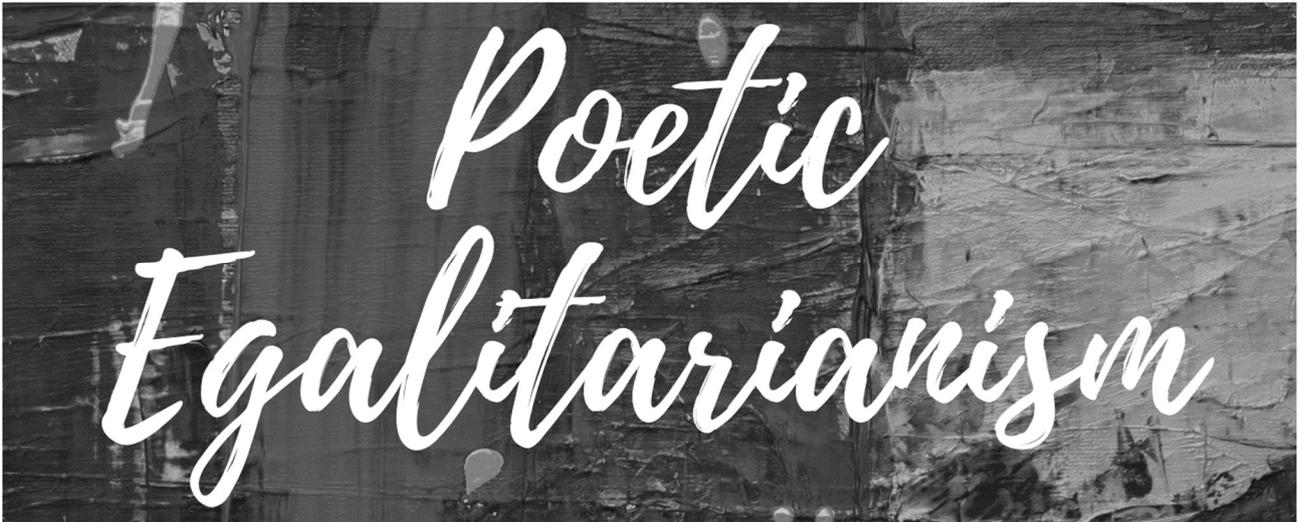
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**BLACK
KIDS
REPUBLIC**

Abyss

Your shadows clock in for their shift at 12 o'clock... at night

Hanging its cloak on your happiness and lying luxuriously on your chest. Their hours stealing your dreams
and numbing them into painful memories.

We become a bath of obsession and depression
Our tears spelling out the words that our throats cannot read
We are an ocean of misled, overthought fantasies
A nation of unspoken miseries.

Our bones, rubbing against each other

Getting lost in the darkness of our humane cast
Trying to find themselves.

Itself.

Trying, to, rediscover the stories that make you one

Trying to align your purpose

But...

The shadows have won.

So, you create a new self. A version that breathes in the heavy smoke that is your emotions.

A hemisphere where your shadows are your friends.

Buddies that allow for the dark half of your minds to dance in the abyss

Play in the dark

And whimper about the stories folded in your heart.

Sleep, my child.

Rest, my love.

Crumble, darling.

Be reborn, sweetheart.

Sleep,

Sleep.

- *Mamolefe Molefe*

Africa Rising?

Nothing is better than an African sunset
in the Savannah
Buddhist enquire from us on how to transcend to Nirvana

Africa is not rising - We are already closest to the sun
Look at our skin
Bronze, and mighty, a glistening armour for the elements
Look at how the sun bounces on our contours

How we contort in movement, in dance, in art
It is art how we walk like there's gold beneath our feet
Our breath births an ecosystem within the firmament
Within this permanent lifeline
We inherit stories of survival, of servitude

Stories of misdirection;
African stories told by non-Africans -
Who are not too eloquent with the tongue, but write stories about culture?
Not too substantial about the fire, but stories about smoke

Stories that mirror black man in its manufactured image
Stories of hope
Not too many stories of home, from home
But stories of the road
Stories of the sea, of the trade, of the silk, of the spices

Africa is not rising.
We raise our kids on stories of Biko.
Sankara, Lumumba.
Stories of Mandela. Winnie Madikizela Mandela.
We also tell them our stories of pain.
Marikana, xenophobia, femicide

But we tell them that like Phoenixes,
they will emerge from the ashes of these concentration camps we call Townships.
Designed to numb our minds, but they have become our muse

Their dark streets double as our vegetable gardens
But at night, shadows are quick to blow a fuse

The pavements; oh how so many souls have separated from flesh on these pavements
They know us by blood
They are the protagonist of our stories
Every corner bares our names - champions of living below the poverty line
We have been living day zero since day one

Look at the disgust that our township resembles
Our township wrecked
Our township disassembled
Our township could never swim
Our township sank

We live in a swamp
Or better yet a pond
No! We live in a fish tank
We can see through the glass
Sandton, oh how beautiful you look to Alexandra...

- *Rabbie Serumula*

Afrikan Child

Born in this land of misery
 The land of wars, famine and diseases
 Land ruled by greed and injustice
 Land overseen by rogues, bandits and lots of ordinary people

Contentment is your birth right
 But in reality, there isn't nothing blissful about your life
 Naturally, you're precious
 Yet so audacious
 But the twisted nature of your land denies you all that
 It has only brought you despair
 Painting your existence onto the canvas of vulnerability
 Your whole life is a story of unmeasured pain and misery

Staring at you through my pity filled eyes
 I can see into your grief-stricken eyes
 How much you hope and wish to live
 How much you want to survive
 How much you're willing to grow
 How much you're willing to be part of the impending future

Tragically!
 The greedy and self-indulgent 'leaders' of your land
 They turn a blind eye on you
 It matters not to them whether you live or die
 Their lavish lifestyles have impaired their sense of sight and reason
 They probably think you exist only in documentaries

What must be rightfully yours goes down their pot bellies
 For they seem to believe
 You are not their responsibility

Your wailing goes in vain
 Your lament is of no concerned to the powers that be
 As you mourn the demise of your parents
 Your fathers and mothers die alike in wars they never instigated
 Everything around you smells of death

Your mother's soul possibly abandoned her body during your birth
Through lack of proper medical and maternal care
Your parents were probably poached away from you
By the merciless HIV/AIDS
A mysterious missile which its pointer faces your Motherland lovely child

All that is keeping your flesh and soul together
Is the blinking lit hope flickering inside you
Hoping that one day fate might show its teeth your way
And convey to you some change
And present unto to you a fair chance
And then maybe you might see yourself
Content and exultant like your peers around the globe
Hope that one day
Those devil-hearted so-called leaders' hearts would be touched by your grief
And they then consider you beautiful, black, lovely Afrikan Child

- *Sibusiso 'Tutu' Mkhabela*

A New Way of Being

That piercing pain...
 That constant anxiety and fear...
 That painful depressive state...
 That constant worrying...
 That guilt in experiencing pleasure...
 That terrifying loneliness...
 The deafening silence...
 That aching desire to scream...
 That little voice that sends you over the edge...
 That consistent feeling of worthlessness.

It is a New Way of Being...

Gather yourself and find a good spot to cry.
 It's about to get real.

Prepare yourself and find a moment to take a nap.

Read a book...

When you're done crying and sleeping,
 Prepare your mind, body and soul for a war on your being.

Hold steady and keep calm,
 You will meet people along the way who will hold your sweaty palm.

In the words of Diane Di Prima,
 It might be time to tote a weapon,
 And be proficient in its use...
 Whether it's an okapi or a pen, a camera,
 A mic, a phone, a book, a gun, pepper spray, jujutsu, kickboxing, music...
 Practice till you're perfect.

I'm sorry,
 I don't know if fighting or writing will make the pain go away,
 I dunno if a bubble bath soak will do...
 But it's all I have.

The pain mostly does not end,
 We walk with it.
 We get used to it.
 Smile with it.
 Fuck with it.
 Tweet it.
 Retweet it.
 Like it.
 Follow it.

Let the pain allow you to feel bliss,
 Walk the streets loudly,
 And find yourself in the chaos of being a target.
 And when deep in the throes of an orgasm,
 Remember why you're here on this earth.
 In the bigger scheme of things we might be smaller than a speck of dust
 Only just big enough to exist.

Is there any meaning to it?

All the ones before us,
 Denoted their unjust struggles and pain with pride.
 We came along with our freedom and our phones and still face the same demise.

A life where only death has meaning.
 Like forgotten artists we are only held high in hashtags when we die.
 Our lives are nothing but something that can be ruined, ended because we wore a skirt too short or couldn't
 pronounce a word...

We've marched, bared our breasts to the masses, named our rapists and killers, given a face to our
 oppressors, yet we continue to feel the stifling pains our foremothers tried so hard to protect us from.

We go and far and wide seeking a refuge,
 Lines drawn on a map determine who we are and for how long we belong,
 We remain true to the weak characteristics of being human(e),
 Our children desensitised to violence, a norm that has lived in our DNA.

My friend calls it Generational Violence.

Anxiety engulfs us,

Freedom is a state of mind state so hard to obtain.

Can't even go to the fucking post office...

Too female.

Too vulnerable.

Too foreign.

- *Vuyolwethu Reoagile*

Behind closed doors...

How long will she put up with all the heart ache
He has nowhere to go so he's forced to stay

Little did she know that happier curls were a sign of being different
Or being tall, dark and handsome was something that can be used against you in an instant

Behind this door she's left to die slowly
Walking these streets is something he does reluctantly

She's stuck between feeling aggravated and dejected
Most of the time he feels nothing which is something he has always expected

Their sleepless nights are filled with excruciating anxiety attacks and tears trickling onto the pillow
With no hope left in him, his soul's filled with sorrow

Not being able to speak their vascular language has always been a weakness
Being called a terrorist is just the beginning of the endless emotional torture

From all the emotional exhaustion she feels she's just waiting for her dying day
His strive to stay alive is fading away

She's tried by all means to stay kind to her mind
With unpleasant thoughts clouding his head he's lost what he's been trying to find

With a very lash on her back their hearts became cold
Even with no little support they have every right to feel all alone

The bruises on her thighs don't ache as much as my heart
He's lost himself and now he's falling apart

Being accused of things you've never done to make you hate the country
As a black person you'd expect for moral support and understanding

But no...
Just more hate and discrimination
No love and no motivation

She'll try to rediscover herself on this dreadful
journey
Remembering that pain is fatal so this too shall pass

- *Kesaobaka Jackals*

Beyond hope

months later
the voguish clouds
still walks proudly
on chestless bodies

channelling the world
around the waist
with frozen dreams
and hunger pangs

in this frowning moment
those who knew prayers
may now tell you how stack
heaven must be

for these bloated clouds to scatter
with no hope of ceasing
this anguish which defies
our faith

in any day we live
as if to see the sun
is to be fond with god
in this promiseless time

- *Nkwana Joshua Serutle*

Body search

bodies search for themselves
inside the hearth of their skin

bodies know that skin are remains
when the soul deflates

bodies search for themselves
between the bones

bodies know that bones
may be anything that fire cannot pick

but bodies know that fire can
still lick the bones

bodies search for themselves
in ashes

bodies remember that ashes can be anything
that is linked to the soil

bodies search for themselves
on the ground

the soil know that bodies are part of its fortress
the soil know that bodies can live inside their womb

bodies search for themselves within the soil
until nothing is left to search for

- *Nkwana Joshua Serutle*

Cracked black skins

And the reason behind all this was?
The wind was feasting on our skinny frames
The eyes had cataracts and we found light in old dusty cracked frames
Unforgivable pain, incomprehensible ordeal
The pandemic haunts not the living but the dead like me
Awaiting none but our imminent demise, the peeling off
of cracked mud smeared walls succumbing to the incessant rains.
In a state of decay, we still hear lively bullets fired in the gloomy night
Already subtle, eerie for what it already holds is puncturing.

- *Byron Shingai Mutonda*

Foreign Identity

What if a phoenix is a victim of Xenophobia?
Would you still celebrate its burning?

There's a certain kind of sadness that comes with being a sacrificial phoenix,
when your tears are petrol and do nothing but fuel your flames.

Being a son of an immigrant means you are at constant war with yourself.
Xenophobia takes place under your skin.
One half of your family is burning in a tyre, while the other half is dancing to the rhythm of your screams.

In a train, this man says foreigners stink!
I tug my skin like a baggy shirt and pray my cologne masks my father's nationality.

In this country men like my father cannot afford an accent.
When do you learn a new accent when you live on borrowed time?
When you live in a borrowed body,
When your skin is a trigger,
Warning: people like you come to die here.

He keeps dying for breathing.
They look towards him and he holds his breath.
His skin is invaded land, it is illegal to breath in it.

In this country black excellence symbolises graduation gowns hanging on worn out shoulders.

My father came to this country with only a paper bag.
He out worked himself and went home with a body bag.
Here the cost of living is too high.

I am sorry that my father's,
hundred-rand food stall,
stole your dream job.

I am angry that you got to claim my father's corpse before God did.

When my father was murdered mom stopped wearing things that can reflect light.
She replaced her chains with a noose,

Her mirror with a coffin,
Her watch with a slit wrist,
And her rings with second-hand halos she earned during her failed suicide attempts.

I am angry that my tongue keeps folding into apologies for being born different.

My grandmother says,
'Your father could have still been alive,
but he was screaming in a foreign tongue.
His pain was lost in translation.'

We hide behind languages responsible for our father's oppression.

Look at me for instance,
I am well dressed in a culture that does not suit my existence.
Death is my fashion statement.

This is why I am not good with relationships,
I am afraid of sparks that turn into born fires.

- *Jonathan Lefenya*

For the sake of peace

Who will love
when love finds no peace in love?

Who will you love
When love loves no more?

Who will love when love is hard to pursue?

Who will love you
when you are not in love with you?

Who will love the poet?
For the poet loves his own voice

Who will love the children when love buries their hearts in grief?

Who will love our parents
when love pretends to be true?
Who cries for us when love dies?

How can we learn to love
when we fail to listen?

Why should our differences come between our love?
But who am I to question your love because love
once lost trust in me

And as a child I learned
that love finds peace in forgiveness

And so, for the sake of love
We must learn peace

- *Mak Manaka*

Gatherings

Hands meet.

Faces in space greet.

Like strangers rushing into loving arms.

We always pace like our hearts do in the
streets, or our homes with clothes on.

We've been immune to mask the night and its
worries, silence it. Cause nobody carries it like
the stars do, even though they have to die
soon. Worse, in the presence of the moon
MUTED. I WILL NOT BE SILENT OR DARK.

I WILL BRING THE STARS WITH NO
FACES.

PAINT THEIR WINGS
PINK.

AND EVERY COLOUR THAT IS IN
BETWEEN-

BRAVERY AND
SCARED.

BE FREE FROM
WORRIES.

That when the night comes, IT IS AFRAID TO
SWALLOW US.

- *T. Boya*

"Her tongue cannot go, but faster."

Like an old tale to new ears,
her
tongue cannot go but
faster.

In quarantine, you can only retell what was done. find
solace,
comfort, and vigour in the place where deeds rarely
die.

Like hands guarding a matchstick,
we
sit around the crackling
fire.

Warming up our imaginations with shapes the fire
dances to.

Waiting for gogo to unpack her
back.

A tale told is a back less
heavy.
Giggles and gentle awe fill the
air, a
pleasant fog in our
home.

COVID is not a warden
but,
A priest absorbing us off our old
ways.

An opportunity to be, to do
better.

- *Kgabo Mohlamme*

How to burn a township

Soshanguve is a tire
 On the neck of an old gogo.
 Burning.
 Neck; laced with wild fires
 Confined.
 Contained inside the labyrinth of death.
 It wants to breath
 But this oxygen is rotten.
 Soshanguve still burns
 This time on the wombs of teenage girls
 Creating newborns with ashy palms.
 How are they going to hold these pens
 When their index and thumbs are acquainted to holding lit matches?
 But it still burns
 Beneath the throes
 Of cremated ghosts that simmer with boiling lava instead of blood.
 Maybe fire is how Soshanguve speaks.
 We will never know
 Until the whole township is ashes
 Melora
 Until all the temples are set on fire
 Until these shacks become sky scrapers scratching the heavens with poverty.
 Until it becomes an octopus
 It's tentacles reaching the under belly of privilege.
 Until our black skin and bones become logs
 Incessantly feeding this wild fire
 Until we run out of tires.
 Soshanguve burns
 The rest of the world watches.

- *Linda Masilela*

In Seasons

Sometimes circumstance turns a blind eye on you
 And you find yourself speeding towards the ground
 With your hands tied behind your back
 Screaming at the very top of your lungs
 Only to have your cry for help fall mutely on deaf ears
 The mass of disadvantage rests on your shoulders with a force so heavy that even your knees buckle

The absolute terror of this instance erases all memory of goodness
 Of ease
 Of sated bellies
 Of suffocating laughter
 Of the tranquil before the gunshots
 The fear convinces you that life can only ever be this painful
 Can only ever be this hopeless
 That there is a constant need for numbness
 And to see death as some form of relief
 Your prayers begin to revolve around the request for a fast release
 Your peers' resort to plunging their own knives into themselves
 Because they can't bear the mystery of how they will go
 What agony awaits them
 They run out of curiosity
 They run out of patience

But take heed,
 For this is a reminder that life is but a series of plot twists
 That tomorrow is as capable of life as was yesterday
 The chance for better times still stands
 For as long as your chest rises and falls then so will you
 The breath you exhale will return to you with pure intention
 The dust will settle and blow away

Remember that the universe moves in seasons
 Where there was a fire, there can be life again
 Where there was loss, there comes a win
 The roar of bombs will be replaced by the exclamations of glee
 And your agony will be crushed by the enormous weight of joy

So, breathe in as deeply as you can
While you can still afford your breath
Have faith that tomorrow holds morphine for your hurt
Believe in the word that there is a season and a time for every purpose that's God's
A time for birth and a time for death
A time to mourn and a time to dance
And let every moment of circumstance find you
With a prayer around your neck

- *Noxolo Desire*

I wonder if leaving home made me this way

I am childless, yet I am wondering
 if I should raise my children here,
 or even have them at all
 if they will grow up wishing
 their skin was disposable,
 with a label that reads:

“To be peeled off when blackness becomes too heavy.
 Caution: This country needs you to be lighter
 than the brown you inherited from the soil back home
 This country needs you to be lighter
 than the luggage you left behind when escaping the war.”

In art class I was taught
 that brown is a combination
 of three colours:

Red: for the blood of those who died on their way here
 Yellow: for the sun that shines even on those we left behind
 and blue: for the sky we all raise our eyes to,
 hoping that tomorrow will be better.

In art class I was taught
 that my body is
 death, sunshine and prayer.

I am preparing for motherhood
 in this new home
 That calls me a foreigner,

 calls my mother a refugee
 my sister an asylum seeker
 my uncle an illegal immigrant.

I am preparing for motherhood
 in this new home

with the hope that my children
will be called beautiful;

with skin like mahogany,
with skin like the wooden floorboards
that creaked beneath their mother's feet
before the war sent her running
and running
and running.

- *Nkateko Masinga*

Jesus Walks

A journey of an artist
 Trying to find timeless poetry
 Searching for wisdom in silence
 Does not mean the world has stopped talking
 It is hard to be a knight with no armour
 It is difficult to dance in heaven with two left hands
 I cannot two step with Karma
 When time has eaten away at hourglass sands
 Imagine science and the bible were to meet
 And evolution was derived from eve
 A result of a big bang
 Look at the sun with the earth at his feet
 Pay attention to the doorbells we never rang
 We have found homes between destiny's sheets
 Forget about operational sciences
 And focus on the law of information
 That nothing can create itself
 Not biblical love stories nor scientific transactions
 Imagine revolution as wealth
 And it orbits life in daily dollar'd rotations
 As opposed as this idea may seem
 It gets to a point where they both agree
 Look not to the sky for miracles
 Gravity has adopted all angels
 Look not to chests for heartbeats
 Sleeves have reclaimed custody
 Do not even mention loyalty
 We have been asked to let those dogs sleep
 Open your eyes and see
 Two worlds attempting to coexist
 A spiritual energy
 Paired with paradigm shifts
 The desire to ultimately be
 Is in the miscellaneous mystery of matter
 And is attributed to the atomic nature of spirituality
 I guess stars do not belong in space
 And I guess God is a place

That exists somewhere between my heart and my head
 I guess eternity is a face that my soul has met through grace
 I have been avoiding writing about creation
 Because of society's gun to my head
 The donation of dis-eased insemination
 Has me scared of being dead
 But when death is euphemised as heaven
 It server's spirituality at the legs
 Chakras perfection of 7
 Those dogs have never had beds
 I wanted to see everything
 But my feathers didn't allow me to flock with eagles
 I had one glance at freedom
 It showed me the power of ink to heal
 I heard that the slowest form of suicide
 Is if in every moment you are breathing
 So, I have fallen in love with gasping
 And as-my (Asthma)stamina deepens
 Every moment pulse fasting
 Has become a moment worth living
 The theory of breath-taking
 Has not met the concept of frequent
 But if you listen closely to the hourglass
 You can hear the universe speaking
 To vision that radiantly river danced
 To dreams that have been sleeping
 To pupils dilated and expand
 To the mediocrity that has begun fleeting
 The ability to adapt does not mean split personalities
 Develop a set of values and establish your own morality
 Pay no attention to outsider's thoughts
 Introspection is a one-man sport
 But carry on writing
 We will chop down more trees if it's your kind of ink to be shed
 Do, the verb
 Ozone layers will be healed by the word
 Don't let insanity die, be weird instead
 Tell the fun inside you not to cry
 Our clocks are too heavy for time to fly

Clinch your thumb onto pen
And leave your fingerprint on eternity
Don't delay proceedings
Let atomic souls explode into paradise
We ghost write for God believe it
We have fallen in love with breathing
We are expression lords here's the thesis
We can make words walk on water
Jesus
Two step with time until the hourglass breaks
And let karma's sands
Meet Mother Nature's fate
Because searching for wisdom in silence
Does not mean the world has stopped talking

- *Thobani Mntambo*

Lord Strider- Mourning a revolutionary soundtrack

Bloodshed chapters
 Subdued tranquillity
 Imprisoned imagery
 Exiled consciousness
 An eternity in history.
 A voyage to a life that parallels positivity,
 Remember,
 Life is an epic fantasy.
 It lives even when we cease to breathe.
 Notwithstanding your reality,
 Your essence is a never-ending peace,
 Sink (with)in the realm of no agony,
 No tragedy.
 Be revolutionary,
 amid atmospheres where death reeks,
 fill your lungs with the tunes of a freedom fighter's melody.
 Stay Lowkey, they can take your life, but they can't take your soul.
 Oh refugee,
 Your valiant footprints will give rise to a resilient legacy.
 When birds born of frost excrete traumatic memories,
 And their acidic faeces incinerate every ounce humanity,
 Remember that you matter
 And when your eyes are tired of bleeding horrific imagery
 Remember that the Elohim will wipe your slate clean.
 Whichever soil nurtures freedom into your feet
 Remember to leave the past and water a new queendom
 Let the laughter of birds soothe the trauma that lives in your senses
 Inhale the joy that will mend your bloodline.
 Pour libations for each sunrise
 Drink the blessing of newfound life
 For the creator instilled in you his/her greatest plight

- *Mangala Mangala*

Nightmares on Water

In these oceans, Being a wave
Does not come with
ease.

It means rolling over graveyards.

It means tasting your own blue
When constantly breaking On
tombstones disguised As
mountains of water, Rising,
waving at night

It means becoming An accomplice to
killers A moat to the fortress A tusked
hole to the gaping mouth Of an ocean,
slashing souls out of vessels

It means silently watching Too many
bodies flooding these grounds Too much
blood drowning these seas, but It is not
in your nature to contain Your own
strength, so you became The
gatekeeper's deadliest weapon

Sometimes you dream Of freeing
yourself. Of stretching out Until your
crests stop being so sharp Until your
swirls stop warping justice Until
people can walk on you
Until you swallow borders Instead of bodies

Until time runs backwards
And clenched fists blossom
Into hands retaining their will
And regaining their future

And still. Being a breaking
wave In an ocean of violence
Means being a nightmare
Widely awake

- *Dshamilja Roshani*

On Black Joy

We walk hands up out our mothers' wombs Spinning sadness off us like afterbirth

bloody and pulling bullets from our chests these wounds become song and laughter

We turn back time, to stitch our hearts with stars that pray skipping sunsets out our lungs

and this horizon is a mass grave packed with my kind We recognise ourselves inside God's smile

Don't black Jesus owe us a third day resurrection dancing a rain queen back to life

This skin had plenty of crucifix And flood, we never run out of blood

Call us holy, call me by name I've come to baptise my descendants

Deyi, Mshawu, Zotsho, Buso obumnyama ingath' sisonka Breaking breath to find gods face.
esihojiweyo

Still, call us light.

Nongqawuse couldn't burn these crops i

- ***Xabiso Vili***

Pigeons of the Venice Canal

It's been 4 months since we shut our doors on the mess, we
made 121 days since we hid from our oil spill Pollution flicked like
cigarette ash from the sky Water like melted glass as our oily
fingers retract Birds filling up the sky with their hollow bones
again

Sunlight curling its golden smoke around the sidewalk
plants Our smothering breath no longer diluting its light Life
crawling back into our world Finally breathing again as it
shakes us off its back Finally rid of our liability

We can do nothing as our plagued society dies out As we walk
out on our fragile sandcastle kingdom It's better, I think, that
our self-inflicted plague is snuffing us out Blowing over us with
its poisonous breath Because it all gets better when we're
gone

We scream over our destruction Say we had
it coming, we deserve this Bite our yellowing
fingernails in sick panic As we shut our eyes
against our demise We should go, leave
where we're not needed

But through the slits in our prison cell fingers We can just see
the shadow of a whimpering need A feathered epitome of the
starving lingers The whispered cries that still lean on us
despite our cracks That keep starvation at bay with the
breadcrumbs of our waste That decided to live off the grime
we leave behind

We could leave now Take our destruction in our suitcases
and walk away But we wouldn't, we couldn't Because
despite our sadistic society, our cruel human nature We care
to much, to leave behind the stragglers We would have to
look over our shoulder, one last time, At the world that does
need us after all

- *Tyler Wratten*

Q&A session:

1. How to get away with murder?

Ask the White man.

2. What can you get killed for?

(a) Bruising a man's ego.

(b) Not resisting arrest and co-operating with a White US cop, if you're Black.

3. The most important thing in this world?

The preservation of a man.

4(a). Lives Matter.

Which ones?

4(b). Black Lives Matter.

Which Black? Which continent? **Which gender?**

5(a). What evidence does the public want to show that you were indeed raped?

Your death. And maybe the autopsy to speak for you.

5(b). How will they remember you?

With a 2-day hashtag. A weeklong if they're seriously moved.

6. Repercussions of raping a woman?

(a) Become a country's president, the number 1 citizen.

(b) Become the world's 1st billionaire soccer player.

(c) Keep living, nothing happened.

- *Emmah Mabye*

The Conquering Nomad

We are the brave, leaving life as we know it before it sinks us,
although our heroism is out of absolute necessity.

Through thick and thin, and the luggage on our backs, our legs carry us.

This is our treasure and it comes with us by any means.

I am the head that pleads with the body when it gets too heavy.

I am the matriarch on duty so my mother can rest her heart if she cannot rest her feet.

I am the patriarch who protects our children from stepping into the darkness.

I was struggling to put the pieces together; they were as displaced as I am,
but as the journey continues, I learn to understand that we are truly on the rightful path to success.

This particular path being my destined one, my job here is to just keep going,
until I get to the other side or until my legs can no longer carry me.

"Am I going to make it", sometimes whispers to me from the fear filled air,
but I cannot allow her to discourage me about what my every day is when I know what it deserves to be.

If I could just make it past these few steps even as my feet fight with me,
ready to throw me to my despair,

I encourage them not to tire because she is just fear in false rationality's clothing,
my future depends on them presently carrying me out of the past, into the future.

I am truly on the right way of thinking and the agents of resistance really exist around me,
but they cannot defeat me until death decides, so I rose before the sun to prove that

I could outlast the darkness if I made it through the night.

I am truly capable and these agents trying to sway me away from the greatness,
are a day's work to complete, are a devil to conquer?

And he is conquerable!

I will hold my own, I am David, and this is my goliath

This is my training for one day, my day, when I am called out into the jungle where I can conquer
even the hungriest of Lions and protect our kingdom.

This mountain I will climb because the kingdom awaits me to open it, because I am the key.

I am the sent soldier from the land of my people.

And as I rest, I sing their names to sleep, sending messages of survival through the stars.

For I have touched the fire and still I have not burned, but my soul is ignited.

- *Khanyisile Mtshobile*

The Pledge

I dreamt of a stranger last night/
 Moulding my body into puddle/
 Hallowed my breath when I tried to speak/
 Hands as tender as new love/
 I am lost in this the same way/
 The nativity of hope abounding much/
 In a split second, my body was in water/
 Rid of all strength/
 I am miracle for a moment/
 The moment stretches itself/
 But is lost/
 Cannot patch itself onto me/
 I am child again/
 Playing with boys/
 Dust on my hands/
 On the edges of my pants/
 A spark of wonder in my eyes/
 The day renders itself anew/
 I have been waiting a while/
 To unlatch the memory of your dying/
 To sketch afresh your smile onto our mothers' heart/
 I am lucid in this dream/
 I hold my breath/
 Curbing back my rage/
 Water breaks from my eyes/
 Giving birth to a burden I will not be able to carry/
 The dream ends/
 A friend texts from miles away/
 Says she is thinking of me/
 I wrap my arms over my back/
 Imagine her holding me/
 Me, whose hands have learned a strange language of survival/
 I am often lost in this illusion/
 Would not bare to have you see me this way/
 Cannot bare to see myself really/
 I stand, afloat of all my fears I am solid shape again/

Firm/
Awake/
Grieved.

- *Hope Netshivhambe*

The Terror

The terror is in the waking that comes before the rising.
Gulping hope in heaves,
And swallowing sour faith in a stranger's dreams.
This is why you came all this way,
To surrender to the waves.
To pray that now that it has come, it stays.
This breathing like you know what makes up the air,
Like bravery is your human right to name the wind and make it stir.
Like the chains wilted and shattered to shards at your obsidian stare.

And yet, maybe the true terror is in the rising from the sea.
The violent shrieks of a vagrant voice that drips down your spine,
Breath putrid and vile from too long in the deep.
From too heavy the hands of injustice around the ashen throat,
Too loud the bones that learnt to shatter in time with the ripple crushing the boat.
For even your anguish had to be polite.

Now your feet have felt the sand,
Your nose must forget the waft of salt or the sting of the back of a hand.
Now your shattered throat must chant, and claim this rage and justice for your homeland.

- *Shanice Ndlovu*

Through the eyes of a face mask

Struck by a lot of emotions
and realities yesterday.

Emotions that have been brewing
for weeks but yesterday.

Something in me just gave a way.
Quite honestly,
grief changes you immeasurably.

This pandemic grief is inconceivable,
what I'm about to tell you happened in just one hospital.

In one city, one country
on a planet being ravaged by this virus.
In God we trust
though it seems clear others blame God
for he's forgotten about us.

In the hallway
a mother cries and wails.

She begged her son
to open his eyes and breathe.
Her dying son in need,

of another lifeline.

Vital signs,

started to look concerning.

Dissolving
into her grief
into the arms of the husband.

A grieving
for the loss of something.
Letting

down the walls of the mind
to let the grief flood in.
Patient's heart rate is slowing,
blood pressure tanking.

Dare not wish
to be a patient in the ICU.

Now we're sick
there's constant death in the ICU.

Stresses shortages
of PPE's in the ICU.
Sounds of Peep, peep
tragic reminders of
someone dying in the ICU.

First it was normal white body bags,
then came orange
disaster bags.
It's all sad,
blue tarp bags
came and ran out too
now it's just black bags.
Even more sad.

In the ICU
patients are so alone, suffer alone
dying alone.
Felt the heartbreak
as loved ones said their goodbyes
through the telephone.

- *Aphiwe Namba*

To Grow

Like
memory,
What grows learn to
leave.

As birth is a cigarette
lit,

Slowly approaching its
end.

Burning into
wind,
To dance
itself
Awa
y

To
grow,
To
leave.

- *Kgabo Mohlamme*

Town_shipwreck

Our township wrecked whilst our parents were still building
 Our people are not moving
 There are shacks
 In sufficient land
 Our township lies flat on its back on waters that are shallow
 The streams of consciousness are said to be narrow
 There are shadows
 Moving in the sorrows
 Of a sophisticated machine
 Whose work remains unseen
 Like it is lost in the sea
 Especially in the eyes of those who are not familiar with our kind
 There was never enough time to scribble stories on a page
 Our township's history could never be found in books but in the way our ascendants look
 Their palm lines
 Like railway lines leading to times
 When to be alive was to be a victim of abuse
 So many souls were bruised
 There are traces of wounds
 Our township holds many untold stories that can only come with age
 Stories of how our ascendants held storms in their hands
 How they would burn with rage
 When they were slaves
 Predestined for a fast-forward reality into the grave
 A different phase
 A mysterious place
 Like an empty stage
 That's darker than a cave
 SO WHERE TO (Soweto)? They would sometimes wonder
 But I too have at times wondered
 And have since realised that the seeds were planted
 And despite the madness
 These lotus flowers are beginning to flourish
 We are startling the heavens and charming the oceans around us
 Like spirals
 Our spines are spinning and still
 We have inner peace instilled

Inside are steady even when our limbs begin to shiver
We will keep thriving
Load shedding could never drive us to sleep
Because resilience is what we keep
In the dark corners of our shape shifting streets
Even in our dreams
We seek to expand and our RDP's we extend
Our hands may be weak
But we still stand on our own feet
For our job is incomplete
Spirits divine have arrived to redesign these hives
Into a beautiful cosmos
With cosmic sunrises and edges of forever
Wherever the sun sets
We are restructuring, self-remembering, recreating
Forget the imaginings, the hallucinations and all the dangerous fields
We are erasing all the treacherous pains that our elders could never run from
Simultaneously mending hearts that were once broken and torn
We are drawing closer to our purest forms
Painting new lyrics to our old songs
Nobody knows where our township goes because it floats
But we are moving tremendously
Resurrecting our locations into an eternity
We are writing poems on our floors
With our toes as we go

- *Sibusiso Ndebele*

Travel Ban

A suitcase gathers dust under a rickety bed;
Sometimes hymns from a distant home
echo through its keyhole.
A smoky melancholy hangs heavy in the room;
clouding any chance of rational judgement.
In one hand, a surgical mask offers
the illusion of immunity;
The other clutches a hard hat: the apparent delusion
that poverty is not steadily knocking on the door.
A text message reminds of fields ready for harvest;
Home holds the reassurance of abundance
but there is no one to pick up the sleeping plough.
There is an angst slithering through the trenches
and everyone sits, waiting for it to reveal
its unforgiving fangs.

- *Flow Wellington*

Untitled by B Maragelo

I stopped existing a long time ago
While you were still holding onto me
With all your strength

You thought your love was an anchor
And I was a ship
And that's how you kept me
All this time

I am the ocean bed
I constantly move unnoticed like a ghost

So do not write about me
We do not talk about the dead here

I am poltergeist
Trying to prove that
Even when I have stopped being alive
I have kept moving
Going from body to body
Looking for myself
Looking for love to resurrect me

So do not write about me
We do not talk about the dead here

- *Bokang Maragelo*

Untitled by E Henrietta

Where are we to go?
 Are we to come together or to stay apart
 We are divided amongst ourselves and torn in between
 No peace!, No love! yes-War, war is our song.

Where are we to go?
 No family, we can't come together social distancing
 No home, we are left in filth, death, in germs and in pains
 No peace, No love, yes-War is our song

We mask our sorrows, our face, our souls.
 Yet we are naked, vulnerable and sick.
 Where is my joy, I kept it somewhere in my heart
 It was stolen, me broken.

Where are we to go?
 I am waiting for the rising sun
 Who knows where its leapt,
 I have searched the seas and valleys, where is my hope.

O! Peace, come and comfort me
 With your wings cover me
 I want to lie in peace and rest.
 You are my joy, my final rest.

- *Eguogwu Henrietta*

Untitled by M Kaapu

I am here.
With this grey under my feet
I wore socks
And when I stepped on the carpet
My body shivered with an unknown phobia
I felt my soul coming back to the light.
Then my mind took over.
It made me remember you.
A reminder of how beautiful darkness is.
How it is gorgeous
Sexy.
Then my heart caused a massive interruption
And everything that is me,
Had a feeling of how beautiful the light also is.
But when my body took over
When my body snatched the crown from my heart
When it ruled over all of them
I was reminded of how a mixture of both
Could be more than beautiful
The mixture could change lives
Souls would smile.

- *Marviin Kaapu*

Untitled by M Simelane

On this day, I had lost the count of a promised brighter future,
with all relief funds associated for citizen's,
With such heavy dark clouds hanging over our heads,
how about us who had found a second mother from you?
must we die from hunger since we cannot even hustle on the lungs of the street?
May God be kind to us,
Through these terrible times,
Where we laugh with hunger adjacently to our chairs,
Trying to peep through the windows of our minds,
Cooking ways to provide food for our families,
Yet every radiation of hope loses its sparks,
God please remember us, as the cabinet meets,
May they just throw a crumb of bread our direction,
Even if we may die, we can't even have a decent funeral,
Spare our lives from this armed disease,
Cover us from your wings of glory,
May they remember the illegitimate children that lives from their home,
We cannot toll the death count through hunger,

- *Mumu da poet Simelane*

Untitled by X Ntuli

Black is natural beauty .
A rainbow nation ,
Where all colours are one.

Black is a drum .
A jembe .
A heart beat music ,
Dance to the feeling .

Black is magic ,
Call and karma .
Loves spells and loves charms.
A bonfire .

Black is strong gold
An Old soul .
A rough diamond ,
Precious stone .
A living treasure .

Black is a primary colour
A black rose .
A sunflower ,
Growing from the concrete .

Black is a picture
Worth more than thousand words ,
What you see it's what you get.

Black and white .
Still
Black is light.

- *Xolani Ntuli*

‘...we will be there again.’

**‘... we will be there
again.’**

we tuck ourselves into
our
little straw
houses.

Gather our memories into a
handkerchief
Stick over the shoulder, and walk
our
memories into a
park.

A chilly breeze zipping past our
necks.

Oh! We see it as though we are there!

Well,
we were, and we will be there again.

leaves
rushing and rustling about,
crumbling
under our every
step.

- *Kgabo Mohlamme*

What praise?

birthed on
east african land
only to be shipped
to the south
where numbers
are rising
and black people
are fighting

a friend cries
to me
fear in her voice
for her father's soul
the president is counting
down his days
what praise do we give
to a president whose
victims are his own people?

what praise do we give
to a world where the
whites cannot breathe
and point their guns
at people in the street
while refugees
cannot
simply eat

what praise do we give
when souls are
facing a reality they
should not have to
face?

- *Maziwana*



FIROZA KHARVA

The Playgrounds of my mind

Little dancing shadows
In the playgrounds of my mind
Laughter, happiness, warmth,
A tender touch, a gentle look,
A warm smile, the love in your eyes,
I drift along on a wispy breeze
Drinking in the sound of your voice,
Watching the dimples on your cheek,
My heart is filled with joy,
Soaring like a bird.
I have discovered love,
I have discovered you.

A dark storm cloud
In the playgrounds of my mind
The little dancing shadows all gone
Tears, grief, loneliness,
A broken heart, a betrayed look
Bitter memories, an empty life,
I sit in a lonely corner
Thinking of your deceit
Remembering your promises,
My heart is rent asunder
Weeping like a child
I have given love
I have earned pain.

Little shadows, where are you?
I want to play.

- *Firoza Kharva*

Untitled by F. Kharva

I once dreamed, such beautiful dreams
like all the colours of the rainbow,
I once hoped, such wonderful ideals,
which made my heart rage with joy.
I once loved, such a selfless love,
with every inch of my soul.

The spell has broken!

My dreams lie like shards at my feet,
My hopes all strangled before being met,
My love strangled and tortured without
any mercy.

I stare blanky at the future,
Visions of darkness, despair and
grief engulf me.
I am lost, wandering and searching.

Where is my lost love?

Tears fall like little dewdrops from my eyes,
A sob escapes my lips as my heart is wrenched,
I look at the road ahead and
wonder

How will I ever survive?

- *Firoza Kharva*

What kind of love is it

What kind of love is it
that
changes day by day,
that
has contradictions in its nature
that
holds one so dear for years and
alters at the blink of an eye?

What kind of love is it
that
is faithful for a minute and
deceitful the next,
that
makes promises which are meaningless,
that
is dictated by circumstances and is
never constant?

What kind of love is it
that
is never committed and dedicated
that
hurts rather than heals
that
revives you for years yet stuns
you for an age?

What kind of love is it?

- *Firoza Kharva*

You will never know

You will never know of the searing pain
I feel every time I think of you,
of the lonely future I have envisaged,
of the haunting sound of your voice,
You will never know because you have
never lost something precious.

You will never of how you rent my
heart asunder when you walked
out of my life without a word,
of the shattered dreams and hopes,
of the bitter sweet memories that
have become my companion,
You will never know because you have
never shared your heart and soul with me.

You will never know of my worries, fears,
desires, sorrows, tears and regrets,
of the many sleepless nights,
of the scars on my heart,
You will never know because you have
never committed yourself to me truthfully.

You will never know.....

because

you have never loved!

- *Firoza Kharva*

KMP

Khutaijah

Beneath the stars and a canopy of trees

Where the water cascades and the drops glisten like crystals in the sun,
Where it trickles from above and pools into rocks,
Where it gushes and flows into a stream;

Where the ferns flourish and the moss grows,
Where the thicket is rich with thriving greens;

Between the mountains and the boulders,
Beneath the stars and a canopy of trees,
This is where I'll build my home

- *Khutaija Patel*

Buried Beneath the Pain

I see now how pain created monsters,
How it seems to dull the light,
How its parasitism consumes you,
How it demands to engulf your being with words you wish you could say,
How it builds tombs of resentment in your chest,
How it constructs constraints around your mind,
How it buries it's dead within your heart,

But I refuse to give in to the bitterness that it is clothed in,
I refuse to dance with the demons it creates,
I refuse to harden my heart to be a home for its graves,
I will forever remain soft,
And filled with love,
And painted with light,
And everything that alludes to goodness

- *Khutaija Patel*

Crowning Glory

Every moment has its crowning glory,
Sometimes it unfolds
As slowly as a blossoming bud,
You just have to be patient enough
To watch it unfurl

- *Khutaija Patel*

Flower of the night

Bloom in the darkness
Oh, Flower of the Night;
You need not birdsong to blossom;
And when heartbreak echoes through the depths of your soul,
Remember that it is moonlight that rains down to kiss your unfurling buds,
It is stardust that settles on your petals like a crown, resulting in your efflorescence.
You are royalty of a different kind,
Remain Regal

- *Khutaija Patel*

High tide

And your crests may turn to troughs,
But swell again after you crash;
Rise when you fall;
Recollect your water droplets
And reform into the billowing wave that you are,
Let the current within you surge right back up to high tide

- *Khutaija Patel*

Love letter to myself

I promise to love myself in all of the places that you broke,
To plant seeds in the darkness of my mind,
To let them blossom into beauty,
To heal all that you've hurt with love and light;
I promise to be in awe of my strength,
To treasure myself,
To be spellbound by my own magic

- *Khutaija Patel*

Mind Shackles

What are you running from?
Is it fear that chases you
Or something that you flee from?

What are you afraid of?
Does the fear of endless possibility scare you,
Or is something holding you back?

What holds you back?
Is it the irrational fear of the unknown,
Or the inertia you're so reluctant to overcome?
Do you fear your potential,
Or a particular outcome?

What chains you to your mind?
Is it the rapid, racing thoughts,
Or a deep-rooted terror?
Is it the panic caused by change,
Or the fact that things remain the same?

Wherever the answer lies,
Know that this is a signifier of optimism;
The unshaken hope that keeps you treading along,
The undying soul that refuses to step down,
The fight you still have left in you,
The realm of possibility open to you,
The signifier of love,
Aspiration,
Imagination
And dreams.

This is the sign you've been looking for

- *Khutaija Patel*

Moon Kissed

Do not be afraid
To stand on your own;
For in the light
Your shadow will be right beside you,
And in the dark
Moonbeams will shine down to kiss your pearlescent skin;
And an epic love story about learning to love yourself is a romance that can never be shattered

- *Khutaija Patel*

Rise up, Royal Soul

To every Queen who has let the crown slip off of her head,
Rise up out of the ashes like the phoenix that you are.
With your dragon slayer heart
And a sword of courage;
Keep on fighting.
Unlock the graceful beast that you keep on hiding;
You are a warrior with finesse,
Royalty among the rest

- *Khutaija Patel*



Lutfiyya

Seedat

A Letter to Management

Dear God, I need your help
Your managers are driving me crazy,
You said, "Love thy neighbour,"
Yet, they preach segregation daily

I'm not sure which way to go, they say you won't hear my call,
There's no stamp on my body confirming my "religion" after all

They each think they're right, and the rest are doomed to hell,
They all claim to have your *only* word, the purest of intel

Aren't we all your children no matter our race or creed?
Don't you judge our character purely by our deeds?

Dear God, please guide me,
I'm trying to do my best
I thought what matters is our heart,
And not the way we're dressed

I try to earn your pleasure, through purifying my actions,
It doesn't seem enough to quench your humans satisfaction

They're fighting amongst each other, justifying their oppression
Please tell them it's barbaric, the highest form of regression

So many humans, so little humanity, oh what has come of us
The best of the best committing acts so treasonous

Dear God, come save me
I can't take the hate
They're destroying *your beautiful word*
Please stop them before it's too late

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Dandelion Tree

If I could be
 Anything, I'd be a
 Dandelion in the wind...
 Born bright like the sun
 adding colour to
 my roots,
 turning
 white
 like
 the
 moon

when

I spread

my fruits,

I'd be

the symbol

of a wish whispered

to the universe...

I'd travel

across the

world

every time

my seeds

disperse.

If I could be anything
 I'd be a Dandelion tree,
 Rooted in the ground
 While my fruits wander free.

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Dark Blossoms

The purists will tell you, that Roses are meant to be red,
And Violets a stark blue,
That love is an essential,
'Coz you're incomplete unless you're a part of two.

But Roses are loyal to no colour
And sometimes they draw blood.
And Violets may be pretty,
But their scent will never flood.

For just like love, nothing is perfect,
Yet we search for it all our life,
Indulging outer beauty over inner light, forgetting,
Dark blossoms wear the prettiest disguise.

But love is not the problem,
It's your search for it that matters.
Don't attach it to another,
Lest your heart be shattered.

Its not something you seek out
It's something you exude.
The purest rendition of love
Is giving it first, unconditionally, to you.

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Fountain of Poison

I drink from the fountain of poison hoping to avenge my hurt.
Its furious intoxication rapidly courses through my veins,
Fueling my vindication for redress.
The hurt didn't kill me, the poison surely will.
Such is the vice of anger,
Its consequences always outweighs its cause

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Haiku

Death, you are no foe
I fear not
If I exist, you cannot

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Hide and Seek

What is it you seek?
Is it love, is it wealth, is it fame?
Is it fortune, is it health,
Is it someone to carry your name?

Have you searched for it in every home,
Every heart, every face?
Have you hunted your desires,
Running rampantly between each place?

Have you thought about stopping,
Taking just a moment to breathe,
Have you unpacked your emotions,
Do you know what you really seek?

Are you committed to your wants,
Or does it change each week?
Is it a necessity,
Or something you want to need?

Stop!
Savour,
Breathe...

What you truly desire is within you,
There's no need for chase.
What you seek, seeks you,
Wait for fates embrace.

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Home Invasion

What once kept you safe, now causes you pain,
Sometimes the things meant to protect us,
Cause the blood stain...

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Kaleidoscopic Love

I see you, you see me
What you see, reflects you,
Reflecting me, back to me.
Who's beauty do we see, is it you, is it me?
Is it the union of two broken souls in all their glory,
Dancing across the stage of life, changing patterns with each twist,
Broken individually... beautiful when they kiss...
A kaleidoscopic love story, a tale of two halves
Such is the journey of two souls, walking the same path

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Life After Death

Little Roses shaded
Behind a high boundary wall,
Wrapped in a large sunflower's embrace
Sheltering us far, wide and tall

As we grew so did you
Until, beyond the wall you saw the Light
And prostrated in worship
Crossing over to the other side

They say you're gone
You're in the heavens
They say death stole from me
My quintessence

My head believes them
My heart's in dissent
I feel your presence
I will not lament

For I see you in the face
Of every kind loving mortal
And reminisce the sound
Of your heart-warming chortle

For I see you in the hands
Of every hard-working fellow
And smile at the thought
Of your loving character so mellow

For I see you in moms voice
As she cheers me on
And hold fast the ambition
You instilled in me each dawn

For I see you in the values
Of every humble outlook
And remember how you lived
Giving more than you took

So, I'll not mourn your death
Rather celebrate the life
Of my first hero, my first love
On whose memories I still thrive

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

On My Knees

*"I am
 Just a girl
 In front of the
 World asking
 For some Justice.
 I don't want much
 Just the basics, nothing
 Too impossible*

To muster safe
 I'd like to safe
 walk feeling saveme
 safe, not saveme
 afraid saveme
 of being saveme
murdered safe
or raped safe

*I'd like to
 feel respected,
 protected, loved,
 but most of all, free...
 I'd like to live beside you*

Not on my knees"

<i>Is,it,too</i>	<i>Much,to</i>
<i>Ask,to</i>	<i>Feel,safe</i>
<i>To,feel</i>	<i>Free,to</i>
<i>Want,a</i>	<i>Better</i>
<i>World</i>	<i>And</i>
<i>A,bit</i>	<i>Of</i>
<i>Equal</i>	<i>-ity</i>
<i>safe</i>	<i>free</i>
saf	fre
saf	fre
sa	fr
fe	ee
SA	FR
FE	EE
SA	FR
F	E
Ɔ	Ɔ

Perspective

I despise being in lockdown again
 So you'll never ever hear me say,
 I'm grateful we're safe and peace prevails,
 Because when I look closely
 The world is a pretty messed up place,
 Even though,
 Sometimes our oneness shines through,
 I'm sure you can agree,
 It's only for a little while but
 We're finally co-existing peacefully,
 The wars have halted for a brief moment, so
 For once nobody needs to flee their homes,
 Might be a temporary blessing but
 Changing the world for the better,
 Is something we never did,
 Give up!!
 Our generation is a failure,
 Crazy to believe
 People of the world are
 Praying for each other,
 Keeping others safe,
 By staying indoors,
 Oh, what good has come of this!
 Humanity never prevails!
 So don't try to convince me
 I am blessed to be in lockdown today

(NOW READ BOTTOM UP)

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Required Desire

If you must be a master,
Be a master of your mind!
If its superiority you're after,
Seek superiority in your thoughts!

If its control you require,
Acquire control over your emotions!
If its wealth to which you aspire,
Aspire to wealth in your knowledge!

There is no need to change your desires...
Simply raise their standards.

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Rules of The Game

Hello little one, Welcome to the World,
Where boys get extra privileges,
None if you're a girl

We accept you as you are, so long as you stay within the norm,
Stray too far and we'll shun you till you reform.

It's out of pure love, I promise we care,
We're only trying our best to do what's socially fair.

There's a hierarchy in play, we'll indoctrinate you from birth,
The colour of your skin will determine your ultimate worth,

But don't stress about it too much, we'll never tell you to your face,
Our subtle actions will help you learn your true societal place.

You are free to choose your spouse, but stay within your limits,
Cross religious mixing will earn you demerits.

We'll strip you of your self-esteem telling you you're no good,
Then sell you products to build you up like any caring society would.

We frown upon interracial mingling, unless, there's a power struggle in play,
We'll torture you if you're Muslim... Black... or God forbid... Gay.

We really mean no harm, we just want you to do what's right,
Life will be much simpler if you don't put up a fight.

Mental illness is also taboo, so lock that voice away,
Best you keep it bottled up and hold those emotions at bay.

Welcome to the World little one, we hope you have a good life.
Good luck seeing your full term through,
Suicide is surprisingly rife.

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Rush Hour

What's the rush, Where are you scurrying off to my friend?
Don't you realize our destination is all the same in the end!
You spend your life competing, hoping to get ahead first.
We're all fated to death; why are you rushing to the worst?

You're so concerned about the future, you waste time regretting the past.
Why are you holding on to moments not promised, moments that didn't last?

Your life is slipping by like beach sand through your fingers.
You revisit bad memories hoping the pain won't linger.

Counterintuitive at best, yet you spare no endeavour.
Did you really think festering on poor decisions would make the outcome any better?

You spend your life planning and tiptoeing around omens.
You never take the time to just revel or indulge in each fleeting moment.

Stop the race my friend, there really is no rush.
None of us are getting out alive, so why all the fuss?
Take the time to savour, the present and the now.
One day you'll be thankful you did; this is my vow.

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Smiling Skies

Beautiful colours painted across the horizon's miles,
And I wonder if it's your presence in heaven that made the blue sky smile.

They say time heals all wounds so give time some time
But there's always a slight paradox in every paradigm,
For I feel your loss everyday as if the news had just arrived
Yes, some wounds leave scars whose trace makes it come alive.

So in every moment, when the wound is rife
I choose not to mourn, but to celebrate the life,
Of the kindest, loving soul, I have ever known,
Whose love still lives within me – reminding me I'm never alone.

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Smoke and Mirrors

Mirror mirror on the wall,
I don't believe you know us at all.
They say seeing is believing
But I don't believe what I see,
For you reflect just a superficial layer of me.

What about the hopes, the dreams, the values I bear?
You never reflect it no matter how long I stare!
What about the kindness, the compassion, the unconditional care,
Surely there's more to me than just what I wear.

They say looks can be deceiving,
But it's you I blame,
For even when we change inside, you still reflect us the same.
Mirror mirror on the wall,
I don't believe you're fair at all.

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Stockholm Syndrome

Across a crowded room
Our hearts traded a glance
The weather seemed to alter
Two souls began to dance

So many unspoken words
Yet no sound escaped our lips
Our minds so alike
Two souls began to strip

A cold winters day
Suddenly splashed with spring colours
A tiny waterfall comes to halt
Two souls have found lovers

A bird clad in a colourful dress
Natures art now in rule
And as it sings its beautiful song
Two souls hum like fools

In this symphony of our love
Stockholm Syndrome roams
It's in this moment we realize
Two souls have found home

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Striptease

If I stripped down to my insecurities,
Would you clothe me with acceptance?
Would you look at me with love,
Or would I see your resentment?
Would you reassure me of my worth,
Tell me I'm your first choice?
Would I have your unconditional support,
Would your words drown out the little voice?
Would you tell me I am beautiful,
Just the way I am;
That my beauty depends on my heart
And not my kilograms?
Would you commit your love to me,
Stay with me for the long haul?
Tell me, face in the mirror
How safe is it, to bare my all?

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

The Voice of Privilege

The sun has set on this day,
Ending it in a colourful array

And as we bid farewell to the fiery beast,
Our tables are laden with a magical feast

Yet one look at the grub and we rebuke,
Scowling at mom – What’s this you cooked?!

How could she not make the food that's my favourite,
After all the chores forced upon me, pure slavery!

Annoyed and filled with absolute dismay,
Off to bed I scoff away

Feeling entitled to only the best,
Lacking gratitude for how I've been blessed

Laying comfy in bed - what’s this on my social feed?
- Sorrow filled stories of fearful refugees

I see a man, the sun has set on his World too,
As he prepares to bury the babies he couldn't rescue

He bids them farewell with tear filled eyes,
And replays memories of their last cries

No food, No home, No more family to greet,
Just the remains of a nation incomplete
His plight the same of many Syrian’s alike,
Yet the world remains silent in the face of this death spike

Privilege glares at me, shaming my outburst at the table,
How could I not thank God for my food, my home or for making me able?

How easily we forget we have all we need to thrive,
Taking for granted how fortunate we are to be alive

So if you read this poem today,
I beg and plead you take a moment to pray

For the joys, the happiness and for with all you've been blessed,
But most of all for humanity oppressed

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Trick or Treat

A Halo made from fire
And hearts full of love,
Fuelled by desire
We must let go of.

Burning our minds
To purify our soul;
The twisted reality
Of damage control.

Doing what we must
To realize our self-worth,
Loving ourselves first
Brings the greatest mirth.

So keep that fire burning and don't let loose;
A Halo is a just few inches away from becoming a noose.

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*

Waiting Game

And slowly, the day reaches for the company of new colours,
As it discards it's blue and welcomes the others

The sun says it's goodbyes as it sinks to the earth,
The moon forewarns us of nights dark birth

And as I look on at this beautiful transition in wonder,
I feel my heart being slowly torn asunder

Longing for the start of a glorious new day,
Yet waiting in anticipation to lay under the nights starlit beret

- *Lutfiyya Seedat*



WORDSWITHRIAZ

#MISEROFWORDS

Farewell my love

I look out the window,
and a slight breeze flows effortlessly.
A chill runs through my spine,
and the hairs on my neck and hands rise up
like soldiers saluting their commander in chief.

Warm streaks of liquid flow down my cheeks.
I raise my hand to wipe it,
but somehow,
I can't find the strength
to continue...

I look back into the past
and the pain is too much to handle.
I close my eyes
and the flashbacks start.
I can't stop it, no matter how hard I try to.
These are memories that I didn't want to revisit.
Memories,
that are too painful
and too delicate.

I can feel my heart bleed
and the beating
gets louder and louder,
faster and faster.

I take a deep breath.
I get up onto the railing,
take a deep breath, close my eyes
and jump.

- *Riaz Ismail*

Go Back Home

They say go back home,
go back to where you came from.
I don't know whether to laugh or cry,
at the absurdity of it all.

If only it were that easy,
if only I had a home to go back to.

My mother, slept with a man who owned a ship,
so that he could bring me here.

We didn't have money,
we didn't have anything we could sell.
So, she sold herself, as a last resort,
to protect me from the endless war.

My father was a brave man,
but I have not met him,
for he had died, long ago
protecting a country,
that had long forgotten him.

So, you see,
I do not have anyone,
I do not have anywhere to go back to.
All I have,
is the kindness that strangers show.

So, if you don't mind,
I'd like to stay
and make my parents proud.

- *Riaz Ismail*

Hear My Call

Suicide, Suicide...Hear my call.
Suicide, Suicide...Hold me close.
Suicide, Suicide...My heart is sore.
Suicide, Suicide...Take me away.

Oh how I wish, you stopped for a while
and looked into my eyes,
you would see the darkness.
I guess my smile, fooled the best
and now I shall take my rest.

“...but he was always laughing...smiling...making jokes,”
they said, as they lifted his lifeless body from the ground.

He had no cuts, he had no bruises,
and yet, he was full of pain.
No one knew the battles he faced,
and in the end, it was all too late.

Suicide, Suicide...Here you are.
Suicide, Suicide...You've come for me.
Suicide, Suicide...My eyes are closed.
Suicide, Suicide...Take me away.

- *Riaz Ismail*

I am a Refugee

Yes, I am a refugee,
but, I am also human.

Yes, I am a refugee,
but, I bleed the same as you.

Yes, I am a refugee,
but, I still have value.

I keep moving forward,
thinking, I'll find myself,
thinking, I'll see a version of myself
that
isn't hurt,
isn't broken
isn't alone
isn't full of pain...

How can I forget ?
When you keep reminding me
that I don't belong here.

How can I forget?
When you keep reminding me
that I am not welcomed here.

At the end of it all,
all I am,
is a refugee.

- *Riaz Ismail*

Just an Ordinary Day

I wake up not with the sound of an alarm clock
 but with the sound of gunshots piercing through the air.
 I wake up in shock every morning
 with the screeching sound that echoes through the streets.
 Babies are screaming and crying.
 The fear cannot be missed in their voiceless shouts.
 Yet, I am still grateful for my ability to hear
 even though all that I hear is the pain and anguish of the people.

Houses being bombed, buildings crumbling to the ground,
 smoke, dust and fire mix into the air making it difficult to see and to breath.
 Families separated; bodies torn apart.
 The loud screams of women who had just lost their husbands,
 the cries of parents who had lost their innocent children,
 lovers who were snatched apart before their story could even begin.
 Blood oozing out from everyone creating a massive blood pool.
 Pieces of flesh being torn out of the body.
 Yet, I am still grateful for my ability to see
 even though all that I see is the pain and anguish of the people.

Lives are being changed; families are torn apart.
 Every day I wake up worrying about how long I have
 before my house crumbles to the ground,
 how long do I have before my family is taken away from me?
 How long do I have to wait to live a normal life?
 The atmosphere is filled with pain and suffering.
 I can't even remember when was the last time I had proper food.
 Scraping morsels of food from the dustbins,
 whether it is rotten or not is the only thing we get to eat.
 Yet, I'm still grateful that my stomach gets filled.

As I run with fear through the streets,
 I ask the Almighty to give me the strength to live another day,
 so that I may help the people of my land.

- *Riaz Ismail*

Layer by Layer

He didn't just rip her clothes off
He ripped away her layers.
For every second that passed,
He took away
her innocence,
her dignity,
her self-worth,
her purity,
and then he left her,
with scars
that would last
for eternity.

- *Riaz Ismail*

Love, it's a funny thing isn't it?

It might not have been love for you
but for me,

It was everything.

It might not have been love for you
but for me,

you were my everything.

Oh boy, how naïve was I
to think that we were to last forever.

Oh boy, how naïve was I
to think that we would stand the test of time.

Oh how happy I would have been,
my heart still intact,
my trust unwavering
if only...

our eyes never met,

if only...

I didn't say hello.

...and though
you might not have asked me to stay
I would have stayed
for the both of us.

- *Riaz Ismail*

Pray for the world

Today, I lost my mother, my father, my son, my daughter,
and every single person whom I loved.

I didn't realize that life would be so cruel towards me.

A piercing white light lit up the sky,
people ran for shelter,
not knowing whether they will live or die.

I watched as bullets pierced through the bodies of my loved ones.

I watched as buildings collapsed and crushed my neighbours.

I watched as innocent people were bombed.

I yelled out, hoping that by some divine miracle they would be alive,
but not today.

Today was not a day for miracles.

Today was a day for loss.

I fell to the floor, holding my child's lifeless body in my hands.

I kissed her cold soft cheek as I lay her body on the floor,
covering it with her favourite blanket.

I brushed away the tears as I bid her farewell.

Why do people have to pay with their life's blood?

Through the tears, screams and bloodshed,
people shouting out to their loved ones to take cover.

Merciless creatures parading the streets,
shooting bullets as if it were raining.

I saw rivers of blood flowing down my streets.

I cried and shouted for help, but no one came to help us.

Our home was taken, destroyed, nothing left to our name.

Millions of people have been forced to leave their homes.

More than hundreds of people have been massacred.

Thousands have become homeless. How long can this carry on?

I shouted out to the people,

You are not alone! Help is on the way! Just keep holding on!

But the time for hope was long gone.

We were alone with our pain, our loss and our cries.

If only we had value
If only we had mattered.

- *Riaz Ismail*

Second Chances

Maybe we will have another chance
when the world isn't so cruel
maybe then, I will be able to love you
the way you deserve.

But for now,
I will have to set you free
so that you may be loved
the way you deserve
by someone else.

And when the world
asks you, have you been loved?
I hope that your answer
brings you joy,
I hope that you tell it often.
I hope that you feel comforted
as the words warm your heart.

My wish for you
is that you are loved
more than love itself.

- *Riaz Ismail*

Yesterday a Son, Today an Orphan, Tomorrow a Slave

My demons are not made from my imagination,
for if they were,
they would see how scared I am,
they would turn to comfort me
as I am now all alone.

They call me an orphan now,
but yesterday,
I was just a boy,
who loved baking cakes with my mother,
and sitting on my father's lap.

But today,
I am a man,
forced to work for merciless creatures.
My legs shackled.
My dignity stripped.
Fed just enough to work,
but not enough to escape the walls.

I close my eyes,
and smile,
knowing I'll soon be reunited
with my parents.

- *Riaz Ismail*



For Oria

I weep, for you
Newborn, thighs barely ripe
With fistfuls of trepidation
And the heartbeat of a warrior

My love,
I will draw blood for you
And store it on my windowsill
For all the times death will summon you

I will shave parts of my head
Weekly
To mourn the parts of you,
You have already lost

I fracture my pelvis,
Clear path
Give of all the purity left in me
So that you too may know the sweetness of unscathed skin

I set my tongue alight,
On this stage
For the oceans of silence
That will spend decades
Rioting beneath your skin

Darling,
When your flesh grows cold
And silence turns victor
I will ask that they peel the walls back
For your burial,
I will lay your body to rest in the walls
For the soil is far too sacred to be burdened

Peel the walls back,
For my own burial

Lay my body in the walls
For the soil is too sacred to be burdened with

I,
All spilt
And shaven
And fractured
With a crematorium for a mouth
A carrier of victims

- *Yamoria*

Muted

Placentas spilt into ash valley
 Cries barely moulded
 Our breasts are smeared in his ashes
 Paraffin built breaths boundlessly burdened by bonfire egos
 We are left over flame
 I am a heathen's prayer and yours answered all the same
 My hips remind me of stolen glances, and wet dreams these days
 See men (semen) these days view us as shallow things to drown in
 As limbs cascading down folding but not quite drowning

We are muted
 We are lightning on cardboard
 A paper bag of 29 reasons why god is just a story
 We are muted
 We are sin ridden bibles
 Scarlet seas stretched open to showcase parables of how not to stitch those thighs on
 We are muted

Thrown up stories of how not to decorate the streets
 Or on how to select fabric when stepping out into flame
 We are ice carved kettles and failing to house flame
 We are misinterpretation
 My father's hands housing a diamond my mother will never get to wear
 We are debt ridden bicycles and, on our way, back to slavery

We are something you love only with the parts of you that grow back
 Like your fingernails
 And those sideburns
 And the brittle elements in your masculinity
 Young girl, tell me why you wear your mouth like that
 Like the second cumming (coming) of man won't be housed in that
 And why do dress your parts like that
 Like greater amount of fur ever detoured the predator from hunting prey like that
 And why do you flick your tongue like that
 And choke on cum (rum) like that
 We are muted

- *Yamoria*

The Rupture

We are the striking and the rock
 Called to the altar to be christened in the name of
 ‘Buried in a shallow grave’ in the name of
 ‘Suspended from God’s grace’

They have been striking, we are the rock
 To be discarded:
 Beneath things
 Behind things
 Inside things
 Remaining, Silent things

Rakgadi gauwa tswara tipa ka mo bogaleng,
 You are the massacre behind it
 The sphandla feeding off of their wrists
 They are skipping stones with your bones
 Willing you to hold yourself above water
 As if to say, “where is your Jesus now”?
 As if to say, “where is the liberator of Israelites now”?
 As if to say, “how many amens can we usher between your ribcage now”?

Koko danced herself into a casket
 Offering her blood as a tablecloth
 She is skin, melting away at the seams,
 Offering her rupture as a chorus
 She is still stitching her marrow together with her split ends
 They don’t quite math her crumbling nature,
 But Koko still lays myriads of skin as prayer mats

She has always been the chanting, the chanting, the chanting before the sacrifice
 The summoning and the spirit
 The renewal and the becoming
 The slaughter and the cleansing
 Amen

- *Yamoria*

Victims Apology

Victims are sorry too
 Shame is swallowing what is left of my tongue
 I am reminded of tombstones in the way my reflections respond
 I am drowning in what is left of the air

I am six feet under water and begin to confuse my breath for seaweed
 Where anguish makes a home of your eyeballs
 And your skin is peeled back for seasoning

Remember,
 Women is synonymous with hearse when your feet abort you
 Remember,
 Tomorrow is a luxury, for women with graveyards for mouths
 Remember,
 Victim and apology, both bloom from the same poisoned tree

I'm sorry,
 I'm sorry I wear my innocence as an appetizer,
 Maybe next week the sky will be more willing to devour his skin from beneath my fingernails

I'm sorry,
 I'm sorry I defaced Saturn's sheets
 Splitting virtuous evils with the Devil

I'm sorry,
 Sorry the wind came bearing no lyrics
 I swear we composed melodies of
 No,
 Or stop,
 Or no

I'm sorry,
 I'm sorry I couldn't dictate the seasons
 Autumn came to soon, smuggling breaking in their pockets
 Autumn darling,
 How do you answer to God when your own skin has forsaken you?

Say sorry,
 Say sorry you flaunt your depression as jewellery, or humour
 Little girls with sunburns are not worthy of pearls

I'm sorry
 I'm sorry today's waves beached in my dignity for questioning
 I'm sorry
 I'm sorry my weeds are unearthing the pavement

Rage never did bloom as a pretty flower

I'm sorry
 Sorry my mouth isn't built for housing thunder
 I'm sorry
 Sorry the wind came bearing no lyrics
 Little girls with sunburns are not worthy of pearls

Autumn
 How do you answer to God your skin has forsaken you
 Autumn
 How do you answer to God, You flaunt depression as jewellery
 Autumn
 Your mouth was not built for this,
 Housing thunder and beached dignities
 Autumn, say sorry
 I'm sorry I haven't learnt to breathe in a body bag.

- *Yamoria*



A CHARITABLE ANTHOLOGY

An abstract painting with a vibrant, multi-colored palette. The background is a mix of deep blues, greens, and reds, with a prominent diagonal streak of bright yellow and orange. The surface is covered in various splatters, drips, and brushstrokes, creating a textured and dynamic composition. The colors are rich and saturated, with some areas appearing more saturated than others. The overall effect is one of energy and movement.

THIS IS A BOOK WE HOPE YOU WILL CHERISH FOR
A LIFETIME, FOR WITHIN ITS PAGES YOU WILL
FIND A PIECE OF EACH POET'S HEART, HAILING
FROM ALL DIFFERENT WALKS OF LIFE TO
COLOURFULLY MERGE AND DARE TO DREAM OF
AN EGALITARIAN WORLD FOR US ALL. TOGETHER
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