

INKSPIRED CHAPBOOK SERIES 2023

Tomorrow is a Dove



Adesiyan
Oluwapelumi

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DEDICATION

to the young boy I was ten years ago...

PRAISES FOR THE BOOK

“(Poetry) reading, is fast becoming a volatile, ephemeral & shortchanged activity. This is not due to the readers' inability to appreciate the art before them, but mostly due to the ineptitude of the artists or writers to give their readers a scale of options with which their reading can be guided. One major poet who incorporates this idea into his art is Adesiyan Oluwapelumi, who offers us an eclectic approach to the perception of poetry. With such eclecticism one could almost term him a polymath; like Aristotle, Da Vinci, or Caravaggio—among others. Like an artist mixing colours with his spatula & palette, his ability to meld brief histories, collective memories, nature, & time-dialed emotions into one seamless whole—with 21 poems—affords readers the emblem of “relativity” irrespective of the time zone he paints. Through this, he doesn't offer only perspective but clarity. *Tomorrow is a Dove* is Oluwapelumi's conscious effort to portray humanity in retrospect & prospect. This, for some, might be an outright stretch of “limitation” but when we really look at it, humanity in itself is an inexhaustible concept. I so much like to see this chapbook as a Darwinian construct of humanity which spawns from series of activities initiated & motivated by man himself, & his interaction with (to)morrow.”

— Prosper C. Ìfẹ́ányí, *Author of Sermon (Ghost City Press)*.

In "*Tomorrow is a Dove*," the pages of this exquisite chapbook become a sanctuary for the soul, a place where the heart's deepest whispers find expression. Through a tapestry of evocative verses, the poet takes us on a journey through the complexities of life, love, and longing. Each poem within this collection is a delicate brushstroke in a portrait of emotions, from the tender nostalgia of "*Ode to Memories*" to the profound introspection of "*Time's Signature*." These verses explore the intricate dance between memory and reality, and how our pasts shape the tapestry of our existence.

As the reader plunges deeper into the pages, they will discover the beauty in life's imperfections and the wisdom that resides in scars, as depicted in "The Art of Metamorphism." The chapbook beautifully captures the essence of resilience and growth, reminding us that the human spirit can triumph over adversity. It is a lyrical exploration of the human experience, a gentle reminder that, even in the darkest moments, hope flutters on the horizon like a dove. The poems are like lanterns guiding us through the labyrinth of emotions, leaving us with a sense of catharsis and a renewed appreciation for the fragile yet enduring nature of existence.

In this collection, the poet's words become a soothing balm for the weary heart, an invitation to reflect on the profound mysteries of life and the promise of a new day. "Tomorrow is a Dove" is a poignant and contemplative chapbook that invites readers to embrace the beauty of the present while looking forward to the gentle promise of tomorrow.

— *Jaachj Anyatɔnwu, Poet & Publisher, Poemify Publishers*

|
**THE
PAST**

1- THE PAST

“I wanted the past to go away,
I wanted to leave it, like another country;
I wanted my life to close, & open like a hinge, like a
wing...”

- Mary Oliver

MEMORY & RUST

I morph my arms into the skeletal appendages of a fleeced butterfly & in translating the glyphs of transition, I become a memento of glitches.

Say the dynamism of change unfurls like the ecdysis of an indigo dye & wears a rust—a latent death, foaming like soap bubbles into a vacuum of varnish.

& we only happen once—the binary numeric of our cataleptic life shaped like a cyclic polygon deviating from the axes of normalcy.

Atop a tree, an emu twitters a high-strung note—a tune of nostalgia, to fly in reversal to the backlash of its mother's cradle but time refuses its veering venture of osmosis.

Tonight, the sepia of a photogenic memory corrodes in the darkroom of my thoughts & a moth descends on the crest of my torso to feast on the fading lights of an image film.

THE ART OF METAMORPHISM

an empty bracket is a familiar origin. a butterfly stowed in an eggshell. & growth is probably the most difficult thing, a body swallowing life in little sips. at first, the mind is a plain & when construction starts, chaos thunders along. sometimes, we must weed the shrubbery in our lives before we can make a grove of fruit trees. a tall sturdy cinnamon tree was once a feathered paper seed. time is the best coach & its departure is the best lesson. the clock will never drift backwards & mistakes will forever remain memorabilia: memories stitched into time, un-frayed & knotted into a tapestry of stasis. the body can never crawl out of its beginning but it can walk out of its end & walk into permanence.

scars teach us the unlearning art of learning & when we enter the classroom of healing, we will have only one course: the art of patching time's loopholes.

GENESIS

i.

you set out like a budding
sunflower from your mother's
womb. you, newborn creature
welcoming the light into the
humour of your eyes. you, with
torched & bespectacled eyes,
squint at dreams of the future.
you begin with a cocktail of
laughter & smiles in your mouth.

ii.

& once everything was in water,
you were a fingerling learning to
swim, learning to un-drown in
the bottle-ness of itself.

TIME'S SIGNATURE

upon the tapestry of our skin, this strain
draws stretchmarks of grief.

this is the exegesis of mourning; what it
means to take a slice of flesh & replace
with silicon of abundant ennui.

or what else can be more dead than the
numbness of being alive?

what can be staler than the decaying
stasis of metamorphism?

stuffed in our mouths are litanies &
dirges, our voice purged into the solitude
of death.

we wear pastiches of bullet holes & even
though these burrows are windows;
windows into the spatial universe of our
grief, our losses are mere breadcrumbs in
the backwater confluence of letting go &
holding on.

by which i mean, how lucky are we to
have losses so small enough to fit into
the orifice of our mouths.

ODE TO MEMORIES

"Time is an illusion" -Einstein

a gulp of liquor spurs latent
reminiscences but you whitewash the bad
memories turning sober.

nostalgia is your favourite child's play; a
celestial traverse into the world of
imagination

& every conjured fantasy is your reality.

this is how you shapeshift dystopia into
utopia,

how you thwart the wheels of time's
entropy

& cycle into the ubiety of joy. haploid of
reality dissected into the duplicity of
existentiality.

you are a master of remembrance but
you forget more than is to be
remembered.

to remember is a malady.

ODE TO DECAYING LEAVES

the leaves decay. ammonified, they
reincarnate back to the tree. there is no
way to tell my birth than this.

september is a new memory but does
august fade for autumn to become
existent? i ask my mother & she answers
in echoes of silence.

does the past not demand an autopsy? do
we need to move on if we don't want to?

a cinnamon falls & cracks. its seeds
splatter on the ground. the rain
denitrifies. the seeds grow into trees.

November lurks, the trees are sick again.
here, I'm telling my son to gather the
seeds. that's the only way you can
preserve the leaves, the trees, autumn,
mother, me & him.

II
THE
PRESENT

THE PRESENT

“Time is a mother”

-*Ocean Vuong*

MORNING ELEGY

The sun breaks incense over my skin & I
can't take the discolouring. I can't take
the vulcanization these ashes of me left
to decay into a smoky shadow of
absence.

To console me is to palpate embers into
snow. What do you know? Can you
acculturate these brown sand dunes with
care or tomb the skin of a man who
sleeps under the umbra of his footsteps?
How can cremation ever be
consecration?

AUBADE TO DAWN

The morning sun awakens, unsheathing darkness from my cornea & sleep plunges into an abyss; my appendages, excited like neurons rushing through cytoplasmic streams. This morning I awaken with a flair like no other morning, suddenly noticing everything beautiful about the beginning of a day. The symphony of mockingbirds in the rear, humming a sonorous tune of ecstasy. The ethereal melody from the beating of their powerful wings. The sweet fragrance of daffodils from my neighbour's garden. The synthesising tick-tock of the wall clock. The whispering dialogue between two ants opposite my bed. The music of the gentle breeze blowing through the venetian blinds...

ANXIETY IS A WAY OF LIFE

Filter

I am drained of
Every dewdrop of happiness
Through the mesh of my hollow body.
& I, dust in the fireworks of light,
Escape the drizzling storms of darkness.
I, billowed tusk of winterbourne
Streaming down into a gorge
Of realities
Acculturate the mimesis of shame.
Here, fear is a fleece wool Unfurling in
the cotton eyes
Of a cowardly man.
& every prayer, the blossoming
Of nightmares before they ripen
In the garden of dreams.

Residue

The remains of memories

Haunt us alike.

In fragments, we break into our death.

Say every light born of darkness

Must return as a wave to its origin.

Say the mind is a haunted gallow

& we wheel thoughts along Like cringing
vehicles enduring

The bruising art of locomotion. Say, to
move is to steer the gears of the mind

In a non-decipherable conveyance.

Speckles

The body knows the littlest wounds.

Every ache— a mountain depressing

Under tactile gravity.

I touch this skin

& it sheds into an ecdysis of monologue.

I am still waiting on what

Won't stay.

Anxiety is a culture

& here, I robe myself

In holy pessimism

BEFORE SUNRISE

Before the next sunrise,
You lay here a sand dune
Perforated by the tendrils of living.
A web of thoughts hovering above you.
Memories receding footsteps.
A ghost of the morning sleeping beneath
your skin.
Ant-like dewdrops streaming down your
flushed face.
A crumb of dessert falling out your lips.
Your eyelids clinging to stay alive rather
than Awake.

EPIPHANY OF THE NIGHT

The night wears the shawl of a permeating twilight parched with crescents of black bioluminescence, a scarlet web over his head as cap, ghostly sledgehammers as shoes & his unshroud skin clad with soot.

Shadows sieved from candle wax. Oil lamps turned zombies regurgitating burnt-out candles.

This is darkness illuminating the mines of light.

PRINCIPLE OF DESPAIR

after Abdulrazaq Salibu

I see the sun wafting upon your skin.

He bites, then mends.

The sky is twitching. This science is a
vulture but you are miraged.

A reflection is the best illusion.

Again, the sky is twitching. An owl
perches on your shoulder, tweets & flies
away. Brown leaves, withered, stale—you
are breaking into shrapnel. I see a forest
with lilies sprouting from the skies
following a decoy into the soil.

Buried, they wither.

SAPPHO

In the dream, my image was flooded by the reflection of Mimesis in the mirror. Eyeballs so big, they could stare into tomorrow's facade. I was a little boy, just learning to weave thoughts into fabrics of fantasy & reality. & with nightmares, I squashed my mural into a black metalhead of night. Deep into the dead silence of the noon of night, I could still hear the clinkers of a monologue enmeshed with the stubborn art of shattering. We never break enough.

Polaroid

From a film crawls out a demi-creature.

His slimy hands speckled with satin
pixels.

Most times, the demon forgets its culture,
Wears a regalia of charming nostalgia.

& somehow, his body morphs into a
baptizand.

Swimming in a pool of murky memories,

A photograph crackles in his eyes.

The clinkers of ageing sepia deoxidizing.

At the backwater of time, there is a
trapdoor.

Everyone enters & comes out naked
torso.

We are what we remember we are.

Winterbourne

My first memory of winter unwinds like
a tape playing in reverse.

Mother drags me to the iced garden &
says " Touch the ixora & listen".

This is my first language

& contact: my first response.

My body talks " he who respire, also
stills ". I realise death is a climate & I am
but a tide weathering in its transition.
The horror of a thing is in its tension.

My first death, staged on the eve of a
solstice. The gross darkness: my first
grave & the bleeding night blushing
black: my first cut.

This is the constitution of seasons.

A bowl of blood oranges laid before me.

A wanting haunting my lips. & in my
temptation, I break a fast at the
sacrament of oaths.

The body commands " You mustn't taste
your blood".

" You mustn't orchestrate your murder".
& yet again like a sea clam expertized in

the shattering art of crash courses, I
break into fragmented triangles.

The shape draws the axes of my body,
soul & spirit to its centre

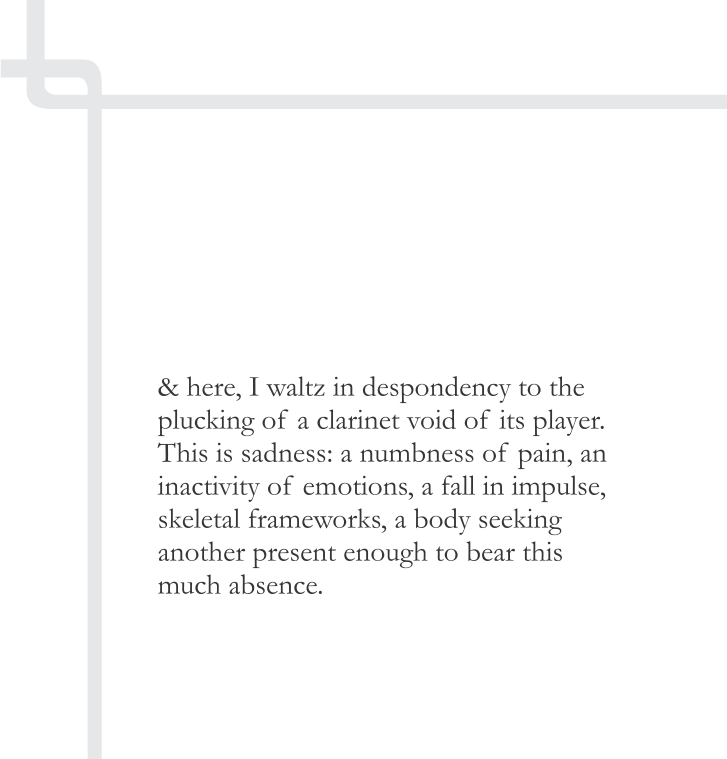
& like a cataleptic polygon, we break
again.

Truth is: I was dead to be born. I only
know what melody rhymes with silence.

Mother, you have given me this art, let
me by my contrition, master the skills to
stretch this edgeless body out of its walls.

0°C

I suffer in cold silence. The centigrade of my depression, like that of an iceberg, There is something sinister about winter. & memories. October & the nostalgic breeze. Remembrance & its brisk semblance with a thawing snowball. Outside, the rain patters on the rooftop. The furnace is cooking another meal to soothe the surge of gloom traversing through the tunnels of my homoeothermic body. The rain, growling like a sea monster, diffuses the aura of fear through the burrowed parchment of the windowsill. The wind whispers to me like harem of wraiths hovering above my poorly lit cubicle & the sun, turned stranger to this moony face, exchanges its warm pleasantries of Harmattan, as the month crawls back into its shell. Sometimes, to be feeble is not a testament of fragility. The days, with suckers like an ectoparasite, drain every sap of my energy till I am nothing but a withered fig traversing slowly to its death. The crickets squeak to assure me of their solidarity. But sound is merely a girly figurine birthing this body of silent-wailing melancholy. Gloom is a sad song



& here, I waltz in despondency to the plucking of a clarinet void of its player. This is sadness: a numbness of pain, an inactivity of emotions, a fall in impulse, skeletal frameworks, a body seeking another present enough to bear this much absence.

A NEW SEASON

Fluffy wheaten tails conglomerate in the
Oak tree's belly. Aching hearts seek the
ointment of Autumn but the sun's
panoramic appetite keeps feeding on the
scathing leaves & soon the the tree
withers—so do the bones of these
broken bodies.

II
THE
PRESENT

III - THE FUTURE

“Say tomorrow doesn't come...

Say we never get to see it: bright,
future...”

— Ada Limon

REBIRTH

after Ocean Vuong

Suppose you rewrite the story of your life & the body reverts from a coffin sealed with bruises. Suppose you woke & found your body replaced by another.

The new body, beautiful & full of dreams. Would you take a knife & unclad the wall till a beam of light appears & you look, at last, on happiness? A world staring back at you waiting for you to begin.

WILD GEESE

after Mary Oliver

I wish I was three & un-sober with all the
mistakes I make.

Little cunning hands!

There will be no need for coffee or hemp
to inebriate this asphyxia.

There will be cloudy jets of euphoria & I
wouldn't even need to wallow in the
moist sorrow of my Jacuzzi.

Although I'm not three & untethered, I
wish time was a dice & every side the
same. But evolution rides on the wheels
of stasis, doesn't it?

LEARNING TO FLY FOR THE FIRST TIME

As I stance for flight: to soar above the earth & gaze down upon the things that fetter me, I flap my hands like wings & posture my legs as though a pair of gliders.

I surge then fall.

I surge again & fall.

I surge again, this time propelling my whole weight through the pummelling wind till I get the chance to fellowship with the birds & seraph-winged beings in the clouds.

TOMORROW IS A DOVE

with wings clipped for flight, to say I flutter like a feather in the ether of the meaningless & bokeh of the incomprehensible. White barbs fall off & like a bird, I am naked to the susceptibility of a flu. I mean, tomorrow is a testament of phantasm, a cough of mist before today's facade. hope, a speedometer linearly activated by longing, a wishful stretch to reach far beyond the limits of the near. I suppose this is the mechanics of flight, being blind to what lies ahead yet flying regardless even in the fog, because the unseen is trustworthy as an abstract ally.

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Tomorrow
is a
Dove

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Adesiyan Oluwapelumi, TPC XI, is a medical student, poet & essayist from Nigeria. He was the winner of the Cheshire White Ribbon Day Creative Contest (2022) & 1st runner up in the Fidelis Okoro Prize for Poetry (2023). His works are published/forthcoming in Fantasy Magazine, Poet Lore, Tab Journal, Poetry Wales, Variant Literature & elsewhere. A 2023 Adroit Journal Summer Mentee, a 2023 SprinNG Writers' Fellow & a finalist for HFR Indigenous Poets Prize, he reads poetry for Kitchen Table Quarterly & is the Assistant Editor of Fiery Scribe Review. He was selected for inclusion in the Annual Outstanding Young Writers Anthology (Paper Crane, 2023). He tweets @ademindpoems.

