

The background of the cover is a photograph showing a flooded area. In the foreground, there is a dark, reflective surface of water. A metal gate with vertical bars is partially submerged in the water. In the background, there are trees, some of which appear to be bare or have lost their leaves, suggesting a winter or late autumn setting. The sky is overcast and grey.

CHAPTERS *of* BROKEN TALES

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Chapters of Broken Tales

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INKspired

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Nostalgia

A place I once called
home
Now echoes
miseries and
dirge.

Children of my father run
wide —
Lynching their own at the altar of
Baal.

Home
no longer
home.

The owls sing at
noon to our ears,
and
Fathers
fear the ways of their
children.

Mothers wail rivers
to sail their griefs away.

Home calls but everyone is
on the run.

Religion

When we all grow wings today,

Shall we then fly to the heavens?

For the world we called our own,

Has been made hell in our hands.

Out of our own anger and greed

We have planted sparks and fanned them to embers

Yesterday I read it from their holy book

We are love and we preach love to humanity

But the other day I saw them planting fire

In the body of their own sister and brother

Did you know that they even killed their messiah?

Don't forget to tell me that I am now an Antichrist!

My Mother's Daughter

Tiktok

-and we climbed to the deck

& the ship sailed to the new world

-warlords, those better dead than alive,

They made us sacrifice our privacy before their gaze;

Onboard the ship, grief ruptured my mother's countenance
as she watched her daughter dance before a stranger. What
our tradition abhors.

The ship

-last night, my mother's daughter climbed onto the
deck;

-her sacred rituals became what whore returns to;
for she has found pleasure in what pains her mother
passed through in the hands of the world

Her daughter danced before the world

Naked, and the sailors giggled at the fallen beauty of my
mother's daughter; who shall deliver her

-my mother mourns again tonight

& she thick-talked to the girl in her daughter

-to know what sacredness lies within her privacy
and the traditions of her people

For onboard the ship once, her sorrows of dancing bare
body before the eyes of the sailors, many find salvation
under the bed of the sea rather than uncovering their
bodies before those who are not their husbands and wife.

The Star Trapped Within A Boy

*"How do I know that I am a soul
trapped in a body?"*

In another of my poems,

I became a boy trapped in a
body.

Inside this body,

a man calls me by the name of a star.

And in the early morning rain, he called,

and my name thundered.

Rain drenched my heart

with thousands of thoughts as

I ran my hands on the surface of the skies

of things that I have longed for.

And in the middle of the night, I stand-alone

—still looking, counting the shining stars

and I see myself in their midst but

the little voice of the man

trapped within me doubts

the reality of the light I see.

How To Paint Grief In My Country

A drop of rain on canvas.

Each passing of the day,
I kneel before my portrait.

Painting as a ritual
to caress the pains
that are visible;
this portrait of a boy who wails.

Each tear drops
like dew to water my grief.

Pain:
pain clothed in a name.

A name:
the name of a country in miseries.

Miseries:
my country has made us
children of miseries in the morning.

We run after the name of a country
At the noon,
the name whispers terror.

Terrors:

terrors became the bed
we make in the evening.

In the evening:

we think of becoming
the children of the morning.

A drop of rain on the canvas of time,
Everyone grieves, and grief became our norm
For every home has its unique pains
Rain drops on the canvas and cleans up
the beauty of the story of this painted portrait.

Broken City

City of broken stones

Broken stories

Broken histories

Broken tales

Broken hearts

Broken arrows

Broken bows

City of broken boys

City of broken girls

Who shall gather your pieces

Who shall listen to your howls

Across the seas, someone called out

Giant of Africa

But when I turned to see the giant leap

All I behold was a broken giant

Fortress

Don't come calling me a fortress

For yesterday

threnody

was heard within my embankments

The children who once loved me now howl at me.

They call me an unsafe haven

The cracks on my walls are now visible

Even the children run at the mention of my name

Hearts

Throbbing

In threnody

Hearts

Throbbing

In sorrows of a failed state.

Don't call me a fortress

For I have failed to protect your inhabitants.

When I Heard Change In The Mouth Of My Father In 2015

Weep not, o
sons of the freed
in bondage

How has this
freedom
eluded your ears

when you chanted
change at the freedom
square?

Weep not o,
sons of the freed.

For your fathers
wailed in the morning
and vowed in the noon

But decided to deceive
you in the evening
with the chants of change.

Worlds Apart

When I turned on the light to see her face
The deep was filled with silence
And I beheld the emptiness within
Of those longings unfulfilled of a soul,
I then knew how we had lived in a
world-apart with our love as the connection
But the face of the deep seas reflects miseries
Pains that barely can be wiped out
When I looked through her eyes,
I saw death and the zeal to kill love
Within her tongue lies a wounded viper
Whizzing to attack at any little peeves
And this she continues to consider her way
The only way to death she had to wish her lover
With each passing day, she hits without a miss
Worlds-apart: miseries unfold itself
One after the other, she proves herself unmarriable
Hysteria; she made her home in assumptions
And of the cruelty of life and failed love stories,
Daily at the altar of her tongues, she murders love
Even the father of her born and unborn children
And when she whispers her words, she means harm

Nigeria

The truths we have failed to tell ourselves will keep hurting us until we learn from them.

Time shall tell what we have become
in this country of our birth and subjection
The impunity of our elders in council
those who run after their pot bellies
on the hills of our wealth and power
to deny what binds than separate
On the hills of our freedom is death
whispering in the ears of the people
—a nation's collapse, more visible than its bond
For the people abhor the truth of our diversity,
instead, they baptise lies in the name of truth
& our amen(s) crack away from the shells off lies

Longings

There is a land where my soul longs for
and there is a mountain to climb

I am in my prayers at the altar
calling out to a being I am told lives
up
-skies

Each night my dreams grow wings,
- off my bosom, they race into the
- deep
- forest
- where I find it hard to locate them
- one by one -
I breathe in the morphing of languages

Languages not understood by many
I breathe in the fresh air of Savannah gorges

Threnody

Before my mother emptied herself to the wind that swept
away /her/ footprints outside our home like a hurricane,
& returned with a butterfly with broken wings, /She/
came dancing,

dancing to everything that echoed,
—just like those that were beaten by the hands of the
wind and on a stormy day.

She had once told me about the village /masquerade/,
the beautiful waist dance of the village's /virgins/ during
the festivals

Mother said, they begin by throwing a step into the gale,
& like nothing holds them, they move gently.

With every hit of the village's /old drums/, &
their beauties glowing in the eyes of our men—
& they became the choice of everyone who sought.

It has become a cinch now, that there are beautiful ones,
who are ready to be called wives and embrace
womanhood.

Rainbow

I am sitting alone in a rainbow town
Where youthful dreams paint the skies
The colours of a rainbow in dirge

Each watching out as their dreams grow wings
Dashing into oblivion in the mouth of a country
Where we are yet to learn our lessons
Rainbow city

Rainbow town

Rainbow dreams

Sitting alone in a rainbow town
Your colours have confused us the more
When would this child within me learn to crawl
You have stayed more than you are expected

Let Nigeria Not Happen To You

I wish I had rivers in my eyes,
A sea to sail grief on

When the town crier announced
That you have become like the winds.

I asked if you
came with the eventide

For they come along
With lost memories of old.

And I know how gentle and caring you were
Not until last night, when Nigeria happened to you

Dear Dreams

To keep you afloat,
I have got your wings.

Over the horizon,
You will take flight,

To the land of Oz.
I am your wonder man,

The magic crafter.
I am willing to be

As long as your flight.
Dear dream, come true.

Nigeria

Perhaps, we have not returned at all
to gather under the shade of a name;
of this name and its givers unannounced
at the threshold of howls of our lives
under this name, we are called noon.

Under this name, we have known death.
At every mention of this name we bear,
dreams grow wings and dash out astray
into the darkest part of hell.

A piece day, the name strangles us to earth.
Iron fists knock knit against our breath
we perspire to grasp life at a glimpse
but this name, death and sting
hover beneath the surface of our lives.

Call Me Independence

You who saw the hands that pulled the trigger
And on the field of your fatherland your blood flows.
With the voice of our ancestors before the beast
You voice the last words of a true hero of Africa.
I know that you have come to kill me on this field,
But I have made this decision even before your coming.
To die as a martyr for my people and their freedom,
As tonight, even the flowers on this field bear witness
That I am innocent of whatsoever sin I am here for.
For this cause, I have been creating friends
But they have turned enemies of our freedom,
Chosen the enslaver over their brothers,
Betrayed our blood for the stranger.



John Chinaka Onyeche is an author, poet, and teacher of History and African History. He is the author of *Echoes Across The Atlantic*, *A Night Tale At The Threshold Of Howl*, *We Returned To Kiss The Cross*, *The Broken Fort*, *A Good Day For Tomorrow's Coming*, *Stateless*, and a chapbook *Chapters Of Broken Tales*. He is a Best of Net Nominee. A husband, father and poet from Nigeria. John composes his work from the city of Port Harcourt Rivers State, Nigeria. He is currently a student of History and Diplomatic Studies at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt Rivers State. When John is not writing, he loves reading.

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