

**IN A
MAN'S
BODY**

IZANG ALEXANDER HARUNA

It is your silence that lets anarchy reign

IN A MAN'S BODY

IZANG ALEXANDER HARUNA

Table of Contents

Praises for In A Man's Body.....	6
Dedication.....	8
Appreciation.....	9
Foreword.....	10
Introduction.....	12
1. DEAR BOY	15
2. THIS BOY CALLS YOU FATHER.....	16
3. SONG OF HOPE: FOR SUFFERING CHILDREN	18
4. TO MY GODSONS	19
5. BEYOND THE LIGHTS: DREAM OF A BOYCHILD.....	20
6. WERE WE THIS GOOD?	21
7. COUNT	22
8. COLOURS FOR BOYS.....	23
9. WAR ZONE	24
10. TO THE BOY IN THIS MAN	25
11. BOY, READ	26
13. THIS BOY IS A CREEPER TREE	28
14. A BOY IS AN ART AT HEART	29
16. DREAM.....	31
17. WHAT'S THE FUSS ABOUT?	32
18. CHILD SOLDIERS	33
19. I CAN'T REMEMBER.....	34
20. MALE AND HUMAN	35

The right of INKSpiredng to be identified as the publisher of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the copyright laws. No part of this publication may be reproduced, retained or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Scanning, uploading, electronic sharing of any part of this book without the written permission of the author will constitute unlawful piracy and theft of the author's intellectual property.

Cover Design by Miracle Quist

All rights reserved. Copyright ©2025 by Izang Alexander Haruna



PRAISES FOR *IN A MAN'S BODY*

In a Man's Body tells the transformative power of art and the enduring search for empathy, understanding, and connection. Through the lens of a writer, leader, and artist, Izang spotlights the power of words, the beauty of creativity, and the resilience of the human spirit. He invites us to this deeply personal yet relatable journey through the difficulties of life, the depths of the human experience, and the uncharted territories of the soul. With uttermost honesty and lyrical prowess, these poems navigate the intersections of mental health, identity, and social justice; bearing witness to the struggles and triumphs that shape not only boys and men, but we all.

-Asibi Akwa Felicity (Poet, Social Justice Advocate, & CEO Sibiscus Publishing)

In a Man's Body presents the issues we shy away from as a society: the dynamics of being a boy child. Izang uses beautifully crafted wordplays that create relatable mental pictures that would stick long after the pages closed. A deeply emotional work of art that holds the boy's hand to know whom to be accountable to and also points out the responsibilities we owe the boy child from our different standpoint of his life. *In a Man's Body* is for every boy child, for every human being and every community. A call to do better!

-Cordelia Nanna Pam (Media Consultant, and Founder of Male and Human Foundation)

This Book took over my life the moment I cracked through its vines, the insight in the world of being a male and human in a society that deems them as stones. The idea of detection by the buffet and trials of real life depicted in this book is a life lesson plan for everyone to avoid being or becoming pillaging mothers and fathers who silence their sons, throw them in a battlefield called life as unprepared teens. This book teaches us that a Boychild is a colourful work of art who deserves to be held up to touch the sun, they can be more than haunting scars armed with crude desires. Boys' wellbeing/mental health matters.

-Loyce Lungu, a.k.a Mysterious Riser (Poet, Social Justice Advocate)

In a Man's Body hits you with an honesty that's both delicate & necessary. Alexander Izang Haruna has given us everything in a book—scripture, guidebook, nostalgia, hope—a conversation we can no longer afford to defer.

-Jide Badmus, Author Obaluaye

Dedication

To Andrew Gazu and Shedrack David, with whom most memories of boyhood were formed—your flowers wilted too soon but their fragrances abide forever.

To Boys are Not Stones Initiative (BANSI), Male and Human Foundation, and all who hold the fort in advocacy for the boychild.

To boys all over the world.

Appreciation

This anthology is essentially possible on account of the generosity and kindness of Jide Badmus and his team, taking it as a personal project brought out the best in this chapbook. Punchline Poetry Society (PPS) remains ever the breeding ground for this possibility, truly a home for a poet. My comrades in reading at Africareads Club (ARC), particularly Obingo Wesonga and Mysterious Riser have made this output a reality with much ease and facility. I think most kindly of other friends, who mentioning here will amount to a litany. The home front can't be forgotten, ever providing the needed stability for my thriving. Family and friends are God's way of taking care of me. Above all, to the glory of God who has blessed me in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places—God who had a wondrous boyhood in this valley of tears.

Foreword

Far as the globe stretches, society's predicament showcases differences in reaction from different people. Some will resort to handle situations via intrusive force, protests, picketing and bickering. And there are those that will summon the might of the pen—which often outweighs that of swords—to address relevant issues in their societies through its bleed of blue. Issues may be many that affect a wide range of the societies' young and old in day and night, which require calm observant eyes to take the data and be able to champion for society's liberation. But this poses a risk: what can one pick on to address in the society, and how sincere can such a one be on whatever they pick without ruining honesty?

In this collection of poems, a calm mind in Alexander Izang poses to observe youths—but most importantly, the vulnerability of a boychild—and takes patience of gestation to interact, meditate, prod and ask that which bedevils a boychild that would later leave the future of his society on a perilous cliff. Then, his pen gives birth to his observations in a most tranquil of ways that pulses to the inner nod of nerves: through an exploration that is warm and life-affirming. The collection dramatizes through its question tag moments, the need of self-awareness from both the subject matter—boys, and its caregiver—society. Much as in most poems one reads harmony in furry through their tone, structural dynamism, optimism, education and parental and/or societal guidance amongst other uncomfortable occurrences for the boy child, are areas of experience that Alexander Izang grapples with at the tip of philosophy as to why we seem comfortable, as a society, when the need to ameliorate the boychild is already beckoning with red flashing beacons.

In a way, the forgotten nature of a boychild is chilling and thus this collection comes in handy to tap on our shoulder so that we can offer a saving glance in the direction of children with breaking voices, since, life in their world – as is generally – is a demanding struggle. Throughout the book, the moral standpoints from the poet are clear. For instance, in the poem ‘YOU ARE A LEADER NOW’, Alexander Izang becomes educational in that he explores the meaning of being a leader, rendering an overarching theme of sacrifice to a reader so as to help cement the sense of responsibility. Through the mood created by the persona, to lead is to put others first, and this is one of the values that many societies limp on in addressing, especially to youths, and the societal thinking that through induction, youths are wired to just grasps conventionally what to do without hiccups, only to end up taking examples from the topsy-turvy political class.

There are various aspects on which Alexander Izang has poured his hearty ink through his pen. He has shared with us his feelings and thoughts with regard to life but by putting the boy child at the focal point of societies. Whereas some poems may not give a direct answer to the topic concerned, a reader is allowed a narrative space to piece their thoughts and allow a guidance of literature to take its course. Where these thoughts are tied, I dare believe that such is done with utmost sincerity, hoping that readers will be wooed to rethink about the subject matter, keenly so, perhaps in an attempt to push ahead the boy child empowerment conversation too.

Finally, much as generations will come and go through a sequence that dictates old life has to die for a new one to blossom and flourish, this book will stay as a guide. It reminds generations that much as it belongs to Alexander Izang, it is equally ours. It is the best offering that depicts how far we can all go as a society, only if we allow the suckers to grow amongst the grown bananas. We were nurtured to be the gatekeepers we are today. Just as we were nurtured, so are we behoved to nurture, for sustainability of a human ecosystem.

Obingo Wesonga
Poet, and Founder, Africareads Club
Kenya, May 2025.

Introduction

This chapbook can trace its roots to the efforts of Jamiu Ahmed, John Vincent Chizoba, Jaachi Anyatonwu, who led the novel initiative of recalling the focus of the world to the plight of the Boychild through the instrument of the Boys Are Not Stones Anthology. I was deeply impressed by this reality—having found it strike a chord in my heart—something of a burden that I never knew existed. I've understood the assignment to be not a competition with the equally laudable initiatives advocating for the girlchild but a gap that needs filling, to ensure that the child—male or female—will be safe secure.

There's no denying that Art can be for Art's sake, but herein, the art of poetry is a sacred medium for enshrining truths, conveying messages about the phenomenon of the boychild—with its beauty and ugliness, its benefits and burdens. Doug Kazé has impressed on my mind the philosophy of poetry as a way of seeing, it is essentially vision. This chapbook is an expression of how I've seen my experience of boyhood and its relatability reflected in the life of the average Boychild.

These 20 pieces should score a point about the reality under review. The purpose of this anthology is expressed in the poem "What's the Fuss About?"—being as it were, a haunting reminder to listen deeply to the quiet devastation they carry, to their silences heavy with grief, to lives too often overlooked. It is to remind boys of their worth but also all the world, especially parents, teachers, guardians, caregivers, and mentors, that truly boys are not stone rather they are human as expressed in the poem "Male and Human." Never should anyone fit into the indicting description "a guilty bystander" as drawn from Thomas Merton.

This chapbook is simply an invitation that tallies the Biblical exhortation "come and see." It is my expectation that the reader should see something that

I've seen and in turn invite others to see. Can anything good come out of the boychild? This collection guides the reader along such path of finding answers. Do not be surprised if you are met with a strong nostalgia as you're gently prodded to remember your boyhood or girlhood as the case may be. One of the goals of the chapbook is to ensure remembrance as seen in the piece "I Can't Remember."

Find in them admonition, find in them exhortation, find in them indictment, find in them education, find in them entertainment, find in them tribute, find in them a piece of your own self or of a boychild you know, above find in them the celebration of the wonder that is a boychild.

Izang Alexander Haruna

May, 2025

1. DEAR BOY

These ashes you see on my tongue
Are tasteless tales of years long past
How I began stronger than cedar
Now, wood fuel on the altar of mistakes

Not the freshest of Olives
Neither the most fragrant of roses
Nor the most gleeful of lilies
None compared to the sap of my youth

I hold myself, torn history
divided into unequal eras
Of bloom
And gloom

I deserve no tears
But spare a minute silence for my dream
Spare a minute of silence for the conqueror conquered
Observe a half-mast for an Odysseus who betrayed the name

Dear son, waste not my mistakes
Waste not the sap of your youth
Keep the verdure, trace the path of fine wine
Your destiny, like Penelope, awaits your return home

2. THIS BOY CALLS YOU FATHER

This boy calls you father—
Can't you hear his voice trembling with fear
his hands, like seedlings, clinging to earth.
He defers to your conscience,
His shadow is cast in this uncertain tale
He awaits you to name him a man.

But you turned deaf
The machete you sharpen,
You tie the bundle,
You send the oracle's whisper ahead of him—
Father, forget not the weight of your hands.

This boy calls you father—
Do not bear a hand in his death.
Sacrifice him not in your silence.
Is he palm wine poured too soon?
A broken mortar ground to dust?

Do you not see him as wood yet unburnt?
To hold the ember is all he awaits
Simply the flame to bear.
This boy calls you father,
Awaits you to name him a man.

Things fall apart—the falcon hears nothing,
Nothing that the falconer is saying.
But it is your hand that loosens the weave,
Your feet that trample the nursery,
Your breath that quenches the fire.
It is your silence that lets anarchy reign.

This boy calls you father—
Have no hand in the
Death of his voice.
Bear no share in this show of shame,
Change your name or live up to it.

3. SONG OF HOPE: FOR SUFFERING CHILDREN

The days seem darker than night
Soon shall the Daystar shed his light
Bored and encircled are you by gloom
Look up, the birds sing of coming bloom

Lifeless does life lie like dry bones
Friendless, forlorn, lonely and alone
Cheer up, take stress to weave a smile
The nectar of grace shall wipe the bile

For life is an ascent up a pyramid
Full of risings and fallings—but like David,
you're souls after God's heart
Singing Psalm must be the purest art.

4. TO MY GODSONS

Dear Child, you strike a depth unknown
A poetic mystery
You are a city, a temple—God's own—
A cloud of glory

Dear Child, you tell the power of water and words
The power of a certain blood-flood
The joy is wild—it stutters for expression.
Only in experience can you find comprehension

Dear Child, you are poetry of re-creation
A new garden blooming with flowers
Threatened by thorns of corruption
Your core option is the slain Lamb's powers

Dear Child, you are the lightning of God
You strike louder than a peal of thunder
But uneasy awaits the path you tread
Stride with awe, simplicity and wonder

Dear Child, you are heaven held in arms, and
Like Mary's little great wonder-mystery
Enwrapped in this frail skin's som'tin of God:
Likeness. Image. Grace. Lightning and Glory.

5. BEYOND THE LIGHTS: DREAM OF A BOYCHILD

(First published by Brigitte Poirson Anthology for June 2019)

I want to be a star
That I may shine beyond the night
I have within me a candle covered by scars
I want to dispel the dark—ignite.

I see myself in the galaxy of tomorrow
Written on the clouds is my name
I want to dine with the moon—boys of other worlds
That the world be brightened by my fame

We too can be like our sis-stars
Shining together as though clothed with the sun
Let the world stand in awe of us
Let them anticipate us like dawn

In each of us is an anxious genius aiming beyond the sky
Willing to twinkle more than diamonds
Together we form a royal fleet
But we can't shine unless given space

The atmosphere would be dull
If the sis-stars alone colour the sky
If the sisters are to know no blisters
Pay attention to the boy child too

6. WERE WE THIS GOOD?

song of victory for the street boys

We were born and raised in the hood
Notorious ghettos that could assure us no food
Wearing rags that left us nude
Left drowning in a pool of despair we asked:
From Nazareth, can there come anything good?

We were like weeds among wheat
Our songs treated as misfit beats
Our struggle scorned as starved of wit
Our hopes broken, deprived of potential feats
In that night of despondency, I asked a dude
In life, is there anything good?

Now, we are like lilies among thorns
To see us they have to take turns
Without beats they listen to our songs
Some wonder if all these were proceeds of *runs*
I turned and stared to the mirror-dude
Wondering, were we this good?

This will be our testimony
It may seem like a myth or mystery
For we were judged as bereft of history
Yet today we only speak of God's glory
I don't mean to be rude,
But dude, were we this good?

7. COUNT

One: for boys who feel alone and lonely facing the world

Two: for boys whose dreams are as high as the twin tower

Three: for boys equal on all angles but empty in the middle

Four: for boys who are squares forced into round holes

Five: for boys shining like stars in the night of memories

Six: for boys wrecked by sexual abuse

Seven: for boys struggling to hide their scars in search of perfection

Eight: for boys burning with hate from old wounds that never heal

Nine: for boys who never give up—cats with nine lives

Ten: for boys abandoned in the cold world by the two figures who made them

Eleven: for boys who feel inferior to their peers

Twelve: for boys harnessing the winds of their existence

Thirteen: for boys who have crossed the red sea, no longer seeing the Egyptians

Fourteen: this sonnet is for boys awaiting the next sunrise

8. COLOURS FOR BOYS

This moment you're white, filled with innocence and purity
The next you're blackened with horrors of abuse
At some point you get grey with confusion
And brown with the stain of earth to your dreams

This moment you're blue with hope—the sky is yours to fly
The next you're purple as grief, all lost in the maze of life
At some point you feel evergreen—new & succulent
But sometimes it turns all red with danger and violence

You get to feel pink with excitement about that girl's smile
Until it goes all up in the ash of reality—not yours for keeping
You'd come orange as though ripe for realising your dreams
But it could go all up in the mixed colours of flame

You'd wake up yellow singing, *the day is bright and fair*
But the clouds can turn on you with its bland hue
You must be something of a rainbow after that
For your cross and joy is to stay colourful dear boy

9. WAR ZONE

Your mother may have a war room
Where you are the stake
But to the world you've been plunged into
You're a battle ground, a war zone

It would throw every dart at you
It would seek to shell you
And if you're not clear on your purpose
It will go all nuclear on your dreams

It will rain fire and brimstone
It cares not whether you're something
Something of strength or weakness
It seeks only the survivor in you

Your mother may have a war room
Where you are the stake—if you're lucky
But to the world you've been plunged into
You're a battle ground, a war zone.

10. TO THE BOY IN THIS MAN

Do you remember the cradle years—
the dusty years at Word of Faith,
There the first steps in this lifelong learning began,
where break-time was a dream into the world of soccer,
The open fields, *Angwan Kashi's* uneasy paths,
skinned knees, laughter, and the taste of freedom.

Do you remember the march into order—
the wild years at St. Murumba College,
like living in-between two worlds—
the altar's solemn duties battled
with the raw call of restless boyhood.
Church boy by dawn & dusk, schoolboy by day,
but still—who were you?

Did it seem the world did not wait for you to answer?
It pulled, it shoved—dreams stretched thin,
stubbornness, sharp as a blade, cut its own path.
You chased the sun, arms open wide,
and the ground remembered your name when you fell.

I know you know,
You've known failure's full weight,
Felt you the cold echo of almost,
But "nearly is nowhere" as Jim Berglin will say
Here you stand—a man, bruised but unbroken.
Like Maya, still you rise.

Boy, let's call you a phoenix.

11. BOY, READ

The world is a book
A book is itself a world
Turn page upon page
Gently as you age.

To read is to travel
To travel is to read
For every travel the mind is renewed
With every reading a new place unlocked.

Take up those refined wood
Boy, read. Take the risk
Read your way to the top
You are just a book away.

A book should be all things to you
A watch, a map, fuel, scripture
A friend, a home, a therapist, light
Boy, read. It's all you've got.

12. YOU ARE A LEADER TODAY

Leadership is not about standing tall
Leadership is responding to a call
Guiding the way, not seeking fame
First to be blamed, last to claim right
With every word, by every act.
Yes, it is to eat last and less.
Leading is inspiring hope, not fear
It is to show the way,
Leadership is to walk the talk
Leadership begins with you
It begins today—now.

13. THIS BOY IS A CREEPER TREE

Call me a creeper
For that's what I am
I yearn to touch the sun too
Just as the Iroko does
But who will raise me high
Who will be my Hardy tree?

Call me a creeper tree
For I am weak and on ground
I yearn to stand like the Palm
But I can't seem to lift myself
See me flexible and willing
To cling to any gracious trunk

Still call me a Creeper tree
But this time of the desert stock
Finding no Hardy around to clutch
And wind around my planter breed
For where there is a willing will
There, may just be a way to fare

14. A BOY IS AN ART AT HEART

Art is the mirror of the soul
It tells the wonder of the human mind
Through colours, sounds, and shapes
Stories are made and kept for eternity

Boy, you are a brushstroke, a tale told, a poem
You are a music note, a stone carved, a basket woven
You are a dance, hair plaited, even colours blended
Your heart is the vehicle that drives the truth of culture

Boy, your world is itself a museum, a gallery
Like a vessel holding every sound & visual
Every brick, every block turned to a house,
Expresses the wonder of your Creator's mind

Boy, you're made to instruct and delight
To tell stories, keep memories
To heal minds, bind hearts
To replicate outward what He put within you.

15. OF BOYS AND GIRLS

Boys are not stones
Girls are not toys
The penis cries too
There's feeling in the vagina

Girls are not toys
They scent with worth
Boys are not stones
Their chests house pulses

Boys are not stones
Girls are not toys
Erase the imaginary line
Both should sit on thrones

Girls are not toys
Adjust your lenses
Boys are not stones
Review your hashtags

Boys are not stones
Girls are not toys
Body. Blood. Soul. Spirit.
Tears. Feeling. Worth. Equity.

16. DREAM

(First published by AceWorld)

In a long sleep that is not death
He dared to dream
Dreamt big a dream
Dream strong enough to move men's souls

Strong enough to stir the mind awake
Strong enough to manipulate the body

On the road to reality
His dream had a ghastly accident
Its body got disfigured
Beyond recognition save for the soul

Disfigured enough to weaken the soul
Disfigured enough to cause a new dream

Another night must come even at day
Another long sleep that cannot be of death
A new dream, to dare a bigger dream
A dream strong enough to move men's souls

Strong enough to move the sun to its bidding
Strong enough to resist death before it lives and leaves.

17. WHAT'S THE FUSS ABOUT?

(after Boys Are Not Stones Initiative - BANSI)

it's to remind the world of boys again,
and their unbearable weighty silence
to air voices of haunting scars
being borne by boys shattered in the streets

it's grand tales of boys whose lives
are not enchanted forests of pleasurable taste
but as bitter as gall - no vinegar can quench
hear tales of boys under the spell of stale wine

boys who returned home as breaking news,
boys learning how to empty themselves in dirge
boys who refuse to be stones
rather hanging memories in creed and supplication

about why nobody stares at boys anymore
with eyes that cast colourful lights
to give voice to boys robbed of their voices
boys broken in spirit by a pillaging mother.

18. CHILD SOLDIERS

*"Allah is not obliged
To be fair in all that He does on earth"*

- Ahmadou Kourouma

Everything is permissible
And so, for the sake of diamonds
Blood must flow
In the battle of oil
They'd raze hell
But to do these
To ensure their hands reach
They initiate teenagers
Arm them to the teeth
And let loose the bulldogs
Appeal to their crude desire
To feel powerful
So cringe worthy...
Then you remember
*Allah is not obliged
To be fair in all that He does on earth.*

19. I CAN'T REMEMBER

The essay question read something like,
Tell us about your childhood memories
I had two honest answers
The first and simplest is
I can't remember that phase of life
The second is harder
Where was I when it all happened?
For I rushed out of it
As though chased,
Forced to become a man while a boy
I hated being a teen even before eighteen
No memories of toy guns
No parties, no panties, no Pallies
All I remember is this weight I bear
All life long
Before learning the road to follow
I learnt where I don't want to be—
A boy in a man's body.

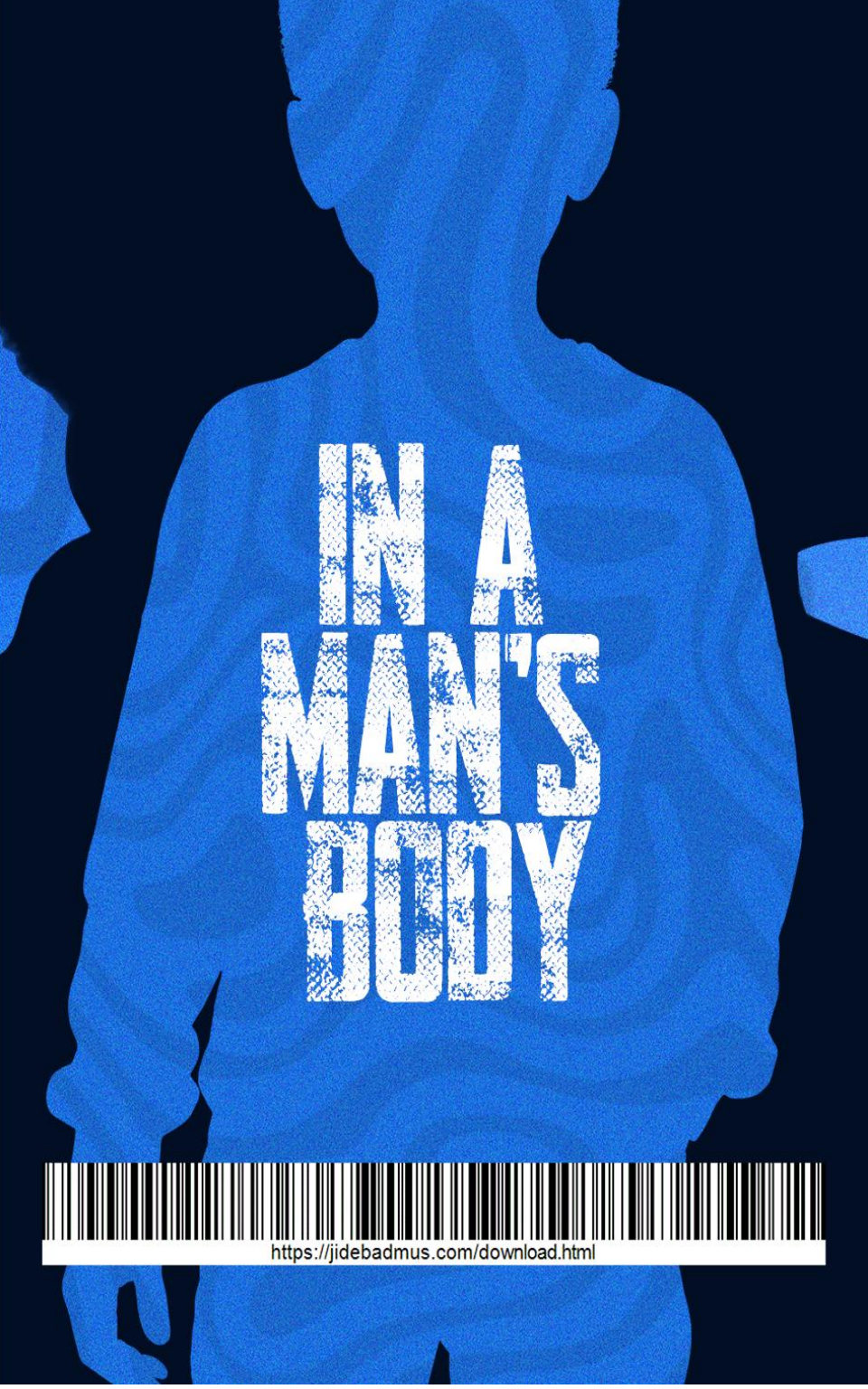
20. MALE AND HUMAN

Dear boy, for days you feel like the ℓ in knife
As if cut off and unheard
When you aspire to the ℓ in mathematics
To be constant—don't give up

For the days you ask your maker
Why am I not a girl?
To be protected with special care
Know that she bears a cross too

For days you feel in-between
Neither here nor there
One minute a rock, the next a reed
Know that you're something of both

You're male and human
You're male and more
You're male and enough
You're male and god



IN A MAN'S BODY



<https://jidebadmus.com/download.html>