



Paradox of
Little Fires

Jude Radmus

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OF
LITTLE FIRES

JIDE BADMUS

Published in January, 2021 by Jide Badmus

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Cover Design by JOBA OJELABI

Cover Art, PAUL BULAI (Unsplash)

Book layout by WALE AYINLA, JIDE BADMUS

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PRAISES FOR THE BOOK

“This poet foregrounds the connection between sensuality and psychic combustion. This book is intimately concerned with intimacy. It has a heady and persuasive undertow. Lovers in ecstasy. Lovers in trouble. Sex resonates in contours of grace. Form and content effortlessly mesh. Flesh and syntax entwine. Jide Badmus is a fiery and fascinating erotic poet.”

Uche Nduka, author of *LIVING IN PUBLIC*

*Yet, once the altar feels love's fiery breath,
The heart must be a crucible till death*
—George Marion McClellan

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PART 1: KINDLE

*“I lit
This fire,
Burning fierce
And all consuming”*
—Michael Faudet

Punctuations

This poem starts with a full stop
to lingering thoughts.

You are poised as a question mark
—shall we explore the night, find
expressions beneath dark skins?

Let's start this conversation with lips
curved as commas, defying syntax
of emotions.

Tonight, lust is synonymous to love,
we are a body of essays
littered with exclamations
—paragraphs running
into an ellipsis...

Parentheses

you're a colony of curves:

trim brows over brown eyes.

mouth chamfered at the corners,

dispenser of carbonated smiles.

Alps & Himalayas are dwarfed

by the pair of ridges on your chest

but the treasure i seek is trapped

within your parentheses of hips!

ampersand

& this is the name I give
to what we do together
or to each other when
your contours complement my stiffness &
your mammoth curves ingest my erection,
when we dialogue—my sex,
tucked in your sheath of flesh—
i mean a conjunction of bodies...
coitus. copulation. conjugation.

Prepositions

On this couch,
we begin with
A sip of wine—
of ourselves.
Soon we are out
of our clothes.
You are as thick, soft
Ponmo in a lust dish.
I bite your lower lip,
nibble on neck & shoulder
tenderly as one about to steal
from the assortment of meat
inside mother's pot—
we clatter onto the floor
& become still for a second
or two...the kids must not wake!

Night remains unscathed
safe for our ragged breaths
as we pick up the crumbs
& start over with you under.
We cook up some rhythm
—sex stew sizzling atop this fire—
I stir hard & our bodies effervesce...

Tautology

I wake in the morning to
plant a kiss on your forehead.

On my way to work, I stop
at the mouth of the door to
pluck a kiss from your lips.

At night, before we succumb to sleep,
I show you monuments on your body
you didn't know were there!

Do I still need to tell you I love you?

Caesura

Sleep is sanctuary—
man's trouble is seduced,
stripped of its ferociousness.
Here I am safe
from nagging worries
until the alarm shrills.
The sun wakes me with a kiss
where he'd bruised me yesterday.
Life is turned on, again—
I won't go down on my knees today

PART 2: ABLAZE

*“I am going to burn, I am going to pour my
Body out as fire...”*
—Sharon Olds

On cold nights...

your arms shawl me,

lips wrap mine

in woollen kisses.

I become a log of flesh,

daring, longing for the

hearth of your fireplace.

Pentecost

I stand before your pulpit,
bold like an open Bible—
head raised in supplication.
Go down on knees, consume
this offering with tongue
of fire.

The Arsonist's Poem

In this poem, a house
is torched from within.

On this couch, fully
clothed, we smooch,

wick & matchstick
—wet & excited.

In this poem,
I'm a cardboard house.

You will come inside
& touch me with

flaming lust, send us
reeling into coital fires.

Stranger in my Bed

Sun sets on your cleavage.

Wind, restless on nox's bed,
reaches to milk the moons
of light, wean the fledgling
evening of shadows.

Night burns in this room,
whiskey keeps passion's lamp
glowing in misty loins
but dawn is devoid of ashes...

Is it still fire, if it doesn't
leave *sootsteps*?

Ablaze

Your lips, parted,
are not only good
for kissing.

When you speak,
you set my doubts
ablaze.

Your heart beats
for two
when I run
out of breath.

Your eyes are
sweet waters
—submerged in them,
I become whole again.

You are ignition.

Throttle.

Brake. Rein. Anchor.

The dock of your bosom
is where I berth. Where I
find rest to pursue another day.

Under Covers

How did you light
the flare—feelings
I didn't know were there,
emotions buried in the dark?

Oh, how you sustain
the sparks. Your smile
keeps my heart on re-dial.
Fireworks live longer than
your anger. My love
has berthed at your
harbour
—eternal anchor.

Smooth lover, should I bare
my lurid thoughts here? Should I
tell what you inspire in my head?
Perhaps I should keep the details
under these covers
where revelations
of your scripture
birth masterpieces.

Little Fires

One second I'm seething,
next I'm stifling a smile.
Like chopped red chilli
in a plate of noodles
—little fires,
daughter calls them—
love burns & excites
eager palates
in the same breath.

avoiding heartbreak

when the flame starts
to wane, start to wean
your heart,
feed it
with bone—teach it
to stand on its own

PART 3: GHOSTS OF ECSTASY

*“They are now only ashes,
No flames of love remain”*
—Greenwolfe

Paradox

When I say you
give me constipation,
it is not a compliment
gone astray—
it means I've had
too much of you.

You are whetstone—
you not only sharpen,
you eat me up.

You stuff my voice box
with rock wool &
bury my head in a pile of
conflicting emotions.

You set fire to my wounds
with antiseptic words—
you call pain by name
& show the path to healing.

But I do not want
to be touched. I do
not want this therapy
that you are.

I do not want you
to break the hymen
of this darkness—I
do not trust the sun.

I'm not a stranger
to the menace of shadows
but I'm wary of getting comfortable
in the arms of light, for you do not see
the beacon—you do not see the threats
hidden in a ray of smile.

When I say you
give me constipation,
it means I've had
too much of you &
there's none of me to give.

Layers

She is a miser of words
but her eyes speak
with the eloquence of the sun.

She warned that her light would scathe
& that her truth would consume me.
I didn't listen.
I didn't listen.

Who wouldn't want to wake
to the cornrows of her smile?
Who wouldn't crave a bite of lips
fluffy as sponge cake?

Our first kiss, like a shot of tequila
started a wildfire in my taste buds.
My flesh numbed for a few seconds,
spellbound—then screamed for more.
She asked for a minute to freshen up
& was back with the stealth of shadows.

She wanted the light off
but isn't sex unravelling—
aren't we meant to peel away
layers of mysteries?

I was set to relish her scenery,
set to embark on a sensual hike—
to explore the beauty of her uplands,
listen to birds chirp in her bones

& streams throb beneath her skin.
I needed to see her mouth bloom
into moans
& smoke rise
at the summit of ecstasy.

She raised her hands,
as though in surrender
& I lifted her blouse over her head.
She stood before me,
transformed, a city in ruins—
her body, a history of abuse.
There's a whip by the dresser
She whispered.
& I went limp.

Butterfly

Panchromatic wings
flutter before hungry
eyes—soft flames tap
dance over tinder heart.
You are within reach yet
aloof, hover close to my
stamen but won't perch.
You are a tease, I can no
longer stand your parade.

Touch me not

The hands that tend
can also be death.

You know this, first hand,
thus only offer tropical
smiles from a distance.

You shrink
at love's touch,
fold into yourself
like *Mimosa Pudica*.

She Keeps the Fire on a Leash,

seeks a harmless embrace,
wants intimacy, wants her space
—proximate but out of reach.

She keeps love on a leash.

fuck/eve

I slept with you

before I knew who

you were

—Uche Nduka, *That is Why*

to spite him, you slept with
a man on your lover's payroll.

apple & a bottle of night train—
served on a platter

—a cigarette
between your lips,

smoking gun inside
chubby thighs.

you left me for dead
in the ruins of the night

& erased every trace
of the tryst.

over the phone, my morning voice
baffled you—

by what forensic sorcery
did you retrieve my number?

I was the perfect pawn

for your vengeful quest—

our first contact

wasn't really a coincidence

Burning Cloud

Feet of fire over heart
of straw—you run into my arms.

You smell like petrichor—
but this land has not seen rain lately

(or so I thought).

The sprouting Lilies of your lips

was watered by another man.

The electricity in your eyes,

residue of night
of thunder—a storm in your bed!

Feet of fire over heart of straw—
you left me, a heap of ashes.

Mágùn

This matter is a mix
of fart & salt in mouth.

You say love is apostrophe,
that she belongs to you—

you raised invisible hedge,
a beacon of thread...

Next morning
while you were at work,

your teenage son sneaked
into his stepmother's arms,

climbed the forbidden hills
& tumbled into the valley.

Of death.

Haunted

I found dust on railings,
cobwebs on ceilings—

I climbed the stairs
& heard your bones
creak beneath my touch.

The light flickered & died
in your eyes.

I hear ghosts
laughing within walls—
love letters & photos
breathing in boxes
in the basement.

I can't stay here, where
mirrors hold memories
& rusty hinges wouldn't
hold shut the doors to
yesterday.

Your kiss
tastes of ex-lovers.

Balloons of laughter
deflate as soon as
they rise, because
you are suspicious
of everything sweet.

I can't live here,
where everything
casts malignant
shadows!

Cold Room

It's a rainy morning.
The earth breathes
cold on its citizens.
I reach for a blanket of
flesh that is unavailable.

The room is filled
with pieces of you—
strands of hair,
vestige of scent,
mirage of smile &
a ghost of your voice.
There is a depression
on your side of the bed—
but these walls struggle
to reconstruct memories.
The mirror claims not to
recall your body dancing
to my song of fire.
The window denies ever
clapping hands over ears
to shut your screams off.

This bed surely can't forget
the love we shared—the lust
we bared. Consequences we dared...

It's a rainy morning
& I long for warmth
but in your absence

I will sit in this teacup
& call cold's bluff.

Nightcap

This bed
has turned brown with absence.
The mirror gazed, square-faced,
into scarlet eyes of dying candles.

I'm stretched out on the couch, forlorn
like greying petals at the foot of our bed,
waiting for you.

I made my way to the fridge
for a third slice of red velvet &
a second cup of vanilla ice cream
as though on a date with calories.

It was late & I needed no prophet to
tell me that you would come home
with the smell of a strange woman.
So, I looked to find solace in the kiss
of a bottle.

Bouquet

How can you be
dirge & love song
At the same time?
You are placebo—
you heal, yet
steal my sanity!

You are a verse
of delectable scents
perched on a banquet table.
You are also refrain, odour
of grief by a graveside.

You're like *Ikogosi*,
brewing nectar & tears—
twin edged metaphor,
sun bearing light & blight.
You are cosmetic for pain

How can you be
dirge & love song
at the same time?
You are placebo—
I don't need you
to be whole.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Caesura was first published by eboquills.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JIDE BADMUS is inspired by beauty and destruction; he believes that things in ruins were once beautiful. He writes from Lagos, Nigeria. You can reach him on jidebadmus.com, Twitter: @bardmus, and IG: @instajhide