

JAACHI ANYATONWU

*you are*  
LOVED  
*and you*  
BELONG HERE



**You Are Loved And You Belong Here: and other musings**

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## DEDICATION

To my friends Ehi, Comfort, Goodness, Sammy, Sandy, Oluwanifemi,  
Ruth, Jeff, Abigail, Bose... *You are loved and you belong here.*

To my siblings, Lizzy, Commy, Dave, Luchy, William, Tochi... *You are  
loved and you belong here.*

To my hero of a dad and super woman of a mum... *You are loved  
and you belong here.*

To you who sips the fine wine of my ink... *You are loved and you  
belong here.*

Depression is real. On daily basis, many take their lives to escape from the hurt and frustration that colour their lives in ugly shades of grey. Naturally, humans desire to be loved, and appreciated, and even crave validation from loved ones, but not all seem to get this desire evenly satisfied. We feel unloved, unwanted, less human, inferior, sad, hurt, rejected, dejected, and eventually, suicidal. Life is full of ups and down. Health can transfer into disease. Successes can be turned into collapses. Romantic love can be transformed into coldness. But no matter what happens on the outside, we can still have a solid foundation built on self-love. This book is a collection of letters, articles, and daily musings that serves as a reminder to you, who's emotionally bruised that You Are Loved, And You Belong Here.

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## TO THE FRIEND I DIDN'T WANT TO WALK AWAY FROM

Dear You,

How are you? I hope you're well. I hope that you're happy, and that you smile as much as you used to. There are so many things that I want to say to you, but know that I can't. So instead, I'm going to write them here- and hope that you see it.

I hope you know that the decision I made wasn't easy and didn't come lightly. I hope you know that I regretted it the moment I made it, but knew it was too late to turn back. I've had a lot of time to think about the decision to walk away from you, and the more I think about it, the more it seems to hurt. I know It was inevitable. However, it took losing you to realize how happy you truly made me. Now as hard as I try, I can't stop thinking about it.

I think about our times together and ask myself if I'll find someone like you. Someone who makes me laugh the way you do. Someone who makes me smile the way you did when you walked into the room. Someone who kisses the way you did, and holds me the way you would. I think about those times that we stayed up all night- sometimes it felt like we didn't sleep for days but I didn't care. I think about how we used to play checkers. I think about how annoying you were when we watched movies, but I still thought you were cute. I think about all the songs we listened to, and how when they come on my playlist, I have to tap next because it's just not the same anymore. I think about our conversations and how open and honest we were with each other- I told you things I never told anyone, and I still hold on to every detail you told me.

Thinking about those things is hard, because they are things, I know that we don't have anymore. I don't get to open my phone and text you like I used to everyday. I don't get to send you "good morning," or "goodnight." I don't get to see you every day. I don't even get to see you at all. I constantly ask myself if that decision was the right one, and I wonder what would've happened if I just kept my mouth shut.

But I couldn't keep my mouth shut, because I couldn't stop thinking about how badly you hurt me. I think about how I'm sad that I miss you, but that it's your fault that I have to. I think about how many nights I sat there wondering why I wasn't good enough for you. I think about how you took a lad like me for advantage when others would have loved to be in your position. I think about how you set me up for heartbreak as if it was a planned script and you knew I was going to lose...you. Then I think about if I could ever forgive you- and even though I want to, I don't see you over here begging for it.

I think about the last text I sent you. I replay what I said over and over and think about the changes I should have made. I was so in the heat of the moment that the words just spilled out, but not how I wanted them to. Don't get me wrong, I was mad- but I wish I could have worded it differently. There are so many times I've opened our thread and wanted to text you, but never brought myself to. I constantly ask myself if I'll ever hear from you again, but figure you must think I don't want to. That's not the case at all.

The truth is that I miss you. Because you weren't just someone I loved- you were my friend. You were someone I told everything. Someone I joked with. Someone that I could always count on to make me smile when I had a bad day. When



something happened, you were who I wanted to tell. I would've done anything for you. But you losing me is your loss, never mine.

All in all, I wish you knew a lot of things. I wish you knew that I don't hate you like you probably think I do. You really hurt me, but we both made mistakes. I wish you would correct yours. I wish you knew that I am happy now, but that I still wish you were in my life. I wish you knew that you still mean a lot to me, and that won't change no matter if we're friends or not. But more importantly, I wish you knew that I just want the best for you. And as much as I want that to be me, I know that it's not. What we had was special, but I've accepted that it just wasn't our time.

I hope you know that I'll look out for you and I'll always be rooting for you. I hope you know that I'll always be silently supporting you in whatever you do in life. I hope you know that I only want you to be happy, and that I hope you are. I hope that when you remember me, you don't remember how things ended. I hope you remember how I use to make you laugh. I hope you remember the way I held you when you fell asleep on me. I hope you remember the car rides and us jamming out to any country song we could find. I hope you just remember me- because I know I won't forget you. I hope you read this and realize I'm sorry that you didn't see what you had in front of you, and that you know it's hard for me to keep you away when all I want is to talk to you. But know that I'm always here, no matter what.

Sincerely,

Regretful Me.

## TALES OF A DOUBTFUL WRITER

Dear Diary,

These days, I hide in my nook; that dark candle-lit corner in my room. The lock on my door can count the number of times a key has subtly penetrated its hole. Solitary is become my only companion. I peruse my notes or numerous writes and edit, edit and edit without end. Companions are like pests to me. I feel inadequate in the crowd. I just want to be alone.

Alone, I would narrate stories to myself in my head and create interesting twists and turns and intriguing sci-fi fictions in my tiny inkhead while humming a favourite tune from Jimmy Swaggart. But, when I try to write down my soul and put these stories in writing, I fail. I fail woefully. Fatally!

My imaginary friends have a way of turning off their cell phone for days, weeks that turn into months and months that morph into years. 'Trust Issues' is complete... but the publisher has chosen to stay in Pluto until thy-kingdom-come. Poems... poems in numerous themes, styles and rhymes written, shared and edited... but I haven't penned the publisher's perfect poem.

Until now – no not now, some years back that still feels like now - I never fully understood what it meant for people (most especially writers) to be speechless. I never really realized that I can be full of ideas yet lack words to pen them down. My lips weren't well versed in pronouncing 'Scriptophobia' until I was diagnosed of same.

Writer's Block... I used to think it is a type of mental block writers use to build words into novels. Now I know. It feels like hell. Hellfire!

I feel closed in a long prison whose walls are plastered with putrid matter and whose floors are covered in bristles.

I feel like Ralindu – the character in one of my numerous incomplete novels – on her quest for self-fulfilment and love and care and vision. When I shut my eyes, Ralindu comes alive, screaming, sobbing, running, soliloquizing. Her heart thudding like the bass drum I played in high school; all in my head.

At other weirder times, I feel like Ben when he found out that his mother was the witch mum she was rumoured to be. Through his eyes, I see his witch mum flying into his dad's room, sucking the blood of his father while he lies lifeless, his eyes being picked out and chewed with blood-stained teeth. And even though I created him in the story, I feel like throwing up. Jesus!

I am unable to make out the body of his little sister, Vero, bleeding from her urethra, his witch mum sucking her blood with relish. I cover my nostrils with my left palm and my innards churn at the horrid sight. His mother is dead now. I don't feel pity for her. The novel, my novel, it says she screamed out of her sleep in the dead of the night, peed on her cloth and slumped. No, the novel didn't say that... I just made that up. Is my muse making a U-turn?

I also feel like Adekunle, who, when after being struck by stray bullet in the thigh, fighting the war of his master – a war he still could not tell what caused it and

why he was conscripted to fight over another man's madness – retired home, crippled, sad and broken.

*Zuby is getting her hair into a ponytail,  
he can tell from the shadow on the wall  
that the sun is going down...  
“Oh Zuby, don't take my love to town”  
He pleaded...  
“I still need some company”*

I still feel his hurt, his pain, his fate, his loneliness. Still feel the sharp pain that swept like electric current through his spine when he fell off the wheelchair ...  
“Oh Zuby...” He breathes his last. Rumour has it that Zuby died en route Owerri.

At several other times, I am in Chuks' shoes, feeling mushy. I would fantasize over the several beautiful women in my head. Their bright eyes would flash flirtatiously at me and their pursed lips would whisper endearments to my willing ear. I would imagine my tongue playing on their perky nips. I would see us doing that thing mummy and the pastor said I shouldn't. Then, their shrieking voices would topple out the love thoughts and replace it with apprehension. I am confused. I never knew romance too could cause hurt to the receiver and dish apprehension on a platter of regret to the giver. I never knew passion too could be painful. Why they scream, I cannot tell. I really cannot tell.

I am unable to decide the fate of my characters. My poems, most, not, few of them... they are like disjointed lines in a master piece of art. Sometimes, I mean for them to survive, at other times, I wish they were all dead. Stone dead!

Sometimes, I want to make it Cinderella-like, at other times I just grin mischievously as I weave them into strange bedfellows, divorced, hurt... I make them commit suicide. It feels good when I impersonalize them as myself because I know they are just memories that will fade into the head of my readers and confuse them like our grate grandfathers confuse present-day archaeologists by being buried with elephant jawbone. Like the archaeologists think my forebears are early apelike humans with funny shapes, so do my readers merge me with my poems and stories.

That feeling... that godlike feeling of messing with people's opinions about things, men and spirits. That creative prowess to weave thoughts into words. That rare ability to make a mesh in a maze of ideas. That wit. That muse. That freedom to strip and stay naked and never feel shy. That... Oh God!

*I just want to write a better story.*

*I wish, someday,*

*to write a story that's worth plagiarizing.*

*I want to ink like my namesake Stephen King.*

*I want to be King of Ink.*

*I want to be in the news like Chimamanda*

*and never fall off the news-line like salamander.*

*Someday... someday.*

But most of the time, I get the opposite of my wish. Realities fail to greet wishes. Hopes stubbornly choose to remain dreams. And then, I fling my pen out the window, rip off the pages and burn them in the hurricane lamp's yellow light.

My bin is full of ripped stories, squashed papers and unfinished stories... my bin? Damn it! The dark abyss in my head, where all stories I'm scared of finishing are endlessly falling into; never reaching its bottom.

I feel like that cursed boy in a horror movie I saw a year ago. I feel like that little girl whose memories are patches of hurt and harassment. Cannot tell why my imaginary friends are mute on me. I don't know how to caress them into saying something. Even when I finally lull them to whisper, they all speak in unison; a cacophony of voices. I get more confused.

I am that writer who never might get published. I am that boy whose crazy thoughts might never make an epic movie. I am that quiet, shy girl whose dreams may never stand the storm of doubts. I am that gentleman, that dark slim lady in my class, whose, ideas may never get written.

I am me... I fear this stupid thing I spent time, talent and thoughts to ink and typeset, might never meet the perfectionist's standards. I know I shall be ignored. Many shall scroll down their news-feed without noticing this piece of literature from a boy in East of the Niger. Many shall see, scan through and pass by. A few... very few shall out of pity slap the like button and keep scrolling. I don't know that lucky, lovely and light-hearted lad or lassie who shall see the beauty in the toad and give it a kiss.

I have no more to say. Thanks, dear diary, for listening... I mean, READING.

## THE REALITY OF HAVING DEPRESSION

*It's really easy to hide when no one knows.*

Depression is real. It could be affecting your friend, housemate, colleague, family member, etc., and you probably don't even know it. That's because humans are so used to hiding or covering up how they feel just so that they

won't bother anyone with their problems... but the thing is, on the inside those people that are struggling with depression are slowly breaking or falling apart, and it becomes harder and harder to hide it.

For some, the hardest thing to do is ask for help.

75 percent of depressed people do not seek help for their depression. Many people are afraid of asking for help because of the stigma behind a mental illness. Also, there are phrases that are commonly said that feed into this stigma because depression isn't always something that cannot be controlled, and can be caused by chemical imbalances. These phrases include:

- “Stop feeling sorry for yourself.”
- “You have so many things to be thankful for, why are you depressed?”
- “Why can't you just be normal?”
- “Get a grip. Life isn't over yet!”
- “Lonely? You need to get out more.”
- “Buck up buttercup/suck it up buttercup.”
- “Why should I care?”

These are only a few examples I have not only heard, but experienced for myself. That last one sticks out to me because that is why people wouldn't want to seek help, for fear of that response. I know how it feels to struggle silently, to hide how I really feel, to be known as the person who is always happy (when deep down I was struggling with a thousand hurting memories threatening to rip my soul apart). I kept it hidden so I didn't feel like I was dragging people down with my problems. I don't want to be a pest on no one. I hate pity, sympathetic care and the likes. I didn't want to be a liability to no one. It wasn't until someone



asked me what was wrong, and really meant it was I able to talk about and tell someone what was going on. Trust me when I say, it definitely wasn't easy, but talking about it seemed like something that needed to happen. It did happen.

I still struggle with depression, and a little bit of anxiety, but I am slowly finding ways to feel better. It may take some time, but it is easier now than it was.

Don't let depression eat up every cell of hope in you. Don't give depression the benefit of dragging you down six feet below the ground before your time.

Depression, if allowed to flourish, will dim the light at the end of our proverbial tunnel, leaving you hopeless, angry with life, yourself and even suicidal.

There is hope.

Cheer up!

Nobody said life will be a bed of roses.

Nobody said these roads have no thorns.

Nobody said sweet wines can't go sour.

Embrace life. Embrace hope.

When you fall below expectations and everyone calls for your neck, don't throw up a pity party and sulk for eternity. Rather, get you up, dust you up and try again. Stay in the light.

You may be trying hard to balance your dreams, aspirations and goals on a wire, hoping ends will meet its means, but all efforts spell futility.

You may feel uninspired, unmotivated, left behind, matching on the spot or going in circles... don't you give up. You are an angel waiting for wings. Soon, your wings shall find you and fly you to heights beyond your wildest imaginations.

Kill depression before it kills your dreams.

## YOU GIRL, ARE PRICELESS

You are worth more than all the rubies and diamonds of this earth.

Growing up a girl is not easy. You're teased because you're not the prettiest or the smartest or the sexiest. Boys pick on you because society tells them that's acceptable behaviour. You can't walk down the sidewalk without being constantly paranoid of your surroundings and just who might be watching you. You're seen as prizes to be won which makes you question the intentions of

everyone you meet. Growing up a girl is hard; I want to tell you something that could change your life.

Yesterday was supposed to be a normal day, but in a crazy twist of fate what Chinny needed was staring her right in the face, literally. At 11:00 am she found herself sitting in a church, refreshing her spirit, listening to the preacher speak on a sermon titled BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU. Here she was on a Thursday morning being completely transformed without even realizing it. God can make anything out of nothing, she mused. And that's just what He did. Just when Chinny thought the impossible couldn't happen, it did. Chinny found her worth in God's word.

Hello ladies, I want to tell you something: You are priceless. Don't sell yourself short because, you are priceless. You are worth more than all the rubies and diamonds of this earth. You are the daughters of a King, the one true King, who loves you more than anyone ever will. You are worth dying for; Jesus Christ died on a cross so that you could inherit the Kingdom of God. You were created in your mother's womb, not by chance or luck, but because you are part of a divine plan. You are so precious. You are so special in every way.

Don't let society define who you should be, you are a child of God, let Him define who you are and what you're worth. Deep in our hearts, we know the real truth, we do; but, somewhere along the way, it got twisted and distorted. The truth we think we know is nothing but another lie fed to us. The real truth is buried down so deep that it's almost forgotten, but it's not forgotten, it's growing every day.

You, dear girl, are priceless. Let those words sink into your heart. Let it drive you. Let it be your sleeping thoughts and waking thoughts. Let it be the prime song on your lips.

*Speak it.*

*Sing it.*

*Shout it.*

*Live it.*

*Relish it.*

*Share it.*

Don't cower like a fallen rose nor recoil into the shell society mounded for you. Rise up. Step out. Shoulder high, heads up, dream big 'male' dreams and work your lady muscles to achieve them.

You are a queen. A goddess and thus deserves worship!

Rip off the price tag! Stay in the light.

## REMEMBER TO WHOM YOU BELONG AND NEVER FORGET IT

What a beautiful picture it is to know that you belong. Unconditionally, blamelessly, endlessly, joyously. Despite your faults and failures. Despite the lies of the world and the clamour of your surroundings. To know that no matter how far you run. No matter how much you wander. You will always unconditionally belong.

I think, sometimes, we need a little reminder of that. In this world full of striving, it is so easily lost. It's so easy to forget that constant love, but just as easy to

remember the feeling of rejection. The feeling that no matter what, you just aren't good enough. Be it your weight, your flaws, your skin colour, your hair, your reputation, your accomplishments, your body. That crush, or that position, or that friend, or that group that has a way of making you feel like you don't measure up.

The constant tearing down of our fellow man is so prevalent in today's society. The way we claim it's cool to be unique yet reject what is different. Sometimes in this life, it's hard to believe that you're good enough. It's hard to give that reflection in the mirror a break. It's hard to figure out who you are and who you are not. What you stand for and what you stand against.

More importantly, how far you're willing to go to prove that. If we're being honest, it's hard to walk in a plan when we can't see the final product. It's hard to have faith that defies the odds... if it were easy everyone would do it. It's hard to choose a different path. It's hard to get told no. It's hard to be built up and to get knocked down. It's hard to battle the insults and regrets. It's hard when you can't get others to see your worth. It's even harder when others are pleading with you just to see it yourself. Most days, it's hard to see your wins for your losses. Truthfully, it's hard to get up every day with a determination that you are called, chosen, and set apart.

So how do we do it? How do we press on in spite of the voice telling us to throw in the towel? How do we fight with all we have to hold on to faith? How do we silence anything that would separate us from our true and best selves? How do you rise above the foolery with your head held high and dignity intact? These are questions we have all asked ourselves and dreamt of having the perfect

answer to. I've found myself asking these a lot lately. As we go through this life, they become more and more prevalent. But if I have learned one thing, it's that if you don't know who you are, the world will try and tell you. PAUSE and please hear this. No matter what, never under any circumstance, let it.

See, I think the answer to the above questions is remembering the One to whom we belong. Remembering the One who has perfected us in His own image. The One who looks down in every moment, every season, every storm and every triumph and chooses us. No matter what we may do or feel, He chooses us. Every day unconditionally. And even better news He has been doing so since before we ever chose Him. You see, our God took the time to write out each of our days before we even set foot on the Earth. He knows every flaw, every doubt, every lie the enemy has ever told us and each time we've chosen to believe it. But, guess what? He loves us anyway. His word tells us that we are a chosen people, His prized possession. That we are altogether beautiful and flawless — like beyond Beyoncé flawless! So, we can have hope when the doubts sneak in. We can have faith beyond the setbacks and disappointments. We can have freedom beyond our mistakes. We can give the person in the mirror a chance!

So, the next time you feel like quitting, remember that through Christ you are more than a conqueror. The next rejection remembers that all things work together for your good. The next trial, remember that you can do all things through Him. The next time the enemy tells you that you are less, remember that greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. Rest in knowing that you are worth more than diamonds and rubies. Know that He knows the number of hairs on your head. Trust that His thoughts of you out measure all the grains

of sand in the world (like what). Realize who you are and what you are worth. Choose to walk in it every day.

Remember to whom you belong... Your masterpiece, You.... and never forget it!

Ephesians 2:19-22

## I AM YOUR MOTHER; I WILL NOT DECEIVE YOU

Don't climb trees, our mothers told us, the boys would get a good view; keep your hair away from your face and smile. Smile like this when you like a person and like this when you don't. Don't slouch; no, that does not mean you should chest out either! What are you, a wrestler? Tufiakwa!

Walk upright; suck your stomach in, you don't want people seeing your spare tires. Swing your hips – not like that, you are not a slut; softly, softly, as to a rhythm. Exactly, that is how you catch a man!

Sweep the floors, clean the house and wash his clothes; stoke the fires and cook his meals. What to cook? Egusi soup, my girl, with pounded yam. You mean you do not know how to prepare it? How old are you? No matter, I must teach you.

Dress the kids, sew their buttons; make your hair and look pretty when you greet him at the door; don't nag, do not ask too many questions; smile when you agree with him, nod even when you don't, then go ahead and do what you want. When he's ready to do the do, spread your legs, moan. No, not like that. Are you a slut? You are there to make children. Male children. Boys! That's how you keep a man!

Smile at your mother-in law even if she hates and annoys the hell out of you, then in the privacy of your bathroom you can stick pins in a doll with her name on it. Your chi will fight for you.

What if he cheats on me? Who taught you that word? There is no such thing. Men will be men; but if it bothers you, well, there are ways. Find the girl – or girls – and invite them home for a little party at about the time he will come home; introduce them as your friends. The next time he goes on a trip, pack for him and put a couple of condoms in his bag; make sure you are waiting with his best food and a smile when he gets back. It will drive him crazy.

Divorce? Are you mad? This is Africa, my girl!

I'm not yet ready to marry; I want to do a Masters first. What Masters? Do not be greedy! I knew I shouldn't have let your father send you to that school. Look at you, your cousin brings bags and bags of clothes and other things for her mother in her husband's jeep every Christmas and here you are talking rubbish.



Career? Job? What are those? Don't let these white people deceive you with big, big grammar.

Oh! Money! You wouldn't need it. That's why I've been teaching you how to catch a man and not a boy. Satisfaction, you say! Well, what have I been saying? Satisfy your man; that's the most important thing.

Listen to me, don't let this corrupt world ruin you with their 'new age' talk. *Abu m nnegi, mmadufugi*. I am your mother; I will not lead you astray. We are African women; this is how our mothers did it before us, this is how we did it in our time, this is how we kept our men.

So, pay attention, do as I say; that's how you keep a man!

## YOU ARE LOVED AND YOU BELONG HERE

I know it's easy to feel so small and insignificant in this giant world. Each morning, you open your eyes. Some mornings, it's easy. You hop out of bed, grab that plate of jollof rice, take your hot shower, and you're on your way. Some mornings, it's difficult. You need the warmth of the sun shining through your window, reflecting on your face and warming up your body to reassure you that today is a new day, and it's going to be okay. You look around and see everyone going about their day. Cars flying by at the speed of light, headed to some unknown destination. They go so fast you wonder if they ever take the time to slow down and embrace the beauty around them. You feel like you don't fit in. Like there's no place for you to turn when you have had one of those days where

it's so incredibly difficult to get out of bed. But you do. Every night, someone, somewhere, falls asleep thinking about you.

Every morning, someone wakes up and looks forward to seeing you because you inspire them. Every morning, someone else has just as much trouble getting out of bed because they, too, feel like they don't belong.

You stand in a crowd of people. At a concert, at a party, in the middle of Shoprite. You feel accomplished because you were able to get out of bed this morning, but you still feel anxieties about what everyone you run into is thinking about you. You worry that your hair is too frizzy and everyone is whispering about it. You worry that the jeans you're wearing are too baggy and that they don't have the right logo on them, so you worry that everyone is making fun of you. You grab trolley, and you wonder if people are judging you for your stylish way of walking and indomie that you grabbed off that middle shelf.

You go home and you scroll through social media. You eat that indomie for dinner and you think to yourself that you could look just like all these girls you consider "beautiful", if only you would have exchanged that indomie for a salad. The truth is, half of those girls feel the same way about you.

***You are beautiful.***

You climb into bed and you feel thankful that you made it through another day. You feel lucky that today was better than yesterday, and you pray that tomorrow will be better than today. You go to sleep thinking about that brother in church that you've admired, but never felt good enough for, not knowing that he falls

asleep thinking of you, too. You don't think you're good enough for anyone to love, but here's the truth:

**YOU ARE LOVED AND YOU DO BELONG HERE.**

Anxiety and depression are disorders that so many children, adolescents and adults struggle with every single day. Take a moment to tell someone you care about how much they mean to you, and that you couldn't live without them. You never know whose life you will save just by telling them that you care.

Always be kind, and remember that you don't always know what demons other people are fighting.

Lend a hand. Be the voice that talks someone up, instead of the force that pushes someone down.

Love each other. Like 2Baba sang, *"All we need is one love"*.

You need love? Show love to others, it sure will come back to you.

You need acceptance? Validate others, it sure will come back to you.

You need faces smiling at you? Now don't you keep a straight face... smile as you walk down that street, smile to the beggar at the corner, smile to that old hag in church... it sure will come back to you.

You get in life, what you give to it. Peel off the island feeling. You are loved... and you belong here.

## DEAR DEPRESSION

I never thought I'd be someone on medication for depression and anxiety, but here I am. When my doctor first told me that he thought I should be put on medication, I had been sobbing in his office for 45 minutes and was asking for something to simply help me sleep. He'd seen this before though, and knew I needed something more than a sleeping pill.

“Sleeplessness is a side effect to depression.”

I hated that word. Depression. Every time he'd say it, I could feel every muscle in my body tighten up. Not me, I thought, I cannot be depressed. Nonetheless, he convinced me to take the prescription, talk it over with my parents, and decide for myself. I sobbed the entire way home, rehearsing in my mind how I'd bring this up to my family when I had been pretending to be fine for so long.

When they all got home from work, I told them, and at that moment, they didn't act all that surprised. Of course, there were concerns about addiction, withdrawal, and other side effects once I came off the medication, but there was also discussion about how it could help me get through the hard stuff that was to come in my recovery over the next few months and that I didn't have to be on medication forever. So, I filled the prescription and started taking it that night.

A war was waged in my mind from that very first night of taking the medication. My mind was pulling itself further into the black abyss because now my secret was out, and I was officially on medication. I thought, Medication fixes problems which means one of two things: Either you have problems or you are a problem. I didn't like either choice.

For the first couple of months, I had to force myself to place the pill on my tongue, take a swig of water, and swallow. Every time I did it, I swear I could feel the capsule moving through my body and landing in the pit of my stomach. I could feel it growing bigger and bigger in my stomach, and suddenly there wasn't any room for anything else. I couldn't eat or drink, and all I wanted was for my body to regurgitate the pill back up. REJECT, please! But that didn't happen. So, instead, each day while eating breakfast, I stare down at the tiny capsule in my palm and think to myself: Just take the pill.

Here we are, one year later, and I still feel a sting of embarrassment when I drive through the pharmacy. One year later, and I still slowly open the pill bottle, stare inside, and force myself to take it. One year later, and I still whisper to myself just take the pill.

But why? Here are the five things I repeat to myself when I'm struggling to just take the pill:

1. **I am stronger than this medication, and the medication does not define me.** Needing to be on medication does not make me weak. In fact, it makes me strong. I am choosing to face my challenges, feelings, and recovery head on. That is strength. I take the pill because I know I am stronger than the medication and that I am not labelled or defined by needing to be on medication.
2. **There are people who love me and want me here.** I have a wonderful family who loves me and wants me around. They have been nothing but loving and supportive through everything. I take the pill because I want to be here, really here, for my two nephews and my niece. They deserve that. When I have no energy, am irritable, or my depression is getting the best of me and I can't move because I haven't taken my medication, I cannot be present with them, and they do not deserve that.
3. **I am not alone.** There are so many people struggling with depression, and so many who are on medication for it. Yes, all of our pain feels as if no one else could possibly understand because it is so personal and deeply rooted, but, at the very least, I am not the only one who is on medication to support my recovery. I take the pill because I am not alone, and all of us who are on medication deserve a chance to heal and feel better.
4. **I was created for more than this.** God has a bigger plan for me than to lay in bed, unable to move. He wants more for me than to be dry heaving from sobbing so much. And, He definitely wants more for me than to be beating myself up for my mistakes for months and wishing I weren't even here anymore. I have a purpose, and I need to be here in order to fulfil

that purpose. I take the pill because God created me for something greater than a life full of depression and sadness, and I am not finished yet.

5. **This is temporary.** I probably won't have to be on medication for the rest of my life as the goal for my treatment is for this to help me get by the hardest parts of my recovery. However, even if I do end up being on medication for longer than I'd like, or for the rest of my life, then I know this pain is still temporary.

Just take the pill. It's time to win the war.

## DEAR MUMMY, GIVE ME A CHANCE

Dear Mom,

I'm here.

It's been 18 days since conception, and my heart is beating. Just 10 days later, at 28 days post conception, I have eyes, ears, and a tongue. At day 30, my blood starts flowing in my veins. 42 days in, I can swallow and my fingers and toes are forming. Around day 45, I'll start moving around, even though you won't be able to feel it for another 12 weeks.

I'm still here.

At eight weeks, I have all of my organs. At eight and a half weeks, I have fingerprints. At nine weeks, I can suck my thumb. At 10 weeks, my fingernails are noticeable. At 11 weeks, I can practice breathing and I can smile. At 12

weeks, I can kick. At 13 weeks, my facial expressions will start to resemble yours and Daddy's.

Mummy, I'm still here.

Mummy, did you know that about 90% of abortions are performed prior to the 13th week of gestation? But look at how much I've grown, Mummy. I even look like you now. What makes me so different from you? We have the same organs and body parts. We can both move and breathe.

Mummy, I know you can't see me, but I'm still here.

I know it's your body, Mummy, but I need to borrow it for a little while. After about 40 weeks you can have it back.

You can't say I'm not a person, Mummy. My heart is beating. I know it can be expensive, Mummy, but I promise I'll be worth it.

And, Mummy, can you really put a price on my life? Think of all I could be, our nation's first female president, a female pilot, my generation's Chimamanda... think mummy, think it through.

I am a living thing. Beyond a living thing, I am woman. HUMAN.

I'm still here. Don't abort me.

Give me a chance, Mum. I'm here.



Love,  
Your Baby

## TO THE BOY WHO ASKED IF I NEEDED A HUG

Dear Stranger,

I don't know if you remember me, but I definitely remember you. I was the boy sitting on a ledge outside of the student centre sulking with my head in my hands. I probably looked an emotional mess.

You had no way to know this, but when you came up to me, I was fighting a panic attack that has started in the middle of the building, right in front of all my friends and peers. I rushed outside with my head tucked low and found a spot to cry and try to calm down.

My lover left me there, sitting there on the ledge and took her love to town. Knowing that I have lost her forever, it must have looked to you like she had abandoned me there. You came up to me and said that you didn't know me but

that you were worried about me and that you were there for me if I needed a hug. You had to have been nervous, but you came up to me anyway. You have absolutely no idea what such a simple thing meant to me.

You had no reason to do what you did. You did not have to step up and say anything. I would have been fine. But you didn't know that.

You stepped up. You said something. At the time I was confused. I got defensive, assuming you were going to confront me and give me advice or try and sit with me when all I wanted in the entire world was to be alone. I'm sorry about that. You didn't judge me, and I should not have judged you.

You took time out of your day to worry about a stranger. You reminded me of who I have forgotten to be.

I could have been suicidal. I could have been facing something much worse in my life than anxiety. You had no way of knowing, and the fact that it didn't matter to you says everything.

I don't see people when I walk by. I keep my eyes at my feet and I pretend the world around me does not exist and I let it all melt into a faded world that moves a blur.

But you left your table, and your books, and your laptop and you checked on me, a complete stranger. Such an act of kindness is something this world needs.

In a world of hurt and darkness and hate and xenophobia and fear, you worried about a stranger. You took time out of your day to make sure that I knew that someone in this world cared about me and was worried about me. Thank you.

Thank you for being the light this world needs.

Thank you for reminding me to stop and to worry about the strangers around me.

Thank you for being the man I need to be.

Thank you for being you - kind, caring and unbiased.

I wish I had gotten your name. I wish I had been nicer to you.

One day, when I see someone as hurt and broken as I must have looked to you, I will pay forward your act of kindness.

I hope that they then do the same and that we all can take one simple step to care about each other just a little more, even though we are all strangers.

Thank you, dear stranger boy.

How I wish we meet again.

## OPEN LETTER TO A FORMER BEST FRIEND

Dear Sweetness,

You were the one person I never anticipated having to miss.

It's I again. I wrote you a poem from the groaning of my heart, but that's not all I penned that day... this letter too was part of it.

I miss you. I miss texting you about every single stupid thing that happens in my life. I miss the way people would ask me where you were when you weren't with me because it was a known fact that we were a packaged deal. I miss laughing with you and all of our inside jokes. I miss sending you heinous WhatsApp chats and Facebooking you from the bathroom. I miss drilling you and knowing exactly what you are thinking. I miss your friend, Maddy, and the way you used to fill me in on her daily happenings. I miss knowing that at the end of the day I had

you, that when push came to shove, no matter how bad the situation might be, I knew you would be there - always online to massage my heart until I slept on my phone chatting with you. My bae (I still wonder why you think bae means monkey). I miss you, bae.

I hate that when people ask me how you are doing, and I genuinely don't know. I hate that our conversations that once used to be so natural and seemingly endless are now filled with awkward silences and formal "how-do-you-dos." I hate that your face, the face I was so accustomed to seeing every single day, has become just another one in the crowd. I hate that we can now go days at a time without speaking to each other and that most of our conversations now start with "I feel like I haven't talked to you in forever!". Sweet Lord!

I'm mad at us for letting our friendship become this far gone. What happened? How did we not see this coming? How did we not feel ourselves starting to drift? It wasn't like most friendships. It was the kind of friendship that neither of us could have anticipated coming to an end. It was us against the world, and now it is nothing. I am mad at us for letting it become nothing but a collection of memories. I don't want to believe it's gotten to that.

No! Far from it. It's no fault of ours. I'll lay the blame on my stupid phone. I am mad at us for not buying me another. I'm mad at Buhari for making things even harder. I'm mad at me for getting a java phone instead. Funny I'm mad at things I shouldn't be mad at. I miss you, desperately, that's why I'm this mad.

I am sad because I don't even know where to go from here. I don't know what there is to be said. Nothing really happened to make it change, so how do we fix it? How do I make this horrible yearning for you go away? How do I shake the

dreadful feeling of knowing that you are no longer just a phone call away? How do we find a way to fall back together just as easily as we fell apart?

I am scared that it cannot be fixed and that maybe we weren't supposed to be forever. I am scared that from here on out, you will not be a part of my life. I am scared that when I am hugging my friends this time next year at my birthday, you will not be one of them. That when I win my first national award, wherever the real world takes me, you won't be there to smile at and take a million photo shots with me. That when I look around at my wedding day at all the faces in the crowd, it will hurt just as badly then as it does now to find that yours will not be there. But what I'm most scared of is that you don't even care at all. I am scared that maybe you haven't noticed my absence in your life or that maybe you have, but it just doesn't matter to you. I am scared that you have already replaced me. I am scared that you don't look back on our friendship as fondly as I do. I'm scared that our lack of a future doesn't hurt you just as badly as it hurts me.

I'm scared that you don't miss me as much as I miss you. I know you do. You do, right? Me, too.

However, even if that is the case, I will never give up hope that we will find our way back to each other, no matter how unlikely that now seems. I will never stop caring about you and wishing you well in life. I will silently smile from a distant side-line as you go out into the world and kick some ass. You will always hold a special place in my heart even though I may no longer hold one in yours (God! pray she still does). I will never stop looking back on our friendship fondly and will always only have kind things to say. I know you are gonna be a lawyer

someday and hope to get into some phony case just to test the efficacy of your wig. You'll be my lawyer, won't you?

I don't know what the future holds for us, but I do know one thing is for certain, I will never find another friend like the friend I found in you. Thank you for everything. I miss you more than you could ever possibly know. All the best.

Yours hopelessly,  
Jaachi

## TO THE LADY WHOSE HEART I NEVER HAD

Dear Friend,

I never expressed this to you, but I love you. I love seeing you day in and day out while we each go on with our college careers. It doesn't matter if it is early in the morning, going to or from class, at the hotel room, or just online, you simply make me smile. I could be getting out of a rough day, a bad night of sleep, or just be generally upset, and seeing your face gives me something great to be happy about: that is seeing you.

It is a silent love, a rarity for me because, in a way, you intimidate me. I'm not afraid to admit, some aspects of my life would be different if it weren't for the way you carry yourself.

You're not my first love, this I will also admit. But each day, I have thought of having the honour and privilege of calling you mine. Whether it be to a fantasy, reality, a joke on cupid or even sheer daydream.

You mean the world to me, and your happiness inspires me. When you believe in yourself that you can do something, whatever the task may be, it inspires me to achieve greater heights as well.

There are numerous things I could say to you:

- “How are you doing?”
- “How was your day?”
- “Would you like me to walk with you?”

Or the most general question; “Would you want to go do something, sometime?”

Or the most important question: “Will you ever be mine?”

But these questions, and more all get stuck in my head before I can utter the words.



## TO THE LADY I DIDN'T WANT TO LET GO

I lied about everything I said that day. As words were coming out of your lips, all I could hear was the sound of my heart breaking into irreconcilable pieces. I knew this was the end for us. I agreed with and nodded my head to everything you said, hoping that it would be easier to let go, but it wasn't. I lied when I said that I wanted the same things you did.

When you said it wasn't fair, all I thought was that it wasn't true. When you said you couldn't love me as much as I loved you, I knew in my heart that was because of my doing. In that moment, I was just thinking of everything that I could have done to hold on, to think of words to say to keep you happy and in love, but that didn't happen. Agreement with your decision and loss of "us" happened.

The more I think about everything, the more I know what I should have done. It could have played out differently. It could have all stayed the same. I knew that I should have grabbed your hand, and I should have looked deep into your eyes. I should have said that no matter what happens with us, we always manage to find a way to each other.

The love we have shared and experienced is one that they write in the stories of fairy tales. You were my princess.

I want to say that there is no one else in this world that understands you like I do. I spent every day, every minute learning everything that there was about you to learn. It breaks my heart to write this now, and I know it's not too late. Words are just words, and life is too short to try and give up on things that we, as humans, would not work.

It's like that one puzzle piece that was never found, or that bolt that fell off the bike. You can buy another puzzle, and you can buy another bolt. But that one missing piece is that makes the original complete.

There is so much more to a story to write. There is so much more to us. In my head, I should have grabbed your hand, and I should have told you that you were crazy for feeling the way you did. I should have told you that I can make myself better. I improve every day.

I didn't want to give up that easily. I thought that there more to us, more to our story that didn't get written. I wanted to find out what the next adventures were going to be, and the new secrets we would have created.

I wanted to live in a fairy tale land with you forever because loving you felt easy, and it felt right.

You were my princess, and you saved me from reality.

I appreciate you for taking care of me. And I love you more for loving me.

But now, I can only wish you happiness, and I can only wish you good things.

I lied to you, but it is too late to turn back time.

## TO THE GIRL WHO WAS FORCED TO LET GO WHEN SHE WASN'T READY

To the girl who was forced to let go when she didn't feel ready, I understand. I know what it's like to constantly think "what if?" What if I had tried harder? What if I had given it one more day? I know these thoughts are racing through your mind nonstop because they race through mine, too.

I've racked my brain for months asking why, trying to figure out why this had to happen to me, but I haven't come up with a good enough answer to satisfy my mind. The logic just isn't there. But when I finally got the courage to accept that what I did isn't logical, something miraculous happened.

My mind may never find peace, but by the good works of my heavenly father, my heart has. Defying all logic, I am finally at peace. Looking back, I wasn't ready

to change. I was terrified at the thought of it, but I now believe that you're never ready for change because change challenges every part of our being. It's illogical and scary and if you wait long enough, it can start to seem impossible. But I've finally accepted something I've known to be true my whole life: change is entirely possible by the power of our gracious God. If you give Him an inch, He will move you a mile. So, to the girl holding on by a thread, let go. God has a plan for you so much greater than anything you could dream for yourself.

But I warn you now, His plan requires change and sacrifice, and most of the time, you don't feel ready for His changes, but I say to you this from Matthew 17:20, "...if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain 'move from here to there', and it would move. Nothing would be impossible." God is always with you to support, sustain and guide you. You don't have to worry about the next step because He is already there. Take a leap of faith and trust that God will catch you. Even when you cannot see where you are going, trust that God is leading you somewhere great.

Change is never easy, but it is worth it. To the girl who was forced to let go when she didn't feel ready, I was there. Breathe and step off your ledge, God is waiting for you.

It's not the end of life.

So, girl, arise.

Dream.

Grow wings.

Trust your wings.

FLY!

The world awaits you.

Sway, girl sway.

## **ADDICTED TO WRITING**

People are addicted to a lot of different things but I'm addicted to writing. In fact, I'm so addicted, that I'm certain to spend my entire career as a writer.

Some people keep their addictions down to a reasonable level – after all, if you only indulge a few times a week, or once or twice a month, who's going to notice? But I'm not that laid back; I write almost every day. I've tried all the usual things, even induced laziness, but no matter what I do, I always go back to my addiction. Writing.

## **WHY I WRITE**

Permission to lift a word or two from Flannery O'Connor, 'I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say.'

Writing has been my creative muse of choice for as long as I can remember; from quirky stories about helpless lovers dying for love that came as a product of my addiction to romance novels coupled with my imagination, to poems about the trials and tribulations of adolescence, life struggles, disappointments, failures, delays, and everything that falls in between. The hobby that started out of teenage wonder has slowly transformed into the constant that I fall back on when I'm overwhelmed, depressed, stressed, and overthinking.

Hell, sometimes I even write when I'm happy. It's just what I do.

To me, there is nothing more therapeutic than putting pen to paper (or hand to keyboard) and getting out of my head.

Being a human is hard. It's confusing. It's overwhelming. We all know it. And honestly, we're all just looking for that one thing that keeps us sane. Writing down the things that are plaguing my mind, and being able to physically hold and look at my mental processes is the easiest way for me to understand what's going on in my head.

One of my favourite quotes about writing reads, "I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say."

How true is this?! The human brain is constantly pumping out new thoughts, stresses, ideas...how am I supposed to know what's going on in there if I don't take the time to express and process it?

But hey, clearly, I don't just write for myself because I have the potential to make me go viral. NAH!

I write to inspire.

I write to make people laugh.

I write to share my opinions.

I write to give myself a voice.

I write because, like Peak, it's in me.

I write for the fun of it.

Hollop! For the bucks too, I write.

Although it can be difficult to come up with fresh poems and articles and one's muse may take a walk into the blues, being a writer with passion has pushed me and helped me in finding my identity as a writer, and has also helped me in uncovering what I might like to pursue as a career.

Oh yes... I got addicted!

I'll leave you with this final thought:

Writing and reading others' writing are pretty damn cool. Every person you ever meet knows something you don't, and there is a lot of learning that can come from just taking a peek into someone else's psyche.

I hope my writing has inspired at least one person; I am so incredibly happy that I have this medium for expressing myself.

Also... if you are a writer, ADMIT IT, that you are ADDICTED.

Be passionate about it.

Write, anyhow, anytime, anywhere, anyway...

Allow your passion drive you nuts into putting pen to paper until you leave behind a legacy 'wordy' of emulation.

Even the dinosaurs were here for a while. You won't live forever. Write now!

## I AM A WRITER, I HAVE NO DEGREE

They send a friend request. You accept. They chat you up. You respond. And the next question they will ask; 'Are you in school?'

'Yes, I am' has always been my reply- 'In the school of life, learning what my mates may never know.

Achieving what they may never achieve in life.

Laying foundations while they clear the bush of academic clusters.'

Then they cringe and drop loads of unneeded advice.

"Go to school!"

"You need a degree."



"You can't go farther without a certificate."

"Come on, bro. Go back to school."

That's the problem I have with normalcy. Dear educated African, degree does not determine destiny.

Everyone's got a time table. You live yours and I live mine.

Ain't going to let my life and success in life be determined by an Admission Letter.

Don't ask me about school and course and year and graduate and service and blablabla.

That's boring.

Ask after my dreams and aspirations and not admission and graduation.

Ask after my writing and authorship dreams, and not about lectures that bore like orthodox sermons in Latin.

Ask after my goals!

Study and get a degree if that's what success means to you.

Don't intimidate dropouts like us. Don't rub your exam-malpractice-smeared certificate on our faces. You are no better.

Indeed, normalcy sucks.

Just so you know, I am a writer. I have no degree.

Thank you!

## SELF-WORTH

Please take your time to read and don't say it's too long. It's actually my most brief musing. My definition of brief amazes me, though.

You might need a cup of coffee.

Walk? Yes, you could walk around the field whilst you ruminate on this.

Don't you love music? Tap your music app icon, select your favourite song. Oh no, not Terry G, keep scrolling, is that Asa's Jailer? Something cool - Good! That's just it. Now I think we are good to go. Shall we?

The First Will Be The Last

God forbid!

Tueh!

Olorunmaje!

Well, wail all you could, the first will be the last. This is one sublime truth we tend to deny. I don't intend dwelling much on this.

The essence of this musing is to get you thinking. So, put on your thinking cap and ruminate on this: "The first shall be the last".

Why?

How?

Think about it.

### **True Simplicity Is Not Easy**

I bet you do not know talking about how humble you are spells pride. Do you? No? Well, I just told you. True simplicity is rare. True humility is silent and speaks not of itself.

If humility is enthroned in the hinder parts of your heart, it will reflect in the way you carry yourself, your composure, conversation, relationship, step, speech... you name. You need not compose an anthem to recite to all who care to listen, like;

*'Hello there, I'm a humble kinda man'*

*'I don't brag'*

Blah blah blah.

Don't give pride a bed space in your life.

It ruins respect.

It degrades your worth.

Does this speak of you?

Think on it!

### **Trying Hard To Be Beautiful Makes Me Ugly**

As much as I love facial beauty, curves and all... I look out for beautiful hearts to cherish and love. It does not matter how physically unsweet you are to human eye. If your heart is beautiful, what then do you desire?

And you that are physically beautiful with well sculpted curves and all; your beauty is as worthless as that of a golden toad if the content of your heart irks of ugly thoughts and repulsive desires.

Are you physically undesirable? Look within... exhume your inner beauty. Let the light of your beautiful heart outshine your assumed deformity. For in the inside lies your true self like an angel waiting for wings. It's in your power either to sulk and wail or grow your angel some wings and fly you to places.

Are you physically beautiful with dashing smiles, tempting curves and alluring dimples? Get some brains.

Beauty might take you places, but brains will keep you there.

Get some sense!

Daalu

## IT IS IN REMEMBERING...

When I give of myself, I become more.

When I feel most destroyed, I am about to grow.

When I desire nothing, a great deal comes to me.

By being selfless, I enhance myself.

In dying, I am born anew.

My best work is done when I forget my own point of view.

The less I make of myself, the more I become.

It is not holy to point out how holy I am.

I have to embrace infinity inside a mortal body.

I have to believe in a God I cannot see.

I have to learn to love in a dimension where there is so much hatred.

I have to see abundance when people constantly talk of shortages.

I have to discover freedom where control is the state religion.

I have to develop self-worth while people criticise and belittle me.

I have to see beauty in spite of seemingly ugliness.

I have to embrace kindness and positive attitudes when surrounded by uncertainty.

I have to feel safe in spite of my concerns.

In dying, I am born anew.

In all, when every other person is struggling to learn, all I choose to do is to remember, remember who I am.

## THINGS I'VE LEARNT

We all learn things in life, sometimes the hard way. We aren't sure who wrote this, but take a look and see how many apply to you...probably quite a few.

1. I've learned- that you cannot make someone love you. All you can do is be someone who can be loved. The rest is up to them.
2. I've learned- that no matter how much I care, some people just don't care back.
3. I've learned- that it takes years to build up trust, and only seconds to destroy it.
4. I've learned- that it's not what you have in your life but who you have in your life that counts.
5. I've learned- that you can get by on charm for about fifteen minutes. After that, you'd better know something.

6. I've learned- that you shouldn't compare yourself to the best others can do.
7. I've learned- that you can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life.
8. I've learned- that it's taking me a long time to become the person I want to be.
9. I've learned- that you should always leave loved ones with loving words. It may be the last time you see them.
10. I've learned- that you can keep going long after you can't.
11. I've learned- that we are responsible for what we do, no matter how we feel.
12. I've learned- that either you control your attitude or it controls you.
13. I've learned- that regardless of how hot and steamy a relationship is at first, the passion fades and there had better be something else to take its place.
14. I've learned- that heroes are the people who do what has to be done when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences.

- 15.I've learned- that money is a lousy way of keeping score.
- 16.I've learned- that my best friend and I can do anything or nothing and have the best time.
- 17.I've learned- that sometimes the people you expect to kick you when you're down will be the ones to help you get back up.
- 18.I've learned- that sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel.
- 19.I've learned- that true friendship continues to grow, even over the longest distance. Same goes for true love.
- 20.I've learned- that just because someone doesn't love you the way you want them to doesn't mean they don't love you with all they have.
- 21.I've learned- that maturity has more to do with what types of experiences you've had and what you've learned from them and less to do with how many birthdays you've celebrated.
- 22.I've learned- that you should never tell a child their dreams are unlikely or outlandish. Few things are more humiliating, and what a tragedy it would be if they believed it.



- 23.I've learned- that your family won't always be there for you. It may seem funny, but people you aren't related to can take care of you and love you and teach you to trust people again. Families aren't biological.
- 24.I've learned- that no matter how good a friend is, they're going to hurt you every once in a while, and you must forgive them for that.
- 25.I've learned- that it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others. Sometimes you are to learn to forgive yourself.
- 26.I've learned- that no matter how bad your heart is broken the world doesn't stop for your grief.
- 27.I've learned- that our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become.
- 28.I've learned- that just because two people argue, it doesn't mean they don't love each other And just because they don't argue, it doesn't mean they do.
- 29.I've learned- that we don't have to change friends if we understand that friends change.
- 30.I've learned- that you shouldn't be so eager to find out a secret. It could change your life forever.
- 31.I've learned- that two people can look at the exact same thing and see something totally different.

32.I've learned- that no matter how you try to protect your children, they will eventually get hurt and you will hurt in the process.

33.I've learned- that your life can be changed in a matter of hours by people who don't even know you.

34.I've learned- that even when you think you have no more to give, when a friend cries out to you, you will find the strength to help.

35.I've learned- that credentials on the wall do not make you a decent human being.

36.I've learned- that the people you care about most in life are taken from you too soon.

37.I've learned- that it's hard to determine where to draw the line between being nice and not hurting people's feelings and standing up for what you believe.

38.How about you... what have you learnt?

## FREEDOM TASTES LIKE FANTA

I've been itching to put pen on paper on a particular theme. But I've not been able to find the right words that'll convey my thoughts in the manner I envision it.

Though my muse's been on rampage, sourcing words and lines and all... I don't want to ink down just 'another poem'. I'm cooking something touchy, emotion drilling, and homemade.

Stop salivating.

Inspiration flooded in sometime last week on my way home. Seated comfortably between two fat women (irony intended), in a public transport. Driver was playing an Igbo highlife song... the lyrics really hit me hard. I sighed my way all through the ride to the bus stop. I wasn't alone in the sighing venture. Angelic 'fatties' on my left and right-hand side sighed in unison. Grey head Pa behind me sighed and said stuffs I couldn't grasp.

Lost in the song.

Driver moaned like it's his first orgasm. But not of pleasure. Pain... he moaned when the artiste dropped a few lines that 'touched'.

It was a sigh ride.

Today, on my way to work, I witnessed a colourful display of sun rise engulfed in the trio of red, black and green, fluttering in the wind. The smiles on faces of pedestrians, jubilation on the street, hearty songs and all the excitement rubbed off on me.

I felt at home.

Like fanta... chilled fanta seeping down your thirsty throat on a sunny afternoon, this felt like heaven.

Whilst the joyful noise looped, all I could think about was this: *"If the foretaste of freedom can place such rare smiles on the face of the common man, one can only imagine what impact the real meal will deal on Ndi Igbo."*

It doesn't matter, to me, what opinions you hold about this struggle;

We wear the shoe and we know just where it hurts.

We drink the hate like vinegar

and smile like 'notin mega'.

We fill in the gaps

in every nook of this nation

like it belongs to us,  
despite the hostility dished to us.

We hustle and grin white grin of cosmetic smiles,  
enriching our 'murder land'  
with our rare acumen  
and envied uniqueness.

We are...

We...

Sighs

Meanwhile, I'll sip this foretaste of freedom's fanta and wait still, until the final  
brew of fine wine drops like pure honey on our hate-scorched tongues.

## THE AUTHOR



He is a poet, editor, and publisher living in the suburbs of Aba. His writings are inspired by everyday happenings and observations. He is also a fierce advocate for the boy child and sexually molested.

He is a firm believer in big dreams and achieving them. Jaachi is a content writer, web developer, and editor at Poemify Publishers, a literary and publishing platform that helps young African writers become authors, convert leads, and get international recognition.

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