

# THE NALUBAALE REVIEW

A LITERARY MAGAZINE BASED IN UGANDA

FEBRUARY 2 019

The First Issue Featuring Writers from Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Ghana.

## PUBLISHING OPPORTUNITY INSIDE

Find a sanctuary for your  
Writing life.

## THE LOVE- MONEY QUESTION

Get to read poems, short stories and essays about the love-money question from writers across Africa. Poet Ronald Ssekajja shares his journey writing love and money.

OUR FIRST  
ISSUE

A Literally magazine  
for culture, literature  
and travel

PUBLISHED BY NALUBAALE REVIEW

# FEATURED WRITERS

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**Jude Taddeus Nalulu, Uganda**  
**Aganaba, Jesudubami Jemima, Nigeria**  
**Atwebembire Dallen, Uganda**  
**Truphena Khalayi Lwanga, Kenya**  
**Agwang T. Aidah, Uganda**  
**Flavia Kabuye, Uganda**  
**Omadang Yowasi, Uganda**  
**Daniel Many Owiti, Kenya**  
**Ngozi Osuoha, Nigeria**  
**Winnie Nabirye, Uganda**  
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# Editor's Note



Yeei! The first issue is here. The long awaited first issue of The Nalubaale Review Magazine is here and trust me on this, it won't disappoint. The stories are ecstatic and the poems are to die for.

This has been a great and fulfilling journey putting together this maiden piece of literature. The Nalubaale Review is a literary magazine based in Uganda. Our aim is to publish the finest emerging writers in Uganda and beyond. We intend to publish unique stories from Uganda and African countries. The magazine started 1 October 2018 and was my brain child aimed at publishing unique stories, pictures and literature from Uganda and beyond. The name Nalubaale is the local name for Lake Victoria, the second largest lake in the world and the largest in Africa. Nalubaale gives a livelihood to many East Africans and is God's gift and presence to us.

The Nalubaale Review aims to publish vibrant voices in Literature and focus on everyday experiences and musings of writers and photographers. It will have two issues a year and hope to add to the story telling candle of our African heritage.

Our maiden issue themed, 'the live-money question' explores how love and money intermingle in people's lives and relationships. The stories in here are beautiful and unique from extended family love issues, finding love for a young Masaaba man to what drives love among today's youth in South Africa. The embellished poetry is here to dismantle love for you. The theme for this issue was inspired by the debate that surrounds the shifting trend of love relationships in Africa today with them leaning on money more than love. One asks that is it better to love a person for whom they are, their character, heart (hmm) and ways then through hardwork you both build wealth and money or should one look at the dollar-worth of someone and the rest are sorted out after? and what is the fate of such relationships? Do they live happily ever after or do they cry in Munshions and Mercedes? The love-money question is a tricky one.

We also feature Ronald Ssekajja, a Ugandan poet who penned the sensational anthology "Echoes of Tired Men". He shares with us his writing journey and his interface with love, money and poetry.

We were energized by the numerous entries received for our maiden issue and hope that our readers enjoy these beautiful love tales. Hooray!

Nakitto Irene Owa'ggingo  
Uganda  
Chief Editor  
NR

## Featured Author



Ronald Ssekajja, Poet  
*“Echoes of Tired Men”*

- *A believer in dreams and in the obscene energy of solitude.*

I am an Architect and consultant IT Engineer by profession and a poet by passion. I am a believer in dreams and the obscene energy of solitude. My journey has been one of telling my stories in twisted forms of poetry, in both simplistic and complex conveyance, hoping to leave a mark in my short troubled life, not to say something new, but to ink that which people experience but are silent about.

Growing up, I was a reserved and lonesome child. Having grown with a bunch of sisters, I often felt that I had my own space where I could not be understood by the siblings. It seemed to me that they lived in a different world than mine. It seemed to me, too, that I was in a tiny world whose images had particular links to a world beyond me. I spent most time alone, listening to 90's Ragga and writing out raps in the way I heard them, which was totally different and wrong from the actual words to be frank. From this, learned to listen and some basics of rhyming that influenced my writing of poetry.

In high school, like most boys in that era, I played my part in writing love letters to girls, which I latter curved out into poems. I needed to have an edge in the game of “finding space in girls’ hearts”. I read and wrote a lot and I wrote a novel between 2004 and 2006. I later focused on poetry as a more aligned form of writing for me. This was also greatly influenced by Julius Ocwinyo. I won the high school poetry category of the National Book Trust of Uganda 2005 Poetry and Prose Competition. The good people there referred me to various writing spaces and publishers. I grew and bonded with The Lantern Meet of poets. Since then, I have gone on to nurture my poetry skills, perform my poetry at many a poetry and arts shows and spaces in Uganda.



Ssekajja performing one of his poems

### **My writing Journey on love, money and relationship**

In this journey, I have been writing about love, Africanism, politics and definitely money. In 2018, I published and launched my poetry anthology, “Echoes of Tired Men” which looks at love from different lenses. In all my poems of love, I kept finding Money as an influencer of relations and a genuine culprit for heart-breaks. I also observed that in a generation that worships material and in this highly sexualised way of life, Love can’t stay pure and undefiled by money.

The bulk of my poetry has hinged on the pain of twisted love, heart breaks and lovers that can’t find their space in Humanity, because of the poison of money as a driver of relationships. My book *Echoes of Tired Men*, was published partly to re-affirm the pain and tire of mankind in pursuit of peace, love and rest.

As is, I still believe in breath-taking love, despite society’s hindrances and attaching it to money. I chose to self-publish so as to contribute to how my subjects were portrayed especially around the subject of love - twisted poetry to paint a picture of wishful love. The kind we all love to experience but keeps eluding us and the kind I delve more into in my upcoming books are “*Footsteps of the Kakalabanda*” and “*Wet Lips, Warm Tongues and Oily Cleavages*”.

**Ronald K Ssekajja**  
**Uganda**  
**Poet**



# Short Stories

# THE THINGS THE SEVEN HILLS OF KAMPALA WITNESS

By Agwang T. Aidah - Uganda

“Just because it is big doesn’t mean he knows how to use it”, said Terah to the loud laughter of her friends: Stephanie, Lola, Savannah, Jacky and Nicole. The five friends were spending their Saturday afternoon catching up over wine and coffee, a ritual they had begun after completing at Makerere University. The friends had stuck together through the ups and downs and had left the university with an unbreakable bond. They preferred to meet physically after every four Saturdays which was better than keeping in touch digitally through social media and over the phone as was the norm these days.

Terah took a sip of her Chateau Lafitte as she took a break from narrating her latest sex escapade. At 34 years old, she was single and a dangerous combination of beauty and intelligence. With the much admired hour glass figure, she never failed to draw longing stares from the men and admiring glances from the women in every room she walked in. She had no child and was in no hurry to settle down, always content to date different men. The ambitious advertising executive had just finished her stint at Harvard University and was on her way into top management at the prestigious BMX, an advertising firm in the upscale suburbs of Bugolobi. Terah always kept their get-togethers lively and entertaining with her entertaining stories of her escapades and the various local celebrities she worked with. As the girls laughed, Stephanie sneaked a look at her watch for the sixth time that afternoon. Her heart skipped a beat when she read 5:45 pm.

“Stephanie why do you keep checking your watch?” asked Nicole.

“I bet she cannot wait to get back to that dreamy and yummy husband of hers” added Jacky dreamily.

“Screw his looks, give me a man with his money and I am game” said Lola to more laughter from her friends.

“Girls, it is getting late and I have to go home and tuck my kids in”, sighed Stephanie, a stay-at-home mother of two James Junior aged five and Caroline Wetaka aged three. She was married to James Wetaka, a real estate mogul with homes in Uganda, London and the United States. Stephanie’s life was nothing short of a Ugandan fairy tale. Hers was a life of shopping, travel and luxury. As the evening drew to a close and after the women had said their goodbyes, and each headed to her home.



Stephanie sped towards her house and impatiently honked, heart pounding. She had nearly broken the speed limits just to get home. It was 7:15 pm as she parked her car in the garage, her husband's Range Rover Sport was already parked. She said a silent prayer and pasted a fake smile on her face. As she walked into the dining room, the maid was clearing the children's dishes. She walked up and gave both Caroline and James Junior a bear hug. James Junior, smiled up at her, he was the splitting image of his handsome father complete with the charming smile. He is going to break hearts, that one thought Stephanie to herself. She took the children to their bedrooms, tucked them into their beds after brushing their teeth, reading them bedtime stories and saying their prayers. She quietly closed their bedroom door and took a deep breath.

Walking back into the living room, Stephanie was met with silence. She prayed that James was busy in the study working and he had not noticed her arrive late. She tiptoed across the carpeted hallway, opened their bedroom and quietly shut the door behind. On turning around, she saw James half sitting, half lying on their bed just looking at her. Deceptively calm eyeing her up and down with a calculating gaze, Stephanie stopped in her tracks. He stood up slowly and started to walk towards her, like a leopard stalking its prey. Mesmerized, Stephanie could neither move nor look away.

“You broke our rule, our agreement is that you get home by 7:00 pm. And for that, you have to pay,” said James in a calm voice.

As she opened her mouth to answer, Stephanie felt the a hard blow hit her on the side her head as James' fist connected with her head. The impact sent her to the floor.

An hour later Stephanie woke up, she had passed out after James had continued kicking her unrelentingly while she lay on the floor. She touched her ribs and winced when a sharp pain pierced through her causing her to curl up in a fetal position on the carpet. Tomorrow she would have to go to the Doctor with a really good excuse. She hated the pitying look, their family Doctor Kakooza Stanley gave each time she told him her made up stories to cover up the swellings, bruises and rare fractures. James was always careful not to break any bones though. She closed her eyes and fought back tears. Crying would further aggravate him and that was the last thing she wanted. An angry James was not one to be toyed with. She heard the sound of the powerful Range Rover engine start up and a few minutes late hooting at the game and he was gone. Time check 9:20 pm.

It was not always like this. She flashed back to the day they met. After University, Stephanie had found a job as a teller at Standard Chartered Bank on Acacia Mall. Stephanie had been working at her new teller job for a month when James Wetaka walked in. Suddenly there was a furor of activity. The branch Manager walked up to James, exchanged pleasantries and asked if they could handle his transactions for him. It was then that James looked directly at her and asked that she serve him. Even though Stephanie was just a teller and James's transaction was a bulk transaction he was too valuable of a customer and so Stephanie was sent to serve him. In the privacy of the VIP lounge of the bank, James had struck up an easy conversation with Stephanie asking her about her job and herself. Being an older, sophisticated business man, James managed to get Stephanie to agree to coffee with him that evening. Flattered by the attention from the noticeably powerful James, Stephanie felt butterflies in her stomach. After the transaction Stephanie hurried back to her desk. She quickly logged into the banking system and checked James's bank account the figure left her speechless. Having grown up in a modest home, Stephanie knew a life time opportunity when she saw one. Having gone through the upheavals of dating of campus boys, she was done with games and wanted to settle down. She has not seen a wedding band on James' finger and figured that was a good start.

That afternoon, she faked a stomachache and left work early. She had earlier called Terah and asked for her bodycon-Herve leger dress in maroon. She jumped on a Bodaboda, picked up the dress and dashed home. She quickly took a shower, sat down and applied makeup. She pulled out the expensive dress and out fell a silver clutch that Terah had generously added to the dress. "Bless her heart!" said Stephanie out loud as she slipped into the body hugging, knee length dress. She pushed her feet into silver stilettos and headed for her coffee date with James at the Serena Hotel. Once she got to the Serena the door man had her name and took her to a private dining room where James waited. She later learned that he had spent a huge amount of money to hire out the private dining room for just the two of them. He looked dashing in a crisp white button down shirt which was open at the neck, blue jeans, a checkered jacket and loafers. He stood up and pulled out her chair for her. As they made their orders, James was overly attentive as her complimented her dress, hair and shoes. Stephanie was in heaven; she was in love. After an evening of laughter and great conversation, James dropped Stephanie home and gave her a chaste kiss on the forehead before driving off. Disappointed she walked into the house. As she was getting ready for bed, she heard her WhatsApp message tone. It

was James wishing her a good night, telling her how much fun he had and asking her out to dinner that weekend. She smiled to herself and said yes, life after that was filled with dinners, dates, trips, shopping sprees and everything a girl could ask for. James and Stephanie became inseparable and after three months, Stephanie introduced James to her mother. Her family was elated.

There was only one problem, aside from the forehead kisses and hugs, James had never made any further move on Stephanie. This puzzled Stephanie. Whenever she would bring it up, he would laugh it off and tell her he wanted their first time to be special. In the beginning, Stephanie found it endearing but with time she grew frustrated and hatched a plan. They had a getaway trip planned to the Serena Lake Victoria Hotel and she knew this was the best time to carry out her plan. Once they got the hotel, James took out his laptop, settled on the balcony and within minutes he was lost in his world of work. Stephanie went to the bathroom, stripped out of her clothes and took a bath. A few minutes later, James heard Stephanie scream from the bathroom, panicked he dropped his laptop on the table and ran into the bathroom. He found a naked Stephanie dripping and rubbing her eyes furiously.

“What is the matter, Honey?” he asked as her and she clung onto him.

“I got soap into my eyes,” she said.

James laughed out loud and held Stephanie tightly. Soon his laughter subsided; he became conscious of the naked, soft and yielding body of Stephanie, pressed deliciously into him. She looked into his eyes and his body stirred. He made to push her away but she clung onto him, taking advantage of his hesitation Stephanie kissed James hungrily on the lips. She poured all her love, the frustration of waiting and her desire for him in that one kiss. James responded with an equal measure of passion as he kissed Stephanie and carried her to the bed. Lowering her on the bed, he asked “Is this what you want? If we do this, there is no going back.” Impatient, Stephanie shook her head in agreement and quickly reached for the buttons of his shirt.

“Patience little minx, he teased anticipation is the key to the best love making.” Stephanie could not stay still; she wanted him there and then. James began to kiss her eyes, her lips, her breasts and lower he went. Stephanie felt herself burning up. Later after they were both spent, James held Stephanie in his arms in silence. “What is on you mind? Stephanie asked. “If another man ever touches you, I will kill you.” Stephanie laughed it off as she drifted off to sleep. James stayed awake in deep thought

and watching as Stephanie slept in his arms. Four months later, Stephanie found out she was pregnant. When she broke the news to James, he hugged her so tight that she thought her ribs would crack. Then next day they had informed her mother that she and James were getting married. Both the traditional marriage and wedding had been planned hurriedly within four months, money being no problem. Stephanie had not wanted the pregnancy to show before her marriage ceremonies were completed. The wedding was a lavish affair and her friends: Terah, Nicole, Savannah, Lola and Jacky had been part of the wedding entourage. She has resigned from her job after the wedding when James insisted that she stay at home to raise their children. Life was bliss until the fateful day.

James Junior had just made three months and that evening James and Stephanie were home. James being a peaceful baby, he was asleep after his feed and James was in the bathroom taking a shower. James' mobile phone rang, Stephanie picked up the phone and the caller ID read Supplies. Stephanie picked up the call as soon as she said hello the caller hung up. When she turned around, James was standing behind her, towel around his waist with a look that she had never seen before. "Who told you to pick up my phone", he asked as he walked towards her. Phone still in hand, Stephanie answered, "You were in the bathroom and I did not want to disturb you". That is when he hit smack across the face. Stunned, Stephanie pushed him, trying to fight back but before she could open her mouth, he hit her again and again and again until she lost count. After what seemed like an eternity to Stephanie, he stopped hitting her, wiped his hands off and told her look at what you made me do.

In shock, Stephanie spent the night with her son in the guest bedroom. The next morning when she called her mother, she narrated her ordeal and asked that she goes home for some time. Her mother said to her, "My daughter a married woman never leaves her home. We all go through these things. I went through things with your father while he was still alive. Stay in your home" Confused and feeling betrayed, Stephanie broke down and cried. Until the cries of her son interrupted her sorrow, she picked Junior up and cradled him. She looked at his innocent face and wondered what kind of life he would be subjected to if she left his father. That evening James came back home bearing gifts for her and Junior. He had bought her the latest Prada bag and a Gucci jacket. He was apologetic and with tears in his eyes asked for her forgiveness. He promised never to lay a finger on her again. He said he wanted their family together and happy. She believed him after all he is the father of my son she thought to herself as she forgave him. That night they made sweet, passionate love. It was as if

each of them was using the other to heal the pain. Stephanie knew that things were okay. Then it happened again two months later, again and again.

Tears streaming down her face, Stephanie dragged herself off the carpet painfully. Slowly she walked down the hall way to her children's room. She opened the door quietly and let out a sigh of relief when she realized that they had slept through the ordeal. She went back into her bedroom and ran a hot bath. She put in her favorite bubble bath, climbed in the bathtub and let the tears fall.

As Jacky drove home and when she parked the car, she fished for her phone and pulled it out. The screen was blank; she had forgotten to switch her phone back on after leaving the girls. She switched her phone on and found 6 missed call notifications from her mother. Immediately she dialed her mother's number, her mother picked up on the third ring and in a teary voice asked "Jacky where have you been? I have been trying to call you all evening." "Yes, Mama I know, is everything okay?", Jacky asked.

"No, Jacky! Arthur and the boys were involved in an accident"

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Lola reached home, tucked her children to and prepared herself for bed. As she slowly started to drift to sleep, her phone rang. It was Jacky, it was not uncommon for Jacky to checkup on Lola in the evenings.

"Hi, you", Lola asked cheerfully.

"I need you, Lola", Jacky's tearful voice broke over the phone.

In tears Jacky narrated the evening's events and gave Lola directions to the hospital. Lola scrambled out of bed, threw on some clothes and raced out of her house. Her friend needed her. On the way to hospital she called and updated Nicole, Stephanie and Terah. Lola vaguely noticed that Terah sounded subdued on the phone, not her usual cheerful self.

After what seemed like hour but was just 40 minutes, Lola walked into the hospital and nearly buckled at the sight that greeted her. Seeing Arthur hooked up to what looked like thousands of tubes, eyes closed and the monitor beeping away next to his bed, shook her to the core. Jacky ran into Lola's arms and burst into tears, Lola murmured words of comfort as she held her friend trying hard not to cry herself.

“And the boys, where are they?” Lola asked when Jacky was calm.

Jacky told her the boys were okay and had escaped with minor bruises because they had been wearing their seatbelts. However due to the shock and trauma of the accident, they had been sedated and were sleeping in a separate room with her parents watching them.

Arthur and the boys had been driving to get ice-cream when an oncoming trailer had lost control. To avoid a head on collision, Arthur had swerved and hit a massive tree and the impact from the crash and airbag had given him a massive concussion which had resulted into his brain swelling and him going into coma. The doctors had done everything in their power to bring the swelling down and all they could do was pray. Lola and Jacky held their hands prayed. Stephanie, Nicole and Terah walked in and they too joined in prayer with tears streaming down their faces.

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Stephanie looked down at Arthur as he fought for his life, she glanced at Jacky. Jacky was distraught, broken and in so much pain. She thought of Jack and their life together. If tables were turned and she were in Jacky’s shoes would she feel the same way? She knew her feelings would be the exact opposite. She would wish and pray that James her husband dies. She briefly pictured switching off his life support system if he lay in coma so he wouldn’t cause her any more pain. The satisfaction this evil imaginary thought gave her shocked her. The depth of her anger and hatred jarred her. How is it that she had been living and sleeping with her worst enemy for all these years? Stephanie knew what she had to do for her and her children’s sake. She had to leave James before she did something regrettable to him. Stephanie called home and gave her maid instructions for the night. Stephanie had a feeling that it was going to be a life changing night not just for her but for the rest of her friends too. “I am leaving James” blurted Stephanie out loud.

Four pairs of startled eyes looked up at Stephanie. Terah was the first to pounce, “what! Do you mean you are leaving your perfect husband and perfect life?” Willing herself to stay strong, Stephanie sat down and began to narrate every single detail of the façade of the perfect life that had become her private hell to her friends. There was silence after Stephanie finished talking, Stephanie did not have to ask what they were thinking, their faces mirrored their emotions.

Terah was the first to reach out and hug Stephanie, she held her tight and said to her, “I will call my lawyer.”

“Since we are going to be here all night and I hate hospital food, I am going to order all of us some decent food”, announced Nicole as she went to do the one thing she did best.

After briefing her lawyer, Terah asked her to draw up divorce papers and come down with them to the hospital in the morning. Walking quickly back to Arthur’s hospital room, Terah smiled when she found Jacky asleep on a chair with Lola watching protectively over her nearby. She walked out with Stephanie to the balcony and updated her on her phone call with the lawyer and offered to let Stephanie crash at her house while the divorce was being handled. Stephanie smiled at her friend’s generosity.

“Thank you so much Terah for everything you have done for me, but I have hidden for far too long and it is time I stopped. Tomorrow I must do this on my own and face James. Besides I cannot leave my children” said Stephanie.

Terah smiled, she understood her friend more than she knew.

“If you do need anything, please call me”, Terah told her friend as she hugged her tightly.

At the hospital entrance the delivery man arrived. Nicole paid for the food, tipped the delivery man generously and walked back into the hospital.

“Food is here!” she announced excitedly as she walked into Arthur’s hospital room. The girls were standing around Arthur’s bed with Jacky’s head on Arthur’s chest, heart pounding Nicole rushed to Arthur’s bedside. Arthur’s eyes were open, he was awake.

# The Death of Chivalry, the Rise of Materialism

by Eliza Manasa Mabungu - South Africa

“Do you love me?” You ask.

I nod my head and look deep into your eyes.

“I love you,” I say.

“Would you love me if I didn’t have all these things I have now?” You ask.

I nod my head. Boo, I love you hey. Why would I lie? I have loved many broke men with nothing to their name and why would it be hard to love someone like you? You call me and check up on me all the time. You spend all your time with me and you take me out. There are no unexplainable gaps of your absence and excuses about leaving your phone for the whole night. I don’t have to drool over couples at the mall holding hands. Your undivided attention is all that I yearn for and it’s something you’ve not starved me of.

“I would love you,” I say.

Boo, at the death of chivalry the game changed. Oh, how I have had my heart broken by men who didn’t have pennies to their names. They work for the white men and they have sent me selfies of their dusty selves. I was a counselor for their financial problems, a nurse who checked them when they broke their legs at their work site. Then they went around and stabbed me in the back. They left without even saying goodbye. Even after I begged so hard that they tell me what it was that I did to have them all this silent, they block me. Honey, being ghosted is no child’s play. It leaves you looking for closure from someone who acts as if you didn’t exist. Someone who makes my affection for them all feel wrong. They were the first thing I ever thought about when I woke up and they leave without even saying: “it’s over!”

Before I met you my dear, I made the decision to no longer settle for less. People give very little of themselves and give the impression that it’s the best they can do. When a woman loves, she loves for real. These materials aren’t anything to us but unlike the broke brothers, your money is doing the loving. It does the love in case you don’t love me. I have had men look deep into my eyes and tell me how they love me. Those words would send chills to my spine as if I have been craving for them. I meant it when I said I loved them, but them treating me like a puppy starving for affection was



uncalled for. Boo, I've met men without anything. They don't have love and they don't have money. All they do is live for the sun to rise so they can have what's between our legs and then they move to the next one. This ride or die chick game changed when men no longer appreciated me. Now when you tell me that you love me, prove it to me. These words mean nothing to me anymore coming from a man. Prove your love with that expensive weave because even broke men do lie. It's so hard to access what's genuine anymore. These recycled words sound real because they have been so rehearsed by the greatest liars of all time. Then they go around talking about how I am now a whore because my Bae gives me money? Chivalry died with our fathers who when intoxicated with alcohol, they reflected on our mothers' kindness towards them.

"This woman is the real deal," papa professed his love for her at a family gathering.

That's the kind of love I yearned for. I wanted to be that woman who holds her man's hand even when the world doesn't believe in him. I wanted to be the Madikizela my Mandela, but we both know how the story ends.

Boo, these men have made us change the game. Love has not disappeared but it now comes at a price. What's the use of taking two taxis to go see my man who sleeps on a mattress that stands on bricks to only have him treat me like rubbish in the end? I held it down for him, even when people doubt that he deserves me. I understood how his job offers him no growth and advised him to start his own business because he is good with camera installation.

"I will babe," he said.

"Okay, if you aren't business minded you can find a better company that appreciates you," I said. The constant complaints were more painful than irritating. The need to grow with him was my ultimate goal. Oh how I would chase many potential Baes at greater levels in life than him in the name of love. Then he walks out without even betting an eye. He starts searching for potentials without even giving me the schedule. When he walks off, he blocks me. Me? I checked up on him when he was sick. The green light was a vague one from him ignoring my calls and then when I confronted, all he had to say was sorry. Sorry, but he was online. Broken people are like broken things, they aren't for fixing. If you try to fix them yourself, you end up getting cut. I threw them away like they did with me.

I love you because I know that when you go, we would have both lost. There's nothing as tiring as one sided love. You only see it in the end and you now have to beat yourself up for demanding to get what you're worth.

"Maybe I shouldn't have said this and that," I say to myself.

Real love knows no accounts of wrongs and when it ends, two people sit down and talk about it.

Immaturity is this ghosting culture that undervalues a person's worth. The energy it takes to believe that someone who doesn't believe that he is something is exhausting. Sizwe, I love you because you have already built yourself and thank whoever has helped you because I know that someone is also thanking me for the broke brother who left.

I will wipe my eyes with the satisfaction of how your money was wasted on me like my heart was wasted on you.

Chivalry is dead boo and thus a great need for these materials. Even spending time with your woman is something men find expensive. Then they go around telling women about wearing full panties as if they know how much one costs. With you, at least I know that if you want to see me adorn your bed with sexy lingerie you will take me to buy it. At least I now know what a smoked salmon tastes like. These men don't know real love. People bash us for being killed by rich men, but even girls dating broke ones get killed. The truth is, ya'll never loved us.

Tomorrow when the relationship is over, he goes about telling his friends about how crazy I am. Well I am crazy, I can't dispute that. I am crazy for believing that love exists because someone is poor. Here I am, comforting him about how things will be alright.

"We don't celebrate Valentine's Day, ours is every day," he says huh?

Rich men spoil women to come nice. My level of "craziness" could have even persevered if he bought me an artificial flower, but he still fails to.

Whether rich or poor, many of you men never loved us. You go around talking about how fat we are as if you aren't familiar with female anatomy.

See, when I met you baby I said yes knowing that you satisfied my mental image. Those abs that you rock so hard are what I find attractive. Instead of telling me to go to the gym, we go together. Unlike these guys who want a flat tummy while they don't even have six packs of their own, you are a man of action.

“Where’s Sizwe?” My friends ask.

A smile adorns my face as I flash out my iPhone to show them the pic you have just sent a second ago at a press conference captioned, *I wish you were here!* Oh what a change from; “I am worried about my man!”

These things lie. They say they are sick while they lie with other women. They go around pairing us against each other. There are so many standards to meet. At least with you I know that if you say I am too dark, you will pay for a proper skin lightening procedure. These men want things to go their way but don’t even have the resources to make us be as they want us to be. We stand by them and don’t compare them to their peers but they will tell us and their peers about our stretch marks.

Although, you have never complained about them, I know that if you were to, you would pay for whatever effective product that will vanish them off my skin.

These broke men are tiring! They must watch the game and see. They are playing a losing one because of their lack of anything. The blessers are coming for these women and these broke guys are going to lose. We have always watched films and stories about women losing good men for chasing after rich ones, but tales about broke men losing good women are on their way.

They will be loveless, depressed and broke. I know that I am tired of chasing after body goals to satisfy a man who is not even mine. All they do is go around talking about sex as if they are even good at it. They must come and have me rate them before they go around humiliating me in public showing people that this is the poverty I persevered.

Everywhere we go, we meet angry women. They are depressed because these men have told them that their untainted love is not enough. At least with you sweetie, I will go on a holiday with your money when your love proves to not be real.

“I want us to go to Maputo for two weeks,” you say.

I love you. I wouldn’t have seen this side of the world if I had stayed with my standards of love.

“Money makes these young girls settle for less,” these men say.

The same men who fail to love us want to talk about how having a blesser with a pot belly is demeaning, but they then compare us to women with big booties. They call us planks in the end. We loved these broke men, but they never loved us.

A rich man might not have love and that’s okay, his money does all the loving for him.

“I want to marry you,” you say my love.

“It must be in the Maldives,” I say.

You smile and I can still see in your eyes that you have also had your dose of good girls gone bad. The ones who have also had their hearts stepped on by other men, I stand and look into those doubtful eyes.

“I love you babe,” you whisper.

You smile and then let me in on your fears. They have been in relationships with you for your money but I am here for both. I will still love you even if you lose it but trust me, I doubt that someone as generous as you will lose it. It ain't like I am also not hustling so we will depend on mine. My sweat has been sustaining me while I told them to spoil me with loyalty and I will spoil myself with my finance.

“Wouldn't it be nice if we all just heal one another?” You asked.

I nodded, but knew deep down that my rising up game was so lit that no man could ever break me as they did.

“I will love you and hope that with your brokenness, you don't turn to break me,” I said.

I know, we all have to agree that we have had our fair share of bad relationships but going around breaking people for one person's mistakes is uncalled for. It might hurt these brothers that they come as second choice to men with money, but they also haven't been fair. Oh how many women have lost themselves trying to please these men? Nothing ever satisfies them. They fail to make peace with their choices and chase after the next big thing. Although in my prayers, I pray that we end up celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and beyond, I also want to make peace with the unpredictability of this relationship. I love you and I love your money. The things you buy will comfort me when you leave.

They may call me a gold digger, but I am not. Gold can never dig itself.

## GIVE ME “LOVE”, LAST PRICE

by Aganaba, Jesudubami Jemima - Nigeria

*It's because of them that I stopped wearing makeup...* When I was around 14, and the *callings* were becoming too much, I stopped wearing makeup for a while.

It is sweet when boys, or men, are calling you sometimes. There is this *sweetly-sweetly* way your body will be doing you, as if it is you that created your *fineness*; as if it is because of “what your name is” that your shape and height are the way they are. It is sweet to be called “fine”, though the beauty is God’s own.

I was happy, the way girls with breast growing and bums coming out are happy at 13 or 14 or 15. When I would go to buy pepper for Aunty or *Bobo* for her stubborn son, and a man seated at the smelling place would tell me that I looked nice. The first time it happened, I smiled like my mother had called from the village to say my father was finally well and I didn’t have to work again, meaning I could go home, even though it is to overnight *eba* and watery soup for breakfast.

That first time, I slept better with a smile that followed me with kwashiorkor legs into my dream; but not before I stood in front of my cracked mirror, naked, and pressed my face and body like I was a new born baby whose bones were being strengthened while getting a bath. I was glad that the rashes that had broken out on me just the day before were on my laps and stomach where clothes hid them from the eyes that would find me beautiful.

But then, everything started getting too much. *Small-small*, I stopped answering the calls; then, I taught myself to stop blushing—my skin is black, anyway.

It’s not that I was tired of people telling me I am fine—I was just afraid. The boys were always telling me things, and sometimes, in front of the boy with ears like satellite dish!

“Love” was the only thing on their tongues.

They said they loved me.

They talked about “love” as if it was the gateway to heaven, as if without their love, I would not survive. They talked of love in a buying and selling manner, like the barter trade we learnt about in school. They said if I loved them, they would help me enjoy, as if I told them I was suffering in Auntie’s house *sef*.

*Mtschewww!*

Aunty doesn't suffer me. Even though I am not her child, and I am in her house to work for her so I can send money to my family, and she is sad most of the time because of her husband, Aunty does not suffer me. She sends me to school too.

You see...she even makes me call her "Aunty" instead of "Madam" like I am supposed to, and that is even because the "Mummy" she first told me to call her as we drove from our hut in her big car, felt like log of wood in my mouth.

I had just turned 13 the week Aunty came for me in the village. She said a woman in the city informed her of a family that wanted to give their daughter up for household chores so she can assist the family with the money.

We always needed money. There are too many mouths, and so little spoons, that hunger—the pretentious, half-filling kind—knew us like our blood. The lack hit us daily, with blows like 7 days *fufu*, and we bore it like the annoyances of siblings, beings your very intestines are used to. We knew hunger in different forms and shapes—explaining them might be too tasking—but the most lasting way it showed itself to us is in form of Papa's sickness.

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*Papa is a fisherman...*

It would have been a sugary thing in the mouth to tell somebody if it was years ago when our village creeks and rivers weren't two layers—water underneath, and oil on top, making someone think of bread covered with butter.

It would have been a good thing to be happy about if the fishes and the birds weren't dying on the water every time, decaying, and making the whole place smell like unburied corpses.

I would not have known hunger—we would not have known hunger—if Papa actually caught fish, most of which would be sold, and the rest brought home to us. We know hunger and lack now because Papa catches wind and stench and 8 or 9 tired fishes from his nightly toil, and the oil keeps destroying and swallowing up life. We are Niger Deltans, but our village is taken from more than it is given too, and so we know poverty's name.

The water and the breeze and the stench and the frustration caused Papa's sickness, I am sure. It drained his mind first, and then his spirit, before his body followed. There is a way I am sure a man's

brain and heart can see no hope, and then his spirit starts to die, and then it drags the body into that well where nothing is. And so Papa's sickness really has no cure, I know. The drugs are ineffective since the food is still the same insufficient, meaningless thing; since the oil is still robbing him of his livelihood and enriching the pockets of the elites; since his children, plenty like ants on sugar, surround him with eyes that need things, sunken eyes that want life to be better. There is a limited way a father's lightless eyes can tell his family they are loved when there is barely enough money to get them on to the next week.

I left Papa sick and came here. So, it's not really because of him I was sent to come and make some money in the city. I was sent because of all of them. I was sent to add however much I make from cleaning and washing and not being in my home, to whatever peanuts mama makes from selling half-alive vegetables in the market, because Papa's "spirit" and body can hardly move from the mat it lays on now.

So Aunty was and still is an answer to prayer. She pays me more than girls like me are paid, and like I said, she is good to me. I am not suffering with her, and so I do not understand these boys' bargain using love. I also cannot accept their love because I have heard many times that the love they talk about usually ends up with the girl carrying *belle*—definitely a payment for all the money she has been *eating and cleaning mouth*. I cannot not have sense and disappoint Aunty like that. I cannot be stupid like that.

So, it's because of them that I stopped wearing makeup. If it's that I can, and still *be alive* properly, I would have just cut off the face and the growing breasts *kukuma*.

I stopped wearing makeup because I wanted to test something while trying to stop these people from calling me, before Aunty, one day, will get to know, and think that I am a girl that does not have sense.

I stopped wearing makeup to see if they will still call me if my face is not as fine as I usually make it before going out at all, even if it is to a place that you can just throw your spittle and it will land. I started wearing bathroom slippers, instead of *pams*, to buy something. I did not take extra care for my hair the way I used to before. Of course, there really was no need for all those *additions* just to go buy bread or something, but a teenager is like the most confused human in the world.

I wanted to know if *I* was the love they wanted, or if how I looked, and they wanted me to keep looking, was what they actually didn't mind spending their money on. I needed to know the relationship between these "I" and "m" entities, and what I had to do with it all.

I will not tell what I discovered during my hiatus, but I can just say that beauty cannot be hidden, and is not found in what is worn or not worn. Like I said, the beauty is God's property.

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I am 17 now.

It has been 4 years or so since I have been living with Aunty. By the way, her name is Tricia, and...I call her mummy now. It is no longer heavy in my mouth; because I have come to understand that she needs me to call her that, to make her feel like a mother of two since her womb or whatever *chi* is in her spirit won't allow her to be the *real* mother of more than Junior, Junior that is no more stubborn and talkative. She needs me to be her daughter so that the love that her husband clearly is not showing her, because his people say she holds him in her love spell, can be gotten from the way I hug her after painting her nails, and the way Junior holds her when he has awakened from a nightmare, and from the way we three huddle together on the parlour rug on rainy nights when her husband has been nowhere to be found all day and all week. She always knows he is with the other woman, but she has since stopped fighting over it since that month he beat her and yelled about how she owed him her life for helping her grow the wealth her parents had left her, and nursing her back to health when her brain was shaking from the trauma of their tragic death. It was from that month Junior stopped talking like he used to talk and began running to his room when he heard the sound of his father's jeep. It was that month that Aunty came into my room one night, with tears running down her face, and told me sternly to call her "mummy", *if I didn't want to die*. The next day, she sent money and food and clothes and a car to my family in the village, as if she bought me; as if we all were now one family because she needed me.

On one of our many nights without a husband and father, she told us...me, more accurately, about how she had met the now constantly absent man she married.

The story was - her father and his father were friends; they in turn became childhood friends, and later, lovers.



But her father had more of the money, of course. The friend, if not for goodwill and the latter's humility, wouldn't have been able to even come near the flowers surrounding the walls of the compound.

The marriage was arranged by the fathers before either of the couple had adequate time to consider whether this thing called "marriage" was for them.

She had her doubts... There was his constant emotional blackmailing attribute over little quarrels, and there was the fact that he never seemed to do more than his potential.

He had his irritations... The fact that his girlfriend was definitely richer than his full generations multiplied together, and the fact that he enjoyed the privileges he got from their relationship so much, though he felt emasculated in a way. He hated that nature, he believed, was unfair to him.

But fathers, long standing friends at that, are usually 'unargued' with...

They got married.

I have my beliefs: she married, ready to love and work the love; he married, ready to keep blaming life, and giving excuses for the wrongs his heart was prepared to continually do.

My beliefs may be wrong, but at least I do have them.

I have become Auntie's daughter, and Papa is now well in the village. His spirit has smelt money *na*, why won't he be well? He has also stopped toiling in rivers the greedy people have polluted with oil they export and "clean mouth", as if they don't know the villages they took it from should have most of the money.

Papa and mama have started a business now. Papa sells yams, and mama has workers who pound what is left, and serve it with varieties of soups. Her patronage is the Tower of Babel's height's mate.

All my siblings have gone back to school.

I miss home, but I am fully employed here in the city—I am somebody's daughter, a love substitute.

Since life is as good as it can get at the moment, I don't mind playing along with all our unrealities.

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I turned 18 yesterday, and mummy, with smiles wide and fake, and eyes twinkling and distant, threw me a party.

He came home for the first time in weeks just as it was all ending and Junior was leaving the house to sleep over at his friend's. Mummy retired upstairs without a word to him.

By the time I was done making the living room look like a human being's again, I heard him snoring in one of the guest rooms.

He crashed into my room at midnight with the thunder. When my eyes flew open and lightning flashed again, he stood at the foot of my bed. I came fully awake then and heard the loud rain outside. Power, of course, was out.

With lightening again, I saw he was looking at me with something in his eyes. He seemed drunk.

I scrambled up from my bed and did a quick mental check on where exactly my strong, block-heeled black shoe was.

"I want you," I heard him say, and wished I could chop his voice box into little bits.

In the darkness, I scuttled silently to my shoe rack and felt for the shoe I knew could cause havoc. He soon saw it in my hand and laughed.

He surely was drunk, no doubt, but to what degree?

I moved.

"I have wanted you for years, but I was giving you time to mature."

He was coming after me, slowly but surely, as if he had been in my room many nights and knew the dark version of it like his own name.

"She needs you."

"I don't want her; you both know that. I want you. You know I can give you money, and you can send it home."

I wanted to remind him that the money isn't his to boast in anyway, but I said instead: "If you don't want her, then why do you torture her so? Why did you marry her in the first place if you knew you wouldn't be there till the end?"

I heard him stop.

"If you don't do this, I will take most of what she has, tell her you seduced me, and when she hits rock bottom, divorce her."

My mouth hung open at his callousness, and he waited for me to make a choice.

My choice haunted me throughout the night. I cried and hoped I was doing the right thing. I was scared of the next morning.

The smell of food, like a hand, tapped on mummy and I, and beckoned us downstairs, seconds after each other, to the kitchen.

He was there in his boxers, cooking something. He looked so out of place there and in the house, but the real odd thing was the smile he gave us when he turned around, and set us into chairs at the kitchen table, and told us food would be ready soon, and made small talk.

He hadn't been home for two months and suddenly, he was *this* on a Saturday? Mummy was smiling sheepishly at him, but I didn't like any of it. I wanted to know what was happening.

I did, midway through his spaghetti bolognese...

"Honey," he held mummy's hand over the table, "there's this business we should do. I have checked it out—the cost and profit and..."

My fork dropped from my hand, and my mind stopped hearing.

*Uh—oh.*

*He is doing it. He really is going to milk her dry, rip me from her heart, and then leave her!*

I broke out in a sweat, and told myself to trust her, that the drugs will help her keep a clear head for once and see through him.

But I knew, even as I looked up and his eyes met mine and he smiled that knowing, devilish smile, that he had her to toy with as he liked. If only she could stop smiling so sheepishly like a hypnotized person. How bad to need someone so much!

I was gone before she or he or Junior woke up the next morning.

My letter to her didn't mention his crash into my room nor the truth about things. I left, still wanting her clutching to the hope that, somehow, he wasn't as bad as that. I left, helping her retain the idea of the man she loved.

Also, I couldn't watch her hate me, while dealing with the financially bummed state he would leave her in. And, I wouldn't know how to be her daughter—a despised daughter, now—when he finally divorced her.

The eyes at home asked me questions, but I couldn't say. How much would they understand about feeling like a sick woman's shield, but then not being able to save her because she was sickly in love with a wicked leech of a soul? How much could one speak of ties that weren't made for "forever"?

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I am 20 today.

News of her death on TV begins the day for me.

"Suicide", they say. She overdosed on her prescription drugs.

But as the newscaster flippantly refers to her as "the divorced billionaire", I know the suicide didn't kill her; she had died slowly, daily, way before that.

There, of course, is no mention of him, and as I sit in the dark and watch the ugly newscaster and her screaming red weave on, I wonder if he will feel guilty wherever he is.

I sit in the dark long after the news is done and a music video comes on. I sit until something wells up in me, and I start crying, chest heaving and all.

I wonder about Junior and what he will make of everything; of the improper background he is an everlasting imprint of.

I cry in the dark and wonder if I should go back...as a witness to a *murder* that love, soaked in money, had committed.

I cry till my biological mother comes into the parlour and hugs me from the back to say "happy birthday".

I cry as she sees my tears and holds me...



## **Diamond in the Dirt**

by Jude Taddeus Nalulu - Uganda

Mabonga, son of the mountainous land of the Bamasaba; a tribe in the Eastern part of the Republic of Uganda reputedly known for its merry blood-spilling circumcision ceremonies called '*Imbalu*' and fused with the throbbing '*kadodi*' drumbeats, was in the bush grazing his grandfather's cattle while being 'baked' by the sultry midday sunshine, when his younger brother showed up pacing with unusual urgency. He used to bring for Mabonga food for lunch at one o'clock every day.

"Mabonga, I have good news for you." His brother said while panting.

"What news?" Mabonga asked uninterestedly. He was hungry. He wanted nothing less than food at that hot hour of the day.

"The head teacher is at home waiting to congratulate you upon, not only passing the primary leaving examinations excellently, but for being the best in the district and third in the country."

"What? Stop kidding me!" Mabonga said ecstatically. He had a grimace of surprise painted on his face.

There and then the news killed the pangs of hunger in his stomach.

Mabonga left his brother in charge of the cattle and ran back home to confirm the news. He had sat for his primary leaving examinations and was sure of passing excellently but he didn't expect to emerge among

the best in the country as such. His dream to study in the then eastern Uganda academic giant; Nabumali high school, on a government bursary had become much more real than he had wished.

Nabumali high school was famous for academic excellence. It attracted some of the best brains from everywhere in the country and across borders. It is where South Sudan's founding father, John Garang, and many distinguished names in the land had had their high school Education.

One month later, Mabonga excitedly reported to Nabumali High School. He possessed a blue color painted steel scrap box. It contained mostly books and a few belongings. He walked uneasily; being that it was the first time he wore closed leather shoes; a graduation from the tough sandals made out of worn out car tyres, as won by the karimojong warriors of north east Uganda and the Masai pastoralist community of Kenya.. He was also not fortunate to wear a pair of trousers for the first time since, unlike in other secondary schools, Nabumali High School's ordinary level boys wore snow white shorts and shirts, and therefore he would have to wait until when he would reach advanced level to have the chance of wearing a pair of grey trousers. However much his grandfather owned some heads of cattle, and therefore not considered poor, they lived a very modest life. He owned three pairs of shorts; one for the rare journeys he made and the others he wore at home. And above all, he was at last going to graduate from sleeping on a rib pressing papyrus mat to the brand new sponge mattress that he had not yet removed from the polythene bag it had been packaged in at the factory.

While he walked to the Bursar's office to pay up some other school dues, he happened to bump into the soft twin gun barreled bosom of a plump girl at the doorway, causing pulses of electricity to ripple through his veins up to the heart. She was walking out of the bursar's office. She dropped books in the encounter.

"Look at this blind village goat!" The girl fumed as she bowed down to pick her books, after examining Mabonga from the head to the feet and realizing that he was too clumsy to be a city boy.

"I am sorry sister. I did not knock you intentionally." Very timid Mabonga apologized.

Mabonga's heart skipped several beats as he admiringly watched the exotic city girl flamboyantly walk away while flexibly rolling her bulky bottom below her tinny waist, perfectly curving out a convex shape. Although Mabonga felt insulted by the 'blind village goat' analogy referred to him, he was impressed by the strange pretty plump black beauty. At sixteen, his hormones and emotions had matured enough to be tickled.

The pretty girl who Mabonga later learnt was called Namagembe; a princess from the land of the Kabaka, stuck in his mind, however he felt the complexity of village inferiority undermine his urge to let her know how he felt about her. Even when his extra ordinary brilliance and intelligence established a casual friendship between them all through their four year ordinary level voyage, he failed to spill the beans. He

silently suffered the pain of concealing his passion. And to make matters worse, Namagembe had a rich Asian boyfriend who did business in Mbale town and often visited her over the weekend in different brands of luxury cars.

Every time Mabonga got back to Nabumali from holidays in his home village in Muyembe, he carried along with him game meat for Namagembe; for it had come to be one of her tastiest delicacies, despite throwing it back at Mabonga when he hesitantly gave it to her the first time. While grazing his grandfather's cattle in holidays he would hunt down wild game, had it carefully roasted and preserved wrapped in banana fibers just for his heart pecker. It may appear ridiculous but that was Mabonga's gesture of romance. He also carried mangoes and oranges for her.

Mabonga's reflection of a genius did not stop in the primary leaving examinations; he maintained top position every term throughout the four year duration of his ordinary level education at Nabumali. He even emerged the best in the country when he sat for his Uganda Certificate of Education examinations, but to the dismay of his classmates, including Namagembe, he declined an offer to study for his Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education at kings' college Budo; then every student's dream high school and dominant supplier of most geniuses of the land to Makerere University. He preferred to remain at Nabumali high School when he learnt that Namagembe would not change, so that he could have a chance to look at her daily. He thought he would still beat all the geniuses at Kings' College Buddo and others of the kind and proceed to Makerere University to study his dream course Bachelor of Laws.

Mabonga had started to believe in his ability but he was not confident enough to say out the love he crudely expressed for city born Namagembe. However, when at the senior six leavers' party, he realized that time was running out for him to have his girl. They were only remaining with one term to go and so he had to bravely tell her about what he felt for her. She was seated with her friends, chuckle chatting away the merry evening, when he just bravely went and nervously requested to talk to Namagembe in private.

Though Namagembe despised Mabonga for what she thought was the village mentality stuck in him, she had learnt to respect him for his smart head and therefore she rose and obediently followed after him to where he thought was quite distant enough to eavesdrop by a third party. However, Mabonga embarrassingly got tongue tied for a while.

"Please tell me why you have called me here!" Namagembe said, "I don't want to miss even a single moment of this evening."

"What I am going to tell you will either strengthen the delicate friendship we share or it will shutter it." Mabonga said.

Namagembe who seemed to have had an idea of what Mabonga had all along suffered from over the years smiled slyly and said; “If you are not sure then don’t tell me.”

“No, I must tell you because I might never get the chance.”

Mabonga nervously got closer and just bravely held Namagembe’s soft palms in his hoe handle toughened hands. It was the first time he did get into very close proximity with a girl, let alone the bumpy encounter he had had with Namagembe the first time they set eyes on each other. Fortunately she did not deny him that first time opportunity.

“I love you so desperately.....since the first time I set my eyes on you, you have got stuck in my mind over the years.” Mabonga bravely said.

Namagembe was not surprised at all. She remained mum for a while, critically staring into Mabonga’s naïve eyes, as though she was observing whether he was handsome enough for her, then suddenly she pulled away.

“You were right, what you have just said has shattered the cordial relationship we have shared over the past six years!” She angrily said, “Yes you are bright but not my type, and remember I have my Asian boyfriend in the city.”

Namagembe walked away, leaving poor Mabonga standing still like he was held up by red traffic lights. By virtue of his very suburban nature, he hardly expected a positive response from her but he had to puke it out than let it silently eat away his heart.

That was the last time Mabonga spoke to Namagembe while they were still at Nabumali. Following that, he developed a phobia for her. He would change direction or retreat if it so happened that they were bound to meet, until they parted ways after their final examinations in December.

However, Nabumali was not the last place Mabonga and Namagembe were destined to meet. When Mabonga had studied for two months at Makerere University, where he had been admitted for his dream Bachelor of Laws degree course on government sponsorship; having scored super twenty five points and emerged the second best candidate in the country in the UACE exams of the previous year, he happened to see Namagembe at a stationery shop within campus. He had gone to have his coursework typeset there. Having been red carded by Namagembe on bravely revealing his feelings for her at Nabumali before they parted, Mabonga did not have the guts to face her and therefore he stealthy trotted away like a thief, though he was not sure whether she had not seen him.

Ever since then, Mabonga’s feelings for Namagembe were reignited. He thought about her often but managed to defeat the strong urge in him to visit her in Mary Stuart Hall, where he had learnt she resided. She was pursuing a bachelor of Education degree, on government sponsorship too. However, one day he would



inevitably have to visit her. He had just read a sad story about Namagembe in a University tabloid. She was one of the prettiest girls on campus and therefore a staple prey to university journalism. According to the paper, Namagembe had been going out with a guy she was meant to believe was an importer of the expensive European made cars and wore designer suits. He often drove Namagembe out to expensive evening dates either in a Range Rover, BMW or an Escalade. There was no doubt in Namagembe's mind that she was dating a wealthy man as a perfect substitute for the Asian businessman who had only used her for his convenience and ditched her when he married a fellow Asian in a lavish wedding ceremony in Mumbai. However, one day as Namagembe was taking a walk with a friend through one of the slums of Kampala city, which was adjacent to the university, she happened to see a man she thought had a striking resemblance to her businessman boyfriend seriously scrubbing a BMW at washing bay. When she got closer, she was shocked to confirm beyond doubt that he was actually her boyfriend. He ran away in shame when he saw her try to keenly observe him.

When Mabonga reached at Namagembe's room's doorway, he hesitantly knocked. He was there to give his shoulder for her to cry on.

"Leave me alone!" Namagembe screamed so loudly. She thought it was the scavenging university press still after her. Her life had been disgusted into contemplating suicide.

"It is me Namagembe, please open the door." Mabonga said.

For a moment, Namagembe kept quiet. Mabonga's voice sounded familiar in her ears and it tickled her bruised heart.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I am Mabonga," he answered hesitantly.

Namagembe opened the door for Mabonga to enter. She had cried her beautiful eyes red. Mabonga felt pity for her. He bravely offered his wide chest for her to cry in. For a moment, they let their hearts beat on each other. Namagembe felt so safe in Mabonga's arms, as though she had been there before, and she did not feel like letting him go. And Mabonga thought it was just a dream but when he butted his eyes multiple times, he realized that it was real. He just hoped he had at last got his girl.

After Namagembe had stopped sobbing, they looked at each other in the face and saw a strong passion hidden in their eyes. Mabonga bent a little while going for her lips. She responded so passionately. Namagembe realized how much her eyes had deceived her about the men that had come into her life. Only then did she realize that inside Mabonga's unpolished appearance was a very brilliant sparkle. He was the man she so much desired; a persistent lover and a brilliant lawyer in the making.

# THE MONEY-HALF

By Truphena Khalayi Lwanga - Kenya

As I watched her Probox inch its way through our private drive way that seemed more like a government commissioned road. My palms grew pallid and my heart throbbed.

I motioned to her with my hand and she drove into the expansive gravelly parking area outside the house. I waited for her at the door and could see her coming towards me hesitantly. Her face from afar seemed in awe and non-committal, I hoped she would not retreat and run back to the car. It was a wonder why she took my invitation in the first place, especially after the calamitous goodbye we had at the lawyer's office.

When we were face to face, I did not know how to greet her at such close range. To my utter surprise, I settled on suffocating her with a hug as if unaware of my burliness. I sniffed her neck and was disappointed to find a feminine fragrance and detect nothing of him.

After an unreasonable amount of time, I retracted my embrace and looked at her squarely in the face and still couldn't believe it. She was a reincarnation, exactly like the first time I saw her, three months ago.

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It was after finally having completed the exequies of my father to the meticulous standards of the elders. My mother did not understand the ceremonies that involved certain tribesmen residing in our family home for a month and so I took over, naturally, as the first born son. The necessary chants at daybreak after he was buried. The specific bland foods we had to eat in the first weeks, mourning meals. The lengthy conversations that had to be had about titles and lineage. All these I took care of all by myself. My younger siblings as disinterested in our father's demise as they were in his life.

It was the day scheduled for reading his will. We were all there punctually, at the lawyer's request, even my youngest sister in the depths of a visible drug addiction, twitching and fidgeting nervously in her seat to what we all presumed to be fits of withdrawal. We had waited so long for it after all the delays.

Various contestations of the will's validity and my father's soundness of mind, the emergence of other fictive wills and a court case suing the hospital for wrongful death that led to the exhaustive business of exhuming and reintering his body. Finally, were all ready to hear his posthumous verdict on us and put this all behind us. As we waited for our father's lawyer and executor of estate who was late, the door creaked open and Lucy walked in.

I did not understand what our childhood house-help who took care of me years ago was doing there. I noticed the incomprehension register on everyone else's face. All my other three siblings were either too young or

unborn to recognize her. Mom though, who was by my side, was the only one who had the history to remember Lucy but her dementia had been worsening of late.

Lucy walked in uncertainly like she used to when she was worked for us, as if she had stumbled into the wrong room and anxiously needed to backpedal. Her timidity had not changed, even after all these years. I could see an apology already forming on her lips when she looked back like she was being pushed in and I realized that she was. She was being pushed in by someone firmly holding her hand on the other side of the door.

Lucy finally made her way in and the shielded intruder behind her exposed herself at last. Immediately, all our questions were answered as to why Lucy was there. The woman in front of us was my father. Every one of us had inherited some vestige of dad, a protuberant nose there, penetrating eyes here but we generally took after our mother. This woman on the other hand, with her unyielding gaze, impassive dark face and sturdy gait took the crown. The resemblance was stark. Her legitimacy was written in her genes. She was the beardless version of our father.

My younger twin sisters were apoplectic at the sight of her, they instantly understood the disaster her arrival spelt. My father's dissolute lifestyle especially with regards to women had always been an open secret, but this seemed like a kick from beyond the grave, especially because I had falsely reassured them all that on his deathbed he confided in me that though he liked to play, he was always careful.

Reading the will was supposed to be a painless exercise. The inheritance was ours. After all those years of negligence, he owed us. Now this. At the very least I finally understood why Lucy mysteriously vanished all of a sudden, all those years ago. My mother had never been one to tolerate competition.

My sisters stood up and in unison shouted, "Get out! You are not welcome here!" They had always done things in tandem, not even maturation could tear them apart. Shamefaced Lucy and her daughter immediately began scampering to safety, ready to leave which infuriated my sisters all the more. It was not the fight they expected, they expected the kind of uppity mistress who would jauntily walk in demanding acknowledgement, around their age or younger, clad in the latest designer clothing, trudging a toddler preferably male, hurling insults back at them in response. They expected a challenge, perhaps even hankered for it, but instead got the gray-haired woman before them, wearing humility and a penitent face.

To everyone's surprise, even to my oblivious younger sister, mom was the one that came to her rescue. Her debility had a penchant for striking at the oddest of moments. Once on a visit to her old office, she marched right to the now General Manager, her former personal assistant a young man in his early forties and kissed him full on the lips. Unknowingly, revealing their distant affair that had hitherto been properly concealed.

"My children. Don't be rude to Lucy." Mom began, wielding all the false power we allowed her.

“Lucy took good care of all of you when you were still small babies, still poopooing on yourselves. Shame on you. Have some respect.” She said with all the maternal authority she could master, waving her index finger at my sisters.

Thereafter, taking Lucy’s hands and folding them with her own wrinkled hands as everyone watched in frozen horror. Lucy accepted in kind, finally unleashing her apology as they hugged and cried together. She cried a sharp cry of fresh, untouched grief.

Even the lady was shocked at the odd turn of events. Suddenly, the lawyer walked in and before he could ask who the strange woman hugging mom in the middle of the conference room was, he saw the woman beside her and kept his mouth shut. I wondered if he had known all these years.

Instead, he only cleared his throat deliberately and in his stentorian voice ordered all of us to sit that he may begin reading the will. We all took our seats and silence was taken as assent and he begun.

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“I am glad you came.” I told her after the hug.

“You’re welcome.” She said and I realized it was the first time I had heard her voice. It had the same quality of controlled fervour as my father’s.

“What is this place?” She asked scanning the grounds with my father’s scrupulous eyes.

“This is home.” I said proudly.

“Wow.” She said involuntarily with a streak of condescension in her tone. I was familiar with that kind of disgust. Disgust for wealth. I had met many people who were repulsed by my wealth and the libertine lifestyle it accorded me, by the sheer amount of things in my house and the invariable comfort of my life. They hated that places like this existed in Kenya, the same Kenya where children died of hunger, where mothers died, their hands cold but still clasped to their infants who suckled on their milkless breasts. Homes with their own stables, parked Bentleys and swathes of land. Living in such profusion was a kind of sacrilege to people like her.

I liked that she was disgusted. It was disgust that could only emanate from a person who lived under years of privation. I was glad my father did not give her money.

“Follow me this way, I have prepared lunch.” I said to her as I led her to our stately dining room. Complete with designer furniture and cutlery. She took a seat and looked back at me.

“I forgot to ask, what is your name?”

“Nana. What is yours?”

“Timothy.” I said as I dipped a dollop of ugali into the fish soup.

“How was your life? Did he take care of you?” I launched into my inquisition.

“Is that why you brought me here for? To interrogate me.” She said with an exasperated sigh in between bites.

“No. It is just a question.”

“Well then. Yes and no.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean he was a good father in his own way. He was there for me in the beginning but it was somewhat halfhearted, scraps. But I think the bit he gave us, it was his better half. ” The ‘us’ made me wonder if there were more of her, more siblings but I dared not ask. It was a box I preferred to leave sealed.

“How old are you?” I asked instead.

“48.” She replied, she was my age but that didn’t surprise me at all. My parents always had a tumultuous relationship from the very beginning. She knew that we were age mates too because she didn’t ask for my age in return.

“I agree with you.” I said.

“On what?”

“That the man split himself in half between us and gave you the better half.”

“He never gave us any money.” She defended herself.

“I know. That is why I was agreeing. He raised you and bribed us.”

“If it helps, I hated him for years for that.” She commiserated.

“For what?”

“Only seeing my mother and me when it was convenient but never facilitating my growth financially.” I laughed a contemptible laugh at her genuine complaint. His infrequent visits seemed lavish judging by the amount of time he ever spent with us.

“You should count yourself lucky.” I said amid mouthfuls.

“I know that now. My mother warned me about his excesses and what it could do to a person.” She said, her face convulsing with that look of disgust once again.

“I got the love-half while you got the money-half. I have made my peace with that.” She added smugly.

“Why did you come to the reading of the will? How did you even know about it?” I asked in an offhand manner meant to distract her from my growing gall. Nana stared at me blankly then burst into an unnatural laugh, continuing to eat her food without answering the question.

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That day at the courtroom as the will was read out all eyes were on her and Lucy. From me she got furtive glances, from my twin sisters she got venomous stare-downs and a dismissive look from the youngest.

I watched her whispering discreetly to her mother the entire time, her imperceptible gestures identical to our father's. And her eyes, there was something familiar about them that I could not pin point quite yet. I wondered why she chose this moment precisely to unveil herself. Mistresses were certainly not outlawed at the funeral, especially if children were involved, perhaps she had sought some kind of vindication for her shadowy existence. I made a mental note to ask her if I ever talked to her.

"That is all." The lawyer boomed at the end, gathering all the files into his leather briefcase, startling me.

I had a blank expression while everyone looked at me expectantly. At the time I didn't know it was because I had been apportioned the biggest chunk of his estate.

My twin sisters seemed pleased even though I would later learn that their combined inheritance was the least. The youngest beamed for getting anything at all, since my mother had become incapacitated I effectively ended her enablement but now she no longer needed me. A new vitality shone through her, restoring her typically shrunken face.

All my sisters left immediately the session was done, unsure and relieved at the parsimony of the whole exercise. Lucy and her daughter on the other hand, having received nothing, still behaved seemingly, appearing even more relaxed and jocular even after the hostility preceding the Reading. Their appearance had not bungled anything at all.

I excused myself to the washroom becalmed by the wonderful conclusion, sure that nothing else could go wrong if that was done. But when I came back I noticed a gathering commotion around where I had last seen my mother and Lucy speaking, reminiscing tenderly of the past. I reached there in time to catch a glimpse of my mother landing a hot slap on Lucy's cheek.

"*Malaya wewe! Kiangalie!*" Mom shouted angrily and I knew something had triggered her memory.

I rushed to separate the two women but Lucy's daughter had already intervened, sandwiched between them, taking the blows meant for her mother. Mom usually went berserk when reality assailed and pulled her back into the real world, and this was no exception. She landed more kicks and continued shouting expletives at them as I pulled her back. But not before she unleashed a blob of spittle, launched as though her mouth were a canon proboscis splattering all over the face of Lucy's daughter. There was a glint in her eyes at that moment but I saw her physically retracting her reaction, and instead only pulling her sweater to wipe off the glutinous sputum that only spread it farther across her face. I envied her forbearance. The agonized look on the woman's face catapulted the hidden memory I had of her. I knew her from the hospital where my father had died. She was the nurse who walked in, moments after he had breathed his last, to record the time of death, close his eyes, turn off the machine and cover his body.

At the moment tightly wrapped in the freshness of bereftness, I did not think much of it but as I recalled it now, it seemed odd that she was dressed like a doctor dealing with an Ebola patient. In head to toe scrubs complete with a lab coat on, a protective mask and a cap to hide her nicely wrapped hair. I found it odd that she had tears in her eyes as she left, but I supposed medics are not as detached as they are trained to be. I knew then that the outfit was to obfuscate her identity because that was when I last saw her penetrating eyes. “Do you have a card?” I asked abruptly feeling a visceral need to speak to her of the undefined. I did not expect her to extend me any kind of interest, especially in light of recent events and yet she hurriedly handed me a slim white card without uttering a single word. It read, Dr Teresa Nana, Paediatrician with only her email address appended. It would be three months before we met again.

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“Where are we going?” She inquired.

“You will see.” I replied. It had been a long walk from the house, past the plantation and it seemed a directionless, meaningless walk.

“Why did you bring me here?” She asked again.

“I wanted to show you something.” I answered earnestly.

I said this just as we arrived at the site. I had not been there in a while myself, the funereal wreaths had withered on the cross and the protruding soil had sunk. I remembered then that we needed to have plastered the grave shut a few months ago.

Her phlegmatic face suddenly sunk and she dropped to her knees crying shrilly. I decided to leave her alone, I had a feeling she had not yet grieved completely or at all. As I was turning to leave she spoke.

“Wait!” She said softly as she looked back at me with her tear-stained eyes.

“Thank you.” She said and I nodded, feeling the full force of her gratitude.

“I came to meet you all. I never had siblings. I knew you would all be there, at the will reading. That is why I came.” She blurted out as I turned to leave yet again, answering my earlier question.

“I’m sorry.” I said and she nodded, wiping a stray tear from her face, feeling the full force of my gratitude.

I walked back into the house, back into my profligacy, back into my money-half of the equation and left her in her love-half. When I returned to the grave site she was gone, and her car was no longer in the parking area. I knew then that I would never see her again and I never did.

### **Translations**

Poopoo- discharging faecal matter

Malaya wewe! - You prostitute!

Kiangalie! - Look at her shamelessness!

# How I Got so Lonely

By Violet Muwanga - Uganda

BREAK TIME; 10:40am

LOCATION; Main hall

At the seat of contemplation, contorting my mouth to blow over the steam, hesitant to put my lips to the brim lest the contents numb the tip of my tongue. My taste buds devouring a sandpaper product for a donut that needs something moist to make it edible again. My friend Rachel is jabbering away about a boy who has her heart in a net. A fish out of water, she gasps for air while churning out words at a furious pace. Throwing her hands in the air gesturing the obvious affection she has for this boy. Regardless of how immersed I am in this animated narration of intimate details, my mind travels not so far away to a love interest of my own. A very innocent crush on a boy who barely knows me and might even doubt my very existence on this earth. And yet, at my wrists and neck is the beat that pulsates when I see him. Lips drier than before and nervous that he might notice the stalker in me. Admiring the amazingness of a human being from a distance while fantasizing about the likelihood of our being together. The many years of feasting on the theatrics and plot twists of soap operas leaves you with a grain of hope that maybe the unrequited love can grow into something mutual.

Returning from the fantasy, my eyes spy a sea of bodies splitting into singular files of their own once they reach the river bank of stairs; trickling their way through the benches lined in neat rows for all to seat and enjoy within a 20 minute window. The pandemonium and chaos does nothing to hamper my vision. Even in the multitudes of men, I can still point out the one boy that occupies the cavern of my head, something to get excited about when the day is dull to bore the heck out of my eyes. A beautiful sight, my lover is. True to my nature, I conceal the secrets in a treasure chest and bury it underground where it cannot be lifted out by anyone but me. I have never been one to air out my dirty laundry. Until now.

5 minutes to 11:00 o'clock and the end of break time is obvious. Bodies start to shuffle their way to the bins to dispose of the cups that need some washing. Others slyly slither their way to the buckets hoping to score another donut with no one looking. We hop and skip in unison to class, like a pair of fleas jumping their way from one mammal to another, awaiting the mental torture that is Mathematics. While the pandemonium continues to ensue, murmurs rising to the roof filling the room with incessant chatter; I think long and hard about Rachel's apparent confession. Reminding me of my own heart wrapped around an anchor sinking deep into the abyss. The Titanic rests on the ocean bed concealing dead men's tales till the divers come in. Secrets make you sick and with such a huge one strapped to my chest, I fear I might blow up from sheer discomfort. I



decide to air out the dirty laundry for I can hardly breathe in and out of it. Weighing heavy on my back and constricting my lungs, I might suffocate from it.

In Rachel, I see a friend who understands my predicament and feels the unrequited love that I do have. Someone who will embrace me with open arms and advise me on what to do. At this point I believe I total in her unwavering trust well knowing that my privacy is sealed like an underground safe and well preserved like an archaeological site.

“I have a crush on Keith.”

The words roll out of my mouth without a stammer. Rachel cocks her head in my direction eyes getting ever wider. She gasps dramatically placing her hand over mouth literally picking her jaws from the ground.

“For how long?” she enthusiastically inquires.

“Since first term. I haven’t told anyone yet apart from you. Promise you won’t tell anyone else.”

“I won’t. I promise.” She retorts with convincing assurance.

I sleep that night well knowing that the knots of my privacy will never come untied. The next morning proves otherwise.

Strutting down the hallways all sorts of ugly looks come my way. People congregating in miniaturized assemblies for the sole purpose of sneering and giggling. Pointing fingers in my direction wherever I walk. For someone who is as social as a tortoise, this attention is baffling. What I believe is a passing fancy becomes very annoying when I enter the classroom and groups of people take turns bursting into laughter in unison. Once again, eager eyes plant their corneas in my direction until I’m seated. The fixation goes on for an extended period leaving me very uncomfortable. I am a private individual who enjoys her personal space so I find this kind of reception very irritating. My intuition tells me that the roof is coming down, the house cards are falling and the dominoes are about to lead me to the end of my sanity.

“I didn’t know you had a crush on Keith. Everyone is talking about it!!!”

A classmate of mine casually drops a notification as she goes about her business. While she says this, my mind drops a notification of its own; better known as shock.

The room grows static and everything mobile grinds to a halt. The speech gets slower and the words too incoherent to grab a hold. The only thing moving faster than the time pause is the beating of my heart and the pace of my breath. Thoughts in my mind flying faster than a jet. The difficulty wrapping my mind around the current events is too immense. How could the person I believed to be my friend allow the inner workings of my heart to be dissected with no mercy for my dignity? The essence of my soul battered, deflated and defiled for the enjoyment of a few gossip rounds. Exploited so these few bored bums of planet earth can entertain themselves. What about me? Do I not matter or no one cares for me? Let’s see...

My mind returns from the shock I abhor when I hear Rachel drag back her chair so she can sit in it. In the mix of emotions swirling in the place my heart used to be, I question Rachel like an FBI agent at the scene. Desperate for answers and hungry for any scraps one will throw at me.

“How do they know? I thought I told you not to tell anyone. You’re the only person I told.” I quiz her with a slight tremor in my voice.

“Sorry, my mistake. I told them not to tell anyone else.” She answers nonchalantly

“WHO??”

Just as quickly as she answers the first question, she immediately dismisses the next one. My pleas for answers fall on deaf ears. The ones that were so eager to hear me drain my lungs of blood now become deaf to any attempt to clean up the aftermath. With no further efforts on my side, I drop the case and begin to blame myself for not knowing better. Taking blame for a mistake I had not committed only because I suffered the consequences of this action. One that someone else set in motion.

During prep of that very same day, the Mathematics teacher struts into the classroom like a soldier with a purpose and bellows the assignment for the evening to us; to huddle into groups of four or more to discuss math numbers from the PLE book bank. He earmarks the years of the papers and which numbers in specific to do on the blackboard, with the gusto of a general unloading a firearm, and then leaves us to it. Like a swarm of bees, people swirl to all corners of the room and back looking confused. Until it all clears out to finally reveal people congregating into organized tribes. Somehow, I find myself standing in the middle of class, a lonely island. Looking left and right, I am too scared to make a move but desperate enough to try. I work my way around each huddle of people and negotiate with them to include me but they are all stonewalling. The chatter starts to build up, people are whispering in each other’s ears while quizzingly focusing their eye balls on me. One girl crowns the night with a not-so-amazing theatrical performance meant to mock me.

“Violet, what’s up?”

“As in ....” I stutter my way through a barely audible statement.

“As in.... (imitating my tone of voice and stammer)”

“I don’t have a group.”

“So!?”

“Can you include me in your group?”

“Well, I have a better idea!”

“Yes?” I inquire in all my gullible glory.

“Why not ask Keith to include you in his group?”

And everyone bursts out laughing so hard that some people fall off their chairs. Others stand up and clap so ferociously you'd think she was Robin Williams. What people find so funny about that statement, I will never know. Anyway, I slouch away to an unoccupied lone chair and table set, that looks like it was prepared with me in mind, to simmer in my embarrassment and hatred of myself. I open the PLE math book and have a fruitful discussion with myself, my pen and my disoriented mind. Me, myself and I more like. Along the way I pen my feelings to the paper just so to pass the time that heartache and pain seems to slow down.

Ears growing numb to the mockery of myself and no matter how hard I ignore I can still feel the damnation from way over there. Then everything grows quiet. I can actually hear my heart beating out of my rib cage and every solitary breath that finds its way out of my nostrils. My back turned to the world the same way it did me with my head bowed in deep thought and extensive creative expression; completely oblivious to the surroundings while setting fire to the page. The pen drops hoping to steal a few minutes of healing from the third degree burns of my soul. In the midst of the struggle, I look up to see Keith making a dash for the door. In my naivety, I walk up to him putting into practice the "advice" I received earlier on and proceed to ask him if I could join his group. Silent in his endeavours, he offers a blank facial expression for an answer and makes a beeline for the main hall. I follow him and tap him on the shoulder so I can secure an audience thinking he did not hear me the first time. Like a cat twitching in its sleep, he twists his back to dodge my arm and looks at me like I am a deranged fan stalking him, the celebrity. When I attempt to move closer, he backs away from me. This time the message is clear, he wants nothing to do with me.

An audience is growing behind me to unusual proportions witnessing the demise of my dignity. Too ashamed to head back to the classroom, I sprint to the washrooms to lock myself in one of the loos and then proceed to cry the eyeballs out of my eye sockets. I stay for more than a few minutes until my bag is thrown over the door of the loo. How that person knew I was in there is up for serious debate but I instinctively knew who it was.

"Prep time is over, it's time to head back to dorm." Judas Iscariot announces from the toilet beyond. I stay quiet.

"You know what, stay there if you want." She replies condescendingly acting like she isn't the main cog in gearing this very operation.

I stay in and close my eyes hard enough to forget whatever is going on in my life just for a little while.

# PETALS & SEPALS

By Atwebembire Dallen - Uganda

The tired bee lingered persistently over the flower, her tenterhooks clumsily and forcefully doing what must have been the last search for nectar not knowing that the more she sucked, the more harm she caused to the immature petals. As expected, the bee soon grew weary and gave up the search. Frustrated, she buzzed furiously to the distant flowers that though dull as hell, looked older.

Rose was a bud, a soon- to- be flower because her would- be petals had started opening and hopefully, by evening she would have gotten half open and she hoped to attract as many bees. In her world, this was something to be excited about because soon, she would become a fruit, a very big fruit and bear numerous seeds that after drying would germinate into other plants. However for now, the excitement wasn't about becoming a fruit but becoming a flower, a very beautiful flower thus, each one of her kind looks forward to this day praying that it is a sunny Day!

She wanted to enjoy for as long as she lasted before she withered to her ancestors. Before Rose had budded, she had watched with envy as bees visited her siblings, oh! The praise they would shower them with as they tantalizingly drew their precious nectar! The songs emanating from their mandibles was always something Rose looked forward to; that made her pray for a good season, yes because a rainy season makes them bigger, luscious, beautiful, colored, inviting, watery and thus with more nectar than a dry season.

In anticipation, she had made a few plans for this day maybe because her elders had fore-warned her about the likely mistakes that could ruin her entire day or two days of beauty. She had decided to halt the scent until she had fully opened because such attracted bees before time and the early probing of the lovely insects could be disastrous; had limited the color ( she was to be crimson) when she was fully grown and mixed with the heavenly perfume, she would be the most attractive flower of her time! Rose had also altered her direction that instead of the usual face-up that could expose her rather faster, she decided face-down such that when she had fully blossomed, she would face up to the surprise of everyone, including predators!

She developed a strong calyx that held her high and would get higher when time was due for her to shine; a firm calyx coupled with an attractive corolla was to be the climax of her anticipation. How lovely! How beautiful! How glorious it is to be the most attractive flower the world had ever seen!

Unlike other flowers, Rose was to have numerous, unique petals for her to be long-lasting. If the older petals withered, there would still be fresher ones for a time. She had spent all her lifetime waiting for this moment so she was to leave no stone unturned in making it memorable and she always watched those nitwits that lacked

preparation and in the end, they would either be dull and would attract little or no bees so they ended up half-pollinated or worse still, unpollinated so no fruits and eventually would bear no seeds. What a catastrophe! Or they would attract the bees prematurely before they had any nectar.

When all was done, Rose couldn't hide her excitement. Her mother could sense it too and only hours could tell. She waited to open. No sooner had the first petals opened than she excitedly swung in the wind. She now felt ready so she decided to release the sweet smelling scent that her great-grandmother had used and had become a family perfume- a unique scent that would pull bees from their bee-hives! Rose knew it was a short time then she would open so why not release the scent and open then get ready for the approaches from the legendary Apis?

A distant sound startled her and she raised her new petals to listen closely not knowing that the more she turned, the faster the scent moved with the wind. A buzz is what she detected,

“How soon, she thought, perhaps the bee is going elsewhere”

But alas, it was coming closer and she was so sure there wasn't any other flower in the vicinity yet a while ago, this had fascinated her knowing she was going to be a sole flower, a monopolist dominating but now she panicked since it was rather too soon. Apart from the fact that she had not opened up fully, her petals were still fragile so any attempt by a bee to get nectar would damage them and her first beauty would vanish, but it wasn't like she could not stop the bee, she thought as the buzzing increased.

Buzzzzzzzzzz...

The intensity of the buzzing increased and at this point, there was no doubt that it was a bee and it was coming Rose's way so she braced herself to face the intruder that's if she were lost but if she thought he could talk her into defilement, she was wrong and absurd completely! Rose silently wished she were a human. She had one day been told by her mother that humans were way different for they had mutual relationships with each other; they tell each other their fears, help each other, defend each other in case threatened and can advise each other. Rose wished she could open up to someone probably her sister but she was just a descendant of a plant not a human.

She shook dew off herself perhaps it would scare the bee and it backs off forgetting the rich aroma that was spreading whenever she turned. The buzzing was so near that she could even tell the size of the bee. What else was left but to face it? Turning at angle ninety to see the unwelcome visitor, Rose recognized her instantly. It was the same bee that had pollinated her elder sister a month before. At the time, Rose thought her sister was just unlucky.

Mimiks, for that was her name was a big and energetic proud bee that was rather too big for just an insect. She was very dark with yellow freckles on the abdomen; wide wings that made a loud sound which made

announcing her arrival easy. She had long spindly legs and hard arms that almost couldn't stretch with an equally broad thorax that made her voice sound hoarse. Her hind legs that always looked like they were about to drag her backwards always dragged along pollen baskets that were always full to capacity. Word always moved around that every flower Mimiks visited would be left dry and because of her ruthless suckling, the flower would not even turn into a fruit because it would wither immediately and by the following day, it would be no more. Whenever she buzzed, you could hear her from the next village!

Her physical looks made her dominant and arrogant. All flowers belonged to her and she always made sure she was the first bee to get the first nectar from any blossoming flower and then others would come later or not come at all because by the time Mimiks left a flower, it would be completely dry and drained.

Wasn't it rumored that in a bid to please a specific Drone, Mimiks would go an extra mile to collect all the nectar and pollen grains because he had promised her that if she worked very hard, she would replace the reigning Queen and become the first bi-functional Queen bee in the world?

Mesme, the drone in question had always carried a grudge against the Queen since childhood. He had learnt from infancy that first of all, he as a drone just like his forefathers and other drones in the world was a deformed bee and what had annoyed him most was the knowledge that if he mated with the Queen, he would die at once and it was mandatory that he does mate with the Queen to enable reproduction and continuity of bees.

He had thus bred envy in his heart for so long knowing he would die and the Queen would stay; enjoying courtesies from all bees in the hive, being fed on royal jelly- a special diet for only the Queen. Mesme had one day been found in the Queen's chambers trying to steal some royal jelly and worker bees starved him for a whole day for his greed.

That is how Mesme and Mimiks met, on that evening when darkness descending and threatening to engulf the whole village to the extent that one could not recognize another save for those whose voices they were familiar with. Mesme was trying to hide from the darkness to at least seek refuge for the night and luck was on his side that on his right, there was a pile of dry grass so he mapped out to forge his way inside and sleep for the night. He was terribly hungry and weary that even dragging his big body became a heavy burden. As he forced his abdomen inside, something pierced him really bad. It seemed to have gone through the skin and it was excruciatingly painful. He tried to scream but he knew that the incident which had earlier led to his suspension from the hive was too big for him to attract sympathy. So he cursed,

'I will teach those scum bags of worker bees who poke their noses where they don't belong a lesson. How could they carry me outside after saying all things about me yet all of them can see the unfairness of that obese and good-for-nothing Queen?'

‘Hasn’t each resident of this hive complained about how the segmented lady of the house lives to eat at the expense of others? Who doesn’t see how she mistreats the worker bees that are in charge of her private chamber? It serves them right for being rumor mongers,’ he added bitterly.

Mimiks, who had had an equally tedious day, heard a voice. She had wanted to enter the hive directly but lately she had given herself different tasks among which; was the security of the hive. So, whenever she returned from collecting nectar, she would first make a sweep around the hive to make sure everything was okay. It is on this latest task that she heard something in the dry grass and on listening intently, she heard a voice that was cursing both bees and the Queen. She heard everything before Mesme noticed her presence. This is because Mesme had entered head first leaving the abdomen at the entrance of the small door.

On realizing that someone had been listening to his soliloquy, he rushed out to see who it was because he was well aware that if the Queen heard that he had been grumbling about her, she would not hesitate to charge him for treason. His body tensed up when he thought about causing more trouble and as he tried to leave the hole, he fell headlong to the ground below and rolled enough times to make his stomach lurch even more.

He was trying to gather courage when a female but stern voice said,

‘Mesme, when did you start practicing long jump?’

As she picked him up, Mesme’s heart was pumping so fast and the first thing he said was,

‘Did you hear what I was saying?’

Mimiks however took longer to reply. She was debating with her heart whether to let him know that she had heard everything. She responded and told him she had heard everything and there was no need for him to fear since she held the same opinion regarding the Queen. Mesme felt relief and knew right away that Mimiks would make a fantastic accomplice. After Mesme had narrated his predicament, Mimiks offered to feed him immediately and for as long as she were alive and they remained accomplices.

It is on this day, too, that Mesme promised Mimiks that he would kill the Queen and Mimiks would become the new Queen but that she had to work hard, be exemplary and win the hearts of the other bees. Mimiks was also to single handedly feed Mesme every day for other worker bees didn’t like him.

On hearing this Mimiks rolled her compound eyes and opened her mandibles,

‘But as a rule, I am expected to put nectar in the hive cells.’

‘That is why you must gather double, put some in the store and then bring my share to my chamber. It will even give us a chance to meet every day and discuss our plans.’ insisted Mesme.

Mimiks hesitantly agreed to this because she would agree to anything that promised her the throne. It is then that she started to work tooth and nail to meet Mesme’s unending demands. Who didn’t know that he ate a basket of food at each meal?

This turned her into a monster without feelings and she knew. After her deal with Mesme, she sat alone and devised means of getting enough nectar to serve two masters and that when she started going to collect nectar from immature flower, including ravaging them until she left them dry.

As Mimiks descended towards Rose, She definitely knew this was her end; all the anticipation wasted and she braced herself for the worst. She got so scared and hopeless in desperation almost regretting why she blossomed in the generation of ruthless Mimiks. She wished and yearned to live another day and not to suffer before the crude sting of Mimiks.

Rose didn't know how long she spent watching and waiting for her pain to begin but it didn't come. She didn't know how long she waited and how nervous she was. How many prayers she made to her creator to help her stop Mimiks from destroying her youth. She got so immersed in her own fears and almost missed the commotion and Hurly-burly that was going on around her.

The commotion was about the adage that had befallen Mimiks. After spending a whole day in search for nectar, Mimiks had almost given up but then the pressure from Mesme had been too much and if she didn't pledge allegiance even today, for Mesme could spill the beans and bring trouble. She thus, kept on hunting until she smelt a very unique scent and followed the direction. She was so close when they got hold of her... Before long, the council had sat after allegations that Mimiks and Mesme were planning on killing then Queen, those in charge had been sent to pick Mimiks and bring her back to the hive. She was taken and till now she is awaiting trial while Rose awaits her suitor.





# Poetry

## **Cut My Breasts Today**

By Daniel Many - Kenya

My dear husband, if you will have to cut my breasts then cut them today,  
When they are still erect and full of honey,  
Do not cut them tomorrow when I have lactating babies and they are swollen with milk!  
If you will have to chase me away from this house that we are building together,  
Then chase me away now when I still have enough strengths to build another,  
Do not throw me outside in the cold tomorrow when my thighs are withered and my body is frail,  
Do not throw me outside in the cold when I have seven children clutching at my feet and my hair is broken!

My dear husband, if you will have to cheat on me with a teenager.  
Then do it now when I still have the curves,  
Bring her home and let her also see my smooth round buttocks and my soft lips,  
Do not bring her when my lips are cracked and my buttocks having stretch marks,  
Do not bring her when my breasts have fallen on my chest such that she calls me an old woman!

My husband, if you will have to beat me with blows and kicks,  
Then beat me up now when I still have young blood running through my veins and the wounds will heal faster,  
Beat me up now when I am still alone and I can run away and look for another husband,  
Do not kick my stomach tomorrow when I am heavy with your child and Cause my vagina to bleed out thick clots of what was supposed to be our child,  
Do not beat me up tomorrow when my son has started growing hair on his balls because you do not know what the young adult may just do to your hairy balls as well,  
Do not beat me up to tomorrow when I will have nowhere to go and my skin is wrinkled making the wounds to pain forever!

## **SELFIES ON THE HIGHWAY**

By Flavia Kabuye - Uganda

Time stands, love tickles  
Her head feels like a hand-me-down battery-operated radio  
The car squeals with pain, its dreary tyres oscillating with ungraceful rhythms  
Bewilderment chants unholy tunes  
Variegated by sweet sounds of the humming bird, once beheld by two pairs of searching eyes  
A splendid side of life  
Leaving behind a thick cloud of smoke, spluttering vampire eyes and undecorated claws  
Its thunderous roar, a new-fangled uncertainty, could unmask the most wanted criminal  
Beyond what eyes can see  
Dreams and kisses create innate infusions of love and remembrance  
Deeper than triturated potions that  
Keep seasoned warriors in power and make desperate wives disrobe at crossways  
Power and a longing so deep  
One could drown in a bottomless pit without letting go  
Time once called out to her in a voice so punitive she thought she had lost her love  
They say time speaks so softly and whispers gently to each of our hearts  
Time refashions stories on love's highway

## **SOULMATE AT DAWN**

By Flavia Kabuye - Uganda

Lying on the red speckled carpet, battling the blues  
A deep longing in her heart, for memorable revue  
Slowly carving out her mental path to glorious affect

An escape uncertain, cast in emerald ceramic  
Winged in the no-fly zone  
Luscious lilac and tint adorn her body  
She staggers to her feet to meet the sun

Out through the gate, environs louder than usual  
A narrow path leads to a colossal forest trait  
A soul is ensnared between its boughs  
As the world is lost in bee-hive merriment

Fire smoked vessels in rows, deep horizontal patterns in her dress  
Potent cocktails and rations to tighten the bow  
A true African gift and nothing less  
Her burning thirst is far from dawn

Call her Cinderella, build her a fortress  
A lone dancer meets the guitarist  
The power of harmonious quiescence!  
A star in the east, finds respite in her essence

Beyond the windswept hair and brightly coloured outfit  
Half open eyes and a soulful whisper  
The guitar lies at the feet, of the home grown singer

His heart creates her natural rhythm at dawn!

## **WHISPERS OF THE HEART**

By Kofi Acquah

We have walked tides and storms  
We have fed the morn— with love songs  
Like the dying out of a gong  
The moon—  
has faded in our hearts  
— with warmth

The rain is drizzling under Twilight  
Birds are splitting through daylight  
...on a swing in the East  
...listening to tapping feet  
...appearing in dangling hips  
You're a dime piece

For I walk on your mellifluous lips  
& whirl to the liss  
...in your eyes

# UNTIL THAT LAND

By Kofi Acquah

I left the night like a ghost  
Long have I worshipped a dead home  
This leaking hut is too cold.  
Counting flying comets at night  
Telling no stories at twilight  
Breathing no hope at midnight  
Shall my heart  
Soon bid farewell.

Men are warning in souls  
Weaker days are mourning—  
Yet,  
I have unlocked no ear  
To every bloody caution  
Until I feet on a land—  
welcoming my shadow. . .

I shall cross my world  
By land and by sea  
New cosmos. . .  
I yearn to see—

I have made this journey with heart  
Yet there is a crossroad  
Tearing me apart  
O' Spirit within  
The left is void— Night is due  
I have swum in sweat for moon

I taste no good breeze  
I see no stars twinkling  
O' Spirit within—  
The eyes, the ears, the feet  
shall bear my quest a witness on this moon  
For I,  
Shall ripple like a river  
until that land...

## **A waste of sin**

By Daniel Many - Kenya

Small, small money steal not,  
If you must steal then steal huge amount,  
So that when you are taken before the court,  
You can bail yourself out.

Petty, Petty lies do not tell,  
If you must lie then tell gigantic lies,  
So that when you find yourself in hell,  
It will not come as a surprise.

Underage girls leave alone,  
If you must rape then go for mature asses,  
Why leave huge chunks of meat and go for a dry bone?  
Give the devil a good reason to give you lashes.

A few people do not kill,  
It is pointless to give the devil a flirter,  
If you must kill, then a Million people is a better deal,  
Justify why you will be charged for murder.

What a waste of sin will it be,  
To burn eternally in hell fire,  
For committing half-baked sins?

## **JEZEBEL**

By Omadang Yowasi - Uganda

He once exhibited his usefulness:  
That day he took me to the beach;  
But narrow were his pockets.  
didn't take me to the cafe:  
my make-up was out-dated;  
My wish was always against his:  
Show me at least you've got dime;  
And the parcel'll be opened for you.  
The damn bored me;  
This son of a peasant.

## **Agakhan Walk**

By Daniel Many - Kenya

You sigh and shudder at how shabby I look,  
When I open my old rusty Bible to the book of Habakkuk,

You jeer at me when I shout, “Repent, Repent, Repent,”  
And say I am just hustling money for rent,

You sit there on the slab,  
And ignore me like I am a piece of rag,

You turn a deaf ear to my pleas of “Jesus is coming,”  
And tell your friend that people like us are so cunning,

You would rather look and admire the cars at the parking lot,  
Than listen to how Jesus saved a harlot,

You buy chewing gum at Uchumi Supermarket,  
Or put on earphones and fiddle with your Mobile gadget,

You say my self-centered and ill-motivated preaching does not make sense,  
You call my kinds a public nuisance,

You wonder why I talk of God’s blessings in abundance,  
And yet those blessings are not manifested in my appearance,

That people like us who prey on innocent people like a hungry hawk,  
Should not even be allowed to make noise here at Agakhan walk,

When you done waiting you just stand up and disappear,  
As if I am not even here.

\*Agakhan walk is a street in Nairobi town known for street preaching\*

# POWER OF MONEY

By Ngozi Osuoha - Nigeria

We are in trouble  
Because life is crazy  
And things have changed,  
Money seems to buy all things  
Including love.

Money buys conscience  
It buys hate  
It buys envy and jealousy  
Money buys false living.

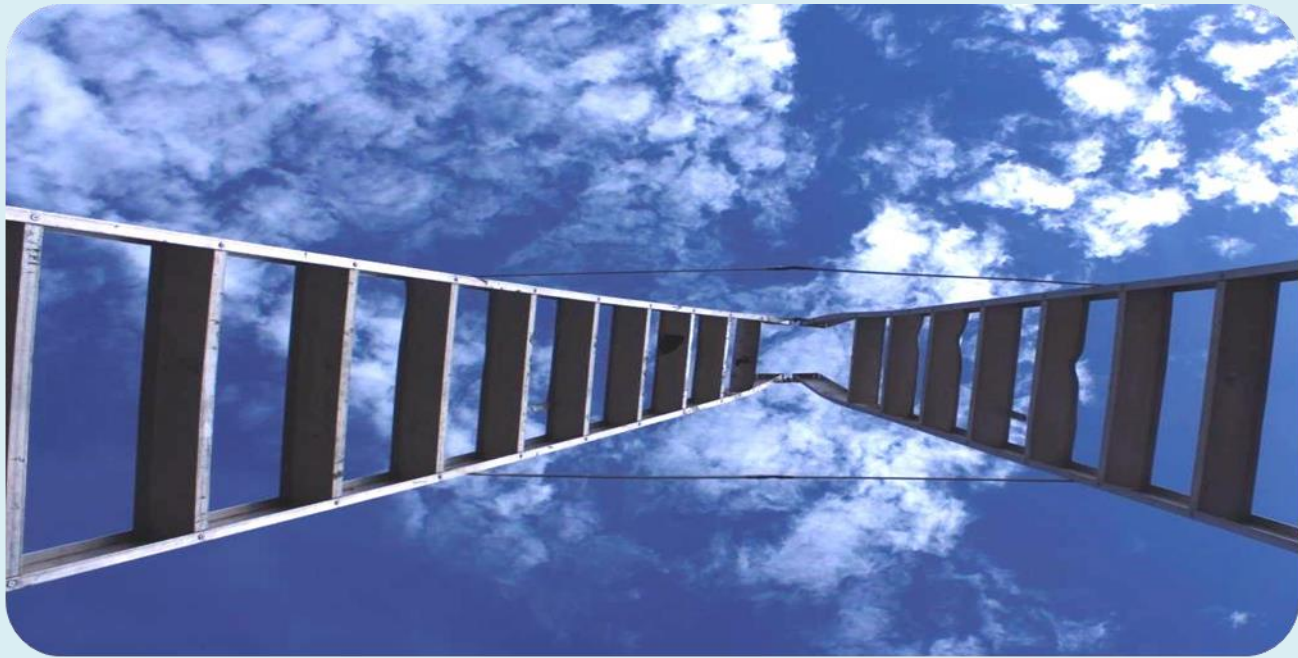
Marriages collapse without money  
For those built on lust and materialism,  
Ties are severed because of money  
For those who cannot see beyond it.

Rich people get what they want  
How they want it and where they want it,  
Poor people can only dream and hope.

Rich people challenge the gods  
And intimidate the poor  
They sweep across the boundaries.

Love and lust swing, slide and slant  
They all tilt towards money,  
Money is no longer controllable  
Rather it controls the affairs of men.





# Essays

# THE CASE OF LOVE ON SALE

By Kelvin J. Shachile - Kenya

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her book length essay; Dear Ijeawele or The Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions, she states in the last paragraph of the 13th suggestion that a girl should not be brought up with the idea that it is a man's role to provide. She writes, "In a healthy relationship, it is the role of whoever can provide to provide." However much this point might be focusing on an already established relationship, it gives a foundation of the bigger questions of who needs to have the money and to provide in a relationship? And what role does money play in initiating and sustaining a love relationship.

I thought of this suggestion a few months ago, when I attended a dinner party organized by one of my friends in the heart of Nairobi. He was so delighted by my appearance considering that despite my busy schedules, dividing my time writing, reading, studying and working, I made it to the party. He saw it as an honor to have me around having put away all I do within my hours of the day. Just to show his joy and gratitude. He held my hand from the table where I sat to the front and requested for everyone's attention to introduce me.

"He is a student of geospatial analysis, working as a contributor to one of the greatest magazines in Africa, an author of an upcoming book and also the proprietor of a cyber café." He said, I was so much moved that it caught everyone's attention and the entire room was roaring with applause and praises. "Congratulations." I could hear people whisper as I walked back to my table. The evening was nice until a young girl, about five years older than me walked to where I was and asked if she could join me, I agreed.

"Your girlfriend must be very lucky to have you. Do you have one?" she asked. My blood boiled and I could feel my heart racing, being a young man who loves to get everything somebody has, I tend to respond to what I think the person speaking to me wants to hear. "No, I am single." I responded. She looked across at me with that kind of a face that no one would love but her expression begged for a chance. "You're wasting yourself. Give somebody a chance to enjoy your money." Was what she said before requesting for my contacts and inquired if we could meet the following day for coffee or just to hangout. Her understanding I thought, is that every man with money must have a woman enjoying them.

This isn't the first of my encounters of money-stimulated love affairs, one boy in my high school class sneaked out of school because he had got himself a well to do single mother in the local town who tasked him that all she wanted was sexual services. The story of the gentleman who got rejected by his bride on their wedding day because she had just found out that the man had taken a loan to finance the wedding has of

recent been viral on social media. I have watched, read and met girls who want a financially stable man, for a long lasting relationship which doesn't include marriage.

A week ago, the news of the inhuman act where a girl who had a relationship with a rich politician being murdered went viral. According to her friends, the girl had been boasting about carrying a rich man's pregnancy. She told them all she wanted was a house, a car and upkeep for the child, not marriage for after all she knew the man was married and had a family with another woman. The "sponsor" issue has been trending in the country which for a very long time has given rise to the numerous testimonies and confessions about love and money. I now hear of "Yesterday he called me, used me and didn't pay." Then when somebody asks "Was it a business?" the girl would feel so guilty, "He said he will give money to buy a new phone."

There are desperate women who says "He is a good man, generous and responsible, he has money and he supports me in everything. But I don't feel his love for me." In such a case then it becomes really difficult to understand what really the show of love is and what role money plays in making a woman or a man to understand and see love as love and not love as a business. Some go ahead to share how they once told this to their man and the response was, "What do you mean? Don't I give you money even when you don't need it?"

There are several reasons that clear gives a pointer why the money oriented relationships cannot go beyond some moments in life when money can go missing. To start with, the experience I have had about love is that, it is a force or a supernatural binding of a soul that sees the invisible goodness in the heart of another being, which makes it ready to say; "for better for worse, we shall forever live together." Money is visible and not in the heart, money is also the better in the vows, poverty is the worst, so if money was the binding factor, what shall be of the relationship after the worst comes that money isn't there to be enjoyed?

Submission to a sexual affair being stimulated by money-minded thoughts, changes the entire thing from a love relationship into a business, may be prostitution. Offering money just for sex and nothing more does the same thing too, it changes the context into lust and sexual obsession, not love.

And so I say, money and love can never be mixed, love is the main course at the relationship table and money is just a supplement. Without it, food will still be eaten, with it also it shall be fine. Love matters but money doesn't. The perfect answer to the love-money question, therefore I think is that, they should never be mixed after all they don't mix on their own. I however consider the other side of the matter where money just supplements a love relationship long established, a husband can gladly give his wife some money for salon, a woman likewise can support her man in doing development to sustain them, may be buy a plot or a house.

The encounter with the lady at the party still rings in my head, I often wonder why she couldn't really try another man in the whole place or may be just talk to me without asking who enjoys my money. I remember how she sat with me and explained her views. "I know we shall have a bright future together." She said with a

fruity voice, I didn't smile, I found it so odd that her first thought was that having money then our future was to be bright. When I was leaving the venue, she introduced me to a group of friends before asking if I would love to meet them the next day and buy them some coffee. I said no, I felt like a thorn piecing right through an inflated balloon and her sigh like a deflation. Was it love that my money was going to buy?

## THE LOVE-MONEY QUESTION

By Winnie Nabirye - Uganda

Before we even delve into this, we should be reminded that before money was, love was. So this is a question that only becomes too vital in this era. If we are to compare the weight or value of the two, we realize that man-kind can survive without money but not without love.

One wonders why money should even be compared with love; for as love is bestowed to us as sacred, pure and only from above, money is mostly gained from sweat, struggle and human pride. We could argue that without money, love won't survive but then without love, the money is reduced to nothing but just strife. The dilemma comes in as a matter of priorities. As in, 'family or finances', 'love or money', 'the future or the present', 'my husband or my job', 'my wife or my job'. These are the questions that often come up and we can only get answers to them when we choose what our priorities are.

Falling in love for me was a really big deal because I grew up as an orphan who longed for real love and affection. Money wasn't something I was used to because we survived on just enough in our foster home and so it was never on the same menu with love. For this reason, I prayed earnestly for the right man. Well, the definition of 'right' is blurred these days and it varies depending on the girl and their desires, but to me, 'right' means Godly, handsome, very patient, very vocal in terms of English conversations and very intelligent. Well, God does answer prayers and he answered them at a very appropriate age.

So in high school, I met my sweet heart. We were both naive and obviously poor but knew we were meant to be together as soon as our eyes meant. At that time, the only thing we cared about was seeing each other and spending time together. It didn't matter how each of us was dressed, whether we even ate or where we went. What was important was that we had a life and a future together.

The dynamics however had to change when we were both at university level and I didn't have the means to feed daily or even pay for my tuition. But as love would have it, he worked really hard to provide for me. He did odd jobs just to make sure I was comfortable and in school. He later got a job as I was still studying and he would send all his salary to me for school. In fact, I had his ATM card in my possession. During this time, I always wondered how anyone would be so mean as to base her/ his love on the availability of money, until we got married and we both had to work; This time, issues of who has to pay the bills came in, how much and whose do we save and so on. In these times, for first time, money would actually cause a rift between us and we would argue over it. We did some long distance relationship for some time because of his job and it wasn't easy. Major problems set in, doubts and jealousy and mistakes crept in our once perfect relationship and it was the most painful period of our relationship. This all happened because of the hustles of the world and the longing to fulfill society beliefs that being rich and lonely is better than staying together in poverty.

Fast forward, God was good to us and we got a chance to work in the same place for some time. Our relationship thrived to the extent that even a few days without each other become hell. We became so intertwined into each other's lives that the thought of staying apart just scares the living lights out of us. That is why when he was transferred again and we had to again make the choice of whether I stayed at my job and we saw each other a few days in a week, or I quit my job and follow him, it was pretty easier to follow him and quit the job. Of course this decision was frowned upon by almost everyone who heard about it and it is still debated upon by all who hear about it. They still argue basing on the beliefs in our society now about women empowerment, the idea of 'depending' on a man, financial independence, poverty, among others. However, I chose to maintain togetherness and peace in my marriage over the paychecks and financial gains; they are obviously very good but may not equal to the valuable time we spend with our loved ones. I do believe in hard work and women empowerment and all those ideas. But if it is a question of what my priority in life is; what are the things I esteem and care about more than anything? It is love and friendship. Money only exists to enhance and beautify our love more.

## **LOVE AND MONEY; WHAT IS THE CONNECTION?**

By Misha Nabukeera - Uganda

It's funny how we all think love and money are separate entities. No they are not; they are both recipes for a sumptuous relationship! Love is the most amazing thing that one can indulge in especially if they are made as comfortable as it can get. See, if I say I love you, I am a lady, it means I accept you! And if you say you love me, means you accept me as well. Men are wired to support, facilitate and engulf. Now how are you going to support financially if we do not involve money? Don't twist it, don't take advantage, but if a man is wired to facilitate, if facilitation calls for money, does he drop it?

They say money cannot buy love, that's true, but money can advance love. Trips, dinners, gifts, dates, name it, you swipe or sign or count out some notes! It's mandatory. In my language, there's a saying, '*obugagga bwo mwami, obulabira kumukyala we.*' loosely translated as; if you want to see how rich a man is, look at his wife. For money to be a part of a relationship does not make love weak, no, it actually gives it the shove it needs. My grandma, God rest her soul, fell very ill in the last days of her life. I was very far away from my family, but I was dating this very nice guy I loved to bits, he was a darling. I told him about my grandmother and also told him that because it was an emergency, my father needed a little help, help I could not extend at that particular time. He was really generous when he decided to help. That was a gesture I could never take for granted. But imagine if the money was not available, or if he is one that believes that in relationships money is not a part? I loved him even more for his kindness. Never in my life had I thought that I could love a boyfriend more, because they offered me financial support when I needed it so bad. See a lot of things in this world are made seem like they are untouchable topics or those things that feel like pricks every time you think about them. Money and relationships is one of those things. When I was growing up, there was a very close uncle of mine, he was really close with my dad at some point I actually thought they were blood brothers. This beautiful man was the kindest relative that I had ever known, for a child like me, if you ask me why I considered him the kindest; he was the only one willing to help my dad with any financial constraints,

especially when it came to my school fees. Look I was a child, my dad was struggling, I needed to go to school and the only kindness I knew or would appreciate then, was someone helping my father to take me to school. Some of you might think this is selfish, but how is it? I love this uncle of mine, to this day not because his wife prepared the best breakfast meals or his kids had the best toys or that he had the biggest house I had known, no, because he, unlike the other uncles I know, was always willing to help my dad take me back to school, because for me, that was the most important. See money on its own is not a recipe for the best relationships, but money alongside other factors; thoughtfulness, availability, essence, progress, can be the most aromatic spice in that sumptuous meal.

Dating in today's world especially is so hectic, so draining, so frustrating and really disappointing. A friend of mine who has done most of her recent dating online, keeps telling me that age does not define maturity, well I know this for a fact but I had to listen more. According to her, grown men are still leaving with their parents, seeking their parents approval on what to wear, eat, what time to go to bed and how much to spend a day, because they don't make the money. So for her and her filters, her matches have to have reasonable jobs and a place to call their own; not because she thinks it's the most important thing for her relationships, but because she has known for sure that a man, who is responsible for his own wellbeing, can as well understand another person's situation. For her, maturity is very important and her yard stick is a place to call one's own and a reasonable job, in a nutshell, financial stability.

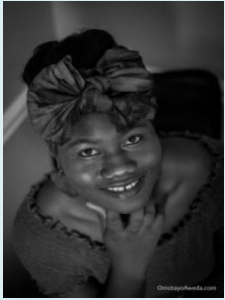
I have read stories of how women take care of their men from the simplest of things to the grandest of all necessities. These women take up the roles of men in their houses, why? Because they love them and want to be there for them until they meet their own shine. The greatest percentage of these men, usually meet their shine and like you would never expect, find what to them are better suited partners. When God was creating MAN, he knew exactly how the going would be, man takes care of his home, supports his wife and household and woman submits to her Man. So when you try and change the scale, be the man in the house, when the man is stable enough, he will find his submissive, who he will pamper and spoil and spend on so he can feel like a man. That's why these stories usually end that way.

Frank Sinatra in one of his quotes; 'a simple I love you is worth more than money.' He's putting money and love as enemies, competitors and that's the whole problem. There's a popular saying, amongst the millennials that 'love does not feed us'. Yes it does not, that's why we need to be able to say 'I love you' and mean it when not saying it to a hungry person, or someone so sick we can't even afford paracetamol, or a child sitting at home for the last two years because we can't afford school. Money is not an independent entity, but it's a dependent necessity. I love my father so much but I live so many miles away from him, because I need to make money, it's very important! The most painful thing for me in this age is for my dad to ask me for something and not be able to afford it. It would keep me awake for so long, we need the money, especially if it will help us show our loved ones how much we love and care for them.

So yes, money and love are sesame twins, joined at the skull! Inseparable! But don't take advantage and don't think it's supposed to be a race. This pair of twins is both amazing and dulling. Most times we think wanting money will fail your relationship, but who does not like a partner who shows up broader than we anticipated? What would be more loving than a lovely expensive dress on your birthday from that man you love so much? Let's not be so blinded and see the greater picture of how money actually escalates these relationships.

## Writers' Bios

### Aganaba, Jesudubami Jemima – Short Story – Give Me Love, Last Price



Aganaba, Jesudubami Jemima is a young Nigerian writer from the Niger Delta region with a passion for stories. She studied English and Literary Studies at Niger Delta University in Bayelsa, Nigeria. Jemima is also in love with children, music, and fashion. Jemima started ‘serious’ writing seven years ago and has since been working to know people better and improve her craft. Her works have been published by *F-bom*, *Kalahari Review*, *Creative Freelance Writerz*; in *Coloured* (an anthology), and Michael Afenia’s “*Write Now 2018*”. She also runs a blog; [www.jemimajaphet.wordpress.com](http://www.jemimajaphet.wordpress.com)

### Eliza Manasa Mabungu – Short Story - The Death Of Chivalry, The Rise Of Materialism.



Eliza Manasa Mabungu is a South African born Mozambican. She studied Film and Television at the University of Johannesburg. She is a Freelancer, a prolific Blogger and an aspiring script writer. Her works have been published in Black Letter Media’s *The Short Story is Dead Vol. 2* and *Experimental Writing: Africa vs Latin America*. She can be found on twitter @Blackdoll\_E and her blog is; [elizamabungu.blogspot.com](http://elizamabungu.blogspot.com)

### Jude Thadeus Nalulu – Short Story – Diamond in the Dirt



Jude Thadeus Nalulu is a 40 year old Ugandan secondary school teacher. He is a writer by passion. He is a single father of two handsome sons residing in the stone city of Jinja. He love for books and words developed in high school and he became a devote reader of Mills and Booms series, detective series of Hadley Chase and classics of people like Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and others. He decided he would one day become an author like them and so far he has two novel drafts. Being published in this magazine is for him great and a step into his dream of publishing his works.

### Omadang Yowasi - Poem - JEZEBEL

Omadang Yowasi is a 26 year old Ugandan from Nyeminyem B, Tororo District. He is a poet and writer whose poems featured in the 34<sup>th</sup> issue of Writers’ Space Africa published by African Writers Development Trust. He loves writing and reading.

### Agwang Aidah – Short Story - The Things the Seven Hills of Kampala Witness



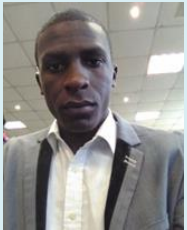
I am a closet writer and a lover of books, music, and solitude. I am fascinated by people and their life stories. I read my first novel at 10 years and have never looked back since. To me the written word is life. My favorite poet is Rumi. I am inspired by the strong women who have gone before me and paved the way. My favorite place in the world is the solace of silence. Agwang tweets at @TitinAidah

## Daniel Many – Poems – Cut My Breasts Today By Daniel Man, A Waste Of Sin, Agakhan Walk



Daniel Many Owiti is a Kenyan creative writer of poems, articles and short stories. He is the founder of Eldoret Poets Association (EPA) and was the first runner up in the inaugural Nyanza Literary festival (NALIF-2016). He has interest in African literature, Luo culture and contemporary issues affecting youths. His poems have been published in in 'PARENTS' – a Kenyan family magazine, Jalada's African Writers' collective, the Kalahari Review and he has articles published in Saturday Nation, a leading newspaper in Kenya. He is set to be published in the 2018 Crater Literary Festival E-Anthology and 2018 Best "New "African Poets (BNAP) anthology and he is currently working on his first collection of poems titled," The Virgin from Mavoko."

## Kelvin J. Shachile – Essay – The Case of Love on Sale



Kelvin J. Shachile is a 21 years old Kenyan fiction writer, essayist, poet and orator. Kelvin has been writing since he was 12, he has been published in several literary journals and magazines including *The Whispers* - an international poetry journal, *New Ink Review* - a Zambian based literary magazine and *Writers Space Africa* - a publication of the African Writers Development Trust. He is a student at Maasai Mara University Kenya where he divides his time reading literature, philosophy, geography and history. He loves to travel.

## Flavia Kabuye – Poems - Selfies on the Highway & Soulmate at Dawn



Flavia Kabuye is a Ugandan social worker, creative entrepreneur and a member of the Uganda Association of Women Writers. She is also a writer and poet whose poetry and short stories have featured in *Never Too Late*, *A Thousand Voices Rising* and *Prairie Schooner*. Her poem 'Beads of Hope' won an award in the 2011 BN poetry competition.

## Kofi Acquah



Kofi Acquah, real names Eduful Ishmael, is a Ghanaian poet, writer, spoken word and performing artist. He is a member of 'The Village Thinkers', a creative writing and performing art society in Ghana. He participated in the 2015 American Poetry Marathon, was shortlisted in the 2016 and 2017 poetry category of the Ghana Writers Awards and shortlisted in the poetry category of the 2018 African Writers Awards in Abuja, Nigeria. He has been published in *The XX1 Centruy World Literature – India 2016*, *Voices of Humanity Vol.1 – USA 2016*, *Tuck Magazine*, *The News Ulster Journal issue 62* and he was the artist for the commercial poem of the 2017 Adonko Radio and Television Personality Awards in Accra, Ghana. He tweets at @\_Kofi\_Acquah



## Truphena Khalayi Lwanga. – Short story – The Money Half



Truphena Khalayi Lwanga is a 23 year old Kenyan writer and a web and mobile programmer. She has a degree in Actuarial Science from Strathmore University and an unhealthy fixation of one day becoming a clandestine polymath. She is 23 years old and lives with her family and three business partners Fahari, Sunny and Daisy, who also happen to be dogs, as she works from home. She first wrote in high school in both Kiswahili and English and writing has always filled her with awe. She writes poetry and philosophical articles that can be found on her blog [ofsenseandsensibility.wordpress.com](http://ofsenseandsensibility.wordpress.com)

## Misha Nabukeera – Essay – Love and Money; What's the Connection



Nabukeera has been writing since 2010. She studied Mass Communication at Makerere University, Kampala. She has never written professionally apart from an internship piece that appeared in The East African in August 2012. Recently, she started a blog where she writes occasionally. Visit here: [keeramisha.blopost.com](http://keeramisha.blopost.com)

## Winnie Nabirye – Essay – The Love Money Question



Winnie Nabirye is a 26 year old Ugandan. She is married, a banker living in Kabale. Her dream as a young girl was to write because that is how she and her two sisters were raised their father. He was a lecturer and a writer and he shared his passion for reading and writing with them. Being published in this magazine, the Naubaale Review is a dream come true for her as she is now published in this issue. She has always wanted to write in a magazine or paper and publish books but I had not yet got the chance. In her free time, she writes and reads a lot.

## Ngozi Olivia Osuoha – poem – Power of Money



Ngozi Olivia Osuoha is a Nigerian poet/writer/thinker and a graduate of Estate Management. She has experience in broadcasting and she has published almost two hundred poems in over fifteen countries and featured in over thirty international anthologies. Her three poetry books are available on Amazon.

## Atwebembire Dallen – Short Story – Sepals and Petals



Atwebembire Dallen is a Ugandan writer, secondary teacher and a teacher trainer who is an active member of Uganda National English Language Teachers Association. She has presented at several conferences among which is ALZELC.

## Violet Muwanga Mugabi - Short Story - First Crush

Violet Mugabi is a 22 years old Ugandan. She started writing in high school and her eagerness grew thanks to encouragement and feedback from her English teacher. She loves reading literature novels especially books by African writers. She hopes to one day pen a best seller.

# Our Next Issue... themed - TRAVEL

Next issue theme is Travel. We call for short stories not more than 6000 words, poetry, photography and essays. For this issue, we would be glad to publish photography. We would like to also feature a travel writer. Hit our inbox if you would like to be our featured writer for the next issue. The submission starts from 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Submissions can be sent to [nalubaalereview@gmail.com](mailto:nalubaalereview@gmail.com)

Subscribe on our website to receive future issues.

## CALL FOR UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS

If you would like to publish with us, send your manuscript to [nalubaalereview@gmail.com](mailto:nalubaalereview@gmail.com). We accept novels, short story collections, poetry anthologies and children's books and comics. We would also like to publish romance, crime fiction, urban fiction, love stories, cultural books and others. You can also feature on our website as a guest blogger/writer. Send an email to [nalubaalereview@gmail.com](mailto:nalubaalereview@gmail.com) to find out more.

**Enjoy... Write... Bless**