

JOEL OYELEKE & YAHUZA USMAN

poems ...

JOEL OYELEKE

&

YAHUZA USMAN

**LET ME
GRIEVE**

LET ME
GRIEVE!

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YAHUZA USMAN

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INTRODUCTION

Firstly, we give God thanks. Our heartfelt gratitude then goes to the leadership and membership of the Hilltop Creative Arts Foundation – it was on the association’s official WhatsApp group that the idea for this piece was birthed. It started in fragments, variations here and there but today you have in your hands thirty-eight poems from two poets trying to understand grief, healing and everything in between.

The chapbook is dedicated to everyone going through strange phases, depressing moments. The poems can be the therapy you need to grieve away grief.

Like Dr. Tony Morinho would say, *‘without art, there is no heart.’*

Every line of every stanza seeks to scream away whatever screams in you.

DEDICATION

To Almighty God, Almighty Allah for grace to breathe the breath of life – To healing, peace and every good we seek – To everyone who contributed to the becoming of the work – And to you, our dear reader for jumping into this ocean. Swim out of grief, let poetry teach you therapy.

BLURBS

This book is a collection of grieving threnodies that mourns and wails aloud the agonies of loss and death, and what it means to inscribe onto the canvas one's subject of pain without being object to self-harm and self-sabotage. Aside the repetitive chronology of Yahuza and Oyeleke's poems diving into a suppressive state of melancholia, they manage to swim against the turbulent currents of time while conjuring nostalgic moments with the profoundness and healing power of their pen. In their words, "Let me Grieve" is the picturesque of a "soul that shrouds grief / with a winding sheet / too elated and pleased to send a smile to the sky." Every line haunts the mind with what fossils are left off of our memories in our private grieving moments and stuns us with their elegiac syntax and remarkable dexterity with language. Grief is a spiritual art of therapy: says these therapeutic bards. Undoubtedly, Oyeleke and Usman are two formidable contemporary poets to look out for.

- **Adesiyan Pelumi**

(Winner, Cheshire White Ribbon Day Creative Competition, 2022)

This collection of poems from two young poets echoes the unfathomable length at which the heart is stretched to find peace. Engaging, vivid, and the quest for more. It is a collection where you could sit and reflect on what life is and is not. Read and reflect on the journey of life.

- **John Chinaka Onyeche** *(Author of 25 Atonements, Newcomer Press, USA)*

To write, is to be a living testament to the beauty of words, here, each poem explores itself as a reflection of each word chosen carefully and wisely for a sharp purpose and moment of truth. Let me grieve, is not just seeking to grieve, it's an avenue to search for solace with the round corners of your body.

- **Abdulrazaq Salihu** (Winner of Nigerian Prize for Teen Authors' 2022)

*Art begins as speculation. A pocket of what-ifs. Grief is much talked about, both speculated and deep breathing. In this collection it is the former, but we can forgive the poets for introspection, since at least it shows they are poets concerned in the paradoxes of things—of life, death, and in this case its gulf of transition: grief. I enjoyed reading the collection as best as I can while under a certain self-consciousness that the grief so talked about in this collection is, so to speak, adjunctive, an almost perfunctory thing. However, the book and indeed the poets — Joel and Yahuza — have begun an esthetic quest in that they understand in part and they strive in part to understand or strive to understand in part one of such many human spiri-sensual climaxes as joy, sorrow, gratitude and, in this instant, grief. **Let Me Grieve** is a beautiful collection I wish you read.*

- **Isaiah Adepaju** (Joint winner, Lagos - London Poetry Prize' 2023)

***Let Me Grieve** is a collection of poems whose voices have been hardened by the sole element of grief. The book, which has a totality of thirty-eight pain-stricken poems, reflects on the complexity that comes with the language of grief and how the text producers break loose from the complexity of this language barrier.*

One of the major functions of a poet as classified by William Wordsworth is his high sensibility. Joel Oyeleke and Yahuza Usman — the text producers have extensively proved themselves worthy of the title by being sensitive to the motif being discussed. It is no doubt to say that this is a powerful collection – a mark of literary excellence in the literary world

- **Sunday Saheed** (Winner, ZODML Poetry Prize' 2023)

Oyeleke and Yahuza, two incredibly talented young poets, have crafted a remarkable poetry collection titled "LET ME GRIEVE." This captivating poems delves deep into the realm of human emotions, thereby exploring profound themes such as gratitude, sorrow, and grief itself. Through their evocative verses, the poets skillfully capture the raw essence of these powerful sentiments, leaving readers moved and introspective.

In "LET ME GRIEVE," readers can expect a meticulously woven tapestry of emotions that resonate with the human experience. Oyeleke and Yahuza's words transcend the boundaries of language, immersing readers in a world where pain and beauty intertwine. Each poem encapsulates a different facet of the human condition, presenting thought-provoking insights into the fragility of life, the depths of sorrow, and the transformative power of grief.

This collection invites readers to embark on an emotional journey, evoking a myriad of feelings that will resonate long after the last page has been turned. From joy to heartbreak, from gratitude to despair, "Grief" encompasses the full spectrum of human emotions, leaving no stone unturned. Whether you are seeking solace, seeking understanding, or simply in search of profound poetry that awakens the soul, Oyeleke and Yahuza's "LET ME GRIEVE" promises to be an unforgettable literary experience.

*- **Oyin Bimbo** (Founder of ArtingArena).*

FOREWARD

Let me grieve waltzes around the theme of grief like a well-planned choreography. One peculiar thing about this work, however, is the way both poets grip our hands and lead us around the dark room of grief, to let us witness how it dims whatever lit room it enters till it crushes the egos of ecstasy.

Pen is one recurring metaphor in the work that equates itself with a pallbearer – carrying the weight of grief in a country that weighs its citizens down with life's vicissitudes. To escape, men find solace in the ugly hands of grief, which cuddles them, open its palms to welcome the outpouring of their pains.

In Yahuza's voice, *“Grief has become a legal citizen in this country.”* The presence of grief can be seen in the eyes of Oyeleke who confessed; *“I see grief in the streets, at home, in churches and mosques.”* In a country where grief has become ubiquitous, we see how *“a sad boy psalms; God, let us grieve by your grace!”* for *“even after kissing the lips of joy, grief makes life taste sour.”*

Open the door. Take a chair. Let's feast on this amazing collection.

OKORONKWO CHISOM

Winner, Delyork Academy Creative Writing Prize, 2021.

“Grief is more contagious than joy”

- Natasha T. Miller

“Grief is a language only the grieving understands”

- Ngozi Chimamanda Adichie

*Grief does not know who is black, who is blue, or
which is brown; it is a disaster.*

- Salim Yakubu Akko

LET ME GRIEVE (001)

My pen is everywhere, like the wind -
Present around us albeit invincible
Blowing the air of enthusiasm nigh my head
Pulling cloudy verses out of my poetry.

My teacher found strands of hair
hung up in the broken teeth of my pen,
He preserved it, squirreled it into a wardrobe.
It sings from afar

that i come squeeze it out.
But the darkness it gives me, like a bereavement.
In every sadness, literacy
hangs around my longing tears.

Some say 'your pen is a reflection of your art'
For me it isn't what I stand to stare, sight into.
My pen holds me against my art,
Travels several miles that leaves me shaking - like a feverish bird,

trembling. Today, I pressed a deep-rooted kiss on my pen,
To feel its tender skin squeeze heat
onto my lips. And like boiled musings in a piercing night,
Melt the ice of my burning dream.

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (002)

This burning dream is the simulacrum of
grief – a language only the grieving understands.

My pen looks at me, weeps. Because
It cannot bear all of my worries.

Emotions are carefully
hidden inside of metaphors,
lurking behind similes,
masking as oxymorons,
acting like personifications.

Grief looks me
In the eye. Makes me vomit pain.

Pain that makes my throat utter;

'E'li, E'li, la'ma sa-bach-ta'ni'

Oh! Lord let us not be the ones damned to grief,

Let us not be the sore in someone's throat –

The *ata rodo* in the anus of a rebellious child.

Lord, this is why I write, burying the rigidity of woes in literal simplicity.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (003)

Woes in this literal simplicity

share semblance

with a metal sponge -

sponge that seldom absorbs

the moonshine of my pen, my art.

Sometimes, my pen, like a sheep,

bleats "write never, sleep ever," -

This bleat, like a knife

Sharpens the audacity of silence

with melancholic oil brimming on the skin;

Tears in woeful speed aching its moves.

So long as the grief of my pen

breathes like a child,

Shall I find peace in chaos?

As I write, again and again – Drinking hope.

- Yahuza

LET ME GRIEVE (004)

The grief that gives my pen oxygen
Has lost touch with reality,
It has become the conglomeration of origins where
My specie see light as the substance of things hoped for -
The evidence of things not seen.

Grief is like solace,
It is breast milk in the throat of a lonely child lost in a world
Where brutality is normalcy.

I know it can tear my soul asunder –
No wonder
I divide it betwixt
me and my art;
 We become two halves of an open page
 The reverberation of a pattern
Where you must let me
take on the voice of hope,
Where you must let
joy inside of me and I, inside of her.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (005)

Interment of My Pen's Grief

As time grows old. Tall like Iroko.

He is again, in a solemn cloudy confusion.

Here is his book, pages swelling with dust;

Dust of melancholy;

Dust of a shrunken silence;

Dust that dispels pillared verses;

Dust that barricades ink's flow;

Dust that rinses his dirt with metaphors of grief;

Dust that squirrels his lines into a polythene bag;

Dust that peers into an open sky, craving for death.

And here he is - lurking behind my doorsill,

Beholding how the soul shrouds grief

With a winding sheet;

Too elated and pleased to send a smile to the sky,

Wishing he can chant that 'the grief is over!'

I echo a prayer. Like the sun's brightness,

It fills the sky. Enjoys the light in my eyes,

Dazzling with excitement of acceptance, of publication;

When will it be the time to mourn for the exit of my pen's grief?

- Yahuza

LET ME GRIEVE (006)

In prayer, my knees twitch in solitude
To faith that is trapped above the skies.
When the very essence of my pained self becomes similar to
A world where grief is the lingua franca;
I lose my voice.

The flowers around me share in this pottage of discomfort;
They wither in rainy season
and
blossom in the harmattan.

The air I breathe saps life and
whispers death to my understanding -
Yet I took hold of metaphors and led them to a place where
Grief is laid to rest.

Inscribing an epitaph on woes,
The strength that comes from hoarding resistance to
Portray that grief is now an antonym.

Let me grieve for grief -
My pen has buried it.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (007)

Today is not like every day to me,
I woke with a solemn vigil; Tears trickling down my eyes;
Tears that emanated after I dreamt a dream.

On Saturday night, while asleep -
I found myself, like the wind, roaming a forest.
Amassing strength. Climbed a tree;
A bounteous tree of mahogany —

And suddenly, I espied a lion
twitching and roaring; "*Yahuza, enwrite an epitaph.*"
I remember in the surreal dream
"*Come down and sap this grief.*" Said an untraced voice.

Then my tongue, like a knife, began cutting
into a size that would fit my mouth -
All I knew is my heart mimics a lion's roar.
Uneasiness cut my sweet sleep short;

I understood very lately
How grief put us in melancholy; How it wants to communicate with us.
How grief speaks for itself — evil.
I pack my load and run away from whatever looks like sorrow.

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (008)

To let me be brief in my grief.

To entice my joy and levitate it into something glorious.

Breathing. Like a child gasping for breath from too much running;

I inhale and exhale the fragrance that keeps sadness out of my lungs.

Thus, my tribute to grief stands, albeit sadly -

Grief can be a companion, a buddy in times of gothic reverberations but I found

Our friendship too solemn. Too silent. Too rigid. Too complex.

Too sad a union to exist.

Bearing the troubles in my chest made my pulse pause at intervals.

Beside the corner of my room,

I found a shirt soaked in the rain;

I took it and squeezed Mississippi out of it the same

way I squeeze grief out of my abode.

The same way I devised a means to grieve and not let

grief hold my mother's skirt, accuse her of giving birth to a depressed being.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (009)

I put verses into a frigid
half-opened bathhouse,
I twigged at how my pen quivered,
Took off its clothes and became bare.

I marveled. Grief, like a crocodile
Levitated my pen, scared it extremely and it groaned.
Like a favorite meal, I watched it eat my peace;

The grief that bubbled with life;
The grief that eluded the burden of my art;
The grief that took me into the sky, with fear and trembling.

Deluged by the tears of woe
that clutched my tender heart;
I search for the tunnel at the end of light.

Beside this bathhouse, there is a pillared tree —
I see how it stands against
all odds and I wish I become the tree.

- Yahuza

LET ME GRIEVE (010)

Grief is a mixture of things untold, things too gruesome,
things too unusual, things too antagonistic,
things that shudder the soul and arrange
the body in a way that leaves it with an aura of sadness.

If I let you grieve my kind of grief,
Won't you become an epitome of darkness or
a nomad roaming in Sahara?

This living thing grabs the body of a person and animates it.
Yes, it is a violent specie that becomes real once in a while.
In this poem;
I once saw grief in the death of a loved one -
That feeling of hopelessness, that regret,
that reminiscence of the past with the one that passed the shores.
I beheld grief causing adults to shed tears too strong to hide,
Tears shed with too much passion,
Too much grieving. Mature tears.

Grief is a meditation, yoga - the kind where one sits and falls into a trance.
In that trance - life is reckless and we all had the right to stay outside of happiness.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (011)

Amidst the scorching sun that refuges heads,

I footslogged to the arid river of our area.

My eyes glued to a flock of cattle

Roaming on the sand like the ship of a desert.

I sensed how fatigued they were from their sounds,

They grieved because of the barren land; short of pasture.

"Am I not the only liver that grieves?" I thought.

An echo of my sound kept penetrating into every strand of my heart.

In rage, a grown-up cow voiced out at once:

"Grief is what we all do, you and I.

Life is the birth giver of darkness and light

Grief is what makes life an enemy."

Your gnawing stories and fortunate wins, enveloped in your heart

shows that grief is not sand,

but the conjuring of the dark days.

I mean to say, a cow taught me the animal kind of grief.

- Yahuza

LET ME GRIEVE (012)

A river threatens to turn my peace to
distress. I took hold of its evil and sapped good from it.
The river – flows in a way that one becomes obsessed
Or bewitched?
Since it is a language only the victim understands
I speak it with my own intonation, a unique tempo.

Let me grieve. Let me be me.
Because it gets to a point
where grief is the only *ponmo* we find in the *egusi* -
Where every other thing is roses, roses and nothing.

Depression is one good brother to grief so I hate that family.
You grieve grief because it
shapeshifts darkness into something tangible,
Something you painfully caress and know a lot is going on.
Grief can be many things
but it can never be the reason I will leave earth.

Let me weep instead of grieving:
Grief is darkness
Water is life and tears is another name for water.
I am my own therapist.

LET ME GRIEVE (013)

You become a knife that cuts grief into slices like
the *aboki* selling *agege* bread across the street.

You wipe away tears wetting the bed. Subdue
everything that makes you see life as a puzzle.

I scamper to my room chewing the alphabets of grief.

I found my pen weaving a stanza;

A stanza of how some families are familiar to suffering.

A stanza of how Naira redesign

becomes a dirge in the hearts of Nigerians.

I thought of how Salim weaved “Into Ashes;”

A weave that speaks about the flames on the throne of ice —

This inspired me to reflect on Vyangel's “Archive of Pains”

It is a dirge that dirges.

"Lassa fever and covid-19 already metamorphosed into eternity.

ASUU strike is over."

I taught myself to handle

grief like the vigilante group handled the yam thief last night.

They beat him to stupor.

I know another thief is coming. The vigilante is very much alive.

- Yahuza

LET ME GRIEVE (014)

In my mother's house:

Grief

is

gruesome

rebellious

irresistible

enraging

fucking painful!

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (015)

Grief has become a legal citizen in this country

Where a

sad boy psalms;

God, let us grieve by your grace!

God, let us behold! And feel how it feels:

To be carried by tragedy

To be homed by sorrow

To be embraced by darkness.

Now, every joy comes

after melancholy;

Now, every peace

turns to raw anger stretching our bones.

Now, fear is how we learn to stay controlled.

I have discovered that in my father's land -

grief fiddles with my torso and

deflowers the innocence in joy!

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (016)

In my fatherland;

Grief is defined as the normal.

A constant discomfort, a recurring theme.

Everything symbolizes grief -

It is a metaphor overused, a clichè.

I see grief in the streets, at home, in churches, mosques.

I see grief come with every new policy,

every new implementation -

Our leaders become a version of grief we never thought possible.

Grief is blood shed in cruelty.

We cannot grieve this kind of grief

that digs a grave and hands us a shovel.

The grief my country grieves turns pain into a living thing;

Innocence is a stale bread everyone rejects.

Lately, I have learnt that grief is not a meditation,

Not a mere feeling -

It is the source of our un-gleefulness.

The very way we express our thoughts about the land.

- *Oyeleke*

* *First published in Panorama Magazine, OAU, 2023.* *

Let yourself feel. Cry in the shower if you need to. Stare in silence at the ceiling. Scrunch up like a paper ball. Claw at the ache in your chest if it helps. But let yourself feel it all, because that is not weakness. That's you being brave enough to release a pain that would be so much easier to ignore.

- Zara Bas

LET ME GRIEVE (017)

I saw my mother cry after the interment of my sister,
I know that grief is a symbol of untold plight.

He lost his car. My brother. He embraced silence even as
tears flooded from his lids like the tap at my grandmother's backyard.
I learned that grief is the remedy to misery.

By the time I beheld how my sister's smile
Changed, her clothes melted.
I realized what it takes for a heart to grieve. What it takes to lose oneself.

Sometimes thoughts enthuse me to delete
Grief from my life.
But I learn to be patient. To see if I can learn from evil.
At the end of the day, grief keeps me in reflection -
It enhances pain.

My soul whispers that it remains with us - a memory in its oviduct
fertilizing new stories, new dirges,
new ways to endure heart ache.
Even after kissing the lips of joy, grief makes life taste sour.

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (018)

Grief can be an elegy,
Once in a while - a dirge,
Most times - pain.
Usually it skyrockets the soul into a meditation
Or hallucination of things unseen.

The memory is aching,
The brain is tasking,
The pulse is choking.
Grief is a two-edged sword committed to divide asunder
What glee has joined together.

Grief is like hot chili on the lips of the grieving.
It makes the eyes – peppery, heart - hot.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (019)

I peered into the sky amidst the scorching sun,
And my eyes were brimming with oil -
Augmenting my gloomy face.

Now, in a city of ghosts
I marveled how I, like mother hen
Sang lullaby for the annoyed chicks in our house.

When the sun set before daybreak;
I watched a cat trample on the zinc
Looking for a prey to ease its hunger with;
This grief is the grief of hunger –
the type that leaves my brother with red shot
eyes and angry fists – the type that
makes me hear my stomach
screaming; *'do you want to punish me like life punishes you?'*

I saw in the cat's eyes an emblem
Painted in blue, red, green and white —
Now I want to know if grief comes in colors?

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (020)

I remember my pastor saying;

'Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning'

What if this joy delays after dawn?

What if grief holds me and leads me on a journey to un-becoming?

Grief that spills into dimensions -

Squarely facing my courage and challenging it.

If grief is a government official – dictatorship is its system.

I see the colors of grief in mixtures.

Colors combined to become one.

What if grief is *green-white-green*?

Oh!

When I look in and see pain,

I turn my hope into light that shines

To the weakest of places.

I fold my faith into a wrapper

that camouflages the grief in me.

It is an art I have mastered.

It is how I become a peacock.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (021)

It all started on a day when the sun refused to shine

And the wind in our home refused to wind.

My mother, brothers, neighbors and well wishers

Gathered together — weeping and weeping —

Screaming like cocks fulfilling the metaphor of dawn.

Here I learned that every grief begins with

a reason — too small or big to bear.

My immediate brother sprang to his feet and gave me a pathetic look,

Trembling sluggishly to speak to me like a feverish parrot in the scorching sun.

There I felt unconscious, seeing a stranger in my brother's rage.

That day, I learnt that grief can change a man.

If you kill grief, even a well written epitaph would not say it all.

I failed to see and comprehend beyond their bloodsucking problems.

When I learnt how to weep like them,

it was for the

Death of my sister!

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (022)

It is only when grief pierces the skin

That one looks for its cure.

It is only when the heart melts under the fire of sorrow

That one looks for an escape.

Grief becomes real when life becomes cruel.

Experience they say teaches best but with grief;

the bad side of issues becomes a

route we do not know how to navigate.

I have seen grief in the eyes of my mother -

The retina – bloodshot for her deceased sister.

I have witnessed grief in the eyes of my uncle

His lids darting about in confusion. His voice, unusually hoarse -

That day I understood that pain can change a man's voice.

When I try to merge the imagery in

mum's retina with uncle's lids – everything becomes a blurry sea

For them - grief came like a river, it drowned them.

Grief can be many things

but to me, - it is a death I have refused to die.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (023)

And the mood kept multiplying itself like a virus
spreading as fast as a cheetah.

I peered, as I stepped into his house, his room.

To see how fire was crawling up to the roof:

There were sudden destructions that emerged.

Everything was as scattered as blasts of bomb in Maiduguri.

House dwellers were weeping and grieving and murmuring:

"These flames, like an oven, roasted all our possessions—

Into a cloud of dust — into ashes."

I stood strongly, peering at the hot flames crawling,

Then, began to walk and, annoyingly, scamper through

Everything that was a tourist attraction in the gone days:

The beautiful, well-decorated, shiny African furniture.

There, I saw how helplessness turned into

An option that will never be evaded easily.

I know grief is very personal because

that day it became a flood of flames —

an inferno. Turned me into magma.

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (024)

Even when nothing allows you to grieve

You still find a reason to block your ear drums with songs that spell ache -

Songs that tell you more about grief.

It starts from the outside but I promise, grief flourishes in your soul

Now, stand up - gather everything synonymous to pain and seal it in a box:

A box that little moments of joy help shut tight,

A box that hope keeps away from your dark side

You shouted;

'But it won't be long before I tear the box open;

Before I immerse myself again.'

It can scavenge the body, levitate hope into hopelessness,

A metaphor that keeps peace and anxiety in a sentence of antithesis.

It finds its way into this poem and mocks me,

the poet, because even behind these words

are tears only verses weep,

pain shape-shifted into stanzas,

Wails that rhyme into everything against happiness.

Grief, in the eyes of the grieving is anything

That turns tears to the body of *my village stream*.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (025)

Loving you is not losing everything, oooh!

I have been in an appeasing relationship

For more than a year before I became a stranger —

A stranger in the relationship that was once many things:

It was the solace, hope and smiles that surrounded my heart —

There was never anxiety, or cause of cries.

Seconds were becoming minutes, and minutes were moving to be days,

Days turned into months, and the month

Spelled out some grief-stricken words when it was about to die —

Those words that the wind blow into my ears gently

Mock me. Scare me. It is a year now since

My joyous heart was turned into a hell of confusion

She left brokenness as a body of consolation.

I became a sheep of the desert,

It was never my choice, but an *'it is over'* forced a new kind of grief on me.

I learnt to start afresh, give love a second chance

But whenever I sit on that beach behind the flowing water,

I glance at my reflection and see her —

utter: *"Yahuza! Sometimes an untold story is better left untold, forget me"*

LET ME GRIEVE (026)

I took my pen to grieve in poetry since
reality has done too much to move me.

I have come to learn that my grief is your happiness
and your joy is my sorrow.

A man's darkness is the light that guides another man's path.

Let me manipulate this sorrow -
conjure the past, present and future into tears; weep them.

Let me wail while the sun shines so
That the sun can burn the grief in me.

Do you know how grief squeezes itself into a body?

How *it / he / she* enters without permission,

Steals joy and makes this poem
sound the way it shouldn't sound.

Makes me search for that point
when the meaninglessness of existing becomes meaningful.

Grief is tricky, witty,
but surely a worthy villain in life's tragedy -
I become the protagonist.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (027)

If grief becomes the warm blood
Circulating through his body -
The scent of hell's perfume become how people perceive him.

No amount of air and tears are enough
To consume this blood and fix together its woes
To make this pollen grain into a petal.
A flower that blossoms in a blossoming
That transforms grief into a smiling love.

When he listens to dark music –
It is grief wanting to saturate his being.
He sings out his throat, music away pain:

'oh! grief, oh! grief

Listen to his rehearsal and learn to avoid him.'

- **Yahuza**

LET ME GRIEVE (028)

sleep - as if that is the remedy for grief.

silence - as if grief does not scream on top of its lungs.

motivation – as if the motivator is motivated.

Hence

Pain is not worth grieving – since the

mouth we use to utter *wahala* today can be closed in a grave tomorrow.

Life is out of our reach,

like the sun, sometimes bright, other times paves way for the moon.

When it comes like the wind – navigate.

Spread wings and fly like an eagle,

Fly against the raging of the storm.

Sit grief down

Bid it come,

‘come

and see how

I take

whatever

rids me

of happiness

to the mortuary.’

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (029)

everything has turned into ashes,
Nothing moves even a mile but a cloud of woes
& she has become the elegantly dangerous soul
Exhaling the tears of a body that once
Danced and sang for decorated love.

this grief — of an inferno — is a river of the heart;
It absorbs the body. Drenches it.
Water
& depression like a flood is disaster
but this is not from nature,
Grief eats everything that is red and white.

perhaps hating her will chase her
Or is she obsessed with me because
White is the metaphor for my soul yet my sorrow is red?

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (030)

This Part of Me

When I tell people to thread
carefully with me –
I do not mean I am wicked.

When I say I am too fragile –
I do not refer to my heart.

There is a part of me hidden somewhere –
This part breaks, it melts,
it is the yolk of my life's egg.
Only few people live to see this me –
If you are opportune

to encounter this version of me, please, do not hurt her.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (031)

This poem begins with a remedy for tears,
Living in an invisible world of mellifluous cries;
The cries of a pen that screams, looking for ink,
The cries of a mother that beholds her daughter clothed by dust,
The cries of beloveds after a rueful break up,
The cries of breathing souls that become fire,
The cries of books that look for words to re-book them.

I might not have the cure to Grief
yet fret not.
I might not have anti-depressants
but I know how to manipulate
lines into an ocean of therapy -
Just learn to swim.

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (032)

Untitled Past in Grief's hands

I want to take you back to when
grief sat me down on a wooden chair.
said; '*boy, you are no good.*'
That evening was solemn,
raw – the moon winked at my willingness.

The willingness to immerse
myself in the loss of faith.
I want to take you back to how
pain gave my skin a new shape,
how it dictated my emotions,
falsified every joy I have ever joyed.
It taught me that loneliness
is a brother in times of need.
It made tears drink me or was I the thirsty one?

It punctured my eyeballs until
I saw the wickedness in peace.
Grief is cruel.
You hate reality. Life is wild.
Like an eagle,
it hops on our peace,
escapes with it to mount Varvara.

*Grief schooled me until I became a rebel,
until I expelled myself from everything my heavenly father has not planted.*

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (033)

When grief becomes horrible as the scorching sun
That bakes the solitary tissues in your body—
Just a distance away from the rivulet of your ecstasy,
Do note that: there is a space, a pathetic separateness
Betwixt your soundless breath and your tender lung.

Again, when grief turns into a pot cooking for you,
Don't eat the pottage of tears. It would roll on your cheek and
Slide down your nose to make a streamlet.
Heating your crawling mouth like flames walking in water;
Fall. Weep. Wail. Get up and chase life again. Flee from depression –
That is the cycle of healing.

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (034)

- After *Dolapo*

The Beatitudes of Grief

Blessed are they who grieve, for they shall be called the children of pain

Blessed is grief, for it / he / she shall be a tormentor

Blessed art thou if the tormentor attacks you

but finds the sun and moon morphing into your resolve.

Your strength. The momentum built against grief.

Blessed are they who seek what they do not find,

for theirs is disappointment.

Blessed are they that ask and don't receive -

Blessed art thee because there is always sorrow in joy.

I will look down on suffering –

From whence cometh my struggles.

Oh! Grief who art in us, hallowed be thy wickedness

For it allows us recite thy beatitudes –

Allows us see the blessedness of pain.

What is healing if not an Antidote?

Therapy - hold grief by the hands,

sit it down and whisper; *'you have no hold over me.'*

Let the words sink into grief the same way you sank into him.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after glee,

for they shall still grieve but perhaps

she would give them fortitude.

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (035)

I reflected on

how

our Imam

Cried out

while

delivering

a sermon

yesterday.

The voice seemed

similar to mine –

What if grief is a spiritual process?

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (036)

The way grief leaves us in

confusion

is the way this poem starts –

A beginning without an end

An end without a beginning.

It makes everything misty, creepy:

Sucks us into the beginning

of the end and

leaves us asking if there really is

light at the end of the tunnel or

the tunnel is at the end of light.

Grief is a weapon that

I have learnt to attack with the divine

sacrament; *'no weapon fashioned against me shall prosper.'*

- *Oyeleke*

LET ME GRIEVE (037)

Dear you,

Innumerable images of gloom have been residing in my dreams, in the last few months. I saw your shadow everywhere / even in my smiles, and I heard your echoes resonating through my innocent body in midnight hallucinations. In my breakfast, too, you would come to carelessly remind me of memories carefully hidden in my heart. Every day, your presence drops little sprinkles of loneliness that dances on the roof of my pleasure. Today I want to vomit what the sun holds for the moon for you / I have developed flexible wings on my shoulders that fly with me freely into the sky where blue is the metaphor for healing.

Of accumulated grief - Of tears left unseen - Of silence left unnoticed. Of voices far from auditory reception - Of words that stop short on the tip of your tongue – genuine yet premature. And whenever your scent visits my heart: a gorilla – comforter, takes me to the branch of a therapeutic *iroko*. Feeds me mango; fruit of consolation, euphoria and therapy.

What if nature is the cure to grief?

- *Yahuza*

LET ME GRIEVE (038)

After Abdulrazaq Salihu

Dear you,

the day the world justified calling a spade a spade, did they also agree that your body can be many things? Did they justify how light and darkness finds expression in one body? If *Inyang Titus* says '*he would not forget the mercy of un-sugared garri*' – does it mean hunger is the blessing of the poor? Is healing a constellation of speculation or it is the safe space from pain? If *Jaachi Anyantonwu* says '*nothing really is as heavy as a rose in a casket*' – does that mean death is the recollection of affection locked up in the most fragile of places? Of grief being the weight on a man's shoulder – can it bring ecstasy to pain? If my mum says '*what will be will be*' – does it mean some are destined to be in bliss, others in chaos? If *Yahuza* says '*Of accumulated grief - Of tears left unseen - Of silence left unnoticed. Of voices far from auditory reception*' – does it mean *of* is the metaphor for anxiety? I heard *Romeo Oriogun* say '*our destination is between suffering and joy*' – I learn he insists life is to be tasted in twos (bitter and sweet).

You wonder why the poem becomes a rhetorical orchestra – I ask is life not full of surprises? - Is life not black when you expect white? Is it not love when you expect hatred? Is it not *bitter-leaf* when you prepare for *sugar-cane*?

In one of my poems – the persona searches for life, he looks and looks but sees the absence of it. In this poem you become the persona, find life – it is in that calm in your soul. I mean true therapy is recognizing the minutest of things that twist your lips into laughter, joy.

- *Oyeleke*

“Deep grief sometimes is almost like a specific location, a coordinate on a map of time. When you are standing in that forest of sorrow, you cannot imagine ever finding a better place. But I can assure you that if someone stood in that same place, and now have moved on – you have hope.”

- Elizabeth Gilbert

“There is no grief as bad as the grief that does not speak”

- Henry Longfellow

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

YAHUZA USMAN:

He is a member and the Taraba State Secretary of *Hilltop Creative Arts Foundation*. A talented individual who writes from the northern part of Nigeria. A student, poet, voracious reader and lover of literature. Yahuza is a wikimedian, book reviewer, essayist and science student from Al-Mishkat Academy Jalingo, Taraba State. His works have been published or are forthcoming in reputable publications such as *Al-Mir'aatu Magazine*, *World Voices Magazine*, *Literary Yard*, *Arting Arena*, *Afrihil Press*, *Synchronized Chaos Magazine*, *iTell Stories* and *Everything Beautiful Blog*, *Opinion Nigeria*.

He was shortlisted for the 2022 Iconic Writers of India. He emerged the runner up for the Taraba Youth for Peace Project Essay organized by Dar Al Andalus Centre in October, 2022. He serves as the President of the *MSSN Forum* of Umara, Jalingo Area Council for the 2022/2023 session.

He won the first prize for *on-the-spot non-fiction writing* at the 2023 Hadiza Ibrahim Aliyu School Festival (HIASFEST 2023) in Minna, Niger State. He is a hafiz, typist, graphic designer and networker who resides in Mafindi and uses *Crawling Writer* as a pseudonym.

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JOEL OYELEKE {Word Commander (V)}:

A member of *Hilltop Creative Arts Foundation* from Osun state. Joel is a Nigerian poet, literary enthusiast, God-addict and Literature in English undergraduate of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun state.

Author of *THE THEM IN ME* (Direwords 2022), Winner of the Arting Arena Poetry Prize (2022), Coordinator of The Society of Young Nigerian Writers (OAU chapter), Publishing Officer II of the Association of Nigerian Authors (OAU chapter) and Curator of Poetry Village, OAU.

He is published in *IHRAF, The Nigerian Review, Poemify, Shuzia Magazine, Yellow house Library, Crusaders Magazine, The Sailors Review, Clean Ink Anthology (Ohio, 2022), iTell Stories and Everything Beautiful Blog, Pidgin Poetry Magazine, Panorama Magazine, Outlook India*, and elsewhere. He currently reads and edits poetry for *Arting Arena Magazine*. When he is not writing, he is reading, teaching, playing football and dreaming of vacation in Michigan.

He is active on Facebook @ *Joel Oyeleke*.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

YAHUZA USMAN

I am humbled and profoundly grateful to the Almighty Allah, whose divine grace has ignited my mind, granted me the ability to reflect, and gifted me with the power to pen these pages. Without His unwavering support, this labor of love would have withered away into oblivion.

My heart overflows with gratitude towards my cherished parents, Malam Usman Sani and Malama Halima Musa, whose dogged devotion has nurtured me from the moment of my birth. Their selfless care and endless sacrifices have paved the way for my journey. May Allah shower His blessings upon you, dear Abba and Umma, forevermore.

To my beloved school, Al-Mishkat Academy Jalingo, you have become my sanctuary, a haven where the seeds of wisdom were sown, blossoming into the rich tapestry of this work. My heartfelt appreciation goes to the luminous souls of my teachers: Mr. Mukhtar Lawal, Mr. Abdulmudallib Ibrahim, Mr. Sani Aliyu, Mr. Muhammad Umar Kamaludden, Mr. Usman Hamza, and others. Your guidance and mentorship have sculpted the course of my life, molding me into a better version of myself. I am indebted to our visionary principal, Mr. Tahir Abdulmalik, whose tenacious dedication serves as a beacon, inspiring me to reach for excellence, ever higher. May Allah elevate your noble position.

I must express my gratitude to the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria, where dreams took flight, and to the Hill-Top Creative Arts Foundation, an enchanted realm that breathed life into my writing vocation. May these flourishing organizations continue to sow seeds of transformation, leaving an indelible mark on the world.

To Mal. Muhammad A. Muhammad, a guardian angel, mentor, and illuminator of paths, your unwavering financial support and invaluable life lessons have paved the way for my education. May Allah bestow upon you His eternal blessings and reward you with paradise.

In the tapestry of my journey, I am eternally grateful to Safiyanu Yahuza, Yahuza Abdulkadir, Salim Yakubu Akko, Joel Oyeleke, Adamu Usman Garko, Hisham Saleh, Mubarak Sa'id, Mr. Terkule Aorabee Gargajav, and Mrs. Nwoye Cecilia for the lighthouses they have been, guiding me through treacherous waters. Rest assured, I am resolute in my determination to make you proud.

To my classmates and colleagues, whose souls resonate with poetry and whose support is an unwavering fortress - Bilkisu Ahmad Muhammad, Abdurrauf Abubakar Adam, Abdulaziz M. Inuwa, Vyangel Aorabee, Moses Ya'u, Amina Kabiru, Al-Mustapha Umar, and Ibrahim Usman, I am forever indebted to your love, unswerving support, and the tranquility you have brought into my tumultuous voyage.

Lastly, to every soul gracing the pages of this book, I am eternally beholden to you. Your presence, your support, and your eagerness to embrace my thoughts and ideas fill my heart with profound joy. I consider it a tremendous honor to share this journey with you. May Allah bless you abundantly, enveloping you in His benevolent light.

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OYELEKE JOEL

It is with joy that I render due eulogy to my maker, Yeshua, who undoubtedly gifted me immensely. The way he helps me keeps awing me and so it is He I first acknowledge in the success of this work of art. In continuity of gratitude, I thank my parents, Pst. Joshua Oyeleke & Pst. Mrs. Justina Oyeleke for bringing me into the cosmos and nurturing me in this career path. I will continue to thank God for the grace to have such wonderful guardians. And to my siblings; Ayo, John and Joyce – thanks for giving chance whenever the boy wants to write and read.

I am also humbled and profoundly grateful to the Almighty God for my Teacher, Sir Othello of Acumen Secondary School who shaped my first passion for literature. To my uncle, Barrister Emmanuel Osibie, thanks for letting me steal your books - those where the beginning of my fire for literary quest. I pray God continue to uphold you all, amen.

I would not end this retinue of thanks without being grateful to God for the Quintessentials, well-wishers and friends of the English department of Obafemi Awolowo University, I love you all. To the Watchmen, you are God's gift to me and I cherish it. To Association of Nigerian Authors, OAU chapter – I am growing because of your help. To NASELS debate club, OAU chapter; I love the vibes, intelligence and family love that we home. To Poetry Village, thanks for increasing my teaching ability, and trusting me to help you all grow in poetry – you are loved. And to my teacher and mentor, Prof. Gbemisola Aderemi Adeoti; thanks for the teachings, the travels, the openness to lend me your books, financial assistance and the love you have for me – I cannot forget you in my literary journey.

In a wrap up, thanks to you, my friend for reading LET ME GRIEVE, I pray you find every ounce of joy and peace you seek, amen.

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