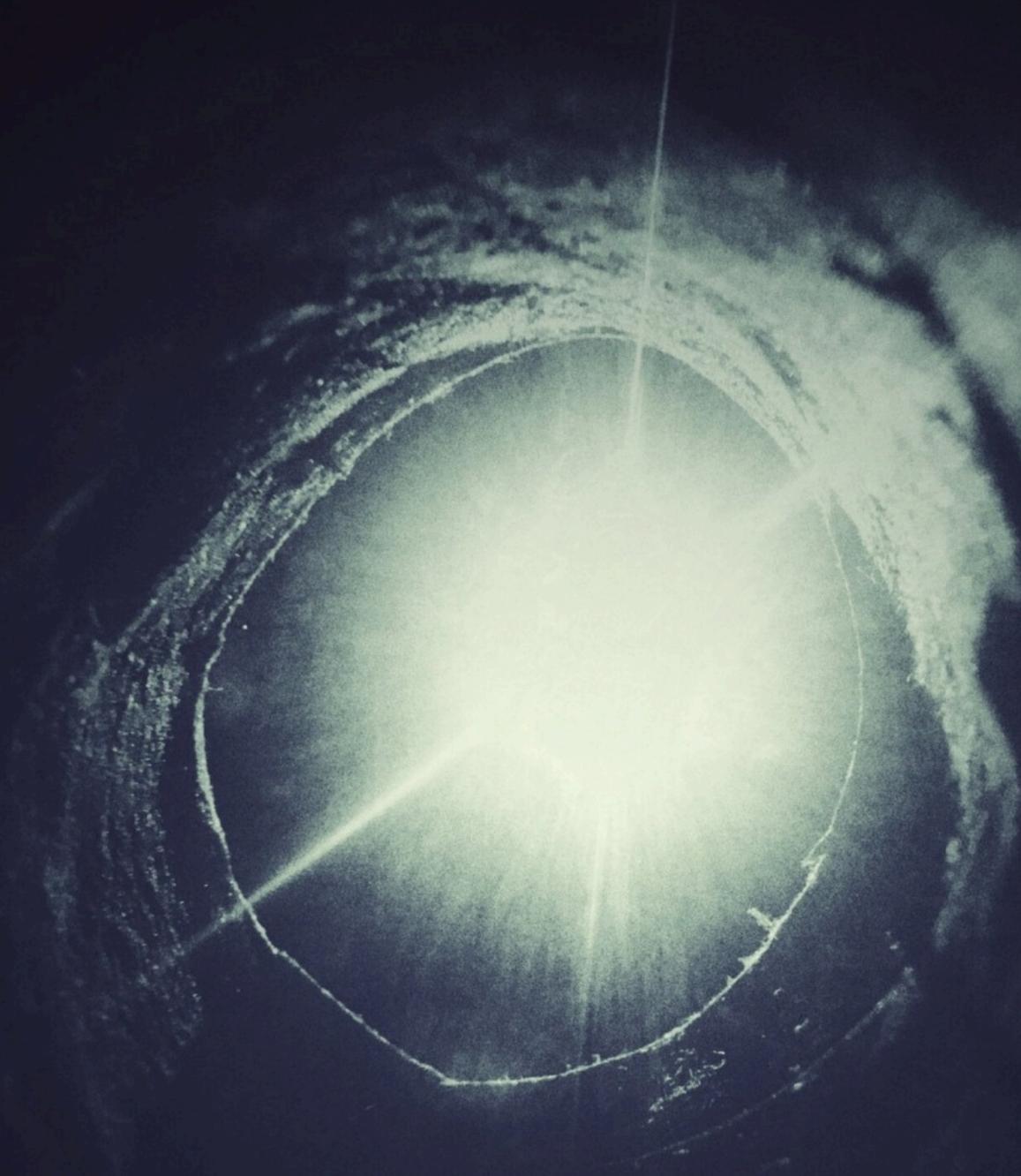


FRAGILE LIGHT

NORTHERN NARRATIVES INITIATIVE



HANNATU SUNUSI YAKUBU

CULTIVATING
CREATIVITY



NORTHERN NARRATIVES INITIATIVE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To my family, for being my constant strength and comfort, and for standing by me through every step of this journey. To my mentor, for always listening to my endless complaints with patience, and for guiding me with kindness. To the writing community, especially the Northern Writers Forum, for giving us this space and opportunity to share our voices. And finally, to myself, for holding on, for not letting go, and for daring to turn my fragile light into words.

DEDICATION

I am dedicating this work to every soul staying strong out there, may your fragile light keep glowing, even in the darkest corners.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Editing Fragile Light has been a sincere privilege. As an editor and poet who has spent years reading different works from different magazines and journal, I recognize when a collection carries something rare: honesty that is pure and pristine. A kind of tenderness that survives heavy criticism Hannatu Sunusi Yakubu has given us all of these in this remarkable mini chapbook.

The poems in Fragile Light are not ornamental, they are lived and remarkably sincere. They are written out of memory, faith, and grief. From the opening Ghazal of Fire, where prayer intersects with pain, to the closing Ghazal for Fragile Light, where endurance itself becomes a form of faith, Hannatu reminds us that poetry is not only what we say, but also what keeps us alive when words fail. As an editor who has worked closely with writers telling stories of survival, identity, and resistance, I can say this: Hannatu's voice belongs among those who write not just to be heard, but to connect us to the deepest parts of ourselves. The greatest skill in fragile light is the gift of sincerity and simplicity, life happens in so many folds of chaos, to be brilliant is to be able to simplify all of this chaos into lines.

What awes me most is her range. The poems are intimate yet expansive. They move from the private ache of Dear Pain, My Oldest Lover, to the generational tenderness of Ode to My Father's Pain and My Mother's Interpretation of Weekends. There is a keen awareness of lineage in those poems; how faith, family, and memory shape us and yet, there is also rebellion, a refusal to remain molded by expectations, as in How She Was Molded and Who Am I, Really?.

Hannatu's craft is worth noting too. The ghazals are patient, rooted in tradition, yet wholly contemporary in their ache and yearning. Her free verse resists excess, opting instead for clarity and vulnerability. There is bravery in the restraint, in the decision to let emotion carry the weight rather than ornamentation. Richard Hugo would call this the music conforming to truth.

In editing these pages, I found myself not only reading but also pausing, returning to lines that asked me to sit still for a little while, to breathe, to remember my own fragile light. That is what the best poetry does: it meets us where we are, but it also dares us to hold on a little longer.

Hannatu Sunusi Yakubu's Fragile Light is a testament to endurance and honesty, this is our light, this is our very fragile light.

Abdulrazaq Salihu

Author of Quantum Entanglements with notes on loss

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GHAZAL OF FIRE

The fire within me won't stop burning,
Even when I fall to my knees, O Ya Allah.
I tried to carry silence like a prayer,
But my ribs broke open instead, O Ya Allah.
These nights taste like old regrets,
I still drink from them, O Ya Allah.
My shadow walks ahead of me,
Braver than I am, O Ya Allah.
I've looked in the mirror for a face I know,
But find a stranger whispering, O Ya Allah.
My chest is a house with no windows,
Only echoes of what I lost, O Ya Allah.
I buried my dreams beside my pride,
Now the wind mourns with me, O Ya Allah.
If You still love me in this ruin,
Call me back with Your mercy, O Ya Allah.

IN THE SILENCE OF UNREQUITED HATRED

They didn't hate me.
They didn't even notice
the fire I was building inside.
A passion in vain,
like a match struck on a soft breeze
that won't catch.

I wanted to be hated,
to burn,
to feel the heat of rejection
but no, instead
I burn alone.
Unseen.
Unheard.

In the angst of my misery,
In the scorn and irony of despair,
I burn and burn
Alone, like a night song
Waiting to be sang
Waiting to be heard

Tired of longing
for something that could've once been
a familiar enemy,
instead, I remain alone,
in the stillness of my own unraveling.

GHAZAL FOR RECKLESS YOUTH

We jumped from rooftops, chasing wind,
And called it love, do you remember, my friend?
Wrote our names on every wall in town,
Hoping they'd never fade, my friend.
Our prayers were whispers, not promises,
Still, we swore forever, weren't we brave, my friend?
You kissed time like it owed you something,
And I watched it swallow us, my friend.
We were nostalgic with no refrain,
Just echoes and thumping hearts, my friend.
Now the rooftops are quiet,
And even the sky forgot our names, my friend.

DEAR PAIN, MY OLDEST LOVER

How you
Settle into my bones like you pay rent.
You didn't knock. You never do.
You just slip in and
Wrap yourself around my ribs,
Tighten your grip like a lover who never learned how to let go.
I tell you I'm tired,
But you cup my face,
Tilt my chin,
And whisper
"Tired? Love, we've barely begun."
You carve your name into my skin,
Etch it deep into the marrow of my being,
You make sure I remember you when I reach for joy
And find your fingerprints on every inch of it.
You are persistence dressed in heartache,
Devotion wrapped in bruises.
You are the ghost that never needed death to haunt me.
And still
I cannot hate you.
Because what is love if not learning to endure?
What is survival if not carrying you like a second heartbeat?
So go ahead, Pain.
Waltz into my chest like you own the place.
I'll set the table for two,
Pour us both a drink,
And raise my glass
To the only thing that ever truly stayed.
Sincerely,
The One Who Never Chose You,
But Knows You by Heart.

HOW SHE WAS MOLDED

They shaped me
with their hands
that were not mine to have.
Sculpting expectations
like a cold, wet clay,
pressed,
pulled
until I fit
into the shape they had drawn for me.

I didn't know
I could resist,
didn't know
I could break free.
I believed the mold was all I was
perfect, flawless,
but not mine.
Not really.

And so, I wore the mask
they created,
a smile they drew with their hands
that never felt like my own.

But now
now I am learning
to push against the clay,
to carve my own face.
To stand up
and say,
"I am more than you made me."

FRAGMENTED IDENTITY

I

see

myself

backwards

a girl in

glass shoes

cracking

with each

memory

mirror:

says nothing.

still shows

everything.

I say

I am whole.

it laughs

in

seven

sharp

syllables.

“Beautiful?

only from far my dear” it spits

closer,

I am splinters pretending to spark.

WHO AM I, REALLY?

I don't feel like the name they call me by.
It sits on me like someone else's skin.

It sits on me like someone else's skin.
Too tight. Too loose. Never mine.

Too tight. Too loose. Never mine.
I smile when they speak, but I flinch inside.

I smile when they speak, but I flinch inside
don't know why it feels like a bruise.

Don't know why it feels like a bruise.
Maybe I was meant to be someone else.

Maybe I was meant to be someone else.
This face doesn't match the one in my dreams.

This face doesn't match the one in my dreams.
Still, I wake up in it every day.

Still, I wake up in it every day.
I don't feel like the name they call me by.

MY MOTHER'S INTERPRETATION OF WEEKENDS

Weekends are workdays
To her
To Sleep is as much abomination
As to walk the night alone.
Minutes after eight.
She wakes us into the wilderness of work,
No soft hands,
No gentle calls
Just the noise
Of urgency,
A voice slicing through dreams,
Shaking us awake
Like she's fighting the week's weight
And somehow still winning.

It's chaos every morning,
But we've learned
To move with the rhythm
Of her relentless love
A storm that never breaks.

She never stops.
Never slows.
And somehow,
That's how she holds us all.

ODE TO MY FATHER'S PAIN

When the doctor said
His spine was thinning,
He just nodded
Said it was old age,
That it was nothing new.

But later,
I watched him sit slower,
Breath heavier,
Shifts into his chair
Like comfort had left him quietly.

He still prays standing.
He still says,
"I'm fine."
Like an old radio damned
To repetition.

But now I see it
The way he holds his back
Like a fragile gift
Begging to not be dropped.

And I wonder
How many times
He held me
With that same care.

GRATITUDE IN PASSING

(After Small Kindness by Danusha Lameris)

I've been thinking about the way
a stranger's hand holds the door open,
and in that small gesture,
a whole world of thank you
slips into the space between us.

How you offer your seat,
how I smile,
how we don't say much
but something shifts in the air,
like a prayer whispered without words.

Sometimes, it's the way
you pause, for my life to move,
or the heat of a gesture in a coffee cup,
and I feel it
not the warmth of the drink,
but the warmth of your kindness,
the smallness of it,
and how it's all we really have.

In a world too busy to notice,
these fleeting things
are everything.
And maybe this is where we find the holy
in these passing moments,
we give, and we are given.

A STORY TO MAKE YOU BREATHE

(After Mary Oliver)

Here is a story to make you still,
if you are willing.

The trees came to us this spring,
heavy with the promise of green,
their branches wide and sweeping,
as though reaching out
to touch the earth's quiet pulse.

A friend told me of a sycamore on the hill,
its roots buried deep in the soil,
where the earth hums its ancient song,
and in the light, the leaves shimmered
like the soft touch of a prayer.

The wind passed through,
not a rush, not a storm,
just a breath.

And as the day grew long,
the trees stood there,
silent witnesses to time,
offering no answers,
but holding us close in their shade.

I tell you this,
not for the beauty alone,
but for the peace they bring.
How the world quiets down
when you sit beneath their arms,
how the chatter of life
falls away like leaves in autumn.

In their silence,
they ask for nothing,
but offer everything:
a pause, a sigh,
a moment to remember
how stillness can be a place of joy.

KNOW YOU ARE READING THIS POEM

(After Adrienne Rich)

I know you are reading this poem
with mud-stained hands,
after a day spent planting what may never bloom in your lifetime.
You carry hope like a seed in your pocket, small,
but stubborn.

I know you are reading this poem
beneath a neem tree's shade,
where silence is thicker than shade and yet you listen
not for answers,
but for the rustle of survival in the leaves.

I know you are reading this poem
as the harmattan wind returns,
chapping your lips and drying the stream,
but never your spirit.

I know you are reading this poem
on a cracked veranda
watching clouds speak in shapes
only the weathered understand
and still, you hope for rain.
The rain that never comes
but you wait anyway.

I know you are reading this poem
with your feet buried in sand
that remembers your mother's prayers
and your father's calloused resilience.
Even when the earth beneath you trembles,
you stand, unyielding.

I know you are reading this poem
as thunder rumbles like a warning
and you do not flinch
because you've become the kind of tree
that bends but never breaks.

I know you are reading this poem
with the ache of all you've outlived
floods, droughts, heartbreaks,
the slow erosion of certainty
and still, something inside you blooms wild.
Not perfect, but savage,
like the first flower to rise after a fire.

I know you are reading this poem
because something in the earth keeps calling you back
not to escape it,
but to belong to it again.
Even when it's harsh,
even when it doesn't forgive.

GHAZAL FOR FRAGILE LIGHT

The days blur, nothing feels real anymore,
but I still wake up and pretend. Hold on.
I write names on fogged mirrors,
they disappear before I finish. Hold on.
My hands forget how to pray,
but my chest remembers. Hold on.
I sit with silence like its company,
ask it questions, get no answers. Hold on.
The future looks like a cracked window,
there's light, but the wind cuts through. Hold on.
Even the stars don't talk back now,
just flicker like they're scared too. Hold on.
My mother hums in the kitchen,
her voice steadier than my thoughts. Hold on.
There's a version of me I lost at seventeen,
she sends postcards in dreams. Hold on.
I write letters I'll never send,
to people who no longer wait. Hold on.
I watch shadows walk out of my room,
none of them look back. Hold on.
Love doesn't always save us,
but sometimes it delays the fall. Hold on.
I tell Allah I'm here again tonight,
not whole, but not gone. Hold on.
I am not brave. I am just tired,
and hope is the only habit I've kept. Hold on.
I tuck my name beneath my tongue,
some nights I forget how it sounds. Hold on.
Let it not be the end of me, this grief,
this soft breaking in secret. Hold on.
I don't know what comes after this,
but I'm trying to stay. Hold on.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



HANNATU SUNUSI YAKUBU

Hannatu S.Y. is an indigene of Bichi Local Government Area in Kano State, born and raised in Gwale, and is of Fulani descent. Currently a third-year Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm D) student at Capital City University, Kano, she also harbors a profound passion for poetry and creative writing. Her work frequently explores themes of love, identity, faith, and emotional growth, deeply rooted in Northern culture and personal introspection. Hannatu specializes in epistolary poems and spoken word, aiming to preserve stories, challenge societal norms, and evoke emotional resonance through language. She is honored to be part of the Northern Writers Forum's Mentorship Program, an opportunity that perfectly aligns with her vision for growth and meaningful storytelling, marking a new chapter in her literary journey.

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