



# ASHES OF ORANGE DREAMS

*Franklyn Orode*



ASHES *OF* ORANGE

# DREAMS

*(poetry)*

*Franklyn Orode*



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## PRAISE FOR ASHES OF ORANGE DREAMS

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Get ready to swim in an ocean of enticing metaphors, as Franklyn wields his wand, with waves of imagery hitting you from all directions but be careful not to lose your way.

— **Salihu Mahe**

*Award winning poet and Author of  
How to view the world from a glass Prism*

If I am asked to describe Franklyn Orode's art in one word, Sublime would first come to my mind. In ASHES OF ORANGE DREAMS, he makes a strong case for love with such bold and relatable imageries, that from the first poem all through to the very last, the collection makes a very pleasurable read. I recommend this book for everyone!

— **Ehi-kowochio Ogwiji**

*Poet, Literary critic and Editor, Eboquills*

ASHES OF ORANGE DREAMS is a photograph of thoughts, aptly captured by a literary prophet with his spirit eye, who stole a peep into the narrow lines of eternal conquests. Franklyn Orode's maiden collection is an imagery-studded ferry bound for adventurous seas, hop in dear reader as you are launched into the deep of a metaphorically garnished garland.

— **Somadina M. James**

*Poet and Essayist*

With instances of brilliant expressions and rhyme schemes that slither quietly into some stanzas, *Ashes of Orange Dreams* does well to portray love, dreams, sadness and the decay of a promising society. A worthy debut collection with memorable imageries.

— **Samuel Adeyemi**

*Author, Anxiety and Things That Shatter*

Here are words that will take you out on a date, with emotions you would want to hang on your heart's hallways. The greatest achievement of this work is that it leads one on an expedition into the deepest part of oneself. Each new page is like a picnic for the soul and adds colors to the rainbow as one rises with the highs of the author's notes and descend with his pen.

— **Samson Abanni**

*Award Winning poet*

## DEDICATION

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*For the school boys  
who left their mother's arms  
but returned home in ashes*

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## A PORTRAIT OF ME, '97

---

In ninety-seven lies the essence of a climate of barren bombs  
Where the boulevards and catacombs inhale peace like oxygen  
I have missed the little one dancing in the rain, reciting rhymes  
Unperturbed by rumours of war and the croaky songs of famine

Yesterday I found a toy soldier sleeping inside my wallet  
Crying to return home from the silent wars he never started  
To his lifeless shadows whose skeletons lay still in my closet  
Trying to take his hand but away to the moon he disappeared

When I peeped into the mirror all I saw was a missing child  
Drowned in the torrents of time but still alive to tell the story  
Of innocence slaughtered like a goose, of memories harvested  
While his hands gathered sweet berries amidst sorrows aplenty  
He was an orphaned child with undead parents, crying for help  
The jewel that got lost in an unknown quicksand in the desert  
The silent song of a lonely bird echoing from the mountain top  
The tiny needle swallowed as the angry sea opened her mouth

You've been in this wrinkling arms my fine portrait like a newborn  
Come let's have a conversation and from *hide and seek* go agog  
Come hold my hand, precious child, take me back to ninety-seven  
To that land of sleeping troubles, where happiness is ever young

## WILTED ROSE

---

Last night I cried you a gallon of tears  
In the company of your impending absence  
While resting on this tender bed of prickles  
Tenderly inhaling fermented memories of you  
Waiting for the snooping gods to fall asleep  
They sang me stale songs of hopeless hopes  
Bugging me with lies overflowing with truths

You are the clear handwriting of beauty  
You are the axis on which my world turns  
Your virtues, a fascinating cluster of crystals  
Brighter than the twinkling stars at twilight  
Emitting pure radiance of contagious delight  
Until this rented body became a haunted house  
And your shadow with dried firewood traded places  
From growing claws of melancholy cutting skin deep  
And from impatient wings waiting to carry you away

O my wilted rose, let me be the solo butterfly  
Sticking close to you, tickling you with admiration  
I want to be with you until the tributaries flow uphill  
And cherish these moments until the sun turns cold  
Let me fetch you solace from deep streams of affection  
So you can shame this leukemia with your infectious smile

## FINDING THELMA

---

If I could steal you from yesterday's lifeless arms  
And from her stiff grips end these relentless quests  
If I could find the missing diary of you, unflustered  
And take a plunge into streams of moments expired  
If I could fight angels, I'll break through to fair Eden  
And pluck you berries from the other tree, outlawed  
I'll swear by a round thing around your subtle digit  
And take you through aisles and terrains, imperfect

I've traverse troubled seas far more than Ferdinand  
I've clambered all cliffs that I could find in this land  
Searching for those eyes that once brightened my face  
And your magical smile that would every tick, grace  
Those high school meetings, been a sickening mirage  
Nine years and some days, I still can't close the page  
Of the vanished moments, of our sad cheerful dreams  
Dearer than crystals, than corals, your fine charms

A chance meeting with Martha, a old native friend  
Reveals life's true self- a malicious bitch, unkind  
Messing us all up, with her old partner in crime  
Said you're kept safe in the open arms of time  
By electrocution all your orange dreams died  
In a trade you don't know, as our country is blind  
While harvesting breads in electromagnetic fields  
A failed marriage between wires and crop science  
I have found you Thelma, right here in this place  
Beating drums of love, till it turns cold like yours

## ALMA JIRI

---

A fine helpless lad he was, his life a borrowed necessity  
From the neighbours of inequity, beating drums of misery  
Bread-crumbs he'd often sought on this aging pavement  
A good apprentice he'd been to his pitiable lone parent  
Borne along by austerity winds to our sickening old town  
From a miscarriage escaped he'd been gamboled a pawn  
On this highway unholy, at mama's whims he prayed alms  
From hominids nursing frustrations in fast moving carriages

Thus the alma Jiri boy staked a marathon with death  
Our dear little Ibrahim having being fed thin by his plate  
Of unsavory rejected coins and dejected notes bedraggled  
Dared having a handshake with life's indisputable old friend  
On a searing day forgotten, he laid unyielding on this asphalt  
His lean obscure physique butted by an insane metallic beast  
His helpless mother cried dangling a suckling behind her back  
As she held some others still, heading to nowhere in the dark

Take my story to the press before you think this is fiction  
I had seen from my glass prisms, this is far from revelation  
Through my pen's leering eye, I write with ink of new tears  
How this Alma Jiri child, with a precious life paid the price?  
His kindred are nowhere but everywhere like scattered ants  
Succor from our apex guys more miserable than their plights  
What is a distraught poet then to do? Silver and gold I've not  
Prayed my pen to help me help this helplessness in the north

---

## LOVE AND MEMORIES

---

Tonight my head swirls anew  
It rests its weight on your absent shoulders  
From germinating seeds of your memories  
That has become ripe with thorns and thistles  
My heart is a farmland for growing pains

My eyes with counting stars at twilight preoccupied  
Eager to find you somewhere amongst them nestled  
And pluck you away like a ripe avocado just in sight  
But tonight I am cuddled in the open arms of solitude  
February is here again without your name on my diary  
But for you, in black alphabets I bake these dead words,  
While my tears mingle with flower scents on this marble

## TO HAVE SEEN A GODDESS

---

When I checked the contours of your face  
I found flowers growing on your dimples  
And wildfires raging in your incendiary eyes  
Your skin, a savannah in the womb of dawn  
Decorated with dewdrops and of fireflies a crown  
You have kept my sweet poetry benign in your lips  
I found stuck in your teeth some smiling butterflies  
And that's how I knew I have seen a goddess

My footpaths are stained with your breathing shadows  
While in the hands of time I nurtured my crawling dreams  
You sang me songs of love that made me blind without a cure  
Lost my tears in your rain of solace, washed in its waters pure  
You have been the midwife of my barren children, relentless  
Running about the countryside of my cranium in birth pangs  
I can perceive the scent of your adrenalin in my sweat-drops  
And that's how I knew I have seen a goddess

By the cruel clutches of misery, I have been held a captive  
Then my lonely bones cried out like one caught in a beehive  
Through alleyways unknown in the glaring eyes of the dark  
Alone I strode until I found the moon strapped on your back  
And your beautiful feet tucked in shoes carved from the sun  
Your radiance guided me home to my chicken heart of stone  
So I have become a tourist in the land of my kidneys  
And that's how I knew I have seen a goddess

Dear companion of mine, thou fresh watercourse of refreshment  
Flowing through this barren land until my daydreams germinate  
You're the best fish among a thousand caught from this river  
Of tears bursting with pleasure in this dragnet making me shiver  
On the mended walls of my heart hung a clear photograph of you  
I'm hoping you'll come home let's share a kola nut broken in two  
As looking through your eyes I found a doorway to paradise

And that's how I knew I have seen a goddess



## TOMORROW NEVER COMES

---

They planted wildflowers on the acres of my mind  
And eyesores of expectations sprouted in my head  
Borrowed buckets of sleep from these drowsy nights  
Wrapping love letters in envelopes of supplications  
Over their barren bluffing my heart complained of ache  
Pacified from dozing off by the dead poetries that I bake

By this time tomorrow, before the firmament gives birth  
To her beautiful daughters, the dewdrops of this corny earth  
Patience would lay her eggs on the doormat of my dreams  
But tomorrow never comes, she has no shoes for her coy legs  
Their dry words like pebbles in the open arms of gravity  
Quickly they kiss the ground in their public show of stupidity

My confidence in their lips now lay stiff in open morgues  
of broken promises in private libraries of burnt chronicles  
Steering my pot of hopes with the same hands I had cut-off  
I'm carving doors in my head, I have eyes and I'm not deaf  
Fortune would come to me decked with corals like a bride  
Their tongue bleeding with lies, I'll stitch without a thread

Tributaries of promises flow through the edges of their mouth  
To invigorate jaded spirits vending goosebumps in my youth  
But their words they shewed and drank from consciences decayed  
Shamming amnesia when from my mouth their tongue I gagged  
Tomorrow never comes, so I pluck my eyes from their shadows  
And set their names aflame in incinerators of gelded memories

## FIREFLIES

---

Often they come on some forlorn evenings  
These distant relatives of the sparkling stars  
Out in the open field like innocent children  
Playing on rainy days, oblivious of our pain

Myriads of fragile angels singing melodies  
flapping their tiny wings in enviable strides  
They teach me the secret of their symphony  
As their orchestra performs on this balcony

You are welcome to my courtyard tonight  
Little chandeliers like a spread out blanket  
Beautifying my face with a thousand smiles  
With cheerful tears wetting my drowsy eyes

In the midst of your clan, sore memories fade away  
My mountain of worries on a momentary holiday  
When you pride in elegance like miniature moons  
With your fire unquenchable cuddling the dewdrops

Tomorrow at twilight, I'll be here waiting for more  
Call me when you come, you can knock at my door  
Or lean up my wall and whisper songs to my sleep  
My pals you've been, from my windows you can peep

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## SLEEPING DREAMS

---

O my sleeping dreams, wake up  
Wake up from your prolonged dreams  
From your awful bedstead of procrastinations  
You've for so long a time been lying quiescent  
Like ancient scrolls abandoned in termite infested caves  
Peel off please the torpor from your giddy eyes  
Let my passion appetize you like morning beverages  
I have with admiration nurtured you like growing tendrils  
I have with embroideries of patience embellished your bodies

O my dying dreams, please don't you die  
Do not make my immaculate tomorrow a widow  
Without a dowry, I have betrothed her to you a virgin  
Give her loaves of bread not stones, give her fishes not serpents  
Take her on a trip to the moon, let her a ride on the back of whales

Rise up please from your sickbed  
Do not hesitate to jump about like a stag  
Let me follow your trails through the footpaths of motivation  
To torrents of victories from rich banks brimming with diligence  
Let my pregnant tomorrow bring forth her children without tears  
Be a loving husband, pamper her to the delivery room of success,

You are the blood of my struggle, the beauty of my strength  
The tireless heart pumping passion through my veins of hope  
Please like a sportsman, run with endurance to the finish line,  
Bring me tidings of excellence, beautify my neck with laurels

O my stunted dreams, grow up to maturity  
I don't want to wear the garb of a fool at forty  
Your stature had betrayed my sweats, my labors of pain  
I was the one who had sat and watched your infant head  
I was the one who had changed your diapers from birth

I was the one who had with solid food sustained your breadth  
Why do you not pity me please and grow up for good?

I am growing old from too much waiting  
O my beloved dreams come quickly and catch me  
Time, so insolent, would not relent in her pursuit of me  
So I come panting, limping towards you from a thousand miles

## THE ENGINEER'S INVOCATION

---

I have seen square pegs fitted in round holes  
behind an ancient farm house sitting on a rock  
I have seen carpenters performing Caesarian  
On some of my professors' pregnant girlfriends  
I have seen keke drivers teaching mathematics  
To university students during ASUU festivals,  
Postgraduate *agberos* on busy road sides  
Curing their rotting brilliance with local herbs  
And school girls taking prenatal modules  
From large morsels of silence swallowed often  
While they sprinkle unholy cups of red wine  
On alters not too far from their father's thighs

I've seen shoe makers electrocuted to pure death  
While fixing bad wires on a street bereft of angels  
And a blunt knife falling asleep in a dead man's kidney  
Whom we buried again, because we lost him not once

I've seen clowns in my trade  
Like a malignant tumor spreading quickly  
Houses poking the sky's stainless face,  
In much disrespect to codes and theories  
And a giant made of stones slumps quickly  
In the east, in the island, somewhere unknown  
The mediocre feed fat from their ignorance  
While we wash our hands in their urine  
Pavements like open morgues, gap toothed  
The practice catches cold from bad weather  
Blowing from foreign lands far away from here  
If we are not good enough, what about the dons?  
Could our lecturers have lost their eyeglasses?

Have they been feeding their kids with nonsense?

Imported artisans call the shots while we grope  
On meagre wages dry like ancient cadavers  
Our farmers fear to eat their harvested crops  
Of garden-fresh dreams, decaying, abandoned

Give me a drawing board and a pencil  
Give me French curves and a protractor  
Let me draw the lines of my vexations  
In isometrics, in third angle projections  
Let me check the perimeter of my soul  
If it could equal a pound of happiness  
Poetry is pure physics and I can prove it  
From these dead equations floating  
In my head, hanging by a thin thread  
Of pain, coloured red from frustrations

## DEAR MARIA

---

Scattered pieces of castrated promises  
Adoring landscapes of flawless deceits  
Lies are the pomades moisturizing your skin  
Stings from kisses deadlier than a scorpion  
And your tongue - the grave digger's shovel  
Burying me deep in your menacing spell

I've been so sick from your repeated jabs  
Tall temperatures defying new medicines  
Beautified this land with a garden of regrets  
Hitherto I climb up to your loveless plateaus  
Craving to sip from your warm septic springs  
Cuckolded by the scent of your forbidden spices

I should have run fast after the earliest cockcrow  
And permit these irate tears to flow up my brow  
Watched you burn down all bridges to your heart  
The wounds from dead years, still fresh and intact  
Hoping you'll return when your gods fall asleep  
Plunged my foolish pains into time's watery deep

Dear Maria, you are crueler than the devils hype-man  
Your season I have missed like a year without rain  
When next it does come, that beautiful thing,  
At my broken door, knocking,  
Damaged from your wrecking  
Where do I begin to find the lost keys?  
To get a healing from this desperate disease?

## CURTAIN FALL

---

The dead child growing on your foot was all it took  
To stop the music that started playing since forty-six  
Like a badly damaged cassette it all started with a squeak  
And the dancers in confused strides tried hard to find a fix

The knives brought out their savory tongues at the cobbler's shop  
Performing holy magic on your naked sole, licking out the unborn  
Death gnashed his iron teeth when you escaped with hope  
You're good to go said the butcher-man, he was only a clown

Human radio play for us more songs, our eyes are not yet ripe  
To squeeze out tears enough to swallow these rivulets of pain  
Our willowy hope evaporated like methylated spirit in a snap  
As pain grew more teeth, a scribble of lies was the prescription

The pregnant child slain, has got grandsons and many daughters  
So to you we borrowed life as death we held tightly by his throat  
Half a limb was rotten wood, made maggots dance to awful songs  
How fear carried you on her wings to the abattoir without a fight  
Oh! the battle has only begun, joy stayed home with us for a while  
Death laughed at your phony heel, at your crutches made a scorn  
When your thigh carried dead broods inbred from parents in exile  
More prescriptions, more pills, more bread gone down the drain

Years ran faster than days while we run around wearing your face  
Like crashed airplanes our pleas fell in pieces to the naked ground  
We mourned the living, not the dead, grew old running your race  
Because the rat that was killed has got cousins also on your head

Thus everywhere the carbuncles sprang like hyacinths, undeterred  
And grudgingly you stepped into the ring, O my God! the die is cast  
How the scoundrel knocked you down hurriedly at the third round  
The scorching sun turned cold at midday, the obeche, a dead root



Secretaries of death everywhere, lying fellows in garbs of white  
Clueless clowns carrying breadknives, a tragic comedy of errors  
“You're good to go” so said a prankster but in a dash dug pa a pit  
In this place decorated with classy morgues and waning sanatoriums  
We've come to the end of the beginning, our cassette's beyond repair  
And the radio, badly damaged, would never play again for us to dance  
Tributaries of tears thro' tired eyes flow ad infinitum before this bier  
The curtain falls, the show comes to its end, but the music never dies

## SOLITUDE

---

I had a boring conversation with the loquacious night  
As solitude gnawed off pieces of me with her growing claws  
The Heartless walls whispered cold silence in loud syllables  
And I wore trouble to bed like a dead winter garment

Who can stop the raging cold from burning me down?  
When my sweating shadow had jumped out my thick skin

I hear voices breathing poetry into my resting quill  
Hoping they'll take me away to big cities in my head  
Sleep crawls out of her hiding place, looking exhausted  
Wished she grew legs enough and sprint quickly to my brow

How would a poet find rhymes to quench his burning bones?  
When somehow the cocks crow with his demons still awake

## SCHOOLING THE SUN

---

Dear Sun, mother of twelve  
Hanging up there like an over ripe grape, ready to fall  
Please stop trying to burn my eyelids  
They are allergic to your menacing finger nails  
Before you calm your troubled nerves  
From this uncontrollable anger  
Eating you up, giving you a bad name  
Keep your ears attentive to my pleas  
While I school you about good behaviour  
Bad temperament is not good for your health  
And you know it like the back of your palm  
See how my blood complain of running temperature  
Crying in loud silence, while you fry my bones for lunch  
My skin suffers from corrosion like uncoated steel sheets  
Licking water from the prying dewes while they kiss the earth  
Your entangling claws, sharper than a butcher's knife  
Have made a million black holes on my coveralls  
Tearing off my fresh flesh like a hungry lion  
Your dead conscience could not prick your soul  
It watched you pick firewood out of my thirsty skin  
While I scurry home to escape your dreadful wrath

## METAMORPHOSIS

---

Before you left your father's household  
Before I kissed your lips in the full glare  
Of smiling benches and peeping spirits  
Before we said the words that bind our hearts  
To a forthcoming, laying ambush of uncertainty  
And with locks of affection closed doors to foreign gods  
You were a conundrum I thought I had solved  
A red sea of obstacles I was certain to have parted  
The wildfire I fought with sprinklings of endearment  
The right path at the crossroad of ambiguous fantasies

But now at the very beginning of the end  
Before the debut anniversary of our illustrious voyage  
Comes the swift metamorphosis of your charm  
I whimper in bewilderment at your caprices  
A recipe more complex than the previous you  
You've been a scientific theory I must formulate  
A new phenomenon all my inventions had defied  
A capacious manuscript too difficult to comprehend

So I have resigned myself far from mediocrity  
To guard the lofty walls of our beloved metropolis  
From shooting arrows, from our own grenades  
I have enrolled in the academy of your troubles  
I'll study every book from your complicated library  
I'll study your antics like a college course compulsory  
In each passing moment, I will decipher your codes  
I am not without debauchery; I do recognize, O my dear  
So I pray you fathom truly the long stanzas of my character  
Till our beautiful imperfections entwine at the summit of glory

## RACHEL

---

Come take away these bitter alphabets from my tongue  
I fear to chew them raw, trapped in my skin of dead tissues  
Like seven keys to power, the children's nightmare  
I got dead syllables stuck in my throat while I choke  
Come and eat these words wrapped in a parcel of tears  
Garnished with ground broken spices of delicious sorrows  
So you can grow fat from my banquet of soured grapes  
Take a plunge into this flowing streams of lamentations  
And feel the acidity of pricking stories buried in my bones  
I wear pain behind my chest like a perpetual tattoo  
I carry death in my pocket, perceive her awful stench  
Her hands trying hard to squash my testicles

Have you ever poked your middle finger in the sun's eyes  
And watch her make supper out of your fatty ashes?  
Have you ever strapped a mountain on your aching shoulders?  
While you journey through deserts to valleys unknown?  
Have you taken five fishes from a crocodiles mouth?  
Have you shared a kill with a hungry pride of lions?

I can't hear you, speak Rachel, speak  
Before you drink from that medicine, speak  
Or do you intend using a farmer's sickle  
To pluck out pain out of your bitter leaf heart  
Will your angry blood wash away  
The sins of your unrepentant demons?  
Let my words sting you like a plague of bees  
So you can run the race till the moon is breathless  
To see you tomorrow after the countless shipwrecks

But you have not answered my questions Rachel  
Do you wish to write back in black blank verses?  
Oh my God! I have been writing to a wilted hibiscus,  
Damn! She drank the medicine faster than my pen  
Why did I forget, she was not even listening?

## FOUR LITERS OF DEATH

---

Listen child, let me sing you a dirge  
Let me tell you how death was measured in litres  
Don't try to wipe the pain navigating my eyes  
Chase the birds from my window, I don't need their songs  
How many litres did they bring? Maybe four or even more  
Right in their grandfather's compound, behind a high school wall  
In the glaring eyes of the sun, they strap darkness on their backs  
And massaged demons on behalf of kids who cry of tooth ache

*Bring me wreaths for the holy school boys  
Who left their mother's arms  
But early returned home  
in ashes of orange dreams*

Listen child, let me sing you a dirge  
Let me tell you how death was measured in litres  
Of motor spirit poured out as libations to angry gods  
As travelling oxides carried cubic cries in their clenched fists  
and in profuse sweats flung them heavenwards in four directions  
A clear crystal tears leaked from a corner in God's eyes  
It drops into my plastic heart and my tears became a lagoon  
Sit here child and cry with me as I sing my lamentations

*Bring me wreaths for the holy schoolboys  
Who left their mother's arms  
But early returned home  
in ashes of orange dreams*

Come on child, sing along with me on this dirge  
As I have told you how death was measured in litres  
Let's not pretend that the clouds have got no eyes  
They caught dizziness from the parting flames  
Let's not pretend that the winds have got bad breath  
They spread the rotten news far away from that land

Let's not pretend that the trees lack sympathy too  
The monoxides still choke their guilty conscience  
Let's not pretend that the earth has felt no pain  
It is her aching womb that carried the quadruplets

*(Initial draft first published online by SprinNG in May 2020)*



*Thank you for reading*

To pre-order the paperback edition with illustrations and additional poems please send an email to **[franklynorodepoetry@gmail.com](mailto:franklynorodepoetry@gmail.com)**.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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FRANKLYN ORODE is a creative writer from Nigeria having a strong bias for poetry and prose. He is a graduate of civil engineering from the University of Benin. Franklyn has been writing poetry since he was a teenager. He regards poetry as a means of finding a path around the vicissitudes of life. Franklyn's works have appeared on *Eboquills*, *SprinNg*, *Voicesnet*, *PIN*, *Hello Poetry* and elsewhere. He edited and contributed to the '*Earth on a Wheelchair*' poetry anthology. He writes from wherever his engineering practice takes him to.

