

W R R C H A P B O O K S E R I E S 2 0 1 9

# PETALS OF A WITHERED FLOWER

*(poems)*



Baaji Akura

Other books in the Chapbook Series:

- [PAPER PLANES IN THE RAIN by Pamilerin Jacob & Jide Badmus](#)
- [A BOYS TEARS ON EARTH'S TONGUE by Ridwan Ishola Olorunloba](#)
- [BUT HERE YOU ARE by Oyindamola](#)

# PETALS OF A WITHERED FLOWER

(poems)

*Baaji Akura*



Copyright ©2019 Baaji Akura

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, distributed, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission from the Publisher.

For information about permission to reproduce selections from this book, write to [info@wrr.ng](mailto:info@wrr.ng).

National Library of Nigeria Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Cover Design: **Grafreaks**

Printed and Published in Nigeria by:  
Words Rhymes & Rhythm Limited  
No.2 Adekunle Tijani Street, Hillview Estate, Arab  
Road, Kubwa, Abuja, Nigeria.  
08169027757, 08060109295  
[www.wrr.ng](http://www.wrr.ng)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	viii
FOREWORD .....	ix
PRAISE FOR PETALS OF A WITHERED FLOWER.....	x
MARIAM SAID I AM A CHRISTIAN .....	13
TRUE LOVE.....	15
PASSION FLOODS.....	16
HYMEN .....	17
PROPHETS BEFORE ME FORETOLD.....	18
CHAINS AND CROSSES.....	19
HEADS MEN .....	20
IUWESE.....	21
DO NOT TELL ME HOW TO DANCE .....	22
AREN'T YOU A MAN? .....	23
ODE TO DEATH.....	24
MA'AMI .....	25

PETALS OF A WITHERED FLOWER .....	26
HUMAN KIND? .....	27
THE GRAVE SHALL PURGE .....	28
TO OUR FALLEN .....	29
ABOUT THE AUTHOR .....	31

## DEDICATION

...for you, for us, for later

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am, first of all, very grateful to the Almighty God for the divine inspiration to write this book. I wish to thank Him also for the Grace and Mercy that is abundant in my life.

I also wish to thank those dearest to my heart, my family – *dad, mum and siblings* – for the support and kind words of encouragement, as well as your care and affection.

To my many friends, thanks for being sources of light in my darkest days; to my teachers both past and present, thank you all for the unquantifiable gift of knowledge and also to my friend and source of so much inspiration; Ahmadu Usman (*Odu Ode*), thanks for the mentoring and for being the spark that created this great fire.

Lastly, I appreciate my publisher Kukogho Iruesiri Samson and everyone else who contributed one way or another towards making this dream come true.

To you all I am indeed truly thankful.

**Baaji Akura**  
March, 2019  
Keffi, Nigeria

## FOREWORD

Only a few manuscripts from young, emergent literary voices have inspired as much enthusiasm in me as *Baaji Akura's Petal of a Withered Flower* does. From the moment I read through his poems and realized they were the beaded words of a teenage poet still finding his feet, I knew I wanted to be a part of it.

You are up for a pleasant surprise if you expect basic metaphors and naively strung words from this poet because of his age, or because he has not ever before been published. *Petal of a Withered Flower* offers poems that are rich and diverse in their expressions. Baaji tackles, very efficiently, contemporary subjects one would assume are beyond his age.

Without doubt, this is a poet who has observed the world, its rotations and revolutions and the humans who make it their home. His words are unignorably evident of his aliveness.

This poet has refused to be unconscious and I promise you this: You will like the ticking of his words.

Kukogho Iruesiri Samson

May 2019

Abuja, Nigeria

## PRAISE FOR PETALS OF A WITHERED FLOWER

In well woven words, Baaji Akura has creatively highlighted contemporary social issues such as rape, violence, religious intolerance, corruption, etc. vis-à-vis their impacts, direct and indirect, on our societies, our daily living and general wellbeing. *Petals of a Withered Flower* examines the irony of our societies where moral decadence is worsening despite the proliferation of churches and mosques.

Despite being Baaji Akura debut as an author, the collection presents very serious social issues while also offering some romantic poesy. Akura's pen is commendably sure-footed for a debut poet and it shows so much promise. *Petals of a Withered Flower* will definitely leave you yearning for more of his poetic wit.

Omaku Adamu

President, National Association of  
Students of English and Literary Studies  
Nasarawa State University, Keffi

\_\_\_\_(.)\_\_\_\_\_

*Petals of a Withered Flower* meanders mischievously through life's ups and downs. In the collection Akura navigates a litany of tedious thoughts which he alternates in rhetoric and soliloquies.

This collection creatively maximizes the use of imagery and symbolism in painstakingly painting pictures of love, lust,

hope, religion, banditry and a myriad of challenges confronting 'human kind' world over.

He is quick to sting the readers' conscience, especially with the motif of guilt, in search of redemption from society's iconoclastic prejudices. Akura's poetic perspective comprises modern and contemporary style, typical in his use of literary devices while knitting this soulful and spirited tapestry of rhetoric and soliloquies.

Aba, Leo Ame

Editor, CWA

Nasarawa State University, Keffi

\_\_\_\_(.)\_\_\_\_

*Petals of a Withered Flower* is a powerful start for a young poet like Joseph Baaji.

Odu Ode

Author of *Dark Diary* and co-author of

*Lullabies Mother Never Sang*

"A flower cannot blossom  
without sunshine, and man  
cannot live without love."

— Max Muller



## MARIAM SAID I AM A CHRISTIAN

I.

Tonight's walk home is snail slow  
My head, lowered by my heart's burden  
Beats the earth. I remember the words...  
Mariam said, *"You are a Christian!"*

I loved her and I told her  
Her heart offered the same flower  
But her lips told me:

*"Do not love me!  
You are Joseph, not Yusuf  
I am Mariam, not Mary  
This love is like Eden's fruit!"*

For god  
    Fuck god  
        False god

Abraham is Ibrahim.  
    Moses is Musa.  
        Isa is Jesus.

II.

God is love.

Love is God.

Love is not hate  
Hate is not God.

Religious begets hate.  
Religion is not God!

Mariam said, *“You are a Christian.”*  
I ask, *“So, what? What separates us?”*

## TRUE LOVE

*True love is not the splitting of a woman's thighs  
It is enduring the lows and the highs*

A true lover sees your dark flowers & calls them good  
The one with whom faith quenching trials you withstood

Always there, like heaven above your head  
Sharing, contentedly, your meat and your bread

In burning smiles, flooding tears, and pleasures  
Never leaving, not even for all Earth's treasures

*Please, I beg, give me true love this time  
And stay through changing climes*

## PASSION FLOODS

We lay entwined—

Held together in passion's arms,

My breath against yours, yours against mine

The rhythmic thuds of our hearts

Created the beat for our dance.

The beat surges

Threatening to bring this dance

To a climatic crescendo

And I realize my dancing partner

Is stranger to my dance steps.

Frantic movements measure a puzzled pause:

Beats stop

Dance halts

Passion floods

Eyes unlock.

## HYMEN

*Hymen –*

We,  
By its absence  
Or presence,  
Seek to judge human essence.

*We must be high men!*

## PROPHETS BEFORE ME FORETOLD...

The world is a stormy stage  
Filled with (wo)men who hate and rage  
Fighting wars where the innocent bleeds  
And Love's language no one heeds

Violence walks leaving carnage  
Vengeful flames follow, burning to enrage  
Death into sowing more fertile seeds  
While Hades silently feeds

Peace in the horizon is mere mirage  
Unclear as (wo)man's idea of God's true image

## CHAINS AND CROSSES

He came from beyond waters we never dared to cross:  
Carrying chains, shoulder laden with many a cross  
Salvation, they said, is for those with gold  
They chained our people with crosses to be sold

For we have placed their ways high up the ranks Our  
While ours have become debris on our river banks  
As our people hail God in twisted tongues  
Some lips whisper the lyrics of sour songs.

From beyond our waters they came with Book and cross  
And led many away, in chains, to lands beyond waters  
we've ever dared to cross

*“Flow! Ye tears, flow forever endless  
For they who came to enslave are relentless”*

## HEADS MEN

*Were we pests to be so removed; as flies to a cow's tail?  
They struck us down as moos drowned our loud wails.*

...

Our peaceful land is now a field of slaughter  
Rid of joy, for dead men know no laughter.

They strike like beasts in the wild  
Sparing not father, mother or suckling child.

Those meant to protect offer loud silence  
Deaf to the marauders silent violence.

Our land in terror's rumbles and shakes  
We pray that Peace shall from its slumber awake.

...

*Were we pests to be so removed?  
Evicted by strangers horned and hooved!*

## IUWESE

You are more precious than all of Earth's treasures  
Your body is pure, in it is all of all Earth's pleasures  
*I am sated mouthful*

Your eyes' glow pierces the darkest day's gloom  
& your smile radiant like a garden in bloom  
*I am fulfilled in one eyeful*

Your voice is a gracious war cry, triumphant  
Yet it calls to me like a lovers chant  
*I am blessed in one earful*

*Truly,*  
Your Beauty should be praised:  
For it, my voice will be forever raised

## DO NOT TELL ME HOW TO DANCE

This page is my rage's stage  
Do not tell me how to dance!

This stage witnessed a poet's rage:  
My pen stumbled in a trance!

## AREN'T YOU A MAN?

In hurt?

*Cry not.*

In pain?

*Frown not.*

In strain?

*Quit not.*

In love?

*Feel not.*

In need?

*Ask not.*

In...

Are you not a man?

## ODE TO DEATH

oh death! ever gracious maiden  
extractor of man's ticket to Eden  
you are heaven's scourge to human race  
yet you part the curtain of eternity's grace

oh death! cruel as they say you are  
you are only a noble blink that reaches far  
to shut eyes from horrors of mortal strife  
and usher them to glories of immortal life

by fear of your wrath are many made chaste  
for your sword strikes irrationally: sometimes slow,  
sometimes in merciless haste  
blind to wealth, age, size, biology, you call  
night and day, delivering your gift to all

## MA'AMI

When life besets me with strange struggles  
It is to you alone I always turn, mother  
Seeking rejuvenation in the warmth of your cuddles  
It is you I turn to, for I have no other

*Who, like you would place my head betwixt her breast?  
Quenching my thirsts  
And lulling me to sleep*

When life cuts me with double bladed swords  
It is to you alone I will turn, mother  
Seeking healing in the warmth of your words  
It is to you I will turn, for I have no other

## PETALS OF A WITHERED FLOWER

Man, born, becomes his own destroyer –  
*A branch that cuts itself from the tree*  
Till he falls like petals of a withered flower

Life finds me living today (waiting to die tomorrow) –  
*And sets upon me ruthlessly*  
As death offers an end to Life's sorrows

Life is truly a tale with no fair end –  
*I hope for more than I have but eternity offers less*  
For hope is the false gold we're free to spend

As we fall, like petals of a withered flower

## HUMAN KIND?

*What shall we say of human kind?  
Human creatures with mind unkind:*

In need, he kneels until what is sought is gotten  
But in short time the good deed forgotten  
So, when in reverse the river of need flows  
The chameleon in the beggar shows

A kind deed is sweet, sweeter when repaid  
But the pillars of ungratefulness is strongly laid  
With greed as brick and covetousness as mortar  
He robs man and earth to fill his treasure jar

*O human! You taming beast yet untamed  
The price of your greed cannot be named!*

## THE GRAVE SHALL PURGE

(for Ochanya)

I was just thirteen  
But my body had drunk its fill of *purber-tea*

I blossomed like a rose in early spring  
But I remained a child at heart  
Pure and innocent as from my cradle

In one moment of lust  
You tore away my innocence as you did my cloth  
And left me dressed in shame

You stole irreplaceable treasure  
To purchase minutes of pleasure  
And you blame the Devil...

No, Uncle, it was you who left a *thirteen-year-old*  
In the fields of your lust

## TO OUR FALLEN

*I salute you!*

You who paid the ultimate price  
That we may in peace lay and rise

*I salute!*

*I salute you!*

You whose skins are fields of scars  
Earned in defense of our nation's stars

*I salute!*

*I salute you!*

You whose mother's eyes still bleed  
Wishing you returned breathing from the battlefield

*I salute!*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Baaji Joseph Aondoakura is a 17-year-old writer and poet from Benue State who writes under the pseudonym 'Baaji Akura'. He is currently studying English and Literary Studies at Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Akura discovered his passion for writing in 2016 and has been writing since then. His poem, Ode to Death, was recently published in [\*Imomotimi \(a collection of poems for Late Pa Gabriel Okara\)\*](#). ***Petals of a Withered Flower*** is his first published body of work.



Aside writing and studying, Baaji's other passion is football. He supports Manchester United. He lives and writes from Kubwa, Abuja and can be reached via telephone on Phone (+234(0)8117956494) or on Facebook: [\*Joseph Baaji\*](#).

You too can submit your manuscript for the Words Rhymes & Rhythm Publishers [Chapbook Series \(WRR-CBS\) 2019](#), an opportunity for (Nigerian) writers to get published and reach new audiences designed to meet the obvious need for accessible, reliable and affordable platforms for new and emergent voices in the literary scene. [Click here for details.](#)

You can also download other recently published chapbooks authored by Nigerian writers for free by [clicking HERE](#).