

## Poetry Series

**tinashe severa**

**- poems -**

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## **Alone but not lonely**

Heart hardened, soul purified,  
like desert sands i have fought worldly rain,  
torchered and scarred, through it all i felt no pain,  
floating along like a msasa leaf in wales,  
noticed by no one, caring about no one,  
stepped on, no compassion forthcoming,  
alone but not lonely ,  
i have watched the clock strike, move  
calendars torn off, walls crumbling  
images of funerals, heart warming eulogies for my parents,  
recited over and over again,  
tears never shed,  
my prayers have always been heard,  
smiling at frustrations, hand me downs piled in bags,  
always quick to move from sufferers of the dreaded condition,  
...A.I.D.S orphan allergies,  
stigmatised, was it my fault, my doing  
the victim, the murderer, the sufferer, the orphan,  
too many roles, just one poor child  
one soul and one heart

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## **Anguish, pain, misery, sorrow and retribution**

Some say life is full of anguish,  
old man once sang that life is full of pain  
some even preach that life comes fully laced with misery and sorrow,  
and some believe that life offers no retribution  
ideas clearly instilled in the hearts and souls of many a man,  
but the truth of the matter is,  
life is anguish,  
life is pain,  
life is misery and sorrow,  
in the same way as rain is water  
and water is rain  
for where can one get one`s own share of anguish,  
who`d we ever have known pain if we never had life  
without life, would we live through misery and sorrow  
life in itself is retribution,  
for he who has life can stand ground against  
anguish, pain, misery and sorrow  
and live to see brighter days seemingly unscathed  
but woo to he who loses his life  
in anguish, or pain, or misery , or sorrow  
for he will receive no further retribution  
and he will depart this earth with nothing but  
anguish, pain, misery, sorrow  
and retribution lost

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## **Born free**

Post war babies, children of black rule  
pick on both sides of the cake turned stale bread,  
thoughts unpredictable, unstable, aliens in their own mother land  
they know nothing about this world, neither do you  
and your rusty guns,  
wars were fought,  
will still be fought,  
we do not feed on bullets,  
like virgins we cannot conceive from past relations

born free from white rule,  
white hate and white disgust,  
chosen never to face those treacherous smiles,  
to be stared at like dogs, but fed less,  
freckled faces, forever sweating and fainting under the African sun,  
too sacred to join the rest of their kind,  
where their 'supremacy' will cease to be

born under the rod of the same python chameleon,  
its only assumed a different shade,  
once white...now black, but it has not lost any of its fangs,  
the hunger remains, the segregation remains  
joblessness and destitution among blacks still remains,  
the buildings have grown bigger but emptier  
living in this black shell is still unbearable,  
born free,  
born yes, free no  
the chains around mama AfriKa also surround us,  
we will never be free

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## Child`s play? Our sisters tale

In any domain  
under this here sun  
being a woman  
is not  
has not  
..will never be  
childs play

Great nations might try to pacify the fairer sex  
by enthroning one or two thousand of their sable countenances  
into garnishing dull speeches and resolutions at the so called 'convections'  
a demonstration outside the state house here  
some protests in a few capital cities  
should do the trick.. they all percieve, preach..wrongly  
for why should our sisters have to be as loud  
as a self consious whore  
at a homosexual mens last party  
aboard a sinking remake of the titanic  
for them to be treatd in true accordance to their status  
as the mothers of all great individuals  
that have been and shall be,  
the mothers of all nations  
the creators of mankind's past, present and future  
for the fault wil never completely  
with any group of people they might try to drum the message into  
but is this any justification  
for the continued treatment of this thorn on the road  
to the development of mankind  
as childs play,  
a matter of no consequence

A young womans tale comes to mind  
a young woman who spent most of her childhood,  
toiling away in her fathers fields  
daliy bearing the the grudge of the relentless african sun  
destined never to come face to face with a classroom door  
a destiny that has reduced her to what she is now

she sits solemnly on a concrete floor  
under the cover of her overly patched plastic roof  
a child with no name  
malnourished, quite sickly  
rocks her fragile frame, feverishly sucking on her pale breasts  
the only thread left between his soul  
and his emacipated little body  
the same child who is our sisters only excuse for breathing the sorry sight that she is  
fatherless, the child is  
a mere product of our sisters numerous poorly paid for nights  
in the arms of countless strangers  
She coughs woofishly, almost spitting her lungs out  
hurriedly she places her sibling  
onto her only notable belonging,

an old creaky three legged bed  
covered by an old, torn, small blanket  
she reaches for her make shift corrugated iron door,  
the vomit already seeping  
through the top of her charred lips  
to vomit what now is the question  
..she last had a meal three days ago

At the same time  
the only being she shared the same womb with  
but was of course lucky enough not to be born female  
has the time of his life  
grinning away at cocktail parties  
forever in the company of bulky ladies  
who undoubtably  
would be much blest by applying less make up  
A low achieving academic is all his  
but who`s to say  
let the tight fitting suit speak for itself  
he happlily steps in tune to the tempo of urban life  
quite oblivious to the sufferings of our sister  
the same sister who had to abandon her only key to a happy life  
her education  
so that he could be what he is today

Well, at least he made it  
and he will afford her one visit this year  
so  
our sister  
shall drum,  
sing  
and dance with joy  
when he comes to her three legged death bed  
for they is ecstasy,  
in dying in the hands of a brother who made it  
and who are we to deny her of the pleasure

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## Crystal clear

Her thoughts and ways are pure as rain, crystal clear,  
to his heart she truly is dear,  
blinded to this none are,  
yet from him she remains too far,  
like childrens eyes chasing a shooting star,  
he seeks to make a wish upon his wish,  
in sight but out of sight,  
he proposes, she opposes,  
he asks why, she sulks  
she cannot give reason her pretence,  
he asks why.....she cries  
he cries.....they cry,  
she is crystal clear

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## Drunk again

Over the edge, tonight im flipping a new page,  
the barman looks like a bird, i can swear he's flying,  
a toothless old lady grins at me...or is he laughing at me,  
my eyes feel heavy and my visions gone blurry,  
i walk up to her and ask her for her name,

'Marita' she says as she winks to her friends,  
they all look old, their skin as wrinkled as an elephant's,  
they offer me a drink and ask me to sit down,  
i fall off the stool and they all erupt into croaky laughter,  
my lips crack, blood trickles down and stains my shirt,  
i try to cry, but only manage to choke on my blood,

i cough and sputter out one of my front teeth,  
the old women just stare at me, all as still as rocks,  
somehow i manage to get up, and stumble onto the stool,  
it rocks back, rocks forward....  
the barman grabs it, and asks if i need a cab,  
i laugh in his face and ask him for another lager,  
he hesitates, looks at me, sighs dejectedly and pours me another,  
i give him a \$100 000 note and tell him to keep the change,  
he doesnt hesitate...he throws my lager onto the table and quickly leaves before i can  
change my mind,

Marita wipes the blood from my mouth, and playfully slaps my cheeks,  
she asks me if i like the song thats playing,  
i cant hear any song playing... i just nod my head,  
Marita places the glass in my hand,  
it begins to expand in my hand, getting heavier by the second,  
the pain throbs through me, but im afraid of putting my beloved glass down,  
the drink bubbles as the foam recides,  
the bubbles look like miniature stars, twinkiling on and off,  
...still mantaning a glow that illuminates my whole being

the drink reminds me of the lonely nights i have spent looking at the skies above,  
the more i stared at the skies, the more i tried to decrypt them,  
the less i actually saw of them, and the more confused i got about their workings

Marita pinches my thighs and tries to kiss me,  
our lips make contact, but mine remain frozen shut,  
everything around me seems to be moving in slow motion,  
i open my lips to her, but she's already stood up,  
i grab her by the hip, and gropple for her breast,  
i pull her closer to me, kissing her neck,  
she screams and slaps me across the ear,  
the barman charges for me,

i pass out

over the edge tonight im flipping a new page,  
a taxi whirls past me, blowing its hooter,  
the driver curses at me...tells me to go home,

i run after the car, my feet fail me  
i wish i could have told me that i no longer have a home,  
..maybe he could have taken me to his....

my coat feels heavy, i take it off and throw it onto the curb,  
a street urchin looks at me, calls out to me,  
i stand still, completely petrified as he walks over to where im standing,  
i empty out my trouser pockets onto the sidewalk, and tell him to take it all,  
he spits at me, tells me to get off his land,  
a shiny object in his hand catches my eye... he swings back

i pass out

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## **eternities yard**

Into eternities yard, some wont go  
in my path, all will tread  
fear not today,  
I'm always at a beckons call,  
fear not tomorrow,  
i will be waiting,  
fear not yesterday,  
i never look back,  
fear not the end,  
i am the end,  
fear not the beginning,  
i may not let it pass

into my yard, all will go  
bordered by tears, a river of blood flows,  
in my path they are no cries,  
in my yard,  
no angel lies

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## **Fictional cross**

Eight is all she took they say,  
smiled as she left the drug store  
swallowed them in one gulp,  
with no water, no regret

she left a note they say,  
addressed it to the lover she never had,  
none would love her,  
just use her and dump her

she tried to lose it,  
tried every diet pill she heard of,  
went for two weeks hungry once,  
but it stuck to her, like rays to the moon

she went to the doctor they say,  
he looked at the scale once and sighed,  
told her she was a walking grave,  
if diabetes missed her, heart failure wouldn't

she left a note they say,  
a final prayer and a declaration of her sacrifice  
'sinful and obscene was my fatness  
for its sins and obscenities i offer myself'

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## **He speaks**

He speaks, they all hear but no one listens  
he points his guns at them , they all bow before him but no one respects him,  
he smiles at the camera, they all stare at him on TV, but no one sees him,  
he laughs with them at cocktail parties, they all smile back, but no one likes him,  
he tells them of all his thoughts, philosophies  
visions of brighter days to come,  
all they see are empty wallets and hungry children on the corner of the street,  
he exalts his greatness, his sacrifice for the nation,  
all they see is a sacrificed nation with greatness forsaken

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## **i am afraid**

I am afraid to cross the river at night  
within its waters, i have no might  
i am afraid to cross the river at night  
at the slightest whisper, my heart takes flight

I am afraid to stare at a gun  
i will never hold it, no, not even for fun  
i am afraid to stare at a gun  
to stay away from it, forever i will run

I am afraid of my own reflection  
i myself am never sure of my next intention  
i am afraid of my own reflection  
for i am a lifetime away from perfection

I am afraid to love  
of companionship i would rather starve  
i am afraid to love  
to live like a monk, i will always strive

I am afraid of religion  
palm reading, horoscopes and superstition  
i am afraid of religion  
who knows, it might all be fiction

I am afraid of my enemies, large and small  
around myself i have built a great wall  
I am afraid of my enemies, large and small  
they lie awake, waiting for my wall to fall

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## **I wish i had been there**

I wish i had been there,  
wish i had seen it all,  
...sailed among them,  
...seen them crack up,  
bulging under the folds of human flesh,  
...the breeze of slavery,  
..punctuated by the stench of rotting corpses,  
...human excretion,  
...the sweat of poverty,  
....wish it had blown across my face too,  
my spirit...wish it had swept over the polished boards of her 'majesties decks',  
...seen with my own eyes

The chosen ones...standing below the mast,  
the medallions of their 'loyal' service to the queen glimmering  
taking a sip of the best  
the 'rotten indians' had to offer,  
biting off...rather stale piieces of chestnut cake,  
as the keepers of hades,  
open their gates once more to another black son! !

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## **In the world of the blind**

In the world of the blind  
streams flow and roses grow  
In the world of the blind  
lions roar and fires smould  
the men snar, curses and ill conceived promises they do throw  
children play, hear the rain coming and smear mud on walls  
mothers praying, silently yearning  
for someone to stop the needless slaying  
of what lies in them  
true greatness in a world they cannot see but can only be  
dancers over laden with worries about dowries  
suitors contemplating past rejections, mounting frustrations  
knock on their doors, start asking questions  
trying to reach out to someone they cannot see  
but know to be their light  
in a world that's forever dark

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## Justice stands still

When justice stands still  
only the fool hearted,  
will contemplate pursuing even the most just of causes,  
when justice stands still,  
the brave only will seek retribution  
for sins committed against them and their kinsman,  
can any gleamse of sovereignty exist  
where justice takes a tea break,  
and when justice decides to stand still  
will any sanity prevail,  
where justice once stood still,  
can any unity ever be restored

once upon a time the jews were slandered and abused  
but they had the courage to stand up and refuse,  
when justice stands still,  
the supposed saviours become the enslavers,  
who then will stand up to refuse for the people  
when justice stands still,  
the law makers become peace detractors,  
creating laws meant not to ensure harmony,  
but to bring woo to the masses,  
when justice stands still,  
they will seek to devour,  
those they once vowed to protect,  
justice stands still,  
the eleventh plague,  
not just a biblical fantasy,  
but a present reality

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## **Late by the bus stop**

Tired workmen by the pavement bristle,  
lazily watching the office workers hustle,  
too tired to jump into the queue,  
they just stare, as if without a clue

little children late from school,  
push up to sue their only tool,  
they pinch the tout and cry 'we are cold, and thats so true'  
till he shouts out 'you, you and you'

the jostling and hustling becomes a bit too much,  
the tout begs as some young men lurch,  
'please let the night workers and prostities depart,  
we will all get home, if you let me play my part'

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## **Lost**

No war  
no foes  
no poison in my plate

no day dreaming  
no yearning  
no need to fear my fate

no H.I.V  
no plagues  
no sickness to guide me to my grave

no tyrants  
no homicidal kings....  
no this cant be earth

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## **mental fornication**

mental fornication...  
what my teachers thought to be education  
forcing me through pages  
of nothing but the history of white ages

poison dripping through my soul  
hungrily like water sinking into desert sands  
erasing my black thoughts...black voice  
colouring me white, red and blue  
like cheap abstract art

leaving me mentally impotent  
like Armar's ostentious cripples  
spiritually barren with a black hole for a soul  
sucking in every custom and bad taste  
floating around me...  
as if i was born everywhere...anywhere

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## **My dreams pain me so**

They pain me so  
dreams of myself walking through lands  
in my youth i never saw,  
places my mind has never known,  
floating through strange fields  
with gray grass and chirpering crickets,  
from the bright sunlight  
my hands acting as my eyes shields,  
straining to cast minute glances  
across rusty wire fences  
at my brothers...holding black shovels  
digging...no sweat forming on their brows  
knots beginning to tighten in my bowels,  
digging....clad in black suits  
with black shirts and white ties  
straining to cast minute glances  
at my brothers bending to pick up a white box  
wishing that it could be all a hoax  
trying to move nearer  
the wind holding me still  
i pride myself as one with nerves of steel  
yet i scream,  
and scream...beg them to stop  
why do i scream?  
what am i afraid of?  
i am in a dream....they are there  
i am here.....I scream

my head stares at me from the top of the box  
covered in glass, resting on a white pillow  
my brothers look up at the skies  
tears already welling up in their eyes,  
hesitating as they stand by the graveside  
summoning up all the courage they need  
to throw me their brother...onto the other side,  
I call out to my sisters  
i hear them singing songs of old  
the ones we were told  
never to sing besides the kraal  
i call out to them  
sisters sing songs of life  
not these of strife  
dance with me  
for i am here with you,  
they do not hear me  
the tears still flow down their cheeks  
as serene and final like the flow of the nyamatsanga,  
all i have known and laughed with  
gathered without me...but around me,  
gathered to cut off our relation  
the living and the dead cannot be part of the same constellation,  
like the missionaries of old, they recite prayers

to guide me through my journey home  
like the warriors of old,  
they silently yearn that my spirit will stay with them, guide them and protect them

Above me  
those who left before me  
call out to me in silence,  
beckoning me to rise  
their calls reaking with sadness  
yet laden with promises of happiness

My dreams pain me so  
all i have loved  
in queues with teary eyes  
hands trembling, shuddering at the echos from this pit,  
as they pick up moulds of clay  
throwing them at where i lay  
i blink at every throw  
i hear the clay drumming against the box  
i try once more to move closer  
but they disappear before me  
leaving me in the company of only the wind

They say to die is to rest  
what rest can one know  
when such dreams possess you so

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## **Shall we or..should we have**

The rains have not fallen  
the crops are withering  
and the people are starving

shall we allow the ngo`s to  
throw bags of undigestable yellow maize  
and soya beans at their immensely,  
ever grateful feet

or should we have  
provided them with the adequate irrigation facilities  
agricultural inputs and the knowledge needed  
to avert such a situation

Our fifteen year old daughter  
flipd aimlessly through a notebook  
the life forming within her stirrs  
serving as a painful reminder to her  
of the bleak future that lies ahead of her  
a future that holds nothing but despair

Shall we  
throw her out of the house and into the streets  
to rid ourselves of the shame

or should we have  
educated her diligently upon such matters  
and kept her far away,  
safe from the lustful eyes of her many suitors

Our one and only son,  
lies within the confines of a prison cell  
twenty years they say,  
is what the judge gave him

shall we  
quickly turn our heads back  
and denounce him  
for can our family name be associated with criminals

Or should we have  
slaved and slaved, struggling relentlessly  
day and night in the fields and sent him  
to the school where all the other village children went to

Shall we... or should we have

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## **She came to me**

She came to me,  
her hair blazing with fire,  
she tenderly kissed my neck,  
promised me that our love would never tire,

she nipped my lips softly, passionately  
...like a vampire  
she threw herself on me, hungrily,  
...then, she sucked me into her empire,

she came to me,  
her eyes clogged with tears,  
i placed her hands in mine,  
and she lay on me all her fears,  
i told her everything would be fine,  
love me as i love you,  
let our souls entwine,

she laughed amidst her sobs  
said she found it obscene,  
i wasnt as rich as Forbes,  
she dried off her tears on my shirt,  
and laughed...,  
told me i was just another flirt,

she stared into my eyes,  
they were emotionless, cold  
like an undertaker,  
she left me in her graveyard

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## The big people

the land of the big people  
my land  
had greatness thrust upon her once  
but that was a long time ago and the big people then already had eyes that saw not

my land  
the land were uneducated black workers  
sweat endlessly under the african sun  
buliding ice-skating rings for the big people  
whilst their own families sit beneath shacks  
under the cover of vague street lights  
busy spiting thier lungs out  
just like the good old days of colonial rule

my land  
the land where champagne sipping ministers  
sign away land and mineral concessions  
in exchange for for football stadiums and empty schools  
which they expect the small people to accept  
without any resignation  
whiling away their time in slowly serviced bank queues  
the aim being to receive very small portions  
from their already heavily emacipated bank accounts  
the rations of money the small people need to qualify them for the other endless list of  
queues  
such wasted time and energies spent  
serve not to unify or strengthen the small people  
but to destroy their youthful zeal for life  
engulfed forever in oblivion  
such wasted time and spent energies  
will leave the small people older  
....but not wiser

After inflicting such pain and misery upon the small people  
the big people then all try to be very comical  
spending all their time delivering speeches fully laced with fallacies  
to the loud cheerings of some heavily expectant small people  
the worst of the big people have resigned themselves to toying around with genocidal  
economic policy formulations  
and to supplying false local statitics to the international press  
seemingly unaware that for the sufferer  
their comedy  
..is a tragedy

through manipualting the mass media  
they try to implant false hope into the minds and hearts of the small people  
barren lands where no seeds of hope can ever sprout  
a people with no hope  
cannot ever formulate visions  
visions of brighter days to come  
and so how can they the small people be expected  
to strive to achieve

what they themselves cannot visualise

will the day ever dawn upon us  
the day when the veil of poverty shall be lifted  
off the heads of the small people  
the day when the small people like a new bride  
will leave their old way of life and accept  
a new destiny altogether

'what do they expect from us, we are just a small stretch of land in sub saharan africa. we do not have the money, the capital the....needed for such a transformation'

sentiments shared quite equally among the big people  
but alas for them  
Humans  
not places  
make memories  
and theirs shall be a legacy  
a legacy that will make generations of thier  
offspring to come  
bow their heads down in shame  
...And cry

The small people are but dogs among the masters  
no matter how much they toil  
the best they can ever be  
is to be the most masterly of the dogs

The unending sory of the zimbabwean child  
at nine a bundle of excitement and joy  
at eighteen a highly gifted and immensely talented academic  
at thirty a dog among the masters  
the most masterly of dogs

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## **The crowd in the street**

They came out of their houses  
screaming, whistling and jumping  
most of the women wore only dirty blouses  
but that couldnt stop them coming

they stopped at the end of the street  
and said to one another in excited whispers  
'i told that right here tonight they'd meet'  
quite proud to be the worst rumour keepers

wife, husband and someone's lover  
clawed away and cursed with no break  
the wife fell, blood flowing from her like lava  
but she raged on, till someone broke her neck

all assembled were untrained dramatists  
they feigned horror and half shutr their eyes  
a little boy shouted'what mighty fists'  
a little girl fumed, but no one heard her cries

'she's dead'came a murmur from the back  
like a wounded lion the husband roared  
this was more excitement than he could take  
so old Martin stroked and away he crawled

'she's dead' became the general cry  
though she wasnt as the doctor saw at once  
to be dissapointed, no one wanted to try  
so on the husband, they all did pounce

the police stood aside  
and the doctor grew pale  
a journalilst scribbled with pride  
'my editor tomorrow will just love this tale'

'hes dead'they shouted as they ran away  
screaming, whistling and jumping  
the police shot at them with bullets of clay  
but that really couldnt stop them running

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## The Hut

Slowly I move forward towards the hut. The moon shines over the thatch roof, exposing the patches and holes it has accumulated over the 30 years of its existence. I grew up in this hut. I was born in this hut on a rainy night, twenty seven years ago. That night all the cows ran away from the kraal. My father was not there to lift me up to the spirits after they had cut my umbilical cord. He had gone to look for the cattle. That is how I got my name, Nhamoinesu 'poverty is with us'. I lived up to my name, poverty still lives with me, and it's been my only companion since my first breathes.

I grew up in this hut with my mother. Many rainy nights ensued after my birth, and that year is still known as the year of the flood till today by the old men who always sit by the beer hall holding empty beer bottles." The white man is gone', they always say, let us the black uneducated man drink from the bottle and them from the wells. On one of those nights rainy nights he went out and never came back. I grew up in this hut, slept in this hut, ate and cooked in this hut. We never went to school but we used to draw animals and numbers on the walls of this hut. I'm sure I can still see some of the drawings just beside the door there, maybe...

I open the door slowly; all its handles and supports have long weathered away. It almost falls down as I step in, 'im sorry mother' I say as I return it to its post. Who am I apologizing to, she is not alive anymore. She almost beat me to death the last time I dropped the door, she can't beat me now, but I'm still afraid of her.

I can hear her voice cursing at me 'you useless boy, cant you do anything by yourself!' " I can hear her coughing, that dry, metallic cough of hers, coughing as if she meant to tear her lungs apart. I can hear her choke and struggle for breath. Tears start falling down my eyes. I can see her in them as they fall to the ground. She is smiling at me and telling me to walk faster. I think I must have been four years old here, and we were coming from the well. She was a true beauty then, with ebony skin and a smile that could warm away even the coldest winter night. I can see her standing by the beer hall with a scruffy middle aged man holding her tattered skirt and speaking into her ear. Her skin had become pitch black by now...I can see her lying on the floor of this hut, holding a thin, emancipated baby in her equally frail arms. That must be Nyasha 'hope' before she passed away. My mother never knew Nyasha's father, she was just a product of the numerous nights my mother had spent in the arms of countless strangers. She never buried Nyasha; she just wrapped her in a blanket and threw her in the stream. I can see her holding on to the door, vomiting. I wonder what she really used to vomit, we rarely used to eat in that hut.

I collapse on to the floor; the effects of the cheap home brewed beer I drank at the beer hall seem to be wearing off. The walls seem to be getting smaller and it is getting colder in here. I take out a match stick and light up the log of wood I left in here the last time I was here. That was two years ago when we buried my mother, but she had long been dead by then. A breathing corpse is all she was for the last three years of her short life. 'A.I.D.S", that's what the village health worker told me." It can't be cured', 'they is nothing we can do to help her', 'please stop coming with her to the clinic, we really have better things to do', 'make sure she gets plenty of water and rest...'. As if she could do anything else but rest in the last three years of her life. She could not drink any water by herself, I used to give her water by the spoon. Her jaws had grown stiff, she could not open her mouth to chew or to speak. All she could do was mumble and hum. I could hear her though. I could understand her. She always used to recite the angels creed and the lords prayer, that's all she ever mumbled with her eyes

stuck fast to the patched thatch roof. I wonder if she ever really saw the patched thatch roof as she looked up, or what she were see the skies, the heavens with the angels calling her home. I pray that she is in heaven right now; she's already been to hell. No other hell can be worse than the one she knew down here with us.

The night she died, I was alone with her. I was always alone with her. Our few relatives and neighbors used to come and see her during the first days of her illness, after a while they became tired of playing the comforters and decided to play the tormentors. She became the talk of the village, an example to all the other would be witches to stop and 'repent' lest the same judgment befall them also. Some said they used to see her dancing naked in the stream every night, with a python slithering around her hips." The snake has turned on its master and made her the stew", they used to say. I would stay up all night crying, angry at her for being sick and angry at the whole world for forsaking us when we needed them the most. The other boys used to tease me and point at me even though their mothers had long barred them from playing around me, lest they catch the witch's disease also.

The night she died, the rain fell again and the patches failed to keep it out. It completely soaked both of us. I just sat there huddled by the corner completely helpless and hungry. It fell on her in huge drops but she never winked nor moved. It slid off her like water falling off a stone. She was already dead by the time it started to rain. I never knew it until two days later when they carried me out of the room. They say all the village dogs had gathered outside of our door, attracted by the smell of rotting flesh.

They buried her outside the village wall. The elders decided that it would bring a horrible curse unto the village if they buried a witch's body in the village. The only people who were at her funeral were me and two men holding shovels. No food was cooked, and they did not dig for long.

tinashe severa

## The Interview

So you want to be a big person,  
have you ever told the truth,  
how good a thief are you ,  
what is the best way to steal from a beggars plate,  
were you a sell out during the liberation war,  
are you prepared to kill those who think in other terms,  
do you look forward to your neighbours funeral,  
has your son ever used a gun before,  
which of the following two pictures do you find funnier,  
an anorexic old lady in binga,  
not out of choice but our own will,  
or a six year old boy....lying dead,  
floating in a pool of blood,  
a small crowd looking on...horrified,  
during the height of Gukurahundi,  
your mother is horribly sick in Chivi,  
what would you send her,  
rat poison, mercury or an assasin

tinashe severa

## **The last supper**

Three mice bore into my mothers bag of rice,  
our last one...they shat in it,  
little droppings that looked just like rice,  
brown rice

we sat on the cold kitchen floor,  
same song...hungry...stick thin,  
she poured it into her only pot  
a clay pot chipped at the top,  
cracked at the side

she lit a fire...poured in water  
stirred and stirred till all the droppings melted,  
it looked so much like tea now,  
brown tea

we drank the brown tea,  
thanking God each time a little white grain  
slipped onto our tongues,  
she threw the bag out...her last bag,  
with three dead rats in it  
they had ate her last rat poison tablets,  
that was my last supper...our last supper

tinashe severa

## **The Little Devil`s trip**

As the red sky`s light,  
on the hills of hell shone,  
a thousand devils cried,  
and hissed all night,  
for one little devil was gone,  
and flying to earth he had been spied

the little devil flew and swooped,  
wondering why the sea`s so plain,  
he held up his head real proud,  
as jets like little soldiers devils by him trooped,  
one bumped into him, but his anger he did refrain,  
'my devil, this place feels just like home, a new hell i have found'

off he went to congo`s jungle,  
perched himself up a big tree,  
and watched with glee, as ten peasants with one knife, a guerilla killed,  
he picked up two dead peasants, to play with and juggle,  
in hell, he`d never picked up toys for free,  
'i bet i could stay here forever, if ma` willed'

he got to the states, as the twin towers fell,  
just like in the revelations,  
he gasped as he saw many souls begin to crawl,  
and back to hell he went, with many tales to tell,  
'that place is better than here, i will go there for all my vacations'  
and that is how human sin in hell began to grow

tinashe severa

## **The love of a beautiful woman**

A beautiful woman  
before your eyes may seem fine  
her aura as intoxicating as wine  
within her  
are thoughts as sour as lime  
her intentions  
those of a snake in a vine  
her eyes shine  
beckoning you into her lire  
setting your heart and loins on fire  
be wary  
she might just show you how it feels to be in the middle of a bonfire

the love of a beautiful woman  
flows into you like a desert river  
..its stay is long enough only to forge painful memories  
the love of a beautiful woman  
is as mesmerising as the african sunset  
..blink  
and darkness falls over you

tinashe severa

## **The man who ran for freedom**

Like little ants after a rain storm, the policemen poured out of their old rusty trucks,  
hungry and weak, as broke as the rest of us,  
their faded, worn khakis barely clinging on to their skeletal frames,  
like silk robes thrown onto wooden hangers,

they saw the angry faces of the small people,  
they heard the songs they sang, heard the notes of suffering dripping out of their  
voices,  
the songs melted into their hearts, they all wanted to jump in,  
to dance and sing for bread and decent wages,  
but their knees couldnt carry them anymore.....  
and the old man was watching,

they knew that the small people's placards spoke of the truth,  
this country needs change,  
the small people marched on to machipisa, an old white elephant turned eyesore,  
an old centre of trade and industry in the spirit of Great Zimbabwe at it prime,  
now turned into a shopping mall for thieves, a parking lot for rowdy, filthy touts  
and a pick up place for 12 year old prostitutes,

the small people sang the same song... Nehanda sang against Rhodes,  
the same song Mandela sang against Botha and the Boers,  
the same song the old man sang against Smith,  
in the spirit of blacks against whites.....  
but its never been a race issue,  
so the small people ran into machipisa,  
singing against him

Beneath our own eyes, the old man has metamorphised,  
into an african Zeus, the god of god`s,  
untouchable, unfallable and never,  
...never the kind of god to be ridiculed in his back yard,  
never,  
no matter how hungry you get,  
no matter how many of your sons lie on your floor dying of AIDS,  
and they is nothing you can do about it,  
no matter which part of hell he throws at you,  
be as quiet as the corpse of Herbert Chitepo,  
accept your fate with dignity and continue to pay homage to our dear father,  
the only soul of the nation,

place a brass lock over your mouth, and hide it under the reeds of the mukuvisi,  
suffer in silence like sacrificial lambs, be little christs and pray for salvation...  
quietly...lest your prayers fall into the wrong hands  
....you might never talk or walk again,

from the comfort of his bullet proof 3 tonne mercedes he watched  
as some small people talked, running to machipisa,  
exercising the 'democracy' he always brags about to Mbeki over lunch,  
...almost chocking on his scotch, he hurriedly dialled up one of his stoogies,  
the one commanding the police,  
... and screamed ' shoot...you stooge.... shoot '

and the hungry, weak, poorly dressed, broke police,  
shot at the crowd running to machipisa, only one man fell down, dying on the spot,  
they missed everyone else, and the crowd fled away like the pigeons in first street,  
(they isnt much you can teach a slow learner in six months)

the hungry, weak, poorly dressed, broke police  
went wild in the poor man's suburbs, rounding up,  
every man, woman, child and dog running around,  
they beat them up for wanting peace and food as if it was too much to ask for,  
they piled them up in their old, rusty trucks like sardines,  
and butchered them with batons, sticks and whips,  
until they all floated in their own blood

like the many others that have fallen, by the bullet and knife of oppression,  
like the many others that have fallen because they dared to speak against the god of  
god's,  
like the many others that now lie in beds of clay, six feet deep,  
like the nameless warriors that have been killed and buried in silence,  
the man running to machipisa, also bore the lethal bullet,  
as testament to our sufferings and fears,  
his name shall be forever etched in my heart...

as the man who ran for freedom

tinashe severa

## **The old mans curse**

Where the sun meets the moon  
is where i lay now waiting for your doom  
its been more than a year  
and as even the wind knows, life to me was never more fair  
at least here, i have nothing to fear  
i am in good health, though worms chew my knees  
and my hands have gone brittle, like old thorn trees  
but that is just, i died at eighty nine  
and of all my fine sons, my grave knows none  
do not worry, i your father am not sad  
shame and poverty, have always been my bed  
on that bed me and your mother lay  
and for that bed, you my sons will pay  
i find solace only in what the pastor said  
as i ate his bread and the beer he shared  
'nevaro, the lord will raise you up '  
even from wood, stone and dust  
and in this i now place all my trust  
when my words reach you as it shall come to pass  
please my sons, do not make a fuss  
neither the sun nor the moon has yet risen  
and the devil tells me, he still hasnt finished your prison

tinashe severa

## The protestant church of the old tabernacle

The old woman on the front bench sat wide eyed,  
song after song, the youthful praise group bellowed,  
talent they had not, but to mimick angles they so tried,  
when the priest arrived, a trumpet blew and the windows trembled,

he wore a white shirt, over a silky purple suit,  
the congregation came alive, the minute they saw his face,  
he spoke in greeting, words flowing from him like notes from a flute,  
'this is the man of god', they all shouted as he took his place,

from the old woman's cheeks, flowed a river of tears,  
the praise group ran, and clung to her like a prize trout,  
the pastor stood up and raised his arms as if he was holding a spear,  
'here in the protestant church of the old tabernacle, no demon will sprout'

the congregation sprang up, and beagn to speak in tongues,  
bibles were thrown into the air, with shouts of 'hallelua' and 'amen',  
the pastor unfolded a cloth bearing an emblem with two tongs,  
'we have never seen her before, she is heathen',

out came a gold jug and a diamond dish,  
the pastor spoke with relish, as their epitome of realism,  
'like Simon and Peter did to catch those many fish,  
this woman must first believe before her baptism'

he stood before her and pulled her flaky hair,  
while he waved and smiled in a way so civil,  
'before we save you woman, it is only fair,  
that you tell us, speak! why do you dance with evil'

the old woman dried her tears and took off her spectacles,  
slowly she stood up to speak to the crowd,  
the praise group shifted, but their hands stuck to her like tentacles,  
while the pastor wiped off his bald head, looking mighty proud

'i am not evil, nor am i heathen,  
i love my lord and God, i am a catholic,  
they is only one shepherd, you all are my bretheren,  
they is one God, as one herd, we all must frolic'

the man of god fumed and foam dripped out of his mouth,  
he jumped up and did a shagani warrior dance,  
'believers, we all know the truth,  
lets all drive away this demon, before it also puts us in a trance'

a cladly dressed young woman spoke into his ear,  
the pastor grew cold as he nodded in agreement,  
'two million dollars and a tithing contract are needed i fear,  
before all esle, she must make this payment'

the old woman laughed and lifted her hands to the skies,  
the praise groups hands withered as she grew wings,

the walls fell apart, and squashed them all like flies,  
in remembrance, on top of their shrine, a rosary still swings

tinashe severa

## **The saints**

The saints of my land never were,  
all that was, and still remains  
are little devils, dressed in rented suits  
living off the suffering  
of the sons of the houses of stone,  
the hunger of the daughters of their mothers,  
the sickness of their mothers,  
the deaths of their fathers

The saints that never were  
took me to the top of inyanga  
and showed me my land free, unchained,  
my mother and father alive  
money in my pocket,  
the sick looking forward to recovery  
i told my neighbour.....woke up in jail

They promised to bring,  
justice and equality to my land  
i sang it to the wind,  
woke up in a mental ward

They took me to the top of the RBZ  
i looked up and i saw the rivers flowing  
i looked down and i saw the clouds smiling

tinashe severa

## **the sides of the balance**

[the poor black man`s song]

my skin black  
my thoughts.. demoniac  
my ways.. aback  
my sign.. not even on the zodiac

[the truth]

weak minds, weak souls,  
will always lie like bobcats,  
waiting to be smothered on the neck by the big people,  
to chat is not an option,  
never was it, never will it,  
the black man will always be sat on,  
...or spat at

[my song to the big people]

hell is where you will land,  
where gates are manned,  
according to the rules you set,  
for the other side of the balance,

gone, will be your providence,  
like you, the rulers there have no consience,  
it will pain you... the resemblance,  
demons and you... all lack intelligence,

your stance at first, like us, will be one of non resistance,  
hoping, like us, for some sort of benefiance,  
the logic being, evil and good counterbalance,  
as we now know, they dont,  
and neither do evil and evil,

so like us among yourselves,  
you will forge an alliance,  
but unlike ours, yours will quickly shrivel,  
you see, your spirits were never servile,  
and neither do you the heart of the weevil,

i pity you, though i must not, for when devils  
decide to become your sole rivals,  
you need to be breath, .....dream at our level,  
you can`t, you don`t even know how to work a shovel,  
but we do, and our gravel is now almost upon you,  
i hope my lords.. that this is not to your disapproval  
but what does it matter,  
they now wait for your arrival,

[the truth]

the love for war and death,  
hate and greed,  
maketh the big people,  
watching lack hearts bleed,  
is how the big people feed,  
the exit is the entrance,  
it only depends on which side of the balnce you stand

tinashe severa

## **The sun**

The sun rises first before those who stand before it  
it wilts those who try to rise too high before it  
it is only those who rise before it  
that know that it rises  
those who know what lies after it  
have never been  
they have always been

the sun gives what it takes  
and takes what it gives  
in its eyes they are no big people  
under it we were all born  
under it we will all pass  
for as long as it shines before me  
my pen will write  
my mind will talk  
it knows no big people  
only those who are trying to rise too high before it  
and those....it wilts

tinashe severa

## **The wind blows**

The wind blows  
the leaves rustle  
still..the mill of justice churns slowly  
..too slowly  
yet the wind blows  
and the leaves still rustle

the ambers smoulder  
the smoke drifts aloft  
but,  
the fire does not burn  
the masses are still enslaved  
..the time calls for struggle  
..yet the people still remain passive  
..engulfed forever in a prison of self denial and self pity  
yes  
the ambers smoulder,  
aloft the smoke does drift  
but still the fire does not burn

the old man tills  
yes  
the old man toils unrelentlessly  
unforgiving, untiring  
..the old man tills  
but the soil will turn no more,  
no more will it bow down to a master  
from whom all the sap of life  
has been sucked from already  
and so the old man shall till  
but the soil will turn no more

tinashe severa

## Two old men

The old man down the street,  
never could say anything complete,  
the old man next door,  
could never take his eyes off the floor,

The old man down the street, dreams of being a flame thrower,  
the one next door was a wine grower,  
the first old man claims warfare as his true domain,  
the one next door abhors all forms of pain,

when im old i will go next door,  
for the old man there, my ways will mend,  
so long as my youthfulness remains,  
i will live down the street,  
for my happiness need not end

tinashe severa

## **We all knew her**

we all knew her name,  
..we all knew her fame,  
yet we all loved her just the same,  
the brothers at the local pub bore he no shame,  
and neither did she,  
all the sophomores blew into her flame,  
..to her it was just a game

i remember her as one with hair so fair,  
always with a smile to share,  
its all a gray memory now,  
and no one wonders how

As a freshman A.I.D.S was always just a word,  
yet now it bears her name,  
it stares hungrily into her face everyday,  
every breath she takes,  
draws her nearer to her dying day,  
and everyday we pray,  
that she might live to see another day

It`s not as if no one told her,  
..even those who used to hold her,  
..in their own self interest did try to caution her,  
her roommates used to question her,  
told her...its not so strange  
to wait till marriage,  
but in her was a passion so deep,  
she just kept on piling the men in a heap,

we all knew her name,  
and now also does the local grave attendant,  
and all those who have passed by the cemetery recently,  
we all loved her the same,  
but it feels funny,  
life here at campus without her,  
still feels the same,  
Rest my dear sister,  
I cannot gurantee you peace,

tinashe severa

## **When you do choose to love me**

When you do choose to love me  
love me not like your dear life  
but as your wife  
for life ends only in death

Do not love me like money and wealth  
money is like a prostitute  
it sleeps in the hands of many men  
today we might have it  
tomorrow we might not

When you do choose to love me  
do not love me like your shadow  
and expect me to follow you around  
and answer at your every whim like a chained slave  
departing from your presence  
leaving you to your own means by night time

Do not love me like your mother  
and expect me to fuss over you like a child  
you are the father of my sons

When you do choose to love me  
do not love me like yourself  
for in the company of drunkards  
you lose yourself

Do not love me like a flower  
free for all bees  
which dries up and rots at the end of spring

Love me my husband  
like the spirit of death  
When it desires you  
nothing can stand in its way

tinashe severa

## Wishing for a song

Tears dropp down my eyes,  
my heart no longer beats, but throbs  
my throat dries up, my eyes pulsate  
a malign emptiness creeps up my soul,  
....tears continue to stream down my cheeks,  
Vision of myself walking through a crystal maze continue to haunt me,  
trudging on relentlessly,  
yet encapsulating myself even further with every step i take,  
the sun begins to set on me,  
...oblivion draws nearer,

...across the enumerable layers  
of the walls of this crystal maze,  
a small fire burns, illuminating my way through,  
a fire kept alight sorely by images of you,  
standing beside me,  
walking towards me,  
your enchanting smile,  
small flashbacks of all the times we have spent together,  
...but the emptiness still creeps up my soul,  
devulging all the flickering glimpses of happiness,  
that protrude across the path of its relentless quest,  
as the minutes waver, the fire chokes itself out,  
and the emptiness becomes my being

...  
i lie down, wearily,  
wishing that i could write you a song,  
a song filled with nothing but the tongs of my undying love for you,  
every note depicting all that you mean to me,  
the very tempo of the song  
in perfect synchrony to the way my ailing heart yearns for you,  
my hands would clasp the song,  
and when all my thirst for life cinders off  
my hands would heave the song and lay it,  
across the breadth of my heart  
.... that is the way i would want to lay in my final hour,  
a prayer i would then utter,  
before my final departure,  
begging all who dwell in the heavens,  
to come and lift the song away,  
and sing it in the midst of the clouds  
with harps and heavenly choruses,  
adding divine melodies to to my words,  
as my love for you is pure, untainted  
and shared by no other,  
only you.....,  
will hear this song,  
your eyes only will bear witness to this

if i could write you a song,  
it would bring you this and more

tinashe severa