

Poetry Series

Lehlonolo J Tshukudu

- poems -



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Lehlonolo J Tshukudu()

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He is Lehlonolo J Tshukudu.

Born and raised in Botshabelo in the Free State, his life has been shaped less by ease and more by responsibility. From an early age, he learned to carry more than what was visible—growing without the presence of a father, and gradually stepping into roles that required strength before he could fully define it.

He completed his matric at Lefikeng Secondary School, later returning to refine his path through Electrical Engineering at Motheo TVET College. His journey moved through working environments that demanded discipline and resilience, before committing himself to the craft of becoming a Millwright under the Transnet Academy of Engineering.

Beyond his trade, he is a father. A provider. A man navigating the weight of building a life not only for himself, but for those who depend on him. His experiences—both endured and chosen—form the foundation of his perspective.

Under the name Jaymiie Fortunate, he extends his voice into music—approaching sound as an emotional language, where rhythm and tone carry meaning beyond words. His creative reach continues into literature as the author of two novels, *Let Me In* and *Outgrow*, works that reflect his ongoing exploration of growth, vulnerability, and the quiet complexities of becoming.

Known in quieter spaces simply as Fortunate, not by chance but by contradiction, he writes as one who has learned to listen—first to silence, then to himself.

His work moves against the current of noise. It does not seek attention; it invites reflection. Each piece is less an expression and more an excavation—of memory, of emotion, of the unseen weight carried within ordinary moments. What he offers is not escape, but confrontation.

His poetry is not assembled—it is uncovered. There is restraint in his voice, precision in his choices, and meaning often found in what he chooses to leave unsaid.

The name Fortunate is not a declaration, but a paradox. A reminder that not all fortune arrives gently, and not all survival feels like victory.

He writes to trace the distance between who he was, who he is, and who he is becoming—while building, in both word and work, a life that those who come after him will not have to survive, but simply live.

Modern Expectations

They told me
a man is a mountain.

Unshaken.
Unbreakable.
A thing that stands
even when the sky is falling apart.

So I tried...

God knows I tried
to turn my bones into stone,
to silence every tremble
that made me feel human.

I swallowed my fears
like they were sins.

Choked down my doubts
like weakness had a taste
and I wasn't allowed to spit it out.

Because men don't break...

Right?

That's what they said.

But nobody talks about
what happens
when the mountain starts collapsing
from the inside.

No one prepares you
for the quiet landslides.

The ones that don't make noise—
just shift everything
until nothing feels stable anymore.

I became a structure
held together by expectations.

A building
with no foundation of its own.

Every brick laid by voices
that never had to live in my skin.

"Be stronger."
"Do more."
"Provide."
"Endure."
"Don't feel too much."
"Don't fall behind."

So I ran.

Ran until my worth
felt like a finish line
I could never reach.

Ran until exhaustion
started sounding like purpose.

Ran until I forgot
what I was even chasing.

And somewhere along the way...

I lost the man
I was supposed to become.

Because I wasn't living—
I was performing.

Wearing strength
like armor
that was slowly cutting into me.

Smiling like everything was fine

while something inside me
was begging to be seen.

But who listens
when a man is drowning silently?

Who notices
when the provider
can't afford to fall apart?

So I carried it.

All of it.

The pressure.
The fear.
The quiet shame
of not being "enough";
in a world that keeps raising
the definition of a man
like a bar I was never built to reach.

And yeah...

I failed.

Not loudly.
Not dramatically.

Just... slowly.

Like a candle
that doesn't get blown out—
it just disappears
into its own melting.

I failed in ways
no one could clap for.

Failed to be everything
they told me I had to be.

Failed to feel proud
of the man in the mirror.

Failed to believe
that I was enough
without proving it first.

And the worst part?

No one teaches you
how to grieve
the version of yourself
you never became.

So now I stand here...

Not a mountain.

Not a king.

Not even the man
they said I should be.

Just a human
with tired hands
and a heart
that learned how to beat
under pressure.

And maybe...

maybe that's the truth
they never told us.

That being a man
isn't about never breaking—

It's about carrying the pieces
and still choosing
not to disappear.

Bruised Heart

I knew you were poison
the first time your love tasted like an apology wrapped in sugar.

But I drank anyway.

Not because I was blind—
no...

I just believed my loyalty
could turn venom into water.

I fed you pieces of myself
like a man trying to keep a fire alive
in a storm that had your name written all over it.

And you—
you bit the hand
like hunger was your only language.

Still... I didn't pull away.

I told myself,
"that's just how broken people love."

So I stayed,
bleeding quietly
like a secret I was too ashamed to admit.

You didn't just break my heart...

You butchered it.

Slow.
Careful.
Intentional.

Like you needed to understand
how something so pure
could still be destroyed.

And the worst part?

You served it.

Plated my love on silver
and fed it to someone else
like it was nothing more than leftovers.

Like I was nothing more than a meal
you outgrew.

I watched you
look alive for someone else
while I was dying in the same room
you once called home.

Tell me—
what kind of cruelty
learns your heartbeat
just to replace it?

Because I gave you mine.

Every rhythm.
Every fragile pulse.
Every silent prayer
that you would choose me
the way I chose you.

But you chose convenience.
You chose attention.
You chose anything
that didn't require you
to be real.

And now...

I'm still bleeding.

Not the kind you can bandage—
this is the kind that writes its own story
across the floor.

My blood doesn't drip...
it remembers.

It traces every step
from the moment I met you
to the exact second
I lost myself trying to keep you.

There's a map of my suffering
somewhere between your lies
and my silence.

And I've memorized every corner of it.

I walk it daily.

Barefoot.

Because healing doesn't come
to people who loved like I did.

It comes to people
who learn how to forget.

And I don't—

I remember everything.

The way I made you feel safe
while you made me feel replaceable.

The way I protected your heart
while you auctioned mine
to the highest bidder.

The way I stayed
even when every part of me
was screaming
“this is where you disappear.”

But I didn't.

I stayed long enough
to watch love turn into a crime scene.

And now I carry what's left of me
like evidence no one will ever investigate.

Because the truth is...

You didn't just hurt me.

You rewrote me.

Turned my softness into suspicion.
My patience into scars.
My love into something
that now feels dangerous to give.

And still...

a part of me—
the stupid, stubborn, loyal part—

would have chosen you again
if you had just chosen me once.

But you didn't.

So now all that's left of us
is a ghost...

and a man
still trying to stop the bleeding.

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Reverse Betrayal

I gave you love like a man with no backup plan,
like my heart didn't come with a spare.
Every late night call, every 'are you okay? ',
I was there... I was always there.

I poured into you like I was trying to fill a void
that wasn't even mine to fix.
Ignored the cracks, the signs, the silence...
I called it 'patience' — you called it 'just how I am.'

I made you my priority
while you made me your option.
I held you like something sacred,
you held me like something temporary.

And still... I stayed.

I stayed when it felt one-sided.
Stayed when love started sounding like excuses.
Stayed when my peace started packing its bags
and my dignity stood at the door asking,
'Are we really doing this? '

Yeah... I stayed.

Then one day,
you found 'better.'

Or at least... you thought you did.

You looked at him the way I begged you to look at me.
Listened to him the way you ignored me.
Chose him... effortlessly,
while I had to fight just to be seen.

That part?
That part broke something in me I still can't explain.

But here's the twist life doesn't warn you about...

He wasn't me.

He didn't carry you with care.
Didn't study your silence.
Didn't love you through your chaos.

He played you.

The same way you played me...
just cleaner... colder... quicker.

And now you know what it feels like
to give your all and watch it mean nothing.
To replay memories like a punishment.
To question your worth over someone
who never questioned losing you.

Now your tears speak the language
I was fluent in.

But here's the difference...

I loved you.

He didn't.

And maybe...
just maybe...
that's your karma,
wrapped in heartbreak.

Because losing me
was never your punishment...

Realizing what you lost
is.

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What's Wrong With Me?

I don't know what's wrong with me
Some days I wake up wanting to be loved and some days I'm just mean
I usually give that good attitude,
Yet now I'm stuck in this vicissitudes

One minute I'm I wanna marry the love of my life
And the next I don't see myself having a goddamn wife
Something's wrong with me, some would say it's a curse, some say 'love'
Well I say 'Bullsh*t! '

I might not know what's wrong with me
And what is it that I'm always sad about
I don't those guys y'all call doctors are gonna say something close having a
depression, ADHD, bipolar
And all that makes sense to y'all

Yes I don't know what wrong with me, but I'm not sick
Okay, I take it back, I think I'm love sick, I hope that's a thing.

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Love In Open Spaces

At first I thought we were 'just friends'

But some nights I could call you and lower my voice just so it could be charming;

I honestly don't know why I did that, but it it worked, or maybe not,

We used to be friends in open spaces but deep town our hearts has tied the knot

'Should I kiss you or not? '

That's the question that messed up the quest to our friendship

I don't know but it felt like our first fight for our relationship

I thought we were just friends, that's what she told me and I had to confess

'Yes, we are friends, we grew up together, I totally get that but that's not the growth that only happened, I guess my feelings grew in a certain direction and you became their attraction, I'm sorry if it came out wrong but this friendship has ran it's course, I think it's time to try something new'

I told her with my tears building in my eyes

Heart pumping faster than daily

Sweat covering my body

And pain of rejection that's yet to happen was already heavy!

She smiled and said, 'finally'

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Imaginary Heroes

Imaginary heroes!

Whenever I scream out loud
There's a deep voice within me,
Whispering, "don't be loud, stay strong cause the pain won't last forever!"

I tried to keep calm, yet the rhythm of my deepest breathe kept growing bigger
each second I think that I'm all alone. "Hush, don't be loud, for we always
within you"

Now this is the different voice that I hear within me, lecturing me in my own life,
"who are these people?" I wondered to myself.
I started shivering and my voice trembled, "..how did you get in my mind,
or perhaps are you God?"

I stood up straight, trying to figure out on how to face my demons, (forgive me
that I called you demons, I just don't know what to call you)
I stood up straight, trying to stop trying but face them already.
"(Giggles)You failed already before even you attempt to try"
The deep voice replied to my question that my actions was asking.

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