

This Is Not A Feminist Poem

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This is not a feminist poem

This is not contorted metaphors with neither punch line nor chorus

This is not a feminist poem

It is a woman learning to trade possessions before her lover takes his last breath.

She will never get the chance to say goodbye because those final hours are one match-point away from the backstroke of ravenous relatives.

You see where we come from, widows learn to bid their dead farewell even before they are lowered into the ground.

Because grief requires time and time is a luxury she cannot afford.

But I don't want to talk about funeral rites or a daughter's non-inheritance

Because this is not a feminist poem



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It is a thirteen-year-old leaking between her legs. She cannot will her waste to stop because culture demands that babies must birth babies even before they are whole.

This is Mercy, waiting to be fully formed before the doctors can fix her. We exchange broken smiles but mine is crackling with questions and I want to ask, how does a six year old ask to be gang raped for lunch after school?

As she fiddles with the beads of a rosary that crawl around her neck, my lips are too drowsy to ask God why?

But I am trying to not be feminist about this because

This is not a feminist poem

It is the landlord who pays off your father to clench his teeth over choking tears for what his son had done to you.

And your daddy knows that homelessness is too close to home so he washes of your shame with a sponge, dabs your wounds with scripture hoping these words will in turn douse the stench of the breath, erase the handprints that form maps across your skin, and glue together all that is broken of you.

But instead memory has an interesting way of refusing to disappear, so this is how you exist with a tape loop in your head playing over and over again.

I am not here to talk about the kidnap of justice in my country or whom, how and why we have refused to pay her ransom

Because this is not a feminist poem

It is piercing screams of gaping mouths choking as hands stifle their lungs
of ambition

It is men in uniform with bellies swollen from bribe, sworn to protect you
but tell you that domestic matters are family matters.

So you drink up your pain till you are full, your throat is parched and yet
again you begin to thirst for it yet again.

It is walking around with a womb too hollow to bear an heir that you take
in the seeds of betrayal wanting it to pull together the remnants of
matrimony. This is what it means to be a real woman.

It is the girls who are sent to school only to come back home knowing that
their future is dangling between their bodies and their silence, yet
deciding which to betray first

It is those 2 am text messages from your boss' phone that leaves you
reminded that you will always lose so you grin, dust it off a shoulder and
bear it. You return to your job because this meagre wage pays for your
little brother's tuition and your mother's heart medicine.

But this is not a feminist poem

It is acquainting yourself with the normalcy that your body is a minefield,
trampled upon by the politics of culture

It is a reminder that you are click, you are bait, you are currency and by
virtue of your existence you are only half human never equal, never the
same.

It is learning that the heavy medals of your success are meaningless until
they are smelted into a ring on your finger

But I told you at the beginning that this is not a feminist poem

It is not a rant or a call to action

It is not a call for your attention

It is not a checklist of everything you already know

This is not a feminist poem

This is a poem about life, about rights, for my sisters who struggle and continue to fight

Inspired by Efe Paul Azino's 'This is not a political poem'

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