



LAYERS OF
A HUMAN

Prose and Poetry

Catherine Wanjiru

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BY

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Written by Catherine Wanjiru

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LAYERS OF A HUMAN
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DEDICATION

For your human self

ABOUT THE BOOK

In four chapters, I have explored the transitions of a human being

- > BEING covers the concepts of human nature and intentional living.
- > BREAKING covers loss, loneliness, breakup, grief and others.
- > BREAKING FREE is about healing
- > LOVING covers love.

Here are bold confessions, observations, confrontations, thoughts, hopes & dreams. Here are unfiltered emotions, broken hearts, lonely bodies, grieving souls, bleeding wounds, wandering spirits, and charred skins. Here are healing and healed beings. Here lies the past, the present, and the future.

THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING ME!

These are excerpts

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BEING

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Life is the time. The moments. That breathe you took. That warm skin. The beating of your heart. The growth of your bones. The thickening of your skin. Life is the unfolding of nature. The knowledge you are gaining along the way. The melodies of the birds. The perfect strike of music to your soul. The rising of the sun after the sunset. The appearance of the light in the dark night. The finding of a silver lining in the dark clouds. Life is the water and the fire. The chaos and the calmness. The rain and the sun. Life is what you get and let go. Life is your choices. Life is in the searching and finding a meaning. The tally of experiences and the memories you make. Life is your engagement with yourself and others. Life is internal and external. Life is visible and invisible. Life is in the visible and the invisible. Life is what you find and what let in. Life is everywhere. Life is in and around you. ***Life is what you receive and what you make.***

Time changes,
So you can change

Life is fluid; tip the scale accordingly. Don't hold the 'rules of living' so tightly that you ignore the simple fact of tailoring them as per your needs. Living is about examining everything keenly to know where you belong and when you should grace a venue with your presence. It is learning the rules and deciding which ones to break, follow, or to ignore. It is about knowing where the line is; some of which are blurry or nonexistent. Where a line exists, it is deciding whether to cross or stay within and whenever necessary. Where none exists, it is about drawing a visible mark where necessary and deciding where to land. Life is a series of line making and breaking. Life is balancing. It is being gentle and patient with self versus pushing yourself beyond the lanes so you can be, do, and have what you need. It is taking ample amounts of time to get through a project versus acting hastily because our physical existence is limited. It is fighting tirelessly like your life depends on it versus resting occasionally because your life depends on it. It is rejecting rejection and persisting until you get what you deserve versus understanding the cues and walking away when it seems like you are acting out of desperation or soothing a wall. It is loving selflessly versus living guardedly. It is dreaming frequently versus getting out of the dreamland. It is creating a comfortable space versus stepping out of the comfort zones. Departing from the past versus revisiting to draw lessons and inspiration from it. Visualizing versus actualizing. Being content with self versus challenging self. Life is taking this natural test of choosing one over the other and tipping the scale accordingly to befit the situation and to your favour.

Beautiful soul, I celebrate you today for the past you endured with grace and the courage you have carried with you for dealing with the present. I celebrate you for letting your entire being be the garden upon which strength deepens its roots and germinates to the unseen depths. I celebrate you for the days of terrifying darkness that you still went out of your way in search of light. For not holding your breath when things were rough. For letting your heart grow soft and tender in spite of the frequent collisions with rock-hard elements. For keeping the fire burning when enemies tried to drown you. For squaring your shoulders and the head held high. For fearlessly navigating through foreign lands in search of good things. For talking about peace even when you were lost in chaos. For preaching about healing in the midst of excruciating pain. For searching for your treasures even when your feet were numb. I celebrate your victories that were unrecognized and those that were deemed too trivial to be worth a feast. I celebrate you for leaving footprints for me to fit my feet in. I celebrate you for being someone I can look up to and write about for myself and for generations to come.

The departed

I thought I had all the time in the world until dreamers became the departed. Some swept off their feet without prior warning and others gradually. I thought I had all the time in the world until I saw the space they once occupied being empty and their absence in my life being undeniable. I thought I had life infinitely until I thought about these people who once meant the world to me. People who had planned their future way ahead and were optimistic. People who had not thought of bidding their loved ones goodbye or making their last memories. People who had no chance of seeking forgiveness from those they had wronged. People who left with their feelings remaining unexpressed to those who mattered. People who had too much to say and do. People I had admired all my life. People who were gentle, ambitious, kind, and considerate. My heart broke into a gazillion pieces watching their lifeless bodies, a house of unfulfilled dreams and unbaked plans being driven away into morgues and being pushed into the earth. It hurt to see everything they had left behind and carried with them. Their scent fading away. Their once welcoming eyes shut and caged away. Their coffee mugs arranged neatly in cabinets and gathering dust not knowing that they would never meet certain lips. Their business plans unimplemented and neatly filed in their cabinets not knowing they would not be implemented or in the rare chance that they land on the fertile ground, it would be by someone. Their beds messy or made but unaware of the emptiness and loneliness that they would endure since then onwards until someone else climbed into them. Their clothes neatly arranged in wardrobes or scattered on the floor not knowing that the familiar skin was long gone. I remember how they yearned to live longer and planned for it. Because that is what we want, right? To live until we can't live any more, right? To stay above the ground until we are ready to leave, right? To stay above the ground for a really long time that when we finally settle inside it and under the feet of our loved ones, they will be glad they spent time with us. But as nature would have it, their time had expired. They had been escorted to a one-way trip. I thought about the endless ticking of the clock, the gradual aging of the skin, the birth of new dreams and the death of others and realized that life is really precious. That we must always take our **existence** seriously because it will expire when we know not. We don't know when the arms of our clocks will make the final rotation and hit the last digit. Or when our hearts will shut and our bodies turn cold. Before then, live fully.

There are friends. There are enemies. There are friends who *are* enemies. There are enemies who act like friends. There are friends who become enemies.

I have lifted myself off the ground that I didn't belong to. I have shed the foreign skin. I have unlearned the habits. So, if you are perusing through old albums, rereading the texts written when my emotions were spiking, retracing the footsteps, or replaying the memories in your head looking for me, sorry, I don't live there anymore. I can't erase every footprint that I left on the sand or swallow back the bad that I spat. Those are just static moments and I am busy pacing forward. I know that time is all I have before the aging kicks in. Before the distance between my birth date and my present date increases. Before the skin become saggy, wrinkles gradually start forming, preferences change, and opportunities and reasons for growth appear. I am not part of the statistic that keeps its feet on the same spot when everything else is moving forward. Don't look for me in places that I was in, it's a futile chase. I don't and never belonged in them.

Breaking

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It's odd that when it hurts, it hurts even in places that weren't hurt

Sometimes dreams cost you everything before giving you everything

You don't have to wear my shoes
Or follow the roads that I took
As an attempt of understanding me,
Or what my life has been like
We are crafted differently

Assurance

You will make it out of that dark tunnel,
Even if not to meet light at the other end,
But with enough strength and bravery to walk through, over, and above dark alleys

I think everyone deserves to be told they are strong
Even before they share their stories,
Because some are too horrifying
Too morbid,
Too thick,
That they cannot pass through a tiny opening like a mouth

Pain,
So invisible,
Yet we can see it
In the eyes of those it has grabbed

The irony of suffering is that it doesn't end after the person inflicting it leaves the room or pulls the item being used to inflict it from the part being acted upon. It doesn't end when the withering relationship finally reaches its end or when a long-ailing loved one is given eternal rest. On the contrary, after the separation, that is when it hits hard and mercilessly; as if it were an arrow that had been eagerly waiting to be released to its target. This transition becomes the beginning of an intense kind of suffering where, where sometimes, you can find yourself blaming yourself for the outcome, for not reading the intentions early enough, for not responding as expertly, for not preparing enough, or for being an easy target. It becomes a phase of agony, pain, guilt, emptiness, self-loathing, and mixed thoughts. But somewhere along the way, the parts that were injured and the ones that had soaked in the pain stop hurting as much.

It's hard teaching self how to stop loving after learning how to love hard. It's hard telling your heart to stop beating for someone while silently hoping it won't stop beating all together

It hurts when they bid a goodbye
It hurts if they don't bid a goodbye

Rock bottom is such a confusing place to be at. One minute you can literally feel the weight of the world on your shoulders and the next you are feeling so empty that you can almost feel the breeze blowing between your bones or someone seeing through you.

Pardon my sensitivity; releasing myself from everything that we labelled as ours has been a hard tackle. But the day is fast approaching when I will see the essence of it. I am sorry for holding onto your memory for so long and labelling you as my only source of hope. I am sorry for keeping my doors ajar for many days awaiting your return. I am working on myself. I am trimming down on the care. I am coming to terms with the fact that you don't deserve an accolade of being my only source of hope. I am learning how to ignore the things that once meant the world to me. I am turning my back to it all and pacing forward. Oh, I am trying everything. I am rehearsing that hard but necessary part of the script that makes me want to pull off my hair and scream your name out of me. It's only a matter of time before I stop turning to web pages for relatable sad quotes and replaying sad songs. A matter of time before I let you leak through the crevices of my memory and make no attempt of trying to remember you. A matter of time before I stop looking backwards and searching for you. Before I disentangle, let go and move on. Before I accept the dark cloud and stop searching for the silver lining in the shape of you. I am getting close to accepting the end for what it is; the end. I am getting close to end of the cliff where I will take the hard fall.

Thank god that most times we don't die when we think we are dying. Thank god that we are able to crawl out of dark holes. Thank god that the weight of grief doesn't swallow us alive. Thank god that our hearts don't stop even when they have been broken into a million pieces. Thank heavens that the heart keeps on fighting *regardless*.

Grief is not easy to overcome because for a long time, you are stuck at crossroad wondering which would be the best way to remember and honour the departed. On one side, you want to accept the outcome, and stop waiting for their return and on the other, you are afraid that if you stop looking forward to their return, you will have stopped loving them or if you move on too quickly, it will send the wrong signal to the public. On one hand you want to let go and allow them to become a memory you will treasure forever and on the other, you are afraid that if you let them go and allow them to become a memory, you might feel like you are degrading them. On the one hand, you want to share the love they left behind in form of with possessions and on the other, you are also afraid that they might see this as a way of getting rid of them.

She has been hiding her bruises
For ages
From everyone

Don't look for tears in my eyes,
For there are frequently shed in my heart
Where no one can see them

The scars run deep,
That's why they weep

Sometimes,
You have to let your favorite bird fly away

You broke a heart without touching it

I knew it wasn't love
When I started wondering if it was love

A lot of time has passed. Your body cells have died and others generated but you haven't forgotten. You haven't forgotten what they did to you and I know you have thought about it for a long time wondering why they were so cruel to you; why they didn't think of the aftermath. You haven't forgotten what they said to you and about you. The memory is still there; dripping the blood, its reek still fresh, tightly tattooed on your mind and forcefully running through your body like a hard material that will never be shed. You still have that wound somewhere in you. You don't speak about it because you have mastered the art of battling alone.

At a certain point in life, we started screaming for help silently, day after day and month after month by isolating and keeping our mouths shut

There are wounds that close up but don't heal entirely. Wounds that don't bleed but open up whenever certain circumstances arise. There are wounds that don't leave a visible mark but still impact our behaviour and attitudes to certain things and people many years after they have been inflicted. There are wounds that heal, but we don't heal from.

We don't enjoy carrying the baggage from the past;
We just don't know how to put it down

Most of us need the courage to ask for help *when* we need it

There are scars that rob us of our voices
There are scars that give us a voice
And others that make us *the* voice

Along the way, the scars lose their effect on us. Some we forget. Some we heal from but still carry along.

We cry in many ways. Sometimes visibly, sometimes invisibly. Sometimes we allow our eyes to water and our bodies to crumble. Sometimes we turn to sad books and music and shed the invisible tears.

Some things,
If left to die,
Cannot be watered back to life

Falling back

I have repeatedly told myself that I should stop caring. That I should disentangle you from me. That I should change courses. That I am worthy of more and that the more isn't you. And all of it is undeniably true. But, sadly and unfortunately, I find myself doing the very thing I should have stopped a long time ago; caring. I slide back into the wonder of what you are doing at this hour, where you are, what you are up to, who you are with, and if you have similar thoughts. Pieces of my heart still wish you were here to mend them back into one piece. The space you occupied in my heart is still empty and awaiting your arrival. I find myself falling back into the centre of the fire that burned me. Back into the very tunnel that I have been climbing out of for the last couple of months; my efforts undone rapidly. Back to you, looking for glimpses of you; the very person who pushed me away leading to the deadly fall. Back to thinking about you, strange, isn't it? I find myself roaming around in the very land that I lost my battles in hoping that I would find one person to congratulate me, to convince me that walking away was the prize and because I did it, I won the prize. Goddamn, I search for one person to console me that the prize was wrongly allocated. I rummage through cabinets of poison hoping that I would find just one spoonful of medicine. I stay indoors but silently wish. I am saddened by how quickly my efforts for the last months have been cancelled in less than a minute....but heavens know that I won't stop. I won't stop looking for peace even though I don't know how it looks like. Even though I occasionally slide back, heavens know that I will strain to sing this song alone until I do it with ease. I'm in for the rehearsal, for the countless trials, for the errors, and for the backslides until I regain peace. Until every part reforms and my feet land in a new world. Until I stop caring about the things I should have stopped caring about a long time ago.

One day.....

The scars will heal and they won't hurt or bleed. Memories won't trickle from the mind to the surface. Tallying of the days since the loss will stop. Dates, events, or people won't trigger memories. There will be more merriment than sorrow. Light will overtake darkness and healing will take the place of ache. The sun will shine and not feel like an enemy. The sun will set and fear won't creep in. The entire solar system will combine its forces and light my world. The ugly shall turn into lovely. I shall be bold and ready to face the world. I shall unearth all my strength and use it for the good of myself and the vulnerable.

One day, the light of the sun will wipe out and totally displace the darkness in my life.

Breaking Free



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I have been there....

In a strange land and wondering how I got there. With conflicting emotions; so full of rage that I could not weep. I have been there, unable to process anything and resorted to beating my ribcage to numbness. I have been there, beating myself ruthlessly wondering where I missed a step and cursing heaven knows what for not smacking me hard on the face and redirecting me to another direction. I have been there, so afraid of letting go that I allowed the sharps to sink deeper and deeper into my skin, slitting my veins and shortening my life. I have been there; sedated by memories and heartbroken by unfulfilled expectations. I have been there; retracing my steps to see where I took the wrong turn. I have been there: lost, confused, tired, hopeless, wishing to be left alone, found and saved, and desperate. I have been there, tired of being hopeful. Maybe you've been there too. With a similar or a different kind of being lost, confused, tired, or desperate. But the thing is, none of us has stepped into each other's shoes. None of us has fitted the soles of our feet into each other's footprints. None of us has felt the intensity of each other's mental or emotional turmoil. None of us ever will because these are the types of shoes fated for one. But we made it through; with or without help. We reached the peak of the mountain. Our feet are on the safe shores and miles away, we can see the bright future. We made it.

Life seems different when you are hurt and hurting. You may see and hear things differently. Maybe the complete opposite of what is happening. You might find yourself jumping into conclusions sometimes. You might hear mockery when others are openly claiming their victories. But healing is the way out. Healing lifts the burden off your shoulders. It peels the layers of your eyes and makes you notice things clearly. It sharpens your senses so that you only hear the clear message. It unclogs your mind and opens you to new perspectives. It halts your movements to the things that once hurt you and keeps you grounded. Healing frees you and grounds you. Healing lets you breathe.

I know internal struggle. I know how loneliness tastes. I know how depression affects one's life. I know the dilemma between wanting to end it all by snapping your life away and holding on one more time. I know how the knees become weak and days seem bleak when the weight of the world is on the shoulders. I know how cold and hard rock bottom is. I know how forcefully the head pounds when nothing is going as expected or when there seems to be no way out. I know that negative thoughts can invade the mind and take over. I know how long some nights seems to be when the mind is clogged with questions. So, you don't have to put on a show with me. You don't have to act like you have it all together. You don't have to measure your words to ensure they don't give you away. You don't have to sit with me acting like you are enjoying the conversation when you are breaking inside. You don't have to stand in front of a mirror to pinch your cheeks to give them some colour when you are dying inside. You don't have to ignore the sadness. Come here, be vulnerable with me. Let me see your wounds and how deep they run. Let me hold you. Let me offer my shoulder for you to cry on. Let me share my warmth with you. Let me help you in all the ways I can.

There is no manual for healing. No one will tell you when or where to start. After you decide to undertake that journey, which you should, it ends and begins there. It's totally up to you; to go forth into the discomfort, hard work, and self confrontation or stay still and smear yourself with more hatred and pity. To sink and shrink or to pull yourself out and grow. But here are some ingredients that you may need along the way: you have to be tired enough of being sad or feeling shitty about yourself or life in general, or not being your best version yet that you can't bear any more of the feeling. Ambitious enough to take back control of your life. Courageous enough to plunge headfirst onto that mountain that might be blocking you. Immeasurable patience to see yourself through the process; because the cracks won't appear after the first hit. Vulnerable enough to knock on multiple doors and sometimes ask for help to identify the easiest path out. The eyes to see where you have headed, the mind to analyse every step of the way, a hand rough enough to smack yourself when you are heading in the wrong direction or lazying along and a soft one to pat yourself on the back when you win the moves. Then the courage to blow the shit up. Luckily, you have everything.

Tears are more than salt and water. They are a way of releasing baggage. They are our way of acknowledging that something has gone wrong. They are the expression of humanness, vulnerability, and courage. They are proofs of existence and having a functional body system. They are the burst of the ocean and silent the wish to the universe to align everything for our peace and calm. They are the messengers when our hearts are heavy and eyes cloudy. Tears are the symbols and symbolic. Tears are more than salt and water, and never will I bow to the shame of shedding them.

When we shed tears, we free ourselves. We communicate. We water our wishes.

And sometimes, what you think
You can't live without,
Is what you can live happily without
And sometimes, what you think
You can't live without,
Is what you should live without

You are made of atoms that can't resist each other. They have a way of coming together regardless of the times you are sheared

We both know it's not worth it

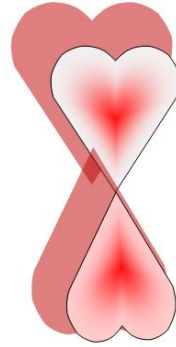
In the days of less,
Never become hopeless

Don't put your dreams away
Because clouds have covered your star

The clouds don't prevent the sun from shining

Look at you,
Flowering widely and wildly
Even where flowers are forbidden

Loving



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To love is to be vulnerable,
To love is to open up to another
To love is to shed your ego
To love is to risk it all

I know something about you. You don't want the ring on your finger. You don't want a body next to you every day. You don't want someone to split your bread with. You don't want the scent of another lingering in your space. You aren't looking for the mere touch of skins or your name signed alongside another's on a piece of paper. You aren't after a warm bed. Your needs aren't that superficial. You aren't after joining the statistics of people who have lovers. You want more. You want someone who will see the beauty of your soul and want to see it every day. You don't want someone whom you will tell how your day was; you want who will be attentive enough to learn the things that bring bliss to your soul and stays to watch your interest in things deepen. You want someone who will fall in love with you and your life. You want someone who understands how deep your love goes and how it cannot be fed to another in a day. You want someone who sees the beauty that you are and what is in you, the potential in you, and wants to witness the beauty of life with you. You want someone who will see the beauty of your soul shining through your eyes. You want someone who will openly **choose** you every day.

The space between my fingers was reserved for you.

I think it is such a brave thing to let someone into and through your world because it requires an immeasurable level of trust. It is really brave to ignore the possibilities of your words being weaponized by another. It is such a brave thing to cast your light on another and ignore the shadow. It's such a brave thing to share your warmth and trust that you won't become cold

She is a wildfire but you shudder at the thought of warmth near your skin.

Some stay,
Regardless of the imperfections

Like the sun, you light up my days. Like the moon and the stars, you light up my nights.
You are the solar system in the form of a human being

THANK YOU

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For questions, comments, suggestions, reviews, etc: Contact.cwanjiru@yahoo.com

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