POETIC WEDNESDAYS initiative





Yanar Gizo

A collection of digital footprints by young women

Compiled & Edited By: **Salim Yunusa**

Luminate
Building stronger societies
Hadis
Habiba Dangana Foundation
Giving a head Start in life

Foreword

The dawn of the internet and social media signalled a new era for young people, particularly in Nigeria. It opened pathways that were previously inaccessible, collapsing distance, widening access to knowledge, and creating new possibilities for expression and connection. For many young women, it still holds that promise. It offers space for visibility, learning, solidarity, and self-making. Yet, increasingly, it has also become a site of surveillance, harassment, coercion, and violence. This anthology, Yanar Gizo, emerges from that contradiction and seeks to confront it directly.

Across Nigeria, and especially among young women navigating layered social, cultural, and technological constraints, the digital space is not neutral. It reflects existing inequalities and, in many cases, intensifies them. The scale of this reality is not speculative; a 2024 State of Online Harms report indicates that 58 percent of Nigerian women have experienced some form of online abuse, including cyberbullying, non-consensual image sharing, and coordinated harassment. At a broader level, an estimated 68.9 million Nigerians have encountered online harms such as sexual exploitation, hate speech, and digital coercion. These figures are not abstract; they are lived experiences and realities marked by fear, withdrawal, and adjustment.

For many young women, participation in digital spaces comes with calculation, because their visibility carries risk and their self-expression invites scrutiny. Their very being invites unsolicited questions for faceless trolls. As a result, self-censorship becomes a survival strategy. Choosing silence over exposure, or invisibility over engagement, is not a passive act but a rational response to a hostile environment. The consequences extend beyond psychological strain; they affect economic opportunities, professional growth, and civic participation. When women retreat from digital spaces, entire perspectives are lost, and public discourse becomes narrower and less inclusive.

What makes this moment particularly urgent is the rapid evolution of technology itself. The modalities of abuse are becoming more complex and more difficult to regulate. Coordinated trolling, doxing, and cyberstalking now coexist with emerging threats such as AI-generated deepfake imagery and non-consensual sexual content. These developments are not isolated incidents but part of a broader shift in the architecture of harm. Systems designed for connection are increasingly being exploited for control and intimidation. The pace of this evolution continues to outstrip the development of protective frameworks, legal responses, and platform accountability. There has not been a more critical moment to insist on ethical engagement with technology.

It is within this context that Yanar Gizo must be understood, not merely as a literary collection but as an intervention grounded in documentation, expression, and resistance. This anthology brings together the voices of young women from Kaduna and across Northern Nigeria, writing from within their own digital realities. The pieces gathered here map the contours of online life as it is experienced, not theorised. They speak to intimacy and betrayal, connection and isolation, visibility and exposure. Some are restrained, carrying the weight of what is difficult to articulate. Others are direct and unambiguous, naming harm with clarity. Together, they form a body of testimony that resists dismissal.

Literature, in this context, performs a dual function: It acts as an archive, preserving experiences that are often minimised or erased, and as a form of resistance, asserting the validity of those experiences. What is frequently reduced to something trivial, described as “just online,” is revealed here as deeply material and consequential. These writings transform isolated encounters into shared understanding. They generate language where silence has been imposed and make visible what has been systematically overlooked.

The timeliness of this anthology lies in its refusal to treat digital harm as peripheral. It situates these experiences at the centre of contemporary discussions on rights, safety, and participation. As internet penetration continues to expand across Northern Nigeria, the urgency of addressing how digital spaces are structured and experienced becomes more pronounced, such as how access without safety reproduces inequality and how inclusion without protection remains incomplete.

At the same time, this anthology does not remain confined to documentation of harm. It gestures towards possibility. In naming violence, these writers also imagine alternatives. They point to safer digital ecosystems, accountable infrastructures, and futures in which young women can participate fully without fear of reprisal or violation. This forward-looking dimension is essential and shifts the narrative from one of victimhood to one of agency and reimagination.

To extend the reach and accessibility of these voices, the anthology has also been produced in Hausa. This decision is deliberate, as it ensures that the conversations contained within these pages are not restricted by language barriers and that more young women can see themselves reflected, understood, and included. Language, in this sense, becomes a tool of inclusion rather than exclusion.

This project was made possible through the support of the Hadis Foundation, Luminate which facilitated a workshop engaging 25 young women in Kaduna around ethical technology use, drawing from its handbook and implemented through the Poetic Wednesdays Initiative. The contributions of facilitators and the support team were critical to the success of this process, particularly Mr Fareed Ibrahim, Mr Aliyu Kutigi, and Malam Usman Nasir Karofi, whose roles ensured both depth and reach.

What you hold in your hands is evidence. It is a record of lived realities and a call to attention. It insists that these experiences be acknowledged, taken seriously, and acted upon.

SALIM YUNUSA
Editor
Yanar Gizo Digital Anthology

About Poetic Wednesdays Initiative

Poetic Wednesdays Initiative is a youth-focused, non-governmental and non-political literary organization dedicated to promoting creativity, literacy, and self-expression among young people, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Operating both online and offline, the initiative provides a dynamic platform for aspiring writers and creatives to connect, develop their talents, and engage in meaningful dialogue through literature.

Driven by a vision to empower young minds to explore and harness their literary potential, Poetic Wednesdays uses creative expression as a tool for advocacy on key societal issues. The organization contributes to the advancement of quality education and innovation, aligning with global development goals.

Through workshops, literary events, mentorship programs, and digital engagement, Poetic Wednesdays nurtures emerging talents, promotes reading and writing culture, and raises awareness on social challenges. Its inclusive approach encourages participation in both English and indigenous languages, fostering a diverse and vibrant literary community.

Since its inception, the initiative has impacted hundreds of young people through training programs, creative platforms, and strategic collaborations, helping them discover and develop their literary abilities while contributing to broader educational and social development.

About Yanar Gizo Project

Yanar Gizo is a storytelling-driven digital literacy initiative led by creative writer and digital advocacy practitioner Salim Yunusa. The project focuses on transforming complex ideas about ethical technology use, online safety, and responsible digital citizenship into engaging, culturally relevant narratives for young people. By combining creative writing, digital storytelling, and participatory learning, Yanar Gizo empowers young audiences, particularly girls and young women to better understand digital risks, share lived experiences, and promote safer online environments.

The initiative builds on previous storytelling-based digital literacy efforts, including the development and Hausa translation of the Rakiya e-book, which used narrative to communicate online safety concepts. Through interactive workshops, participants receive training in digital security, ethical technology use, and creative writing. They then develop real-life stories reflecting issues such as online gender-based violence (OGBV), privacy, and responsible digital engagement. These stories are compiled into a digital anthology, complemented by spoken word performances, school outreach, and community engagement activities to broaden awareness and accessibility.

Yanar Gizo aims to make digital safety education more relatable and accessible by turning formal guidance into narratives that reflect the realities of young people. The project targets secondary school students, tertiary learners, and youth groups, fostering responsible online behavior and informed digital participation.

This initiative is implemented with the support of Hadis Foundation and Luminate, whose contributions strengthen workshops, content development, translation, and outreach efforts, helping to build a more informed, responsible, and digitally resilient generation.

First published in Nigeria by

Poetic Wednesdays Initiative, Kano (2026)

All rights reserved. The whole of this work is protected by copyright. No parts of this work may be loaded, stored, manipulated, reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information, storage and retrieval system without prior written permission from the publisher, on behalf of the copyright owner.

ISBN: 978-978-68-7620-7

Complied and Edited by **Salim Yunusa**

Cover and layout design by **Aliyu Alhassan Kutigi**

A copy of this book is available from the Nigeria National Library.

Table of Contents

Title Page - Yanar Gizo: A Collection of Digital Footprints by Young Women
Foreword - Salim Yunusa - 1
About Poetic Wednesdays Initiative - 3
About Yanar Gizo Project - 3
Table of Contents - 5
Glossary and Abbreviations - 6
Story - Unknown Number (Zainab Abubakar) - 8
Story - I Lost My Savings to a Stranger on Social Media (Fatima Ibrahim Ango) - 12
Story - Nina's Break from the Online World (Gimba Nzankawon Immaculate) - 14
Poetry - You Are a Woman (Maryam Yakubu Jalo) - 15
Story - My Unforgettable First Experience (Aisha Yakubu) - 16
Story - The English Quiz Scam (Hafsah Hussaini Abdulkareem) - 17
Story - The Link I Shouldn't Have Clicked (Hafsah Hussaini Abdulkareem) - 18
Poetry - Just Because I'm a Girl (Hafsah Hussaini Abdulkareem) - 20
Story - Keyboard Warrior (Khadija Ismail) - 22
Story - The Game She Shouldn't Have Played (Aisha Malumfashi) - 25
Story - The Worst Day of My Life (Faith Kognet) - 26
Poetry - Seen, Not Safe (Bintouh_aleey) - 28
Story - The Invisible Support System (Rukayya Aliyu) - 29
Poetry - She Logs In (Yagana Muhammad Goni) - 31
Story - Clinical Asepsis (Leena Ahmad) - 32
Poetry - My screen is a country (Salma Hassan Bizi) - 33
Story - The lie of Love and Trust (Salima Abdulrazak) - 34
Story - Faceless, Not safe (Khadijah Abdullahi Umar) - 35
Poetry - Two versions of me (Fatima Ahmad Dagona) - 37
Story - I was that curious (Hauwa Kulu) - 38
Story - The Name (Hauwa Kulu) - 39
Poetry - Dear God (Amina Haliru Isma'il) - 41
Poetry - A girl speaks - 42
Story - A Trauma Loop (Egbim Jecinta) - 43
Picture Gallery - 44

Glossary and Abbreviations

Accessibility: Making sure technology works for everyone, including people who cannot type or use standard devices.
Accountability: Taking responsibility for your actions online.
Advocacy: Speaking up or supporting actions to make internet access or data more affordable for everyone.
Algorithm: Instructions a computer follows to show you things online, like videos or ads.
Antivirus Software: A program that protects computers from viruses.
Artificial Intelligence (AI): Computers or machines that can think, learn, or make decisions like humans.
Automation: Using machines to perform tasks automatically.
Backup: Saving copies of important files in another location.
Bandwidth: The amount of data that can be sent over the internet at one time.
Chatbot: A program that talks to people and answers questions online.
Clickbait: Misleading headlines designed to make people click.
Coding: Writing instructions that tell a computer what to do.
Collaborative Tools: Apps that allow people to work together online.
Consent: Asking permission before sharing someone's information.
Content Moderation: Reviewing online content to ensure safety.
Context: Understanding the full story before sharing information.
Cookies: Small files websites store to remember user preferences.
Copyright: Legal protection for creative work.
Critical Evaluation: Carefully assessing information.
Critical Thinking: Thinking carefully before believing information.
Cyber Ethics: Rules for responsible online behavior.
Cyber Hygiene: Habits that keep devices safe.
Cyber Threats: Online dangers like viruses or hackers.
Cyberbullying: Being mean or hurtful online.
Cybersecurity: Protecting devices and data from attacks.
Data: Information used by computers.
Data Ownership: Your right to control your personal information.
Data Privacy: Keeping personal information safe.
Data Plan: Internet package from a service provider.
Data-Saving Mode: A setting that reduces data usage.
Deep Learning: AI that learns using large datasets.
Deepfakes: Fake videos or images that look real.
Digital Accessibility: Ensuring everyone can use technology.
Digital Activism: Using the internet to support causes.
Digital Campaign: Promoting ideas online.
Digital Citizen: Someone who uses technology responsibly.
Digital Citizenship: Responsible online behavior.
Digital Collaboration: Working together online.
Digital Content: Information shared online.
Digital Creativity: Creating art or media using digital tools.
Digital Device: Phones, tablets, computers, etc.
Digital Equity: Equal access to technology.
Digital Ethics: Moral rules for technology use.
Digital Footprint: Your online trail.
Digital Inclusion: Ensuring everyone has access to technology.
Digital Literacy: Ability to use technology effectively.
Digital Reputation: What people think of you online.
Digital Safety Audit: Checking accounts and devices for risks.

Glossary and Abbreviations

Digital Skills: Skills needed to use technology.
Disinformation: False information shared deliberately.
E-Learning Platforms: Websites for online learning.
Email Skills: Writing and sending emails properly.
Emotional Appeals: Content designed to trigger strong emotions.
Encryption: Converting information into a secret code.
Ethical Behavior: Doing the right thing online.
Ethical Hacking: Testing systems to improve security.
Ethical Use of Technology: Responsible use of digital tools.
Fact-Checking: Verifying if information is true.
Firewall: Security barrier protecting networks.
Fair Use: Limited use of copyrighted materials.
Google Docs: Example of collaborative tools. (optional keep/remove)
Hacking: Unauthorized access to systems.
Hardware: Physical parts of a computer.
Healthy Screen Habits: Taking breaks from screens.
Identity Theft: Pretending to be someone else online.
Information Technology (IT): Using computers to solve problems.
Internet: Global network connecting computers.
Internet of Things (IoT): Smart devices connected to the internet.
Media Literacy: Understanding media messages.
Misinformation: False information shared by mistake.
Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA): Extra login security.
Netiquette: Good manners online.
Online Consent: Permission before sharing online.
Online Safety: Staying safe online.
Phishing: Tricking users into revealing information.
Piracy: Illegal copying of content.
Plagiarism: Copying someone's work.
Scams: Tricks to steal money or information.
Screen Time: Time spent using devices.
Software: Programs that run on computers.
Spam: Unwanted messages.
Strong Passwords: Complex passwords for security.
Technology: Tools that help us solve problems.
Two-Factor Authentication (2FA): Two-step login protection.
Verification: Checking if information is true.
Virtual Learning: Learning online.
Virtual Reality (VR): Immersive digital environment.
Wi-Fi: Wireless internet connection.

The first thing that came to my mind when the unknown number flashed on my screen was Scammer. This was definitely one of those calls, the one where someone calls to ask me about a code, or something about my bank having faults.

I laughed at the ridiculousness of it all, when has a scammer ever called me and actually asked about any of those? Gaskiya it had never happened to me, but like every other Nigerian, this was going to be that moment.

As I let the thought settle, another flashed through my mind for a brief second. That thought sent my hand flying to the screen, in an urgency not to miss the second call, *what if this was a job opportunity?* One of the thousands I have applied to since the year began.

“Hello?”

I pressed the phone to my ear, clutching at it as my heart pounded. *Was I even ready for this good news? If there was going to be an interview, what did I need to put in place? Was it an impromptu one? The ones that happen right at the moment like the two calls I had received the previous month and somehow messed up?*

My train of thought was cut short by the voice at the other end of the line.

“Salama Alaikum”.

This wasn’t a recruiter, and it didn’t sound like the usual scam recording, unless they’d changed tactics.

My anticipation took a step back, and fear crept in, quiet at first, then louder. The voice carried a callous urgency, like I was the one wasting their time. *Was there an emergency? Has someone died? Or worse, was this a kidnapper calling for ransom?*

I sat up, listening harder.

It was that voice, careless, like flour thrown to the wind.

This wasn’t a grownup. It was a boy, sixteen maybe seventeen.

“Salama Alaikum.”

This was the third greeting.

“Wa’alaikumus Salam, wa ye?”

If this was a lost phone call, I might be able to direct it to the right route.

“Wa ye?”

“Ba kya ji ne, na ce Salama Alaikum.”

At this point, I was pissed. It was almost 10PM and after having had a long day, I was in no mood to entertain anyone, especially a stranger who seemed to be entitled to my time, didn't I answer the person's Salam enough?

“Ni kuma na ce waye?”

The silence that followed after the phone was cut short was deafening. I found myself staring in disbelief, the anger that I had managed to summon hanging in the air, unable to dissipate.

My phone started to ring again. I picked it up.

“Salama Alaikum.”

I hesitated, was this person even worth an answer?

Somewhere from the other end of the call, I could hear another voice whispering.

“Wai ba'a amsa wa ne? Me ake cewa?”

This was no emergency, nor was it a ransom call. These were just kids looking to waste somebody's time, and unfortunately, I was their victim that night.

“Ku baku da hankali neh? Da dadadden nan sai ku dinga damun mutane da kira? Haba!”

This time around, I would be the one to determine when the phone call would end. And having said my mind, I did.

The adrenaline that had coursed through me was lagging now. The anger had found no place to turn to and now, it felt meaningless.

The time was 6AM when my phone started ringing. I had stayed up the whole night to meet a deadline and only slept after Subhi, and now having the insistent ring of my phone had only prompted a headache. There was only one person that would call me in the early hours of the morning, and the call would usually follow a text message to confirm if I was awake, hence only after I replied. I rolled over to the right end of the bed, blindly reaching for the pillow by my right, and was met with an empty space.

The vibration started again inches from my leg, and startled at the way my phone dangled between the bed and the floor, I jumped from my sleeping position. The number looked familiar, but I was in no mood to check, so I pressed accept.

“Salama Alaikum.”

I groaned, frustrated. It was hard for me to fall asleep these days, and I was leveraging the two quiet hours I had before Saturday kicked into a full mode. I was not going to speak, and I was not going to give them the mercy of ending the call.

They had enough call credit to waste, so I was glad to help with that. I reached out to the mute button and activated it, then dropped the phone by my side.

There was no way I could go back to sleep now, so I just listened to whatever sound the phone made as I stared at the ceiling. Five minutes into the phone call, I heard the line hit a dead end. Then another call came in. I answered and like the first time, I kept mute. This would go on for a few more times but by the third phone call, I could already tell that the person at the other end of the line was genuinely pissed off. This only made me determined.

I chuckled, if they were indeed tired, the calls would have stopped by now.

“Ke, nace Salama Alaikum.”

“Wai ba'a amsa wa ne?”

“Durun uwarki, nace baza ki amsa bane?”

The insult was familiar, not only because I had been insulted like that before. But because I knew where these insults stemmed from. A certain kind of moral decay that was hard to pinpoint.

It was hard to sit down and listen to someone spew insults at my mother, but I knew that coming down to their level would only bring out a side of me that I would come to hate.

“Ke zanci mutunci ki, yar shegiya, mara kunya”.

I laid there in silence, deciding what game this was. I did not need to become a part of it anymore. Finding my phone, I went through Truecaller, and there wasn’t any indication or anything that could give me a hint to who the person was. But I wasn’t going to go down without an effort, so I began to frantically type in the suggestion box.

Scammer

This person has nothing to do with their life, is jobless and has no aspirations. Beware of receiving calls from them. Do not answer!

Then I pressed the block button.

Like most cases of a wrong number I had had, everything subsided, I figured since I had blacklisted the number, and it had been five whole days already, it was already an incident that we would both get past. But that morning, on the sixth day when my phone rang and I rushed to pick it up, completely out of sorts and having forgotten the previous incident, I was greeted by that voice again.

“Salama Alaikum.”

I pressed the mute button and pushed the phone away from me. Expecting the hurl of insults that would be thrown my way anytime soon.

The call beeped, meeting a dead end.

Then another call came in. I answered. Like the first time, I kept mute.

“Shegiya, yar iska.”

“Toh wallahi baki san wa kike wasa da shi ba”.

There was no way I could take his threats seriously.

I heard the other voice at the end of the line whisper, “Me ta ce?”

“Kyale munafukar yar durun uwa. Idan ita bata san mu, mu ai mun san ta.”

And just like that, the call ended. For a brief moment, I pondered over that last sentence of his, and the chilling thought that maybe, somehow, they really did.

I was not some famous personality or face. No, I was just a girl from some area in Kaduna, and not one that was very outgoing. I had selective places and events that I went to.

And just like that, the possibility of where this person had gotten my number from hit me. If this was not someone that knew me messing with me, or my number had somehow been extorted from somebody, it could only be from my online profile.

Like almost every young person in my generation, I was quite active on social media and on basically all the platforms. Was it X, or Facebook? LinkedIn or Snapchat? Just name it, you will find me there.

Being someone who wanted to show her work out there, I had ensured that my profile was professional, sitting neatly under my name beside my email and portfolio link. For work, I had said, I wanted to be reachable for collaborations and opportunities.

And even as the nagging feeling of my privacy being pried open latched onto me and refused to leave. I figured that was what came with putting myself out there, of course I had not taken that feeling serious. Who was I? Just another youth lost in the countless numbers of others hustling their way out of a system that was not built in their favour.

Like them I held onto the hope that someday a recruiter would reach out or recognise my work.

Surely this was the only explanation, and maybe I shouldn't have. I thought about the updates I have shared over the weeks, each location tagged onto the pictures, sometimes while I was still at the venue, and the thought of the hostility with which the person on the phone had projected towards me sent chills down my spine. What had I done to them? Something I had said? Tweeted? Posted? I could never know and I had no intention to find out.

I had two options. First, I was going to block the number and secondly, I hid the number away from my page. It had dawned on me that I could no longer tell who to trust online, and any voice could be any face or profile and it made me angry, why should visibility lead to such?

I had to ensure that I took protective measures on what I shared and when I did. For a while, I avoided the calls that came with unknown numbers, especially those without names on Truecaller, it was easier that way.

Still, every time my phone lights up with an unfamiliar number, something tightens in my chest. It's never just a call anymore. It's a reminder that the world watching through our screens also knows how to reach us.

I lost my savings to a stranger on social media. Yes, you heard that right. A stranger who seemed friendly, punctual, and genuine, but beneath the surface, he was a master of deception. My name is Fatima Ibrahim Ango, and this is my story of how I got scammed on Facebook.

My Facebook profile has been a thriving business page for me. It was strictly for business. I only replied to Direct Messages when they seemed formal. One day, I was going through my chats and noticed a profile who always reacted with prayers whenever I made a post or posted on my story. After going through his Facebook profile, which seemed genuine and interactive, I replied to his messages for the first time. I frequently replied to him, and we got to know each other. He claimed he was a student in my department, a year ahead of me, but an evening student—whereas I am a regular student. I thought I could learn a lot from him concerning my studies, so I always replied to him on Facebook.

But that was until he asked for my WhatsApp number, and I sent it. After a "hi," we just viewed each other's statuses and didn't chat anymore until I posted a photo of myself, something I never did and he never asked for. He commented on my nose, saying it was captivating, and praised my eyelids. I was curious and responded with "Thank you, SIR." We proceeded with the conversation. I later realized that he knew my dad—not personally, but he had been his tutor during his SIWES days. I found that amazing, knowing my dad has always been praised by strangers I meet who crossed paths with him. From his status updates, I realized he was a highly skilled forex trader. Myself being in the poultry phase of agriculture, I compared trading with poultry farming due to the risk involved so that in the event of any failure, one can complement the other.

He seemed like he had knowledge of both fundamental and technical analysis of trading. We discussed business, money management, and online teaching. I was impressed and became interested in forex trading. He offered to guide me through the process of learning and investing in forex trading. As a poultry farmer, the only way I could invest was by selling all my poultry birds. I sold them and invested $200 in the broker he used. I deposited the money into the broker's account directly and gave him the initial trading passcode, with an agreement of 50/50 for the work done and the broker's share. He traded with the account for a month and gained a profit of $720 (over-trading). He updated me regularly from day one to month's end.

However, when I wanted to withdraw my investment, he asked me to wait. I was curious but believed him, and I followed his instructions and waited for a month. Until one day came when he called to ask for my broker's initial password. I hesitated and asked what he needed it for. He explained, and I couldn't think further but sent it to him. Days later, I realized he had transferred the money to his personal account. I reached out to him, but the moment he answered, he left me helpless. I felt deceived. He claimed he traded with his knowledge and not mine, and even if he had to give me money, it would be out of sympathy, not that I deserved it. I begged him to only return the initial investment I had invested and he could have the profit. He agreed to that. I sent him my account details, but the money never reached my account, even after a week. I reached out to him. The statement I received was, "Ban da kudi in na samu zan neme meki”- saying that he was broke, and he would reach out when he is buoyant.

I had to involve my guardians about this. How would I start? They never knew any of this was happening and they never knew I sold my poultry birds to invest in forex trading. They never knew I trusted someone I just met on social media. I don't really know, but I was left with no choice because they were my only hope, and I have no one like them, so I told them about it.

At first, they left me on my own to solve what I had started. Dad said, "Big Girl with millions, in kin ce mun zaki yi trading zan hana ki ne? Zan iya kai ki ma ki koya. "But since you decided to do things your way, "ki sa mo ma kan ki mafita.

My father was furious, because he said he would have taken me to where I would have learned forex trading, but he would leave me to get out of the mess I put myself into. After pleading with them, they gave me a listening ear. They reasoned with him (on WhatsApp), but I had no evidence. I had never transferred money to him, but to the broker. All the statements showed that my money had never been with him. "Yaa Allah!!"

But out of pity, he would give me some amount to start again—not my whole investment, but half of it. I agreed to that since I was left with no choice other than to agree.

I later realized he had been expelled from Kaduna Polytechnic. He was not as intelligent as I thought. He was not wealthy enough not to eye my money.

It's been a year. I haven't heard from him. No investment! No profit! But I was left with a broken heart. My dream and ideas of having a poultry farm were shattered. I still haven't gotten over it.

Nina's Break from the Online World

As Nina sat quietly in her room, scrolling through the internet, an uneasy feeling began to grow inside her. Everywhere she looked, there were perfect selfies, flawless skin, exotic vacations, and smiling faces. Everyone's life seemed picture-perfect, and she couldn't help comparing hers to the ones she saw online. The more she scrolled, the smaller she felt, as if her own life wasn't exciting enough to be noticed.

Nina's experience online had always been a mixture of good and bad. She loved the fun parts which involves connecting with friends and family, sharing funny memes, meeting new people, exchanging ideas, and staying up to date with the latest trends. Social media made her feel connected to the world. But it also brought moments that left her feeling drained. She disliked her appearance more and more with each comparison, felt stung by unwanted advice, and was often disturbed by creepy messages from strangers. It was a strange world, one that could make her laugh one minute and question her worth the next.

One morning, after another long night of scrolling, Nina woke up and decided she'd had enough. She deleted all her social media accounts. At first, she felt an emptiness, like something important had been taken away. But soon, she decided to fill that space with things she truly loved. She began writing again, filling pages with her thoughts and stories. She read books that had long gathered dust on her shelf. She painted, even though the colors didn't blend perfectly. She reconnected with old friends from secondary school, and the laughter they shared reminded her of past times.

Her days slowly became richer and more meaningful. She joined a book club, where she met people who shared her passion for literature. Together, they talked about stories that made them laugh, cry, and think deeply about life. On weekends, she volunteered at an art studio for kids, helping them explore colors and imagination. Watching their joy as they painted gave her a new sense of purpose. Her relationships with family and friends grew stronger, and she felt more grounded, more herself than she had in a long time.

Months later, when Nina returned to social media, she noticed how much the online world had changed. New trends had taken over, new influencers had emerged, and everyone was talking about a viral challenge she had missed. For a moment, she felt left out as though she had stepped off a moving train and was now trying to catch up. Doubt crept in, whispering that maybe she had made a mistake by leaving.

But then, as she scrolled through her feed, she realized she no longer felt the same pressure. The perfect images didn't sting anymore. She saw them for what they were just snapshots, not the full picture of anyone's life. She also noticed how many young women were struggling with the same issues she once faced: the pressure to look perfect, the fear of missing out, the exhaustion of balancing online and offline life.

Nina smiled softly. She had learned that stepping away hadn't made her fall behind, it had helped her find herself. The online world would always be there, but she no longer needed it to define her worth.



Poetry...

You Are A Woman



In a land full of evildoers,

Where hatred and anger reign, with silent fear creeping into the streets,

Stealing slices of happiness that lies within.

Cruelty takes flight, with many souls chained, yet no salvation in sight.

Where screams are muffled and shaped by a deafening silence.

Where hope is lost, and the sun keeps fading away.

While the world continues to burn, with no one paying the price.

The agony brought upon my soul deepens, yet no one seems to pay the price. In a land where “he” is seen as a god, and I, with the title of “she,” have no authority to question why.

I am scared.

Scared of the universe.

and being called names I am not.

Scared of how my name will be carried through the generations.

Scared of how my name will echo in every direction, every street.

How eyes will pierce through my throat, cut my tongue, stop me from bleeding,

And peel my skin away with looks that feel like knives.“Shhhh, stop.

You are a girl. Just stop before the world hears you!

Didn’t you think of your mother?

What about your sisters?

And the family reputation?” Hmm. That’s how my voice was silenced at home.

It was brutally killed the first time I tried to speak up for myself.

All that I was,

All that I dreamed,

And all that felt whole and alive was dragged into the darkness of forgetting.“Bad!” they said, and I obeyed.

Those cursed voices online affected me offline.

The lack of love for what I wanted told me to mold myself into shapes that felt safer.I was a young girl passing through trauma,

But society decided I should stay muted.

So in between, I dared to hide before I cried.

By **Maryam Yakubu Jalo**

My Unforgettable First Experience

When I first joined social media, I thought it was just a fun place to share pictures and chat with friends. I had just turned 18, and after months of convincing my parents, I finally created my first account.

At first, I was thrilled; I spent hours choosing the perfect profile picture, writing a cool bio, and following my classmates. Every notification made my heart skip. I loved seeing likes on my posts, even if it was just from my cousin or my best friend.

A few weeks later, I got a friend request from someone named Sharifat Muhammed . Her profile looked normal, she had a few pictures, some mutual friends, and seemed friendly. Her messages were warm and polite. She said she was new on the platform too and wanted to make friends.

We started chatting every day. She said she lived in another country and was studying art. I loved drawing too, so we instantly clicked. We exchanged art ideas, shared sketches, and even video called once but her camera wasn't working “properly,” so I never actually saw her face clearly. Still, her voice sounded real, kind, and familiar.

Over time, we got closer. She told me personal stories about her mom being sick, about struggling to pay for her art materials, about feeling lonely. I felt sorry for her and wanted to help. Then one night, she sent me a message that made my stomach churn:“I don't know what to do. My mom’s in the hospital and I can't afford the medicine. I don't have anyone else to ask. Could you please send me a little money? Anything helps.”I panicked. I didn't have much, but I wanted to help my friend. So I transferred what I could through a link she sent me. She thanked me over and over and even said she'd pay me back soon.

But the next morning, her account was gone; it was Completely deleted.

I checked that my messages have disappeared also. My money is gone too.

I felt stupid. I couldn't believe I’d trusted someone I’d never met. The worst part wasn’t even losing the money, it was realizing that everything, from her stories to her photos, had been a lie.

I deleted my account for a while. I needed a break from everything; I couldn't shake off the feeling of betrayal.

A few months later, I came back not because I wanted likes or followers, but because I wanted to use social media wisely. I made my account private, became careful with friend requests, and promised myself to protect my space online.

Now, when I see people post warnings about scammers or fake accounts, I always leave a comment:“Be careful. I’ve been there before. Not everyone is who they say they are.”My first social media experience wasn't perfect, it hurt, and it taught me a painful lesson. But it also made me stronger, smarter, and more aware.

Sometimes, the best lessons come from the worst experiences.

It happened five years ago; I was sixteen, naïve, gullible and a little bit greedy. I remember scrolling through instagram one slow evening, when I stumbled upon an English quiz. The words “Test your English skills” flashed at me and as an English lover, I clicked on it without hesitation.

I answered everything correctly. Then a message appeared: I had won an iPhone and a MacBook. Just like that. My heart leapt, I was certain I had done something great, something worth celebrating. Finally, I was going to own an iPhone. I couldn’t believe my luck.

A few hours later, “she” sent me a message. Her profile showed a woman with kind eyes and a gentle smile. She said she lived in England and wanted to help young people study better, to give back after losing her husband three years ago. She mentioned she had a little boy. The story sounded too sad to question and too generous to doubt. Naïve me believed every word.

Story...

The English Quiz Scam

It happened five years ago; I was sixteen, naïve, gullible and a little bit greedy. I remember scrolling through instagram one slow evening, when I stumbled upon an English quiz. The words “Test your English skills” flashed at me and as an English lover, I clicked on it without hesitation.

I answered everything correctly. Then a message appeared: I had won an iPhone and a MacBook. Just like that. My heart leapt, I was certain I had done something great, something worth celebrating. Finally, I was going to own an iPhone. I couldn’t believe my luck.

A few hours later, “she” sent me a message. Her profile showed a woman with kind eyes and a gentle smile. She said she lived in England and wanted to help young people study better, to give back after losing her husband three years ago. She mentioned she had a little boy. The story sounded too sad to question and too generous to doubt. Naïve me believed every word.

When she asked for my number for delivery, I gave it gladly. Three days later, I received a call. A man said a package had arrived for me at the Abuja airport. I could either come to collect it or pay a delivery fee of N15,700.I live in Kaduna and I didn’t have that kind of money, so I told my mother. My mother is a very smart woman, and though she’s usually skeptical about things like that, the “English quiz” angle made it seem real, even to her. I must admit it was clever. Targeting young people who love learning made the scam look harmless and genuine.

Fortunately, my mother’s banking app wasn’t working at the time, so she asked my cousin who was in Abuja to help pick up the package. But my cousin insisted it was a scam. I refused to believe him; my heart had already built a dream around that iPhone.

He called the number anyway, pretending he would pick up the package. That’s when the truth came crashing down. The person on the other end began to insult him, furious that their little plan had failed. It was all a lie. “She” was a he. And I had been fooled.

I remember feeling hollow. As if someone had taken not just my hope, but my trust too. After that, I tried to warn others. I messaged three women who were following the scammer, women whose profiles looked young and bright like mine had been. None of them replied. Maybe they didn’t see it. Maybe they were already talking to “her”.Eventually, I gave up.

But the experience stayed with me. It taught me that the internet can wear many faces – kind ones, smiling ones, familiar ones – and still hide monsters behind the screen. Now, whenever I scroll through my feed and see a quiz, a giveaway or a too-perfect promise, I remember that sixteen-year-old girl, clutching her phone, dreaming of an iPhone, and believing too easily.

Looking back now, I realize how easily we can fall for things that seem innocent online. I was lucky nothing worse happened. But I learned an important lesson: not everything online is what it seems.

The Link I shouldn't Have Clicked

It started six years ago. I was fifteen, naïve and gullible.

I am so ashamed of myself. So ashamed that sometimes I can't even look at my own reflection in the mirror. I fell into something I never imagined I would. Something I never thought could happen to me. I became addicted to porn, and worse, I began to masturbate. Alhamdulillah, I've stopped now.

It started so innocently, so carelessly. It started with a DM on instagram from Mimi, a girl who seemed funny, confident and friendly. We started chatting daily, talking about school, crushes and movies.

One afternoon, Mimi sent me a link, saying "you'll laugh so hard, you have to watch this." I was in class when the message popped up on my phone. Without thinking, I clicked on it. At first, I didn't understand what I was looking at, but the moment I realized, I shut it down immediately. My heart was racing and my palms were sweaty. I told myself it was nothing, just a mistake.

But I've always been a curious person. And curiosity can be dangerous. That night, alone in the house, the memory of what I had seen refused to leave my head. The images replayed in my mind again and again. I told myself I'd just open it once more just to see. Just to satisfy that curiosity. But that was the beginning of everything. That was the day I walked into a trap that I struggled so hard to escape.

At first, I thought it was harmless. But then once turned to twice, twice turned to many more. It became a habit, then it became a chain.

I tried to stop, oh Allah knows how hard I've tried. I deleted links, deleted apps, even made promises to myself after crying in sujood. Yet somehow, the more I tried to run from it, the deeper I seemed to fall back in. But then I thought, what if I die doing this? What will I say to Allah? And that became my biggest motivation to quit.

It wasn't easy. Wallah, it wasn't. The temptations were everywhere. Sometimes it was as small as scrolling through the internet and a random indecent picture pops on. Sometimes it was movies that looked harmless at first but slowly built desires in me. And sometimes it was just me, my own thoughts, my own loneliness, and my own curiosity.

Somehow, I managed to create a small online group, a quiet corner of the internet where other girls like me could talk without fear or shame. We shared our stories, our struggles, our guilt, and the little victories no one else would understand. Some were younger, some older, but we were all trying to escape the same darkness.

At first, the group was just a chat. But slowly, it became something scary, a sisterhood built from broken pieces and second chances. We reminded each other to pray, to delete the links, to forgive ourselves when we stumbled. Some days we cried together. Other days, we celebrated how long we'd gone without giving in. Together, we worked hard to quit. Together, we began to heal.

And then came the du'a that became my anchor, my mantra and my shield.

Allahumma-ghfir li dhanbi, wa tahhir qalbi, wa hassin farji minal fawahish.

"Oh Allah, forgive my sins, purify my heart and protect my private parts from obscenity."I repeated this du'a every single day, sometimes a hundred times, sometimes with tears streaming down my face, sometimes with trembling lips but always with hope. I prayed tahajjud every night, pressing my forehead to the ground, whispering to Allah to save me from myself.

I avoided movies that triggered me. I stayed away from websites that weren't safe. I even stopped following certain pages on social media because I knew they were gateways. It was like cutting off pieces of myself, but it was necessary.

It was hard but I pulled it off. I've been clean for a year. One whole year. One year of falling and standing again, of clinging to hope like my life depended on it, because it did.

Till date, I still regret clicking on that link, but maybe it was meant to be. Maybe it had to happen so I could learn, so I could warn others, so I could understand mercy not just as a word, but as something that can find you even after your darkest mistakes.

So here I am, not perfect, not sinless, but victorious in this one battle. Alhamdulillah.

My name is Haneefah, and this is my story.



Poetry...

Just because I'm a girl



Just because I'm a girl

Connected to the internet and unlimited dreams

Doesn't make me a target of your mean jokes

nor should your words clip my wings.

I came here to learn, to grow

to post my art, to let the world know

To write my stories, to share my light

to find sisters who made my soul feel right.

Just because i'm a girl

young, naive and curious

Doesn't mean your links and dirty whispers

should drag my innocence astray.

They said "Just click", "just trust", " just play"

but every "just" took a piece away

Between the laughter and the lies,

I lost a part i couldn't recognize.

By **Hafsah Hussaini Abdulkareem**

Poetry...

Just because I'm a girl



Just because I'm a girl

gullible and a little bit ambitious

Doesn't make me a target of your scams

I am strong, not weak and just as tenacious.

You thought you could trick me,

hide your face behind a name.

But i learned. . .

Your silence and your schemes

can't drown a girl who's found her flame.

Just because i'm a girl,

doesn't mean i don't belong here too

This space, this digital world. . .

is mine To dream, to build, to renew.

By **Hafsah Hussaini Abdulkareem**

One step, one mistake and one word can change your world from being in heaven to descending to hell. My life too was changed with a single step - a jump, a high one. Behind the screen, a single tap on my keyboard led to a 50 word paragraph.

Yes, a 50-word paragraph led me to where i was right now, if you'd ask me i don't really know the exact driving force for the post. I did it for the 'cruise' not knowing not every cruise is worth cruising, I mean not every trend you'd just jump on just because everyone is on it. Yes many do it and get away with it, i thought i might be one of those–it was a harmless joke I presumed. Maybe dark humor is not easy to explore...maybe, maybe...

You might be thinking what I did to end up here right? Though I "trended" really oo, no be small thing but I wasn't a celebrity. My case was among the most searched on X and Instagram throughout last year, it got the most likes on Facebook and the most talked about on tiktok. The controversy earned the most used hashtag in northern Nigeria, so you might have come across it somewhere unless you were not on socials.

As I said earlier it all started with a post—not really just a post, can you remember one Sina_girl saga in the media? The one that started on tiktok and ended to X. Yeah that very one, oh yes, now you are looking at me with a look of know why.

It was a fateful evening, yes that's what I'll call it as it was what lead me to this night of regrets. I was scrolling through my reels on IG when I saw the video, it was a video of a girl at a wedding ceremony. She's a chubby girl dancing to the music. I rushed to the comment section and the comments were kinda healthy, the hate was very low and insignificant.

It might sound weird to you but by Allah I didn't like it, i hate seeing comments like that—like how will you leave a post go unharmful with zero drama and controversy. My mind told me to go tiktok as I'd definitely find what I'm looking for, so I jumped there right away. You know how this social media algorithm works right? It was crazy as the first video I saw was that same one. Joy filled my mind as I started seeing rains of hates comments, people calling her " buhun masara" - A sack of maize in Hausa, the names were dirty and filthy; a person with a functioning brain will feel bad but me no iota of pity or bad rather i felt elated and satisfied like, Baba, this is what i really want. I went through all the comments like a manuscript I was working on.

Instead of leaving it where I saw it, I screenshotted the video and took it to my Facebook page knowing my people there no dey carry last. I made a hate post on that girl using one of the comments from tiktok that I love. As i said earlier the paragraph was just 50 words bodyshaming her, i slept that night feeling a bit sated.

The following day, I logged on my Facebook as early as I could and checked my notifications on Facebook. The post was very engaging; people were busy throwing words on the girl's body, dragging her with some useless and heartless memes. Only a few people were against my post, emphasizing how inhumane I was. One guy asked me if I, as a woman, will drag my fellow woman, then the phrase “ciwon ƴa mace na ƴa mace ne' - a woman’s issue is an issue of women - doesn't exist. Others were telling me to be careful and to not let my actions catch up with me. I pouted, not minding what they were saying, because as far as I was concerned, I have got what Iwanted, why would I care about what they said? Some tagged other people, while some shared their timelines, which I enjoyed more. It meant the engagements will be high and that meant I'll trend more than expected. I turned off my data and started doing some chores, then took my bath and left for school.

Even while in school, I was busy sharing the post with others, and it was more fun because my friends have all these vibes but they were not keyboard warriors like me. They will see a post but won't comment. I noticed there were more comments but it was not the time to read them, I would have to wait till I reach home.

I was inside Keke NAPEP when I started checking my notifications and couldn't wait to go home, as expected it was bunch of new comments but the one that caught mind was one guy that said, "you'd definitely pay for what you did, we'd use you as a scapegoat— an experimental animal." I replied immediately with, "all these your macho will not work, as, there's nothing you can do," hissing out loud as I typed. I presumed he was a clout chaser and an attention seeker — but he's as powerless as his phone. And even if he was powerful, he couldn't do anything to me, as I was not using my name on socials - it was ' K.D_scribbles'. So, I just laughed and shrugged it off like I always do.

As I was in the habit of doing, I screenshoted his comment and made a funny post on my timeline, daring him to do the worst he could. He commented right away with "you won't imagine the worst I would do,' and I didn't reply to him at the moment. I just hissed and put my phone back in my tote bag.

That night, I along with my lackeys—never in my life had I imagined I could get some people to call such— we spent a lot of time replying to him and his group, and we were the most offensive. I was pissed; as I didn't know why this guy was poking his nose into what was obviously not his business, it was just an online dragging which was not for him, so why couldn't he just see and pass? I had to lock up the comments and slept, while feeling the need to strangle him.

I woke up to almost 10 missed calls the following morning, it was pretty insane because it wasn't like me. I could go for good 3 days without missing a single call and I didn't have any boyfriend that would call to check on me. Not that I'm bitter - you see, I can do good for myself without any man, right? It isn't the end of the world. My heart skipped a beat on the sight of the missed calls and I asked myself, "what in the world was happening?" Why were my friends calling me what do they want? Another call interrupted me again and I picked without even knowing who it was until when I heard the voice from the other end. It was Lara, my cousin, and she was asking me what the hell I did. I don't know what she's talking about so i asked what she meant, she didn't answer just said I should go to Instagram and check one famous blog. I did so immediately and was surprised to see my picture with my real name, details and even my page name across socials.

This was the last straw for me, I just don't know how someone dug out everything about me. It wasn't overwhelming me but the sight of a summon letter addressed to me was the Sina family suing me for defamation and cyberbullying. My stomach churned instantly. I had to rush to the toilet due to anxiety. One thing about me is I'm not as scary as I appear online; I can't even hold up to fights in real life and this is happening to me. I stayed in the toilet for a long stretch of time until I couldn't feel my legs. I crawled back to my bedroom and collapsed on the bed, shaking with high fever, while my god forsaken phone won't stop beeping.

I started crying immediately knowing I was a dead rat or worse. My Mom entered to check on me asking why I'm not going to school, I lied that I'm having menstrual cramps. She gave me pain killers alongside my breakfast. I left the room, i didn't eat as i could not work up an appetite just cried until I could no more. I have a test to write in school but I can't even think of leaving this room. This is my safest space right now, leaving it will definitely be the last mistake I'll make.

Eventually I dozed off only to be woken up by my mom, telling me I had a visitor. I looked very worn out, with my PJs and swollen face. I entered the restroom and splashed some water on my face. I put on my hijab to the sitting room where the so-called friend is waiting. She was a middle-aged woman who looked too old to be my friend, not even that I'd never in my life met someone that looked like her. I sat on the edge of the cushion staring at her closely, she was looking at me too and I can tell she was kind of surprised to see me. Like she's expecting something more from me, seeing how observant I was she just smiled, masking her feelings she said " Are you Kande Dauda?"

‘’Yes I am, how may I be of help to you?" I tried to be civil. She didn't respond, just stood up on her feet, brought something out of her hijab – it was handcuffs— and flashed it on my face, finally saying, "you are under arrest".

Then that's it, it had happened beyond what i could think of. I thought they'd only get to me when I go out, but it turns out that wasn't the case. I was arrested in my father's house, in my Mom's parlour and there's nothing I can do about it. I couldn't move and just burst out into tears, the woman didn't seem to mind. She just moved over and started dragging me when Mama came back to the room.

‘’What's going on here?" Mama asked worriedly.

The woman said " I was just following orders Ma'am, your daughter here has committed a cyber crime and she's definitely paying for it".

She stiffened for a moment processing what she heard, before she said " My daughter? Kande? What have you done?".

"It was the devil's doing Mama" I answered, my body shaking with mixed emotions. This isn't what I thought would happen, it was just a joke.

‘’Please officer, lemme call my husband we had.....’’

"I'm sorry ma'am, i can't wait but you can come to the Central police station now you move it" she answered as politely as she could.

I looked at my mom's face one more time before leaving the house, may be I'll be gone forever, may be I'll die in jail behind bars beyond the reach of my parents, far beyond my keyboard and I can't be saved by my words or some other people, i don't think there'll be anyone holding "Justice for Kande" placards. I saw the comments under that blog post, people were glad I'll be caught for my crimes.

They took me to the station in broad daylight, in front of many people—some snapped pictures like uninvited paparazzi. I promised myself no more bad words would emanate from my mouth. Baba, life in police custody isn't anything close to funny, even if you were just passing by. I was brutally beaten, unlocking a hell on earth I didn’t know existed since I was born.

I wasn't taken to the court, you can applaud the Sina family for that. They listened to my parents’ pleas and they let the matter slide after I was asked to make a lengthy post with a video apologising to them along with the girl - who I later knew that she was having a fat digestion disorder with hormonal imbalance - which was what caused her appearance. I did everything I was asked, before they bailed me out. But social media was not fun anymore; people dragged me, making offensive and mean posts about me but i don't even have the courage to reply to them. It was hell of an experience but I was addicted to the media so I can't leave, I had to just swallow the pain. I get to have a test of my own medicine, I get to realize how the other people we mock online feel. How deep it can get, how traumatizing one can get, and how depressing. It isn't easy but I lived through it last year when it was tough and I'll definitely do so for more years to come. It is life anyways. I was left with no other choice but to live it.

The Game She Shouldn't Have Played

When Harir turned fifteen, she begged her mother for a phone.

“Ummiii, " she said, making sure to drag the word to prove her point. "Everyone in my class has one,” she said, her eyes bright with hope.

Her mother - Ummi - frowned. “What will you use it for?...you see, don't even know...let me tell you something, you don’t need it to breathe so you better focus on your studies.” But months of pleading wore Hafsat down and seeing that Harir will soon start exams and needs one for registration and all. She finally bought her a small Android phone - nothing fancy, just enough for schoolwork and family chats. “Make sure you use it wisely,” her mother warned. “If you like to use it anyhow I’ll collect it back, wallahi.

”For a while, Harir kept her promise. She downloaded harmless games and educational apps. But one afternoon, a new game ad popped up: Play & Earn! It claimed players could win weekly cash prizes just by completing simple challenges. The bright colors, the catchy tune....everything felt fun and harmless.

She played, scored points, and was surprised when a message appeared:“Congratulations, Harir! You’ve qualified to be our brand ambassador! Make a short video promoting our app, you’ll earn ₦50,000.”She hesitated but then thought, It’s just a video. " She recorded herself smiling, talking about how much she “earned” from the app, and sent it. She didn’t tell her mum because she wanted it to be a surprise and show her that she was doing something useful with her phone to even earn a few changes on her own. At least that was what she thought.

The next morning, it wasn’t even full since the sun hadn't risen when her phone started buzzing non stop. First it was her classmates that were laughing in group chats. Then later her aunt called, confused. Even her Qur’anic teacher sent a message asking what was going on.

The scammers had posted her video everywhere from WhatsApp, TikTok and even Instagram — tagging her full name, number, and even fake “proofs” of her making millions. They used her face to trick others into downloading their scam.

When her mom later found her she was crying, phone clutched in shaking hands, she didn’t shout at her. She just sat beside her, heart breaking. “You see what I was trying to protect you from,”she whispered, "Give me the phone back and don’t think you’ll even get it anytime soon. She made sure that Harir deleted all her accounts.

For days, Harir couldn’t go to school. Her classmates mocked her, strangers texted her, and her video kept spreading. Even after her mother reported the account, copies of the video kept surfacing on random pages.

That night, her mother sat by her daughter’s bed, scrolling through her own phone. Every parent’s nightmare stared back at her: stories of stolen identities, scam victims, and teenagers lured by fake promises.

She realized it wasn’t enough to say don’t use the phone. The world had changed. What she needed to do was teach her daughter how to use it safely and how to question what seems too good to be true.

Weeks later, everything seemed to have calmed down now and movies when hafsat returned the phone to harir, she didn’t give a lecture. She just said quietly, “This world can be kind, Harir — but only to those who know where to place their trust.”Harir, clutching her phone, nodded with tears in her eyes. She finally understood.

At first, I thought it was just a small network issue. Maybe the app logged me out or something. But after trying again and again, that quiet panic started building inside me. Something was wrong.

Back then, I barely knew anything about two-step verification or online security. Honestly, it never crossed my mind that someone could target an account like mine. A small, harmless page with random posts and everyday stories. I wasn't a celebrity. I wasn't even trying to be one. I was just a girl building something slowly, patiently.

That account meant so much to me.

It wasn't just a page, it was my beginning.

I created it back in secondary school when posting a selfie or a random thought felt like sharing a piece of my little world. Every like, every comment, every friend request... they all meant something. They made me feel seen.

Over time, I started nurturing that page with purpose. I told myself I'd grow it to 10,000 followers. Not because I wanted fame, but because I wanted to prove that my voice could travel beyond my small circle.

And I was getting close. Eight thousand followers already.

My posts were starting to gain attention. People recognized my name, not just for what I posted, but how I said things. It was slow growth, but it was mine.

Still, I made a mistake I didn't even realize was dangerous.

My login details were just my phone number and a simple password. My surname and date of birth. It felt easy, harmless... until it wasn't.

Then one morning, I woke up and couldn't log in. My password had been changed. My recovery number was gone. Everything I had built disappeared right before my eyes.

I just sat there, frozen. My eight thousand followers, my pictures, my memories... all gone. I tried everything I could, but it was too late. It wasn't just about losing a page. It was like watching years of effort crumble in seconds. I thought starting again would be simple. Just open a new account and move on.

But it wasn't.

Days turned into weeks before I could even try. Every time I thought about creating a new profile, it felt empty. Like I was forcing myself to rebuild a house that had already burned down.

When I finally did, it didn't feel the same because my old friends list was gone.

The familiar names that used to fill my notifications, the people who laughed, commented, and grew with me, were nowhere to be found. Only a few found their way back.

The rest were lost in that hacked account, somewhere I could never reach again and then came the hardest part: my videos.

Those short clips I had saved for future use. Ideas. Content. Those tiny sparks of creativity that meant so much to me. Each one held potential, a glimpse of the brand I wanted to build. They weren't just files. They were my plans, my dreams in motion.

And just like that... gone. I was in severe pain.

It wasn't just about losing followers or friends. It was the feeling that a piece of my digital identity had been erased. Every time I saw someone else's page grow, I'd think of mine. What it could have been if I hadn't lost it because starting over was harder than I imagined.

It wasn't just about rebuilding numbers. It was about rebuilding confidence and that it took time. Time passed, but the memory of losing that account never really left me.

For a while, I treated social media like a wound. Too painful to touch, too sensitive to trust again. But deep down, I knew I couldn't stay away forever. I still had stories to tell and Ideas to share. I had dreams that deserved a voice. So, I came back. Not as the same girl chasing likes, but as someone wiser.

This time, I didn't just open an account, I built a foundation.

I learned about two-step verification, stronger passwords, and how to protect what I create. I stopped comparing numbers and started focusing on impact.

Instead of posting for validation, I posted with intention. To inspire, to educate, to connect with meaning. Then slowly, I realized something powerful. Losing that account hurt, but it also pushed me toward a deeper purpose.

It taught me that followers can come and go but growth, real growth, stays and now, every post I share carries a piece of my journey.

From curiosity to caution; from loss to learning. From being hacked to becoming aware.

I still dream big, but this time, I protect those dreams with wisdom and boundaries.

Because now I know that one can rebuild numbers, but not innocence and that one can restart an account, but not trust and yet, I'm proud, because what I lost taught me to value what I have.

So yes, my Facebook got hacked but in the end, it taught me something I'll never forget.

The internet isn't as innocent as it looks. Behind those screens are people who prey on trust, curiosity, and carelessness but even in that pain, I found a lesson, that hackers can steal your account, but not your passion. They can take your audience, but not your purpose.

I learned, I healed and I started again.

Poetry...

Seen, Not Safe



I learned to exist in pixels,

soft smiles behind a glowing screen,

where hearts react in silence

to things they've never truly seen.

They called me beautiful at midnight,

then cursed me in the morning light,

a stranger's love turned weapon—

kind words sharpened into spite.

My name became a whisper,

passed through threads and hidden lies,

they touched me without knowing—

through messages and watchful eyes.

But still I type my truth loud,

my voice refusing to erase,

for every girl they tried to silence

is learning to take up space

Zara raised her fork to her mouth, her eyes fixed on the table. She had no appetite, a slap thrown on her face from across the table, she had to make sure to make her plate empty. After dinner was over, she settled herself in her bed, took a book and began to read. Her mother walked into her room, shot her a glance and left. She sighed and carried on, taking a pen , she tried to write but couldn't, Zara felt her hands vibrating, tears, she was crying. Her parents will never accept her dreams of becoming a writer. They called it a waste of time. And once her father mentioned that ladies should never read, they had only confused them. Her mother only saw a woman's value in marriage. But Zara wanted to empty her ink, to bring ideas to life.

The next morning, she got ready for school and headed out. In class, she sat at the front row. The results for their English test had been distributed, and She was the second with the highest grade. Zara and her classmate were asked to remain in class after closing hours. The teacher congratulated her classmate and showed him his way out. While he asked her to come forth for some questions.

"Your essay is impressive, why don't you pursue writing? I specifically like the perspective you came from." he complimented

All she said was " I came to school to study and not write"

it earned her a glare and he dismissed her. Back home she couldn't help but smile at her grade. This served as encouragement. Zara decided to take a big step, post online, it was dangerous and she knew if her parents were to find out only God knows her faith. She hesitated then pushed her thoughts aside. She opened an account, and began posting.

Three weeks of consistency, she earned 50 followers. Friday morning, she got a message from a writer in Rwanda who found her writing fascinating. He complimented her work and sent her a link which led her to a club for creatives. He was so interested in getting to know her, they had video calls twice a week.

"Let's not talk about Chimamanda or Wole , in fact let's abandon writing, tell me about yourself, I want to know you" he said once during a conversation.

" There isn't much about me to tell

" she said"

Come on , tell me about your family friends" he continued"

Well I am not really the one to go around with friends.... And my family, well I am an only child, and my parents are fine"

" I am glad they are, and you should start making friends. "he said with a small laugh.

" Yeah I want to , but my parents don't like friends," she replied. Her body was trembling, now she was crying, he watched her, shame washed over her.

And Zara could not hold it in anymore; she told him everything, and for the first time, she could breathe.

He stood by her and always gave words of consolation. This helped her overcome her fears and grow a thick skin against her parents' insults. He always sent her banners, links and contacts, anything to push her to success. She felt safe when speaking to him.

The African Union, once a year, search for young writers to nurture; awarding them with an opportunity to be essayists and novelists representing the continent and along with a prize 300,000 Dollars.

Zara saw the banner and sent it to her friend, who had been afflicted with a serious flu.

"Look at this: it's perfect for you, you are more experienced than I am; you have a better chance," he said.

"It's a big opportunity, but the deadline is in three days,

“ she complained.

"Well you could win money lasting you 30 years, I don't see why you won't do it,

" she argued.

" I am weak, I am barely talking and you want me to write, I cant,

" he said.

" So the opportunity should just go to waste?" she asked.

"Why don't you do it?"

He offered

"Me?”

"Yes you.”

"I have only been writing for like a year and half, there are going to be thousands of experts”

"It does matter, but who knows, just try”

"fine, I will try then." and with that she grabbed her pen, crafted a brainstorming and submitted.

Zara preferred to wear flats on her graduation but her mother insisted heels were more beautiful. She wore it anyway. Her father was waiting alongside the photographer for the last shot. They were in haste as they arrived 20 minutes late, speeches had been given and now they settled themselves in their seats. There was a ping on her phone, an email, she opened it, just to see that she was the winner of the AU competition, she beamed with joy and excitement.

"Calm down, your name will soon be called," her mother scolded. Just then her name was called and she received the award and returned to her seat. 5 minutes later, she excused herself and called her friend immediately.

"I won", she beamed.

"You did? I am so happy for you! Send me a screenshot," he said, sharing her joy.

After the graduation, Zarah sat her parents down, told them the news. Her mother burst into tears, apologizing for her disapproval, and her father only remained silent and when he spoke, and said,

"Forgive me, my daughter. I belittled your capabilities and dreams.

"All Zara could do was let the tears roll down her cheeks, a mix of joy, excitement and relief.

She found support and courage in a complete stranger online.

Poetry...

She logs in



She logs in like a prayer

to the glow that knows her

better than mirrors.

Here, she is light

until they dim her

with hungry thumbs

and sharpened words.

“Send.”

“Show.”

“Prove.”

Language enters her body

like something taken.

She becomes a rumor

with perfect resolution.

But now she names the fire:

I am not your silence

By **Yagana Muhammad Goni**

In medicine they teach you asepsis early.

Five minutes at the sink. Palms. Backs of hands. Between fingers. You scrub until your skin feels thin. In the theatre, you walk in with your hands raised and elbows tucked, careful not to touch the world.

In the ward, you learn to be just as careful.

My phone vibrated in my scrub pocket while I was revising PICTURE for a bedside quiz. I let it ring once. Then again. The third time, I stepped into the stairwell and checked the screen.

A screenshot.

A "friends" group on X.

The image was grainy, taken from the corner of a hallway during my last rotation. I was standing beside a male colleague, both of us bent over the same textbook. I was laughing. He was pointing at a diagram I no longer remember.

The moment had been small, but the caption was a heavy thing.

My karma was now a public square. People I did not know spoke with the certainty of witnesses. Some were amused; others were offended on behalf of a tradition they thought I was breaking. None of them had been there.

Another notification. Then a third.

I read a few lines. Scrolled once. My thumb hovered, then stopped.

A nurse walked past the stairwell, her rubber soles squeaking on lino. I shifted my weight, adjusted my stethoscope, and stood still until the sound faded.

When I stepped back into the ward, nothing had changed.

The young girl in Bed 4 was awake. She was watching me the way patients do—with quiet expectation.

I slipped the phone back into my pocket. It felt like a hot coal against my hip. And heavier than it should have.

"Are you in pain?" I asked, reaching for her chart.

She shook her head.

I checked her IV line. Wrote a note about fluid intake. I did not look at the door.

By evening, I sat on the edge of my hostel bed and blocked the accounts. Reported the posts, one by one, watching the automated replies appear. The platform responded so politely as if harm could be acknowledged into disappearance but the picture was still out there, drifting through the streets of Yanar Gizo.

The next morning, the sun was already sharp before I reached the hospital.

Same ward, same rows of metal beds and the same sharp tang of methylated spirit.

At the entrance, I paused longer than necessary. I reached up, tucked a stray strand of hair and adjusted my hijab until it sat properly. I smoothed the front of my white coat. Checked nothing in particular and everything at once.

Bed 4 smiled when she saw me approaching. I smiled back, professional and steady.

Before the consultant arrived for the round, I walked to the sink. I turned the tap and let the water run cold. I washed my hands for the second time that hour.

They were already clean.

Poetry...

My screen is a country



My screen is a country
where cities are cages,
hurting more
than the hidden folders
we bury in our galleries.
In my country,
there's no map to heaven,
just like there's no map for hurt.
Still, pain disguises itself
as "anonymous."A confrontation
too scared to face the body,
yet somehow finds its way
into shattering the soul
into a dungeon of unforgetfulness.

I've made it as far as Habiba's gate, but now that I'm here, I'm hesitating. I don't know if it's courage that brought me here, or just another surrender, the same mistake that started this whole mess.

I knock now, but while my hand waits, my heart prays it stays locked.

I look at the phone in my hand. It's the reason I'm standing here. It all started with a notification...

"Anything for me tonight?" The message flashed while I was busy sending the money he'd asked for.

He was always asking for an urgent 5k. He'd call me names that made my head spin. But I kept telling myself that I was in control, giving because I chose to, not because his sweet talk had its hooks in me.

"Hajiyata," he replied to the receipt I shared, ending it with a heart emoji. "Nagode sosai. Sai kin ji ni," he added

"Hmm, is that my new name?" I replied.

Usually, I was just Qauna. He only used my real name when he wanted a lie sound like the truth. In those moments, I was Kulthum.

He ignored my question and asked again. "Anything for boo?"

I didn't pretend. I answered him as I usually did, what he called unromantic.

He was always pushing me to be naughty, sending his own nudes and blaming me for not doing the same. He called it love and trust, saying he only did those things with me. But I couldn't bring myself to do it. That night, he got the best of me. I sent a nude, view once. He complained immediately, saying he hadn't used restrictions with his own photos and I should do the same to prove my love.

So, I sent it the way he liked. It wasn't that I didn't know it was wrong or that he was using me; I just felt like doing it. But I regretted it the second it delivered.

He kept up the flattery, but I couldn't go along. I went offline and stopped the chatter. I didn't hate him yet; but myself for crossing my own boundaries. He spent a week trying to convince me it was just love and fun, until finally, I started to feel free with him again.

The next time he tried his luck, asking to make a baby, I refused, ending with the fact that it was Haram. To my surprise, he simply sent back my nude. "Is this not Haram too?" he asked.

And all of a sudden, love and fun turned into a threat. And I couldn't hold it anymore.

With all fear and shame, I reached out to my sister. To my relief, she didn't focus on my mistake. Instead, she persuaded me that I had been used and it wasn't my fault. She told me to forget about him and feel free. Sharing it finally relieved me. I realized that the truth was the only thing that could break the cage he built.

They call me strong online, as if strength is what happens when no one sees you flinch.

It is easy to sound unbreakable when there is a screen between my body and the world. My words do not stutter there. They arrive composed, certain, as if they have never been interrupted.

But online is also where I learned I am not always safe. nl thought I had a friend in him, or so I assumed. A simple 'hey' became a doorway I did not realize I had opened. He waited there patiently, counting and scheming his next moves, waiting for the moment I would soften, lower my guard, and mistake familiarity for safety. It began like flirting; light, harmless, almost stupid in its ease.

"What are you wearing?" he would ask, like it meant nothing."Akisa," I would answer jokingly, rags.

He laughed like we were sharing something private.

Then the tone changed, without warning, without apology.

"What do you look like right now?"

"Send me something."

"Don't be like that.

"At first, I told myself it was nothing, that this was how people spoke online and I was simply unfamiliar with the language of digital closeness.

I did not know that silence is also participation when you do not yet know you are being shaped.

The intensity of his messages doubled. At nights, in the mornings and virtually every single time. When I did not respond, he returned with softness that felt like pressure.

"I thought we were close."

"I trusted you."

"Don't do this to me.

"Somewhere in that repetition, I stopped feeling like a person replying and started feeling like something that is being tracked.

Then one day, I did it: A harmless picture, that was all it took.

I posted it without thought, just light, just a moment of me existing. I was fully covered.

Nothing exposed that I had not chosen.

But choice was not what they saw, they saw access. The comments came before I could even name what was happening and my digital presence was rewritten in real time by people I did not know and my silence became permission they invented.

Then the messages stopped pretending.

Some praised me, and some assumed. Some even spoke to me like my body had already agreed to them. I stopped opening the messages, but they did not stop arriving. I tried to reduce myself. I posted fewer posts and even less fewer pictures. Less of me offered a place that never stopped taking but that changed nothing.

Different accounts. Different names. Same hunger.

And slowly, I understood what I did not want to understand, that it was never about me or the picture. It was neither the caption nor the timing; it was always the intention of those who looked.

A person who chooses to violate will always find something to justify it.

They called me strong but they do not see the hesitation before I post or how many times I type and delete before I post. To survive, I had to learn to live in fragments.

But I am still here. and I am still writing for the girls who are told to be careful when, what they actually mean is: vanish quietly. Even here, even in the place that reaches me through a screen, I refuse to remain silent. Not even when they try to turn me into something they can consume.

Poetry...

Two versions of me



There are two versions of me,

one the world sees as bold and shameless,

adorned in revealing clothes,

praised loudly, blamed by none.

I laugh while scrolling through comments,

living in borrowed luxury and spotlight,

soft smiles wrapped in filters,

too distant to touch reality.

But there is another...

the one behind the scenes,

weighed down by untold stories,

silent without the ding of notifications.

I try to be seen, heard, and understood,

yet shrink under invisible judgement,

living between “online” and “unseen,”lost between truth and performance.

By **Fatima Ahmad Dagona**

Story...

I was that curious, naive girl from a family where access to social media only came after secondary school. The day I finally created an account, I was filled with excitement. The flood of friend requests, the thrill of connecting with yanar gizo. It felt like I had finally joined my mates.

I remember uploading some pictures, not one I can be proud of now. My uncle saw it and asked me to delete it. I struggled to explain that I was only trying out new features. Maybe I was embarrassed. Maybe I didn't even have the words yet. But I deleted it anyway.

The first time it happened, I smiled. It was a random message request. A man I didn't know called me "dear." After a series of unanswered messages, he kept asking why I was "pretending to be hard to get." I almost ignored it. Almost. But then, he sent me a photo I had deleted weeks ago. I was not happy someone had it without my consent. That was the first time I felt it—that quiet, unsettling fear. The kind that bubbles in your stomach and sends you rushing for safety in the restroom, even when you don't fully understand why. I began blocking the trouble, the pressure, the strange sense of being watched. And slowly, something shifted. The internet was no longer just a place I visited to grow, learn, or connect. It had become a place that watched me back. I remember asking myself these questions over and over again. "Why can't I just show up here and be me? Why do they feel I am so entitled? Why can't I reply when I want to? Why send the images I never asked for? Why the harassment everyday?

"I now find myself pausing every time I want to post a picture. Pictures that once felt like small pieces of freedom. My smile, my growth and my everyday moments. Because my presence could be questioned. Maybe claimed and often corrected. The internet no longer feels like a window. It feels like a room with invisible doors, where anyone can walk in, but I must constantly think about how I exist within it. Today, I am still here posting and still speaking. But now, I am conscious—deeply aware of the weight of being seen, and more careful of who feels entitled to that visibility.

Because the internet is never just tender or brutal. It is both actually. And somewhere between the likes and the encounters, I have learned this: yanar gizo asks you to be bold enough to put yourself out there....While quietly convincing you that shrinking was your idea all along but never protects you from the cost of being seen.

If I had kept my eyes closed, maybe it would have been easier. The light above me was too bright. It pressed against my eyelids even when I tried not to see it. For a second, I didn't care where I was, whether I was alive or dead - or I was somewhere in between. It didn't matter. Anywhere was better than scrolling.

There was a beeping sound that was slow and annoying. I opened my eyes properly this time. Hospital. So it didn't work. I turned my face slightly to the side. The scar stretched with the movement. I could feel it even without touching it– the thick line running from my cheekbone down toward my jaw. I got it when I was three. Fell from a wooden bench in school. Everyone says it's not that bad. It was never "that bad" until the internet saw it.

It started with an argument. Just one stupid argument under a post. He couldn't win, so he typed it. That name. A twisted version of my real one, reshaped around the scar.

I laughed at first. Other people did too. They liked it and reposted it, and even used it in the comments. By the next day it was under three different pictures of me. By the end of the week it was everywhere; in my DMs and on my tagged photos. Even people who didn't follow me were using it.

The worst day was when I saw him, the guy I had a quiet crush on like a tweet that called me that name. That was when it stopped being a joke.

I stopped posting pictures. Then I stopped posting at all. But I couldn't stop checking. I would delete the apps, reinstall them two hours later. Search my own name. Search the nickname. It felt like watching people gather around a fire that was me. Someone said, "It's just online."But online followed me outside.

At the grocery store, I felt eyes on my cheek. In traffic, I turned my face away from car windows. A neighbour's daughter giggled one afternoon and I was sure it was about me.

Even when my phone was off, it wasn't off in my head.

The pills started small. Something a friend said would "help you relax." And they did. For a few hours, the name blurred. The comments felt far away. My reflection felt softer.

So I took more, and more again. Until the night the room spun too fast and the ceiling wouldn't stay still. Now I'm here, with tubes, and white sheets. My mother crying quietly like she thinks I can't hear her. The scar is still on my face. The name is probably still trending somewhere. But I'm still here too. And for the first time in weeks, my phone is not in my hand. But still, I can hear it.

I imagine it is already a blurry hospital photo someone somehow gets. A tweet: "Remember that girl with the scar?" Another post: "Drug abuse is real. Pray for her." Sad emojis. Fake concern.

Thread after thread pulling my name apart again. The same media that laughed. The same media that gave me a new identity. Now discussing my breakdown like it's content. I can almost see the comments: "She couldn't handle it." "It was never that serious."

“Attention.”

My chest feels tight, but no tears come. I close my eyes again. Not because I’m tired. Because I want to go back to that first second, the moment before I understood where I was. The moment when I thought maybe I was somewhere else.

I hold onto the darkness behind my eyelids, hoping that when I open them again, I won’t feel this heaviness. Hoping I won’t feel weak. Hoping I won’t care.

But I know I will open them. And I know the world will still be there.

The scar.

The name.

The internet. And me.

Still here.

Poetry...

Dear God



Dear God,

save us from the violence that comes

dressed as opinions

from people who bruise a woman

without ever standing in the same room.

Ameen.

The screen is now a second home

for women to bleed—in silence,

unseen, like their conversations with God.

Every day a girl logs in

is like stepping into a house of glass walls

that reflect brokenness

and protect nothing

where a name becomes a target,

a body becomes a debate,

and ideologies sharpen on tongues

like knives never used.

Poetry...

A girl speaks



Someone faraway in Ibadan
is writing the feelings I thought were mine,
putting into words
what I am only just learning to hold.

In this zaure, Mark's Zaure,
silence is rarely empty
even the unkind things,
find somewhere to rest.

A girl speaks,
and her voice travels
through endless scrolls, without asking,
finding its way into another screen, another chest.

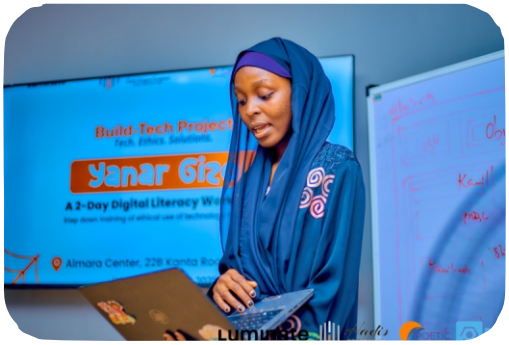
And somewhere,
someone understands.

I have lived my 40s,70s and 20s through the lens of others. You could call me a collector ofsecondary trauma. I have never truly lived—not when my future is gripped by the wickedclutches of other people's pasts. My therapist says trauma erases what should bebefore it ever is.My name is Nbizike, a 25 year old who has lived; lived too deeply in the experiences of others.A collector. A graduate, even; BSc in OGBV, BSc in Rape. Degrees earned notby choice, but by exposure.I remember the first time I saw it, a mob attack, on Twitter. They find a target and, citing failedgovernance, shoot their arrows at one of their own. Her story mirrored mine: a single motherescaping a physically abusive relationship, where sextortion became a tool of control. Theyjudged her, scrutinized her morality, and reinforced the power her abuser held over her.I knew that kind of unraveling.I would cut myself in every place I held a memory of your father's touch. I bit my lip each time Icalled his name. I filled my mind with horror so I would never cling to the possibility that hispromises were real. I know what it must feel like, shredding the parts of you still tied to anabuser.Okoi, every time a keyboard warrior attacks a victim, they forget there are thousands of silentwomen watching. We see how those brave enough to speak are torn apart by the very handsthey hoped would help. I am not broken by my ex's sextortion, his cyberstalking, or hisdeepfakes. I am broken by the hopelessness that follows when the bold try to speak. What hopedo i have? What help can I find?I hoped you would be different, someone who interrupts harm, who offers beliefwhere others offer doubt. As a one-year-old, the gift of innocence will not let you understand theweight of what Iwas saying. But I couldn't stop. Pain does not wait for comprehension. I feared that decadesfrom now, you might become one of them—your father or those strangers on Twitter.2 decades later, I recall when I first found safety in your quiet listening. The silence ofeleven-year-old Okoi, absorbing, hearing these words until they settled as truth let pain that wasnever yours began to feel familiar. Until fear, shame, and silence was learned long before theywere lived.That is how trauma multiplies. How wounds become inheritance.So I told myself I must heal now, for you and for me.But a mother never stops watching. A decadesince I started healing, 45 yet to be fortified,I remains Nbizike—that 25-year-old who lived manylives.

While you have become what I feared. A man who absorbs, carries, fights. Did I fail you? Didmy unhealed trauma become your burden?There is a truth I struggle to name. Indeed, i did not escape.I may have passed it on. To you.

Gallery


Tech Project
Ethics. Solutions.
Road, Kaduna

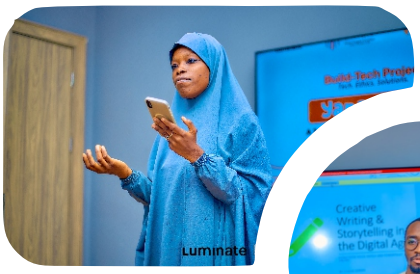

Build-Tech Project
Tech. Ethics. Solutions.
A 2-Day Digital Literacy




Luminate






Luminate




Luminate
Build-Tech Project
Tech. Ethics. Solutions.


Luminate



Build-Tech Project

Tech. Ethics. Solutions.

ISBN 978-978-68-7620-7