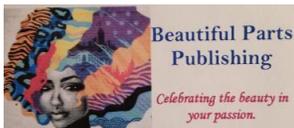


The Way of All Womankind

Selected Poems

Frances Ohanenye



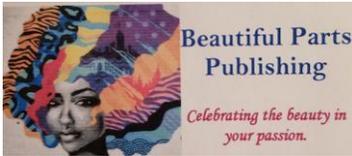
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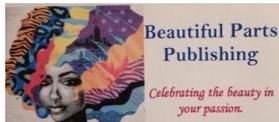
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Preface: Poet's Intention

The title of this book is borrowed from wise King David's last words to his wisest son, Solomon: "I am going the way of all mankind. Take courage and be a man."

The intention's intention is to ask that find time to love, be loved, cherish, be cherished, and find more time to "cook" for one another. The essence of poetry is that it calls to you and causes you to relate to it. I hope you find yourself in the pages of *The Way of All Womankind*

Women, we of drama and trauma, even though memories make us want and wonder, those same memories keep us warm and make us wander with starry eyes as we hope for another such rare feelings.

If we find love the first time, and it lasts us a lifetime, that is truly true happiness. If the first time was a learning experience and we find it the second time, we are even better off because of the lessons we learned the first time. When you find true love, *take what you can live with and leave alone that which you cannot take.*

With much affection,

Frances Ohanenye (Poet, author, educator, etc.)

The Way of All Womankind

When a woman rules, streams run uphill.

--Ethiopian proverb

She Who Must Be Obeyed

There I was a new woman
Hadn't tasted sugar yet
But the Sun turned and smiled
(I looked left and looked right)
At me?

I stood bolt up
My hands found my hips
The Sun became my eyes
My feet grew to prancing
My body sprang to dancing.

There I was a new woman
Hadn't tasted honey yet
And the rain slanted and bowed
(I looked right and looked left)
To me?

I smiled at the world, and
One new man was infected
Tall and handsome like an
Iroko whose tone was poured
On from the skin of that tree

But he must fit into my kingdom
If our looks should merge. He
Flung indulgent neck back and
Laughed the sound of music
That emptied on my skin in the

Goosebumps that stood my hair on
End. He stretched out iroko hands
(I looked left and looked right)
To me?
He worshipped my mind and turned
Me into She Who Must Be Obeyed.

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Yesterday's Face

People never should want to wear yesterday's face.
It should be exchanged from its decreased value
From the breath bartered with the dragon
The eyes that spread volcanic lava at the edges
The hairy beast emerging from flaring nostrils
With the sheep's hair not sheared for many years
And slept-in skin wrinkled and needing ironing
And teeth filmed over with yellow and bacteria.

Get a new face the new morn is generous to give.
Splash and dash with anticipation soap, and
Trim the beast out of existence and into trash.
Let teeth be the floor, scrubbed, so spic and span.
Sanitize the mouth; send bacteria back to Siberia.
Hire heavy equipment to remove hardened lava
From corners the eyes cannot carry any more.
Run a pick through hair and shape it better
Than the shearer and be your Karla Bernardes.

Give it back. Yesterday is missing its face.

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A View

I shouldn't be here
Feeling out of sorts
With this self-re-invention
Feeling a kinship with the fish
Abandoned by a hasty wave
But I have a view
A majestic, structural view
Of the back of a head
Trimmed and meticulously organized
Saving me from the hum-drum speeches
Of age-old pointless instruction
Short and proper hair
Attempts to magnetize my fingers
To create a five-lane expressway
Through luxurious soft mane
Through which the lectures of
Real estate's dual agencies will converge.

The hair, a confluence of yin and yang
Daylight and night, of youth and wisdom
Was the perfect taste of salt and pepper,
Unpretentious, simplistic, short
With no confusing poignancy
Of too many spices fighting
The taste bud for identification.
The senses are the
Insistence of the lecturing voice.
It was the perfect nape
On which rested
An Empire (head of) State Building
Focused and intelligent
Absorbing arrays of peopled information
An assurance he'll pass this course
And I won't.

Can't Touch This

I met a man who said
Women fail to understand
The workings of the male *bod*
Control is a difficult *thang*
Self-discipline must take over.
That marks the infidels, *whatnot*.

My woman fails to understand
What touching her means
The physical attraction crackles
Like the dry log shouting
From the flaming fire. *You feel me?*

My woman fails to understand
The reason I cannot touch her.
She electrifies my entire being
Sending shock waves of desire
Through my rock-abs *bod*.

I must build a bridge long
Distancing our two loving bodies
Dissuading me from touching her
For the consequence of that touch
I must have her all the time.
You feel me?

Not to run down her body
From loving wear and tear
Not to invade her space all the time
I must allow catching of breath
I must allow her body to breathe
That's why this man can't touch this
Or that. *You feel me?*

I hid mockery in my smile and
Gave him loud silence.

Eye Candy

Oh, this heart, this heart
That seeks affections in high places
Finds rejections in low places. They
Never meet in the same hot breath.

This heart, this heart
Has fractured frequently
Has mended so, so rarely.

This heart, this heart
No longer desires to be loved
For love pangs and love aches
Left serration and burns on
This tender and weak organ.

A new deception I found, not
From love I want that cripples
From love I desire that bleeds

A new illusion I found
To seek out a heart-stopper
Every woman's lustful shame
Eye candy for a woman's ego
Dressed up and dressed to kill
Not to love or be loved tenderly
But to decorate the bare arm
Eye candy for social nous
Can only last a split weekend
Before boredom intrudes and
Demands a real, kissable love.

For now, the eye candy will do
Until lasting love hunts me down.

Cooking for My Man

A labor of love, this was not
A labor. It was not at all.
It was more like a loving journey
Into the realm of the aphrodisiac
I secured these ingredients, followed the recipe
And created a lifetime of servings
A pinch of flirtation
A shake of the shoulders
One drop of innuendo
A sprig of fresh caresses
A jar of sweet nothings
A teaspoonful of sauciness
A pint of coquettish smile
A splash of buttery kisses
A tablespoonful of groundedness
One cup of self-confidence
One bunch of fresh giggles
An ounce of vivaciousness
A pound of intrigue
A packet of honesty
A dash of stubbornness
A can of lasting faith
A smear of fruity lip gloss
A mixture of patience and empathy
A brush of two heated bodies
A slice of sweet innocence
A quart of effusive praises
A spray of heady perfume
A chunk of sassiness
And a toss of the head
I followed these directions very well
Sauté the body with caresses until hot
Raise the temperature further with earlobe nibbles
Dot the skin with massage oil
Moisten and knead until tender
Melt in each other's arms
Marinate desires for several days
Soften the lips with lip gloss and inner thoughts
Heat with a passionate embrace
Pour effusive praises
Let romance simmer for a lifetime

Bring love to a boil
Allow love to overflow
Stir each other's soul until well blended
Drain all negative urges and words
Sieve the clumps of interference
Season love with quick get-aways
Garnish often with surprise gifts
Dip the body when dancing
Dissolve all resolves with pleas
Roll each body around playfully
Peel off outer covering slowly
And let sleep uncovered on summer nights
Allow tempers to cool completely
Sprinkle entire body with hot kisses
Mix in all other ingredients not used yet
Flavor with come-hither looks
Spice up with tantalizing touches
Baste the skin with buttery kisses
Serve with giggles and mutual respect

Makes for a lifetime of servings

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Forbidden

He's not mine to keep beyond now.
He scents the air I breathe with her.
He's not hers in matrimony, but
Her eyes light the room and
Trail his steps from room to
Room, but he laughed once at a
Joke from my vying wit.

Oh, but the forbidden fruit is
raw honey and baffling nectar.
This love I must not steal in
broad daylight. My thoughts
Hide from all eyes, but he begs.
I should quote Emily Dickinson
With "We must keep apart,
You there, I here" and run to
That ocean to douse my despair.

Dare I keep him, he will cost us
Ten years from hop-sotch to now.
Dare I lose him, she will bring me
Shadows of him when she visits,
and I will die in the silence
of the unloved.

But his eyes beg to be stolen but my
feet draw maps on her chaste floor
Afraid she'll see my dark side, when
I wear giddiness like a necklace and
Spring from his touch that scalds
My skin. Euphoria in his whispered
Words races straight to my head.

Dare I give him up?
Dare I give her up?
I must not let him go.
I must not let her go.

A Man Is Never Jealous

I think my man loves me
He perfects the tendrils
Trailing out of my style

I think my man loves me
He demands my wanderings
From Waze, Maps, Map-Quest
Minute by minute journeys
Mile by mile excursions

I think my man loves me
As he attempts a quarantine
Dare I flirt. He scopes
every hip shift, studies
men's affectation as they
Walk on by for devotion
To my numerous body parts

He leaves me in haste and
Returns a minute later
His fishing net heavy with
The catch of his own jealousy
Just drives himself insane
Worrying about other men's
Fishing lines.

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Chase Me

Revved and poised
Anticipation's a speed demon.
Not today, pocket's hollow
But chase me, you can,
Not to enrich Georgia's prize
But to raise my feminine worth

Turn on the special blue and
Chase me till the end of jurisdiction.
While there, wine and dine
This urbane woman. No
Regard for race or hang ups.
Chase me till petrol runs out
Then we must park and talk,
A chance at familiarity
But it ends, dear man in blue.
It ends.

But Chase me till the end of
my curiosity. If interest wanes
I must transfer my gaze to next
Object of attention that grips.
No longer can you pursue me.
Stop, please, stop.

Chase me, dear man in blue
Till the end of jurisdiction.

The Sun and My Pot

The Sun is waiting for an invitation
To enter my house. Its rays lap up
The liquids of my pleasure. I refuse
To throw doors wide with glee for
It might not leave. The Moon is the
lover I feel giddy for with planned
Escapades and mischief, but the Sun
Does not hear me like the husband
Who nods, fills his ears with ocean
Water that my anger cannot empty.

The Sun walks around my house
Searching for hidden entry into my
Sanctuary of calm hues and tender
Air where my sanctity lounges.
The nosey Sun finds a slant through
A window high up in the side and
Forces its way into my cooking pot.
Peeping and zig-zagging, it beams
Blinding flashlight into what's
Cooking, an attempt to get me to
Feel remorse for it and feed it, but

The Moon is who I am waiting for.
Now I wonder, if the Sun can invade
With stealth into my pot in broad
Daylight, will the Moon do the same
When he lights his own path?

A Million Words

I wanted to pen a million words
About how immeasurable your love
And how utterly you've smitten me.
I wanted to sing an eloquent volume
About the deluge flooding my knowing
But the depth swallowed me whole
I could write nor speak nary a word.

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Vivaldi's Haunting

If music be the food of love!
Not food, not love, just music
It had a dying call, this one
After his death, Vivaldi's
Post-humously, it called
This one came, in wisps
A haunting of my female soul
My African female soul
Haunted Shakespeare as well

Wondering if Vivaldi knew
Any African while alive
For the wisps of sound escape
Teasing, taunting me, African
With pauses that caused
One straining after another
Gingerly plucking
My African heartstrings
Used in the making of
His succinct "Siciliano"

Feeling what Shakespeare felt
Haunting me as he
One painful string hesitant
Adds another until the near-miss end
Had I not strained to hear
Would have missed
The liquid point of the strain
The strain falling and dying

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I Don't Know

Exchanged words hung
Dangling like a sun catcher
Belying the beauty of it
Ugliness dripped from the unspoken
Uncertainty chastised my mind
Was that a break up?
Confusion rained on us
Was that a break up?
Who would dare call?
Who would dare ask
The un-askable question?
Should we kiss or forego?
Should we hug or shake hands?
Hugging would be the exchange
Between two strangers uncertain
Of a closer or a distant hug
Should we call or let
Silence take capable control
Like the army drill sergeant
Taking charge of terse words
I don't know if we broke up
I guess time will tell
When no gladness surfaces
When all emotions hide
Like a light under the bushel
I don't know if we broke up
I guess silence will tell.