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SEREN

MAGAZINE

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Hanna Lemma

Kaleab

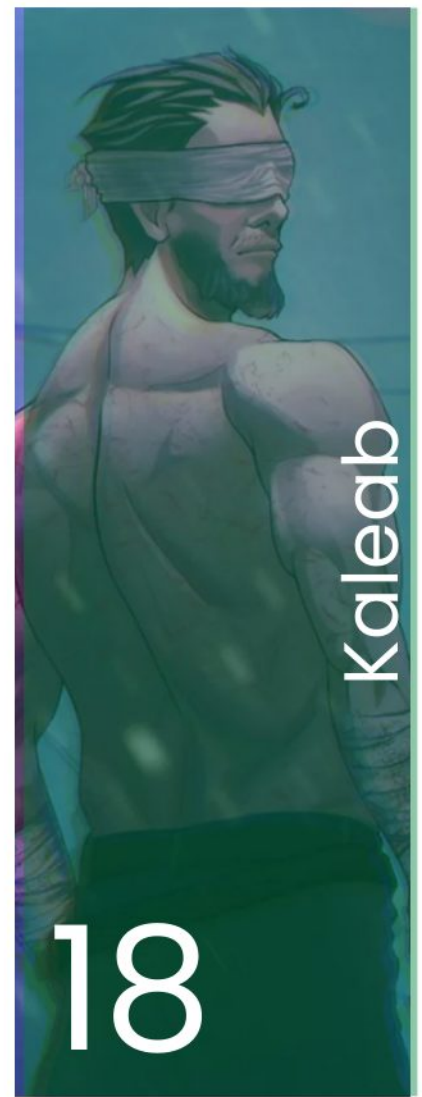
Hermela Mekonnen



Interview with
feminist researcher
and the Founder and
director of
Addis Powerhouse.



Meet Hermela,
a food enthusiast
and founder
of foodcase.

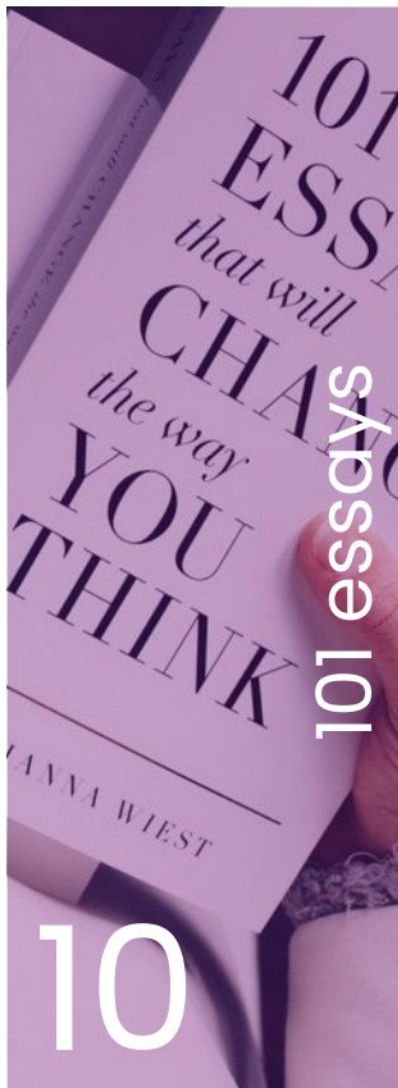


Meet Kaleab,
rising young digital
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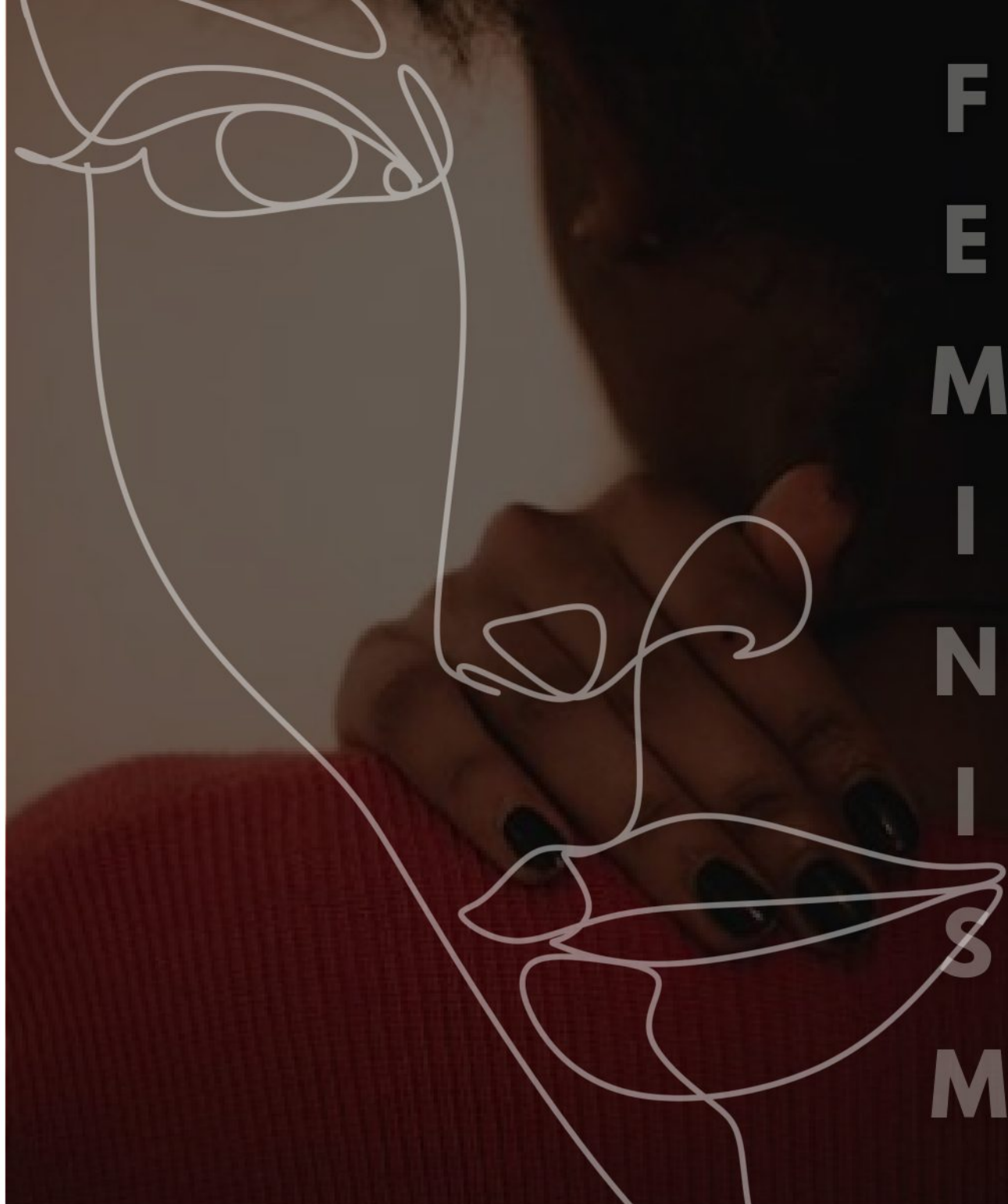


SEREN MAGAZINE

HANNA LEMMA

feminist

Interview with feminist researcher and
the Founder of Addis Powerhouse,
Hannah Lemma.



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Who is Hanna?

I am a feminist researcher, and the Founder and Director of Addis Powerhouse, a youth-led feminist knowledge production platform that conducts digital and physical women's rights advocacy projects in Ethiopia. As far as I can remember, I have been active in the Ethiopian civil society sector, and have conducted several gender researches. I consider myself as an evidence-based activist, particularly as I love reading and writing, and using data to support my arguments. I am also a cat lover and enjoy sketching and find it very therapeutic.

These days a lot of women are uncomfortable with defining themselves as feminist, yet you insist on being identified that way. What does that term mean to you?

This is so interesting because I have actually been reading about that recently - particularly why some women are and could be uncomfortable with the label "feminist". This active dissociation with the term, especially amongst the youth, has to do with stereotypes that are used to defame feminism and its application in Ethiopia. If you look up the term feminism, you can see that the term is actually used to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes.

However, feminists are often associated with man-hating and privilege (e.g., affirmative action) seeking women who are looking to destroy the Ethiopian cultural family structure and value as we know it. As a feminist, I know these claims are false and only reinstated to keep the patriarchy, or the systemic oppression of women and gender inequality, in place.

That being said,
I have no shame in identifying as a feminist, and working to overcome such inequalities in Ethiopia.

How do you see the situation in Ethiopia regarding women's equality and feminism in general?

According to the Global Gender Gap report (2020), it will take the world another century to achieve gender equality, if we continue to move at the pace we are going. For Ethiopia, a country that stands 82nd (from 153 countries) in gender parity, we have an even longer way to go. Countries that have been able to achieve higher scores of gender equality are more economically sustainable and developed, but we shouldn't also discount the role of education and other socio-political factors in overcoming gender inequality.

Ethiopian women still fail to have equal access to educational, economic, and political opportunities as men. Due to these, and other barriers that limit the agency and power of girls and women, gender inequality is further perpetuated in the country. The on-going conflict in the country has also caused a surge in sexual violence as well as economic instability, both of which are more severely felt by women.

This is not to say there is no improvement to the lives and conditions of girls and women in Ethiopia. The country has progressed much in ensuring gender parity in health and education, and political participation of women has shown an improvement. However, the low awareness level within the Ethiopian community about women's rights, values, and experiences is a major struggle we continue to face.

Feminist advocates, groups and organizations in the country are working hard to overcome not only gender inequality, but also false stereotypes about feminism. To do our part, Addis Powerhouse uses evidence-based activism to disseminate information and create awareness in the community. More specifically, our platform aims to equip young people with the knowledge they need to become agents of gender equality

What do you think are some of the factors or obstacles either societal or sometimes even self-imposed that deter women from being seen equally as men? And what can we do as a society to encourage more women?

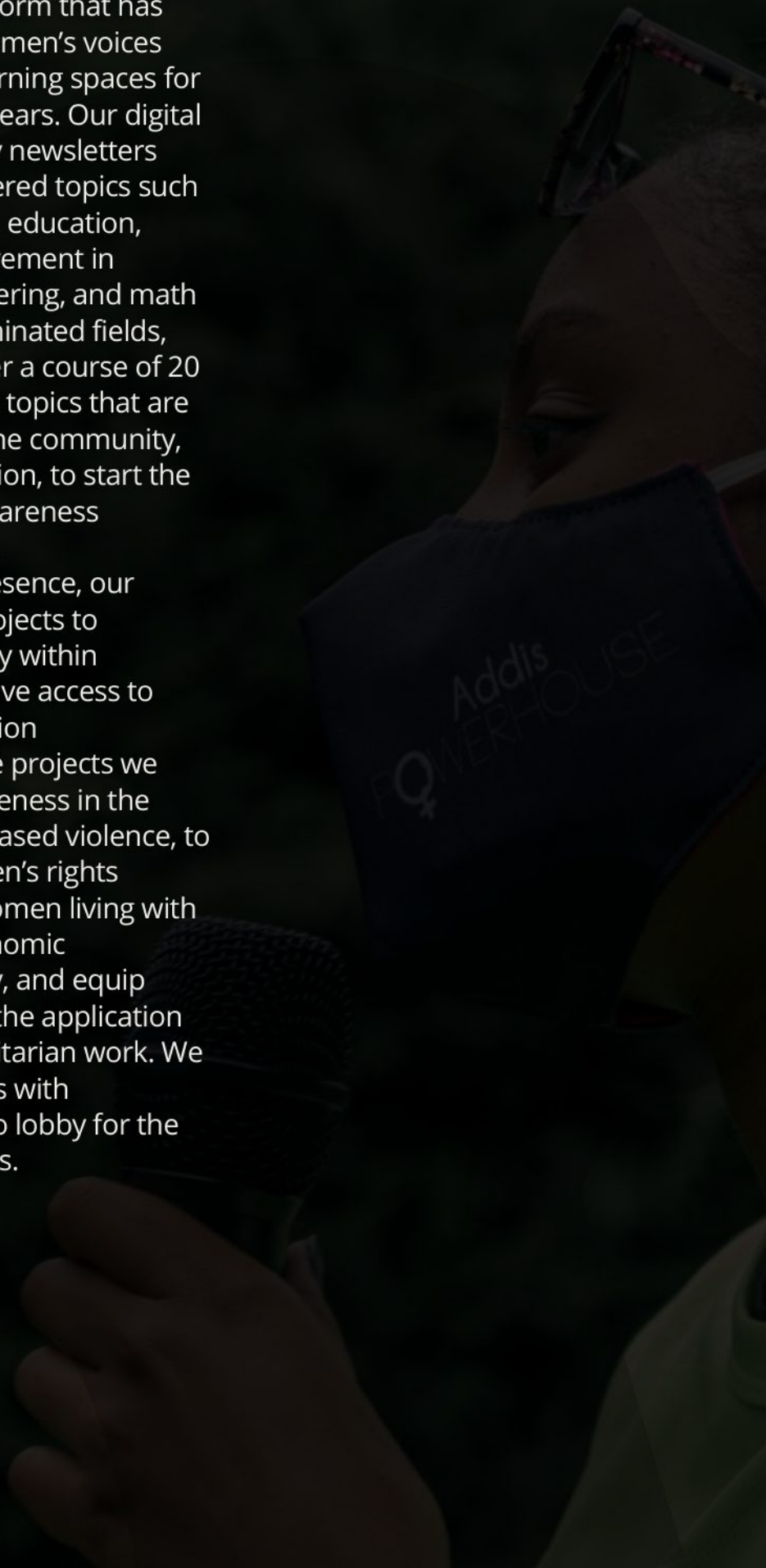
This could be labeled as radical, but if we give girls equal chances as boys, raise them to be independent (as opposed to preparing them to serve men), teach boys to respect girls and to treat them as humans deserving of equal rights and power, stop the abuse and exploitation of women through psychological, traditional (cultural), social, economic, and political means, and stop undermining women's issues - then there is no extra support and encouragement that women will seek from society.

In Ethiopia, similar to the rest of the world, our culture treats women as less than human. We can see a lot of our proverbs and folktales attesting to this truth. However, we have only recognized a very small portion of our culture as "harmful" and reinforce sexist values in the name of culture or through untrue/ misleading religions claims. Culture is also seen as a stagnant principle, as opposed to a dynamic way of life, making it hard to open discussion on several ideologies that question women's rights as humans. To this end, abuse is normalized and justified in our culture, and movements that aim to change this attitude (such as feminism) risk being labeled as evil or "Western".

Tell us about Addis powerhouse and the works you've done.

Addis Powerhouse is a feminist media and knowledge production platform that has been working to amplify women's voices and create participatory learning spaces for the youth for the past two years. Our digital media publishes bi-monthly newsletters that speak on several gendered topics such as women's empowerment, education, political participation, involvement in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and other male-dominated fields, and female role models over a course of 20 Issues. It has also discussed topics that are considered to be taboo in the community, such as sex-work and abortion, to start the conversation and create awareness amongst the greater public.

In addition to our digital presence, our group conducts physical projects to advocate for gender equality within communities that do not have access to internet or telecommunication infrastructures. Some of the projects we have led have created awareness in the community about gender-based violence, to capacitate grassroots women's rights organizations, to include women living with disabilities in the socio-economic development of the country, and equip human rights defenders in the application of a feminist-lens in humanitarian work. We have also held consultations with government stakeholders to lobby for the protection of women's rights.



*What advice would you offer to those
womens who suffer from gender
biases and to the youth?*

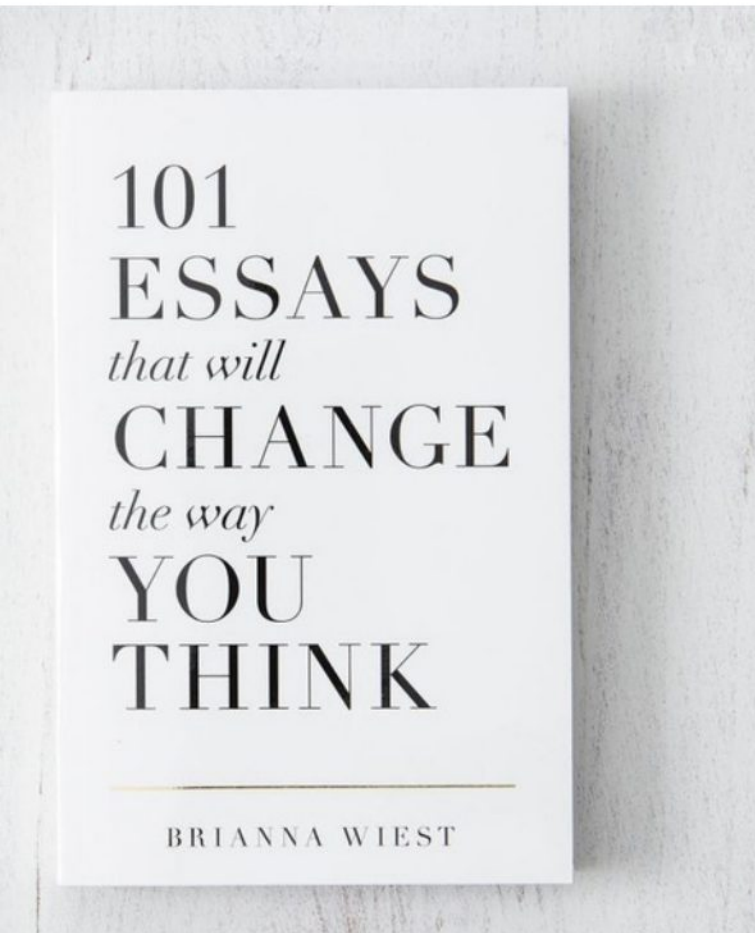
I would advise the youth
to read, to research, and explore
different topics. Our fear of the
unknown, and the assumptions we
make up about what feels foreign,
determines who we are as individuals.
I will say apathy is also our greatest
enemy. Our indifference to what is
happening to groups that we do not
identify with could be dangerous
because we don't know how this social
makeup can be turned against our favor.

To girls and women
who are faced with gender bias, which
unfortunately is every woman in Ethiopia
at this point, know that you are not
alone. Not all of us get the privilege to
act against such biases, not when the
social dynamic makes us dependent on
those that dominate us economically
and socially, but there are still some
things you can do. You can support
other women, believe other women, and
stand with other women - in any and
every way you can.



101 Essays

that will change the way you think



A BOOK BY BRIANNA WIEST

as **Barnes and noble**, this new compilation of her published work features pieces on why you should pursue purpose over passion, embrace negative thinking, see the wisdom in daily routine, and become aware of the cognitive biases that are creating the way you see your life.

READ THIS*if you***'DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE
DOING'
with your
LIFE**

101 ESSAYS THAT WILL CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK | PAGE 83

If you ask any young adult what their primary stressor in life is, it's likely something that relates to uncertainty. If you were to boil it down to a sentence, it would be something along the lines of: "I don't know what I'm doing with my life." How many times have you heard someone say that? (How many times have you said that?) Probably a lot. The idea that we should know is a heaping pile of socially crafted bullshit that's been superimposed on our psyches since kindergarten, and it's holding us back. Nobody—not one of us—knows "what we're doing with our lives." We can't summarize the big picture, not yet. We don't know what we'll be doing in 5 years, and pretending that we can predict that isn't being responsible or ambitious, it's cutting ourselves off from living according to our inner navigation systems as opposed to the narrative we once thought would be right. You owe nothing to your younger self. You are not responsible for being the person you once thought you'd be. But you do owe something to the adult you are today. Do you know why you don't have the things you once thought you wanted? Do you know why you're not the person you once thought you'd be? Because you don't want those things anymore. Not badly enough. If you did, you'd have and be them. If you're wondering "what you should do with your life," it's likely that you're in the limbo between realizing you don't want what you once did, and giving yourself permission to want what you want now.

Thinking you know what you're "doing with your life" quells your hunger. It soothes your mind with the illusion that your path is laid out before you, and that you no longer have to choose, which is another way to say, you're no longer responsible for becoming the person you want and need to be. Hunger is important. Complete fulfillment is the fast track to complacency. People don't thrive when they're fulfilled. They stagnate. So fuck knowing what you're "going to do with your life." What are you doing today? Who do you love? What intrigues you? What would you do today if you could be anyone you wanted? If social media didn't exist? What do you want to do this weekend? "What do I want?" is a question you need to ask yourself every day. The things that run true will weave through your life, the ones that pop back up again and again are the ones you'll follow. They'll become the places you remain, the people you're drawn to, the choices you make. The core truths will win out, even if other truths are lodged beside them. Listening to it is saying: What do I want now?



HERMELA FOODCASE MEKONNEN

Interview with Hermela
Mekonnen, a food enthusiast



Tell us about yourself?

I am Hermela and By day
I am a full-time student at ASTU,
majoring in computer science and
engineering, and by night I am a chef
at my little restaurant in front of
campus.

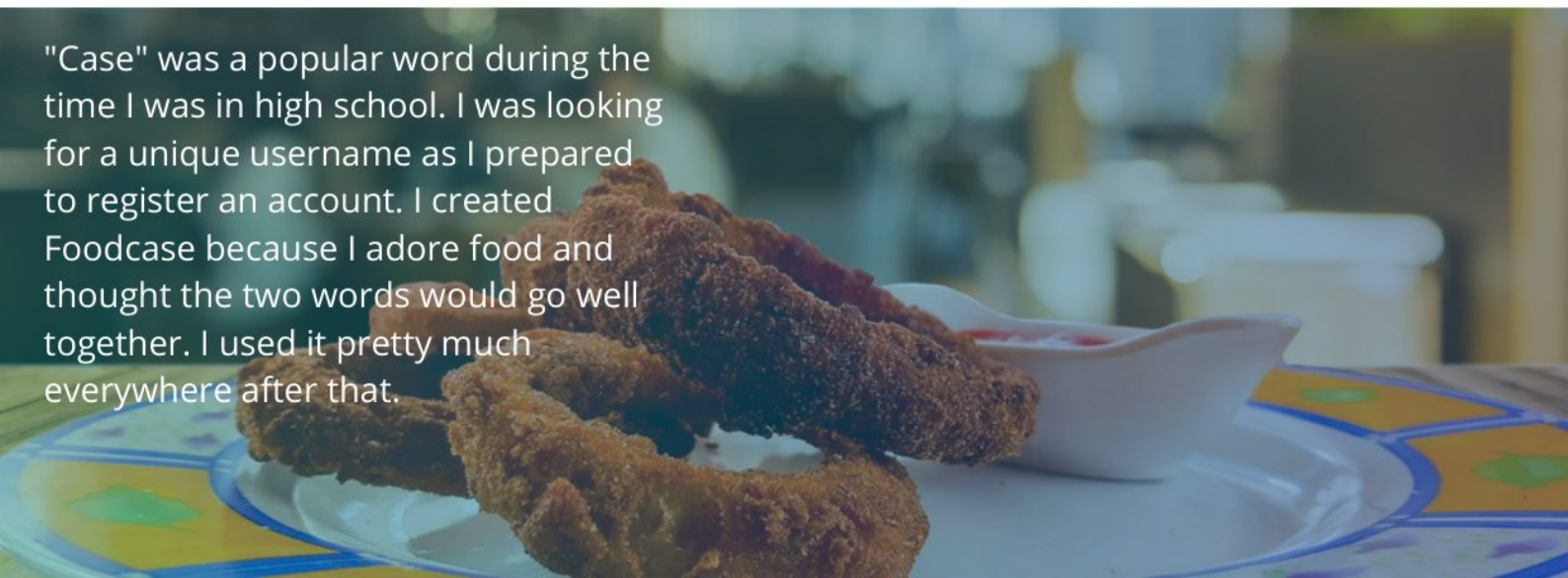
Tell me more about how you became passionate about food?

For many of us, some of the greatest
influences on our love of cooking and
food have been our mother figures.
Growing up, I would always watch my
mom cook, even standing in a chair to
reach the counter because I was so
little. As I got older, I started making
different dishes myself, and I became
more and more passionate about food
and cooking. Even though I said my
mother is the greatest influence, my
dad also enjoys cooking. I suppose it
runs in the family.



How did "Foodcase" start? And what is Foodcase?

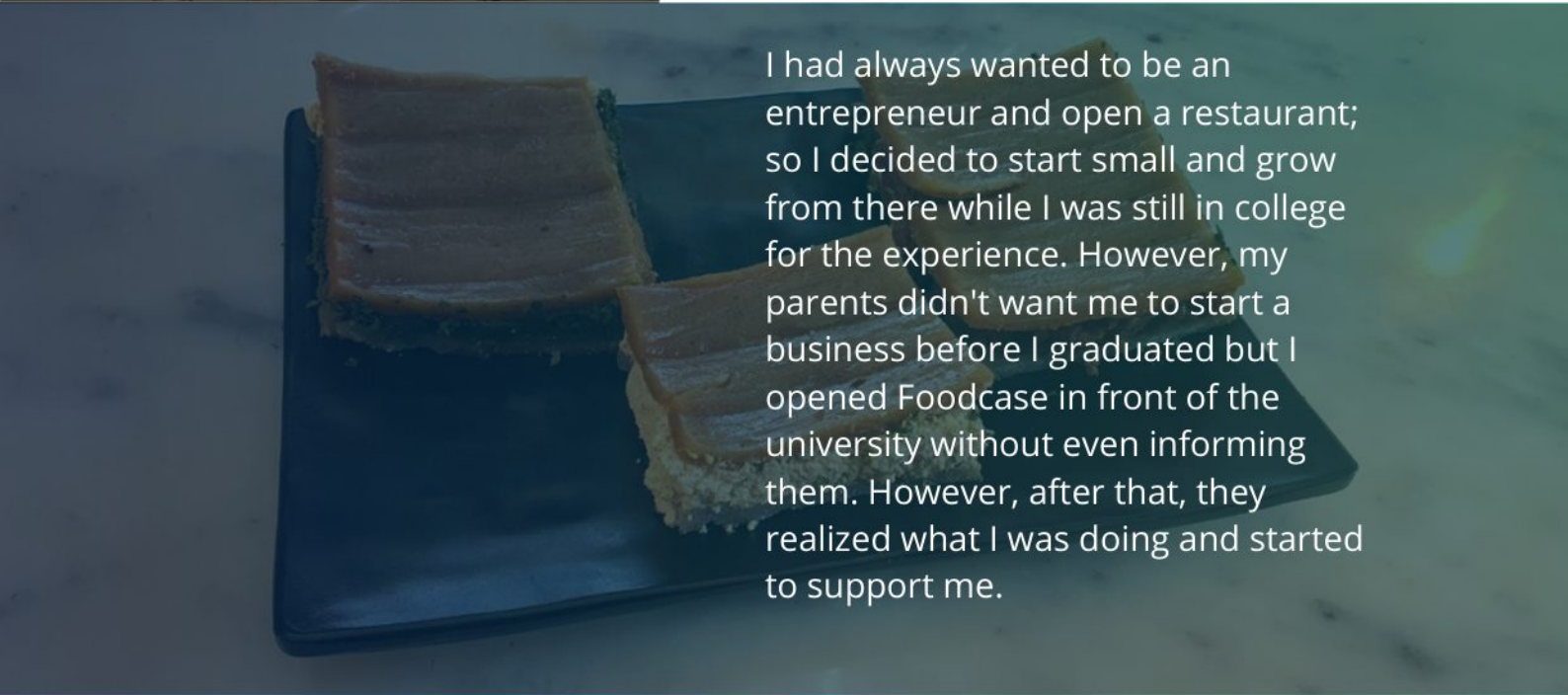
"Case" was a popular word during the
time I was in high school. I was looking
for a unique username as I prepared
to register an account. I created
Foodcase because I adore food and
thought the two words would go well
together. I used it pretty much
everywhere after that.





*Cooking is a chore
for many people,
but it's more than
that for me.*

Cooking is a chore for many people, but it's more than that for me. I cook when I am bored, irritated, frustrated, sad, and so many other times. I also like to take pictures of the food I make and a lot of my friends enjoyed them and pushed me to start producing videos, so I did. But because I was a perfectionist and didn't enjoy my videos, I didn't start sharing them. However, my friends urged me to start with what I had and go from there, so I launched my YouTube channel in 2020.



I had always wanted to be an entrepreneur and open a restaurant; so I decided to start small and grow from there while I was still in college for the experience. However, my parents didn't want me to start a business before I graduated but I opened Foodcase in front of the university without even informing them. However, after that, they realized what I was doing and started to support me.

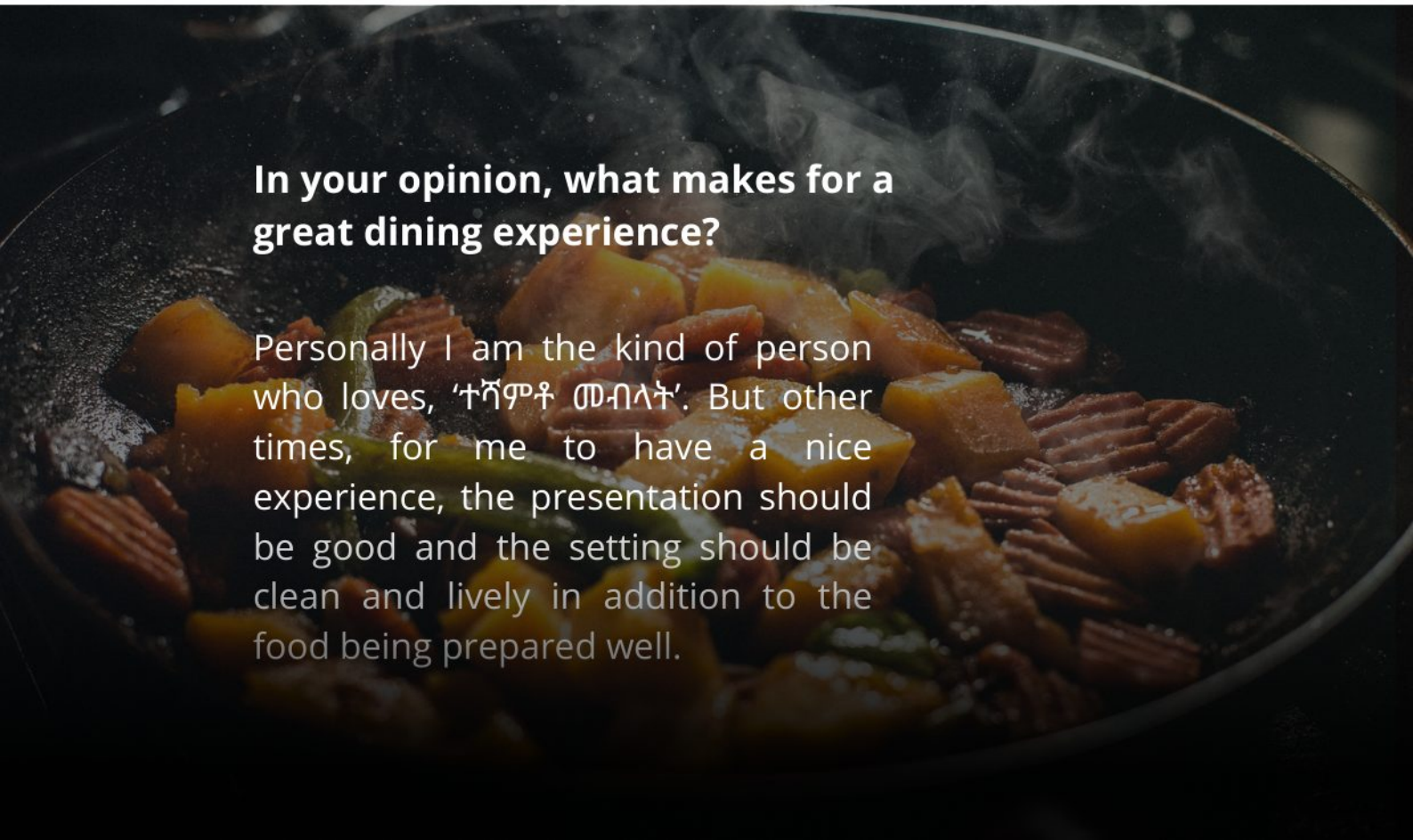
What would you say is your favorite kind of food to make or eat?

I'll choose two or three dishes. When it comes to international cuisine, I prefer Italian dishes like lasagna, pizza, and risotto, and from Ethiopian dishes like shiro, kitfo, and doro. For dessert, my favorites are chocolate and ice cream.



Describe your three favorite recipes - do you have any go-to ingredients?

My go to ingredients are cinnamon and rosemary they're my favorite spices and I use them on everything I make. My first favorite recipe is obviously Foodcase special. It's a pizza sandwich with potato, made with our homemade mayonnaise and it have cheese, beef and egg. Since I like baking and love chocolates my favorite is chocolate brownie. That is rich, full of chocolate flavor, fudgy and moist. The major ingredients are egg, flour, cocoa, chocolate, flour, butter and vanilla. Bula with kitfo is my favorite food to eat, especially for breakfast on the weekends.



In your opinion, what makes for a great dining experience?

Personally I am the kind of person who loves, 'ተሻምቶ መብላት'. But other times, for me to have a nice experience, the presentation should be good and the setting should be clean and lively in addition to the food being prepared well.



FOOD CASE

KEEP IN TOUCH
WITH HERMELA



KALEAB

Digital Artist

" I see my weakness, my strength, and also my progress through art. "

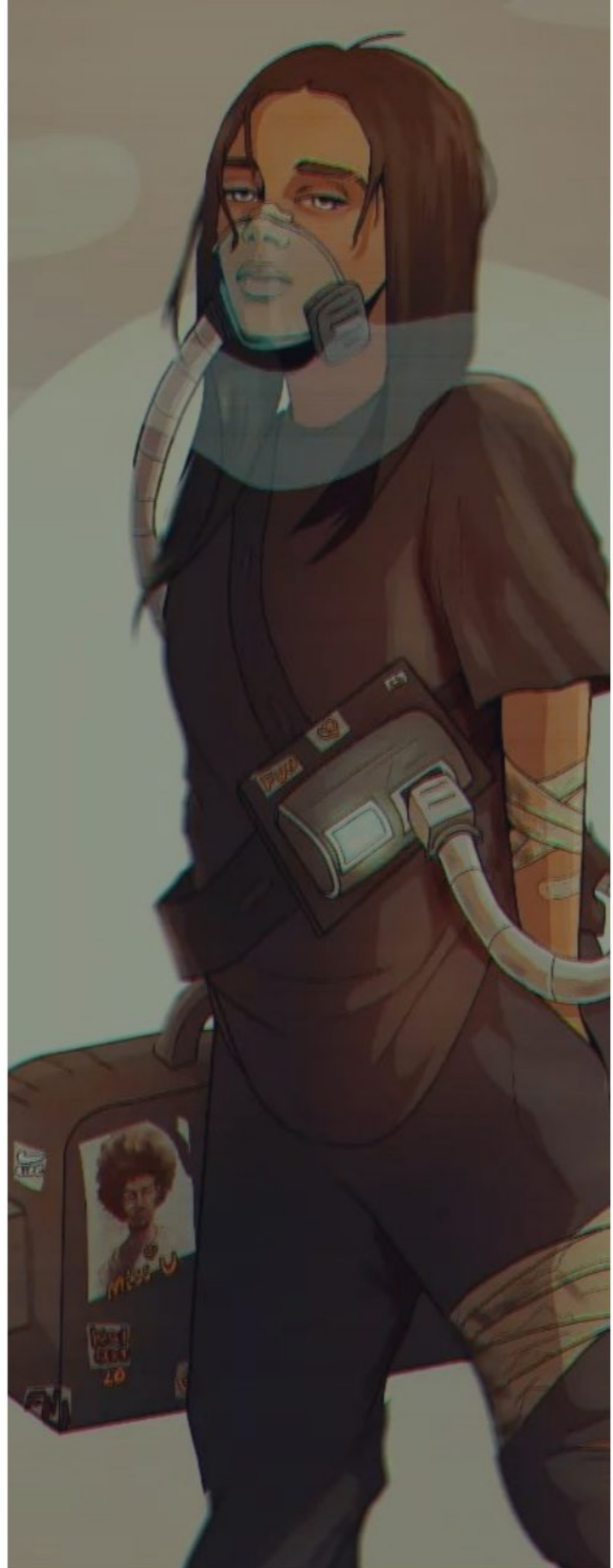


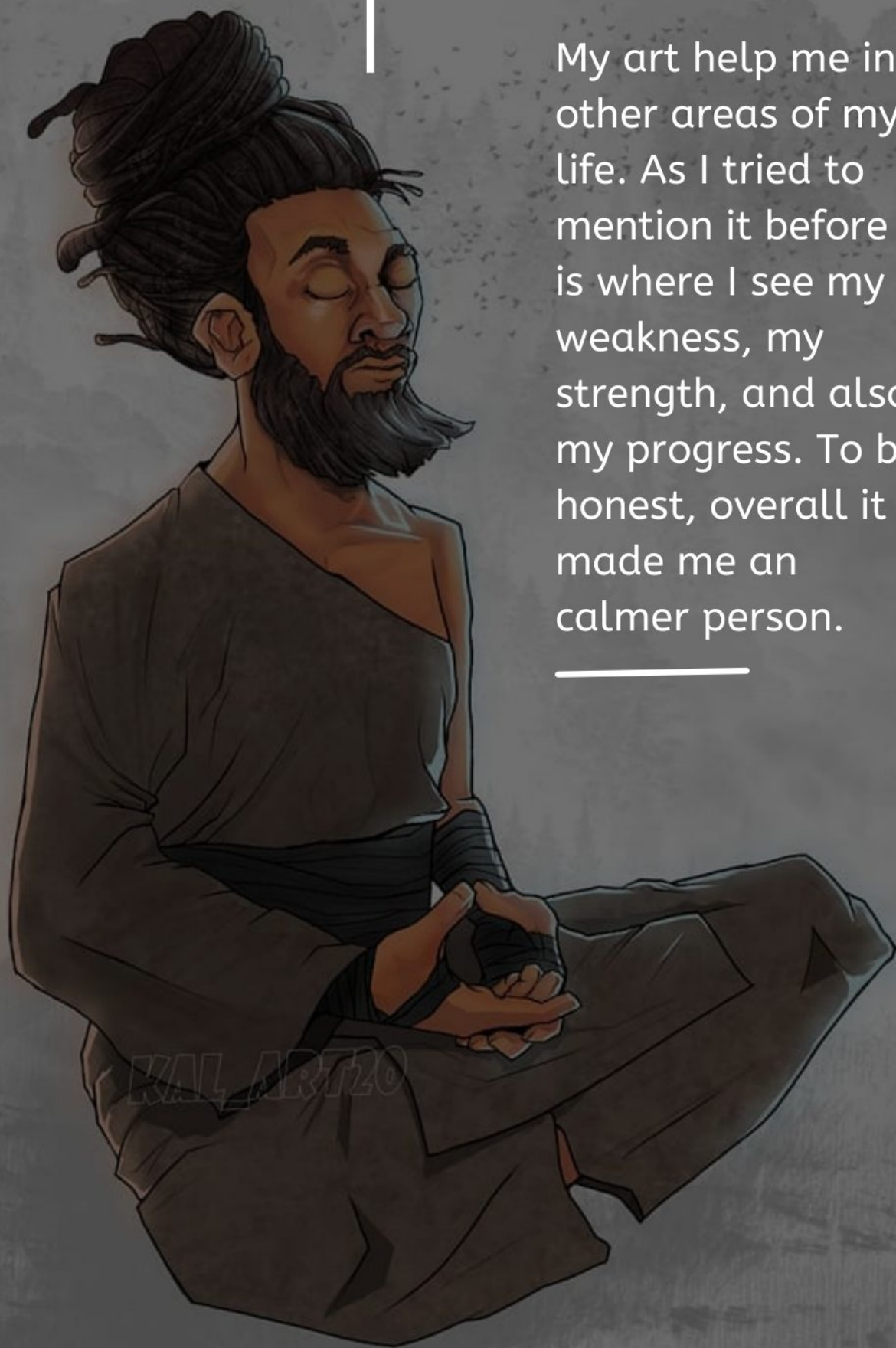
who is Kaleab ?

My name is Kaleab Assefa. I am a second year student majoring in computer science at St.Mary's university. I was born and still living in A.A. I have been drawing on paper as long as I can remember. And around 2012 e.c I was introduced to digital art by a recommendation from a friend and I have been going at it ever since.

What does your art mean to you ?

Usually my arts don't have a hidden message behind them unless a client specifically asks for one and they usually don't. Plus most of the pieces on my social media (mostly instagram) are a result of studies and selfchallenges so there is no much reason to put a meaning behind them. But other than that it is where I see my weakness and my strength at the same time, it is also where I see my progress not only as an artist but also as a person.

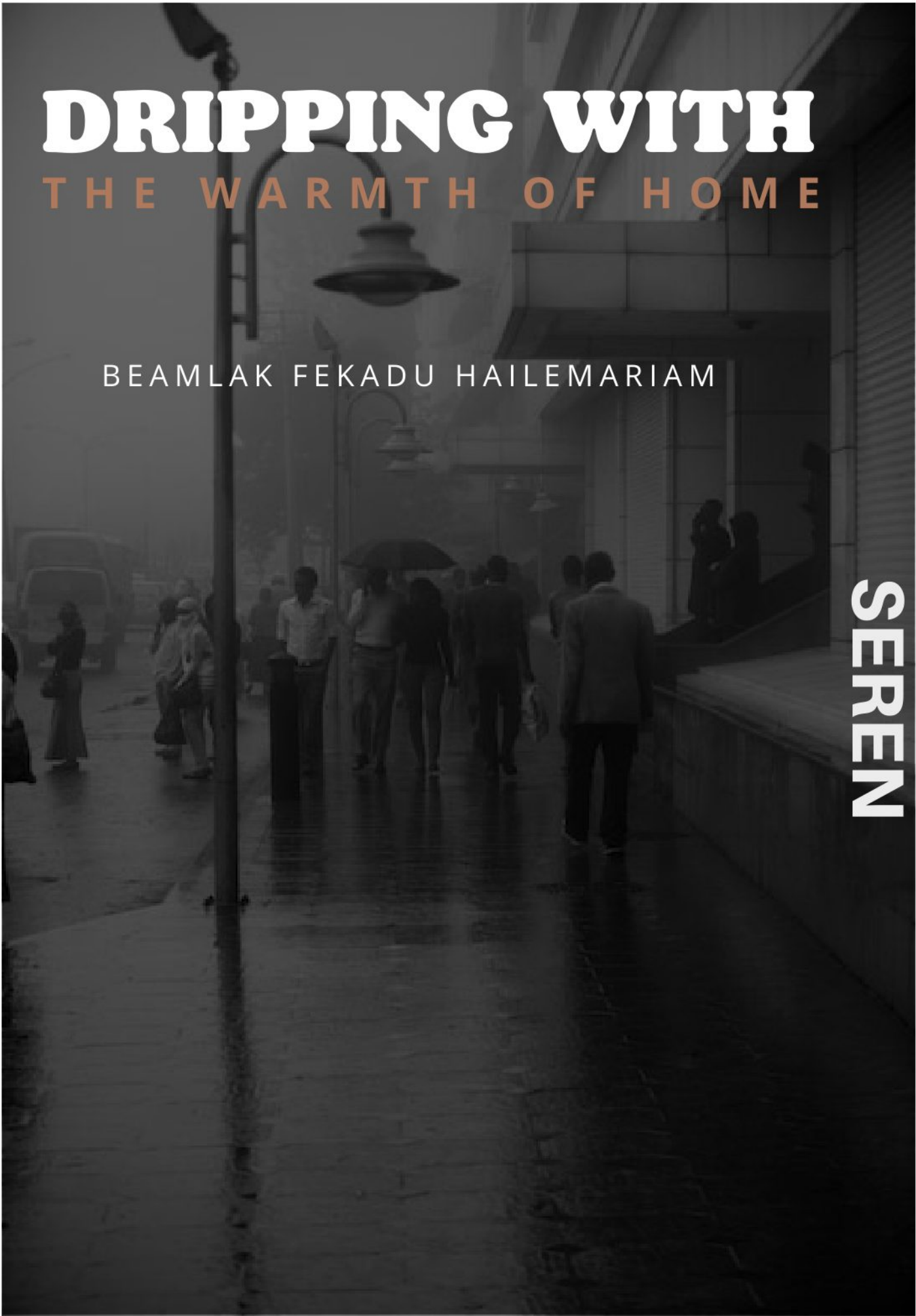




My art help me in other areas of my life. As I tried to mention it before it is where I see my weakness, my strength, and also my progress. To be honest, overall it made me an calmer person.

M O R E
F R O M
K A L E A B





DRIPPING WITH **THE WARMTH OF HOME**

BEAMLAK FEKADU HAILEMARIAM

SEREN



The sun rays slightly raining on your face,
the wind gently caressing your features,
the birds seem to rejoice your presence.

Your brain showing you all the historical pictures,
those familiar voices warming up your inside,
that engulfing hug removing the chaotic tides,
the feeling of belonging to someone,
the dream of being expected by that someone.
And when...the love strikes your heart strings,
when that 'oh yes I am going to rest ' feeling clings...
You are finally home

Feel all the warmth in this ክረምት!!!

WARMTH OF HOME

WARMTH OF HOME

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