

## It Takes A Village

Till the silver cord is cut,  
Till the pitcher breaks by the porterhouse,  
Till the vessel gives up the spirit that inhabits it.  
In that moment, in that last breath  
With that first teardrop that leaves the eye,  
With that loud cry that breaks the village silence  
The loud drums disturb the peace of the night as the stars dance to their rhythm  
Things that angels desire to look into  
Nobody can console the cry of a widow  
Nobody knows the pain of the mother that bore the child.  
A mother's cry is for her son to come back home  
In that moment the elders shake their heads in disbelief  
Nobody knows the journey that spirit will take  
All we are left with is an empty vessel  
However, memories keep the bond till we meet again  
  
Nobody cares in a foreign land. At least no one cared for him, he thought.  
Most of his nights were lonely.  
Resting during the day after those long night shifts.  
No one was around whenever he called home  
His kids would be asleep most of the time.  
He left the youngest at the age of 5.  
A couple of years later his wife had moved on to another  
Because he wasn't coming back anytime soon.  
What a pain for his seed to be raised by another.

He reminisced about the last time he had seen his lovely bride  
She looked at him, her eyes piercing into his soul  
What could have inhibited their budding love?  
A voyage to far far away  
He asked for a kiss that could last an eternity  
And promised they would meet someday at some place called By-and-By  
Surely, his mother had been deprived of a son.  
He would say a silent prayer to God every night.  
His wish was to be laid beside his mother when he died.

A nation ceased to be his home  
Adopting the whole continent as his abode  
He now identified as a black man  
But was never asked what kind of black man.  
His African identity was something only picked up when he opened his mouth.

He missed his family  
After he had finished giving advice to his friend,  
He got off the bus with some groceries.  
He saw his mom walking alone.  
He rushed to her and hugged her.  
He said “Mom, I’m home but I don’t have much time - I just came to say hie”.  
That realization somewhat made him cry,  
He felt the pain deep in his heart, even in that subconscious state.  
He didn’t have time to listen to her stories.

He didn't have time to tell all his stories,  
The mountains he conquered,  
Mistakes that had tripped him up or about friends made along the way.  
He didn't have time to say "I'm sorry" for all the times he had forgotten to sweep the house  
or wash the dishes.  
He didn't have time to listen to her teaching him how to fold clothes.

He woke from that steady night slumber by Macee's  
The only job he could get was in security  
Lying back home that his degree was something of use  
No experience had been as terrifying  
Crossing that ocean hidden in a mattress on a ship  
A crime committed but a means of escape  
Just to send a few cents back home  
A few cents to him but hundreds to his kin  
Looking at the pictures of a dream house that he would build for his family  
He shared a one room apartment with eight others.  
They managed in bunk beds and shared a two plate stove by the corner  
With pieces of ramen noodles and bread crumbs strewn all over the room  
Lying to his family that he lived a luxurious life  
  
He cursed everyone who had said that bread was cheaper in a foreign land  
He grabbed a tin of baked beans from a shelf, his favorite  
He set a crate of cola by the room corner  
He was happy when his bank account was not a minus

Lost more on overdraft penalties than on his weekly expenses  
The bickering landlord had said rent was due every Friday  
He thought to a time when he broke bread with his family  
Saying a prayer of gratitude  
He had lost faith in that God  
Betrayed his conscience by selling his soul for some pieces of silver  
Constantly hiding from the blue and those sentries of immigration  
He couldn't complain about his wage for fear of his secret

I wish I could tell you that his story ended elegantly  
I wish I could tell you that he bought a house near a lake  
I wish I could tell you that he reunited with his family once more  
Maybe he did, but in a lifeless form  
He left home in a mattress but returned in a wooden box  
Crossing over the same ocean as his ancestors  
Having traded his time for that gold that fades away  
His life, claimed by an unknown cold and fever  
Fearing to see the doctor lest he be sent back to his roots

But I'll tell you a story about his mother.  
Years later, she looked at her lifeless son.  
He had grown a full beard with his hair uncut.  
She wailed, remembering their last encounter.  
He had said "Mama, I'm going to a foreign land, I need your blessing."  
She had taken a pinch of tobacco from her small gourd.

Sprinkled it on the ground, asking the ancestors to protect their son.

But that son returned dead.

She blamed the ancestors for abandoning him.

But still asked them to receive his spirit.