The Big City
was a small village
And other poems

Sola Fosudo

Concept Publications
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1. Sophisticated Mama

There was an old acquaintance of mine,
We schooled together in my village
Then, she had a reputation, for beauty and virtue,
And every man desired her with desperation, I inclusive.

After twelve months of clerical appointment in the city, I met her,
And I thought she had been involved in an accident,
Or convalescing from a prolonged illness,
I soon found out it was all due to fashion.

Her clothes,
Like pieces of multicoloured rags,
The type adorned by a roadside lunatic
Barely permitted her to breathe while we spoke.

Her hair,
A product of Overseas Wigs Manufacturers Limited,
The type used during Elizabethan England,
Concealed her face's features except her exaggerated red lips
while we spoke.

Her face,
Fearfully painted and hyperbolically rouged,
Looking like the Siamese of my Village masquerade,
Scared me as she stared on while we spoke,

Her shoes,
Reminded me at once of the Agere acrobat,
Laced tightly like barbedwire up her thighs
The agonies of its inconvenience she suffered while we spoke.

Her skin
Defaced with chemical acids called lotions,
With a wrinkling pink neck and crackling black-chest,
The repulse of her body surface nauseated me while we spoke.
Her perfume
A dreadful havoc of scent,
Recklessly sprayed to offend the nose,
Oozed out harsh odours while we spoke.

Her talents and endowments, all vanished,
Gone are those days when men desired her,
She conversely makes a prey out of them now,
Making amorous faces at every man she meets, I inclusive

But, it was not a pleasure at all encountering her,
Ashamed some folks might conclude I'm acquainted
to a floozy,
I could hardly endure two more seconds after the first two minutes,
Noticing my bewilderment at her outrageous costumes and make-up,

She tittered and stuttered... "OH IT'S ALL SOPHISTICATION:
Contending with her, I yelled... NO IT'S ALL SUFFOCATION!

Notes:
* Overseas' Wigs Manufacturers Limited - An imaginary wigs' manufacturing company.
* Agere - A type of masquerade in Yorubaland, West Africa.
2. Good Nothing

Money,
Cash,
My friend,
Have you a penchant for its accumulation?
Desire it greedily to live a life of sensation
Penury, vamoose, take a liking to another
'Esu' afflict me not, but him whom I recommend
He that speaks evil of you especially when he is broke
Despising the affluent because he could not afford a spoke
Oh money, when ever thee arrives we shall celebrate you
Exchange thee for things and cage in bank the rest of you
What slander to define cash as a source of ruin and evils
We know too well of its un-spotted virtues
Whenever it visits, it's always in a haste to leave
And we acknowledge the training this seeks to give
To hold it dear as a forever treasured companion
Making us restless searching for more dime
But denying us companionship at the final time.

Women,
Eve,
My friend,
Surround yourself with plenty in shapes and sizes,
Jilt as many and revel in your whims
Celebrate each new, with frivolous sleepless nights
And convivial hobnobs, bacchanals and clubs at nights.
Who dares to smear the reputation of a woman?
Who, but a lonely, frustrated child of a mammon
The Treasure of her pleasure is unmeasured
The profits of her deceit she concocts
When your bed is rosy, her love is assured.
When Seasons turn indigent, her love relucts
Her flirtatious feet are shoed, her coquettish hair tongued
To another, your kind she turns yet a horse
Spreading latest clinical discoveries
Barring your soul a dwelling in your bodies.

Wines,
Boooze,
My friend,
Fetch yourself gallons and cartons of it to imbibe
Gorge on, the spirit of Bacchus is on your side
Yes, you're never intoxicated whenever you're drunk
Yap, snap and rap since you've got the spunk
Your dented, rusted ego now is furbished
Once reputed as reticent and polished
Now, suddenly, loquacious, a sorry-sight
Time, energy, money all night
Frittered away in shameless gibberish
On the wheels, you become impish
On the bed, you lie dead except the snores
As you wake, vanished appetite is all you nurse
Musing drearily over hangover
But learning nothing, repeating all over
The nothingness of momentary ecstasy
Basking always in random idiocy.

Mansions,
Houses,
My friend,
Lay multiple foundations on gravel and block
Hectares, acquire for your insatiate appetite
Let the walls compete with Olumo rock
Delicate structures with granite and laterite
Marble floors, iron roofs, glass gates, electric fencing like beads
The bedroom the size of two stadia
The bed, the size of their football fields
Featuring frequent erotic tournaments with those dear
Exquisite furnishing of Italian Origin
Mississippi shamed in competition with the pool
Where at leisure you tan and swim
Returning to the cozy interior ever cool
Gardens and flowers, like the handsome peacock
Subject the iris to the trouble of shifty gaze.
Intimidated passers-by take consoling stock
Visiting mortals profess prison in a maze.

Mobiles,
Cars,
My friend,
Go for the choicest and the most exquisite
The turbo models like flying boats
Convertible engines, adaptable seats
Each moving through the air as though it floats
Sleek and handsome as judged by the eye
Elegant and compact to a feudal taste
To the office, a long convoy through the streets ply
Pleasure time, a fleet of coupes ride to feast
Jeeps that can travel through the woods
Pathfinders which glide to "find the path"
Limousines that creep and sweep through rough routes
Rough riders, which drive to slice the air apart
Moving homes with comfort personified
At will, you oppress the less-opportuned
Insane, you asked to ride two together tied
Demised, you willed to be buried in a car perfumed.
Clothes,
Robes,
My friend,
To the brim stock up a dozen wardrobes
Your fortunes invest on endless attires and robes
Regalia borne of expensive forest wool
Satin, cotton, linen, voile, velvet, damask
At home relaxing, dress up as a prince on the throne
Strolling, costume yourself like an emperor
Partying, combine the Arabian and Indian fashions
Be cool with yourself as others sneer with admiration
Wherever you go, strain people's neck as they turn
To behold the wonder of your angelic appearance
Straight cuts by the world's finest designers
Of colours like the rainbow just after the rain
Even as you possess as numerous
It pains you to part with any, given or stolen
Obsessed, you demand that as heavenly inheritance
Your wardrobe be buried alongside your corpse.
3. Thin Line, Thick Difference

Just before the toll
The hustle and bustle, I loathe
Drivers, riders, commuters
In droves everywhere, all over

Over your shoulders, a curse
Across your face, a slap
Close next to you, a fight
Round about you, a snatch

So much noise
And a deluge
So much craze
And a debacle

Just after the toll
Other beings, noiseless
Odourless breeze and clement
Meet and sleep with you cozily
4. Of Days and Moments

The day I saw her
Was the day I met her
The day I met her
Was the day I took her
The day I took her
Was the day I knew her
The day I knew her
Was the day I left her

The moment she saw me
Was the moment she called me
The moment she called me
Was the moment she quizzed me
The moment she quizzed me
Was the moment she loathed me
The moment she loathed me
Was the moment she lost me.
5. Sometimes

Sometimes...
High spirit's cloak
Adorns your naked soul
Your mood, whet with joy
Glow in a chord of promises

Sometimes...

Warped musings
Assail and garb your mind
Painful thoughts, red-embers-drenched
Occupy you so awrily

Sometimes...
6. Etutu (The Sacrifice)

(A procession enters, led by the Chief Priest, followed by those carrying sacrificial items – hen, yam, palm oil, kola, honey, etc all dressed in white loin cloth)

Song:
A awo de (2ce)
E je k'ogberi o
Ko ka 'se l'ona
Awo ma de o.
Eja lo n'ibu o
Erin lo n'igbo o
Efon lo l'odan o
Ye ye ye riye

Chorus:
Ye ye ye riye (2ce)
Irawo meje etutu meje
Ye ye ye riye

Repeat:
A awo de (2ce)
E je k'ogberi o
Ko ka 'se l'ona
Awo ma de o.

(The song goes under as the Chief Priest sprinkles cleansing water on his path. An acolyte behind the chief priest beats a gong)

Chief Priests:
- Spirits of my father, it is I who come
  Ye ancestors of times past
  I pay thee worthy homage
Accept the greetings I bring
Receive the respect I offer
Ye unclean spirits of the forest, step now aside
Ye ghommids and demons on this path, give thee way
For it stands the peril of accompanying the elephant,
The root that prevents its smooth passage to the river
Iba, iba, iba Loni
It is I who come
With the immolation of renewal
With the sacred rites of regeneration.
It is I, Son of Oluwo*
Servant of Orunmila Barawon Niregun*
The prince of Ile-Ife
Ye deities ancestral, do not play deaf to my calling
For when we call on the day, it yields
And when we cry out to the night, it responds
When a bird flies, it does not collide with the forest tree
Yes, the gliding snake triumphs over every manner of web.
I come regally like the leaf of Royalty
I come ravishingly like the comely leaf
I come not in defiance to your caprices
But in obeisance to your inviolable precepts Iba, Iba loni
Iba, Iba, mo juba k'iba se.

Spirits of my fathers
This is for you
And this
This too
And this
Iba, iba loni
Iba, iba, mo juba k'iba se.

Song:
Iba Iya mi o, Iya mo juba
Oro re o e
Iba Iya mi o, Iya mo juba
B’omode mi sawo a juba Iya o
Iya mo juba alagbara, tete gba'ba o
Iba Baba mi o, Baba mo juba
Oro re o e
Iba Baba mi o, Baba mo juba
B'omode mi sawo a juba Baba o
Baba mo juba alagbara, tete gba'ba o

Repeat:
A awo de (2ce)
E je k'ogberi o
Ko ka 'se lona
Awo ma de o.

(The procession files out while the Chief Priest leaves saying repeatedly)

Chief Priest:
What you did with the last one
Do with this.

Notes:
*Iba loni, mo juba k'iba se - I give respects, please accept my greeting*
*Oluwo and Orunmila Barawon Niregun - Ancestral deities from Yorubaland in West Africa.*
7. Kins and Kindred

Upon the peak of achievements
Sequel to talent turned skill
Multiple laurels adorning name
Lavish encomiums sprayed to add
Our kindred with a spirit humble
And a heart meek as a lamb's
But gait and presence asserting
Kins deliberately interpreted for pride

War-mongering ones vow to fight
In rage, jostle for the head
Of a peaceful labourer, meek
Tucked away in safety by providence.
Then, hooked by skin-pain syndrome
They sneer endlessly in vain
Frustrated by futile troubleshooting
Resolve to adopt the tactic of mutiny

Exiled, our kindred retreats into the hands of the world
Culled up in a shell of solitude
As kin's missiles rumour to hurt
Aimed against entire household
Man, woman, children and in-laws
But targets hit the rocky walls of the earth
Buckler to the wanted
Menace to the useless

That complex but warm world out there
Lies prostrate at our kindred's feet
Loudly they wonder when sleeps the crab
Quietly they ponder over the coconut water
The trade-man's knowledge they recognise
Maverick ability they appreciate
Further effort they encourage
But at home, the prophet, kins loathe.
8. Safety

Lewd hopes tossed up
The kernel of life reversed
Immersed and blinded
And the torch mating with darkness.
9. You are the Rainbow

There is a rainbow in the sky
It has colourful colours
Glittering and glimmering with glamour
It creeps across the sky
Cleaved closely to the clouds
It starts a story and shouts
With hype and humour
A tale rich in words and chords
Complete in songs and gongs
There is a rainbow in the sky
Beaming with abundant life
Like a new young plant
Sprouting thru the earth to spy
Looming up anew to life
To live to grow
To grow to show
The sweetness that abounds in nature
Up above and down below
... you are the rainbow
10. Unusual

Listen with your mouth
Speak with your nose
Touch the world inside your skin
And shout with your eyes

See the wind moving
And feel the sea blowing
Hear the forest flying
And push the earth around

Don't dare ask why
For once, the day broke at dusk
At noon emerged the moon
And at dawn, appeared the sun

Simple, yes, but strange
Strange, yes but simple
Shout with your eyes
And push the earth around
11. Human Beings

For seven days, the sun was at its highest performance
Burning the earth with scorching rays
It was what the people had wished sunny and bright life
The sky refused to open up its tank
The earth was as dry as the desert
The consequence was severe and scathing
Very poor harvests, unsparing heat and serious famine.
The people complained and pleaded bitterly...

Oh God, what have we done to merit this kind of cruelty
Are you not God of kindness and amnesty?
Could you be blind as they say love is
We inherited assurances of a life of bliss
Could this be payment for our transgression?
Please, God be merciful, show us compassion
Let it rain so that our harvest can be bountiful
Wipe off our pain and make our life beautiful

Everybody prayed, including priests and alfas*
Asking the good angels and malaikas* to intercede
Those who've never tasted fasting
Volunteered to lead abstinence
Everyone made this one sacrifice
Then came rain, and for seven days again
It poured as heavy as the prayers that were made
Blowing angry wind, lifting roofs and felling trees

Storms gathered and moved speedily, angrily
Eroding all obstacles including human ones
Into distant valleys and ditches
Then came fresh green fields and improved harvests
But, breeze as cold as ice the surface of the earth
Many, especially children, died of an unsparing chill
Overflowing gutters and pond-turned streets abound
Accompanied by an epidemic of diseases

Again, there was great distress
The people suffered untold sorrow
Distraught, they resolved to approach God once again
Hastily, they indicted Him of deliberate wickedness
Queried Him seriously of destructiveness
Their tone was harsh and indecorous
"We don't want no rain, we don't want no sun"
They chursed again together

Oh God, you should know we don't deserve this kind
of treatment
You should know that we're greatly yoked with this
punishment
You should know by now what great pain we suffer
You should know very well what suits us to offer
Please take away quickly this rain
And you would have taken away our pain
And don't replace it with the sun
Unless our happiness you wish to shun.

God in His mercy, caused the rain to cease
And the people displayed joy
Once again, they sang, clapped and danced
The merriment was unparalleled in the history of humanity
The hobnobbing seemed endless and interminable
But they soon realised how brief it was meant to be
As everybody waited in vain
For what the scourging rain would be replaced with

And for seven days which seemed like eternity
There was neither rain nor sun
The atmosphere became numb, nay still
Nay, the atmosphere was strangely indescribable
Something no human eye has ever beheld
A circumstance very new, perhaps to God Himself
The people existed in a state of atmospheric strangulation
In great anxiety, they voiced their new grousse, stuttering...

Oh God, in which account shall we this record
You unleashed pain on us on your own accord
We feel the burden of a cross too heavy to carry
Death looms large and we cringe to parry
Shouldn't You cancel the world and replace it with a void
Instead of this limbo with peace devoid
Remember Your promise to Abraham, son of Adam.
His descendants do not hasten to damn

"YE SONS OF ADAM, DESCENDANTS OF EVE, GOD SAID,
IT IS WHAT YOU ASKED, THAT I GAVE TO YOU
NOW, YOU HAVE ONE MORE CHANCE, DO THE ASKING
AND ACCORDING TO YOUR REQUEST, YOU SHALL BE GIVEN"

The people looked through one another
And remained in silence, not knowing what to say
While one after another
They fell asleep, not knowing what to do
On the Seventh day
When they woke up not knowing what has happened
Creation was as it was
At the beginning, not knowing how it came about.

"GO YE TO YOUR TENTS, SAID GOD,
AND DO NOT EAT AGAIN
OF THE FORBIDDEN FRUITS!
THE SOURCE OF FOOLISH WISDOM"

Notes:
*Alfas - Leaders of the Muslim faith
*Malaikas - Some divine beings or spirits such as angels,
   but associated with Islam.
12. Learning to be Alone

Thirty six approximate weeks
I savoured womb company with mama
With blooded chord, severed
I first learned to be alone in the court.

Between twenty-four and sixty months
I played, being cuddled and backed
Then, taken to the Rabbi’s registry
I learned to be alone under tutelage

Each term, at the coaching place
I fraternised joyfully with mates and tutors
At a given season, as the semester ends
I learned to be alone in examinations.

At workplace, neighbourhood and associations
I fellowshipped with all gladsomely
But at the final hour
I learned to be alone in the grave.
13. Know Thyself

Ol' boy
Know thyself
Cut your coat
Sew your dress
According to your cloth

You're living in Jungle City
You're posing as an islander
Your coat, e go tear

Ol' boy
Know thyself
Cut your coat
Sew your dress
According to your cloth

You're biting, cutting and biting
Excessively more than you can chew
Your mouth, e go tear

Ol' boy
Know thyself
Cut your coat
Sew your dress
According to your cloth

How much be your salary?
You get six wives, a dozen concubines and a gross children
Your pocket, e go tear

Ol' boy
Know thyself
Cut your coat
Sew your dress
According to your cloth
Remember your position
You dey run mouth, yab your superior
Your life, e go tear

Ol' boy
Know thyself
Cut your coat
Sew your dress
According to your cloth.
14. Time

See?
Each time
The Season changes
The New soon becomes Old
The Old, Older
The Older, Oldest
What becomes of the un-seen, un-born time
And the used, past time?

See?
Man must more than try
At all times, all the time
Now, introspect, then retrospect
Because time will soon change
And another Season will come again.
For ten kings and ten seasons
The earth bequeathed to man
See...?
15. The Big City Was A Small Village

An egg, inchoate, soon turns to a cock
That, in reproduction becomes a flock
Every facet they disperse to touch
Four out of many, there ought to be much.

Our hut was proudly built of mud
Every newcomer mocks at it, instead of a nod
They erected skyscrapers fine and unique
But referred to our mud hut as revered antique

A birth of the new the old makes
The steps of the old the new takes
Soon, the latter loathes the former for old age
Alas, the big city was a small village
16. War Eyes

His voice hollow within
A rebel jolted by command
Recalcitrant and stubborn
Receding and captured

His thoughts waxed up
Tracks laid upon rebuke
And sapience feigning foolery
Creeping to sack the foes.
As I study the world
I realise that life becomes what it is
Due to the time and the people around.
The more I study the world
The more I realise that things might not have been
the same
If the time and people around
Differ at any given circumstance.
As I further, study the world
I further realise that people are the masters of
circumstances
Circumstances being the products of man's relationship w
time and man
Though, man exists now and cogitates about
tomorrow's time
He reflects on the circumstances of yesterday.
If time changes for man, circumstances alter.
And though man may know what ought to be at a time,
Since man cannot accurately know what might have been
In place of that which already is
And in spite of his inner desires and wishes
What man has, man must hold
And what he holds, he must cherish.
18. Heartbreak

Love is a flat-out mystery
Many say it, many write it.
Many read it, many even make it
Yet only a few experience its reality

Beware how you fall in love
So you'll not fall apart

Be sure you're loved when you're in love
Snatch your heart from the claws of a surly stranger
Because strangers come and go
For them love is a fairy game

Beware how you fall in love
So you'll not fall apart

A promise is a debt they say
Don't make a promise you'll not fulfil
The price to pay may be too costly
Even death may be a cheap tag

Beware how you fall in love
So you'll not fall apart

Love is like a harvest of seeds
The Sower and the Harvester are like strange bedfellows
Some seed fall on the Humus and Sprout
Within thorns others drop smothered

Beware how you fall in love
So you'll not fall apart
19. Dem All Crazy!

(Crowd singing with drums in different dialects.
Three politicians emerge, regally-dressed)

Man 1: Eh, clear the road, leave the path.
You, step aside.

Man 2: Peace o, people, please, permit me to present I
contesting politicians for this new transition to
political dem all crazy.

Crowd (cheering): Heee

1st Politician (mounts the rostrum)
Whenever the sun sets, it rises again
With the tiptoe of a new dawn
The future speaks to me in parables
And I respond in proverbial tongue
I, the great warrior of many battles
Sojourn with fortitude and wisdom
And dwell among foreigners as though a native
Everywhere for me a land of fortune
I come unmasked with great tidings
Tidings of goodwill, tidings of hope.
Of bounteous love, of unmeasured kindness
A compound of a thousand cowrie shells
Open your ears, unbar your minds
Free your lives from shackles of slavery
Our sages of old did say
That life is but a mighty ocean
And yet again, a swinging whip
Do you search for the logic in life's paradox?
I am the symbol of change
I am the symbol of constancy
And as no condition is ever permanent
Live and let live
Come brethren, follow me.

**Crowd:** (claps and cheers)

**2nd Politician** *(mounts the rostrum)*
I come, like the kingly leaf
Which serves the sacrifice of approval
I come like the morning dew
That sits amiably upon the garden leaf
I come children of my mother
With great news never before told
I, the fierce leopard that fears no foe
The bold lion that treads the path of danger
And walks tall in victory and triumph
Listen to my voice my people
Let your hearts be big
Let your thoughts be clean
My voice with reason resounds
Like the flute made of crickle wood
It announces a fresh beginning
Bellowing over the cackle of fainted rhythms
Can you hear my voice my people?
The sounds of joy, the sounds of justice
Come, follow me
For man must be master of his destiny.

**Crowd:** (claps and cheers)

**3rd Politician** *(mounts the rostrum)*
Am I a tiger?
Or am I the bull?
That fights its fight and fights for another?
Or am I the handsome peacock
That spreads its beauty over the earth?
I come to you though incognito
With the music of beauty and peace
Beguile me not
For I know too well the history of war
And the futility of rebellion
Several years before this era
Like faded diamond and jaded appetite
It became an old-fashioned trumpery
Can you feel the rhythm of my dance?
The Rhythm of a new day.
If tomorrow comes, today turns yesterday
In that fulfils the harmony of creation
I entreat you comrades, dance my dance
And sing my song
In peace, I extend to you my hand of fellowship
Come, follow me.

Crowd: (claps and cheers)
(Politicians leave, followed by people singing out)

Woman 1: What did they say?

Man 1: I wish I knew

Woman 1: I thought you clapped. I saw you clapping

Man 1: What about you, didn't you clap? Wait.
(Calls someone) Repeat your question

Woman 1: Please, can you enlighten me.
I didn't quite grab the sense in the manifestoes.

Woman 2: Sense? You no get sense.
Wetin concern me with the sense in the manifestoes.
Look, don't waste my time.
We are going to have dinner now and that is where they will talk about the real sense
(motions counting of cash)
If you want to share part of the senses,
Follow me (leaves with Man 1)

Woman 1: Senselessly brainwashed
Dem all crazy!
20. For You

Trustfully
Stash out
The tears
Of disdain
Of depression
Bravely
Wrings away
The fears
Of remorsefulness
Of sorrowfulness
Locked
And liked.
21. Dabblers

Tomfools
In strange terrains
With tremulous hands
Precarious feet
And a stuttering voice
Like straggling minstrels
Leap feebly
Fatally
Into the noble ship
Of our craft
To assault our art
Like an insurgent incursion
And with a gradual suddenness
Wreak havoc
Insidious acts
Of mercenaries
Despicable deeds
Of deadly termites
Formless parasites
Defile sacred moods
Penetrate souls' depths
Cunning fibbers
Out to debauch
And then disappear
Into the thick air
Nonsense.
22. Frantic Moments

At first, I thought I needed just a whisper
To call her back from the other side
But, I called, roared and shouted
Strained my voice and lost it
Maybe she heard, but she shunned my call
On she went hand in hand with an émigré
Into the orbit of the unknown
Where fog and mist shroud the path

I waited in solitary frantic moments
Left alone in the lurch
Though my eyes are pretentiously closed
Sleep eludes me night after night
My head is full, my shoulders are heavy
My flesh is weak, my soul is weary
My heart beats rapidly and suffers a hideous infliction
It bleeds in continuous thought of one woman, A

She was once a sleeping pill for my heart
Whenever this wound heals up
I will try to call again
But never from the other side
People from yonder belong only there
If she journeys back to this side
Perhaps I wouldn't even need a whisper to call
But a wink
23. Poverty

Even on sterile wombs
A lush growth of seeds
And on swampy deserts
Sprout fatty trees

Even on clayey sand
A plantation of riches
And on rocky planes
Fruits aplenty yield

But on gifted humus
Rear indigent harvest
Weeds and Climbers
On manure float

Like routed dissidents
The vocal stutter
And jesting tomfools
In jollity with slaves

Out'a life, decadent
Daily gloat on end
Impoverished ignoramus
At prime youth, senile.
24. Long Long Time Ago

Way back in history
Very long time ago
We toiled and toiled
On the field of our soil

Monkey dey work
Baboon dey chop
You work and sweat
Inside the sun
Your clothes na rag
Your house na slab

We bled to reap the fruits
Of our hard labour
Our plea fell on deaf ears
Our conditions remained unabated

Monkey dey work
Baboon dey chop
You work and sweat
Inside the sun
Your clothes na rag
Your house na slab

We have to put a stop
To this injustice
We must now regain
The freedom we mortgaged

Monkey dey work
Baboon dey chop
You work and sweat
Inside the sun
Your clothes na rag
Your house na slab

We must now re-negotiate
With our persecutors
So that we can celebrate
That peaceful culture we compromised

Monkey dey work
Baboon dey chop
You work and sweat
Inside the sun
Your clothes na rag
Your house na slab.
25. **Time Will Tell**

Father: Son, why are you speaking aloud in solitude?

Son: Father, companionship is my need
Lone thinking fatigues my brain

Father: Speak son, what irks you?

Son: Father,
Why has it been so, why is it still so
That it must repeat itself?
I mean History, why sir, if I may ask?

Father: You err, son
Why do you prove to know beyond
Your knowledge?
Were you born before you were born?
History repeats itself not again,
It now reveals itself

Son: But father, what is the difference?

Father: Well son, they are similarly different
Their differences lie in their similarities

Son: I don't understand, father
I think I know history,
It's like men in reproduction

Father: Wisely said
But listen to this tale
Three kings ruled at different times
One maimed and killed his subjects
One showed love and kindness to his people
The last was neither here nor there
They are still giving accounts of their deeds

Son: To whom?
Father: To the people
Son: How long ago was this, father?
Father: Listen, time is the enemy of history
Son: Speak father, I wish to know more of the relationship
Between time and history
Father: Son, without time, there is no history
And without history, time has no value
Think no more of the spoilage of man
For righteous hypocrites and saintly sinners
Time will tell pretty soon
Son, go to bed, you need to rest
You need to rest, go to bed, son.
26. The Worker

Just a dint of it breaking out
The day, spreads light a wide,
The dawdler yawns and lays back still
The worker jolts up, flees off slumber
Jetting on feet or iron to the labour room
As falcons speed to victory.

Busying at the crust of life
A destiny of fortunes lay
On the stable of the hard worker
And in his purse, richly wealth suffices
But the asset all garnered alone
Will by kins much more enjoyed.

Alas, should a hunter mentalise his pains
Feast participation of exploits he will bar.
27. **Barons**

Trespassing to keep mute
Latching on sore witnesses
A *pot pourri* of folklore, told
For shutting out the treasons.

At once, cruising along the shores
Of punitive parliament
Kidded, ridiculed and exposed
To confess only as aftermath.

Soft cheeks in the echelons
The potbellies, bullies all
Thieving daily by the seconds
Swallowing alone, generating asset.

As gluttons, never ever filled
Insatiate liars, feeding hungrily
Like dogs, deprived of table crumbs
On the people's poverty curses.
28. Another Invitation

Know this,
Anxious you may yet be
But you're my only pal
And each new day
Is like a fresh love tale
Rich in rhythm
And sweet like salt
As ticks the clock's pendulum
Be my only Val
Three, Six and five days
Twenty-four, seven.
29. Childhood

More than mere truthfulness
More than ordinary honesty
More than deliberate decorum
Endeavoured with geometric calculation
Smelling suspicion and scheme
The value of innocence transcends
Resting comfortably on the oars
Of the simple babe born anew

Growing out of that harmlessness
Her peers in the neighbourhood she finds
And with transparent fellowship
They play together minding nothing
Harbouring no hatred
Hatching no vengeance
Sometimes it is "Tente"*
At others "Ta lo wa ninu ogba na?"*

Always sights to behold
Flaming love and passion
Unfettered affection
Absolute companionship
Total friendship
Complete comradeship
Oh, Adulthood is falsehood
Let all return to childhood.

Notes:
*Tente and Ta lo wa ninu ogba na? are African moonlight games/plays for children.
30. My Supplication

First of all, Lord
Praise and honour to your name
Teach us the truth
For that is your way
Let the realities of your domain come upon us
That of Peace, Hope and Love
Cherished from generation to generation
Be Shield and Buckler to your people

Show us your Mercy and blot out our uncleanliness
Snatch our soul from danger and evil
And give us abundant wheat,
The fruits of this world
To sow and to reap at harvest time
Then Lord, grant us leaders not dealers
Give us friends not fiends
And let your grace save us from disgrace

Give us courage and not rage
Grant us the spirit of charity for humanity
Let your wisdom save us from our tomfoolery
Grant us the spirit of service and not malice
Give us companions not mammons
Let your peace reign in every life apiece
Last of all, Lord
Glory and Honour to your name
31. Bondage Forever

After such a long period of time
Close to six thousand, five hundred and eighty hours,
From a dark, slippery enclosure
Hooked and bound with umbilical shackles
Man's first freedom was gained
Just when the liberation was to be meaningful
Began the bondage of tutelage
And an initiation into hypocrisy and slavery

Man walks the streets in fear of pestilence
He toils the fields in fear of reptiles
Man eats in fear of poison
Man loves in fear of Heartbreak
He weds in fear of disjunction
He sleeps with an eye opened
In fear of marauders and killjoys
After such a long period of time

He rests in final bondage in death
Thought to be free by eye's descendants
But cooped up beneath and under the earth
Ignored to rust, abandoned to waste and decay
Suddenly,
A fairy eeriness loomed in the air
Thick darkness seized the shine
And a vengeful whirlwind swept the streets
Of piled debris
Raising 'em up into high heavens
To confer with the burdened sky,
Whose soaked wool, like overfilled bladder,
Hardly could resist regurgitation.

The sun, hitherto famished,
Milked with anger the pacific water to dryness.
It lifts and lifts,
More than its throat could retain.
It belched loudly and threw up
Frightful shells of fat aqua drops
Knocking hard on roof tops,
And heavily on earth grounds.

Suddenly,
Inside my ear, I could sometimes hear
The rhythm and thrill of agidigbo,*
And at other times, it was
The sharp melody of omele bata*
Coming to disrupt or add to the concert
Was the wind senior to the whirled one
Travelling like a bolt of fire
Denying the raindrops direct access to their destination

And then the rumbling thunder
Roaring like the fierce forest lion
Threatening to unbar the wooden door and window
Which safely held us hostage
The tumultuous thunder
Approached its zenith
Rocking the walls of our "mason"
To its very foundations.

Suddenly,
The entire melee
Ceased.
And like the quietness of the cemetery
At night.
Tranquillity returned to the air
Only to be felt, not to be heard
Peace on earth,
After the rainfall.
Suddenly...

Notes:
* agidigbo – an African musical instrument
* omele bata – an African drum of Yoruba origin
33. The Mystery of The Word

Of all the mysteries in existence
Everyone within just a fence
A fence constructed in seven days
With the greatest architectural taste
Only one is splendid and omnipotent
Forever, its constant and present

Wonderful days and nights
Great moon and stars
Amazing sun and rains
Terrific air and seas
Oh marvellous creation
Down below and up above
Wherefore thou art emerge?
Oh mystery adorable

Everything in its proper place
What an artistic design of space!
Every place with its proper thing
What a creative natural setting!
All of the world is for the world
The world created through the word.

In the early beginning
The word came supremely reigning
Breathing flesh upon the vast void
Sourced within a power mysterious
Transcending simple understanding
Just, there was the word
And the word was GOD
GOD who made the world.
34. Natives of the Bush (Ara Oko)

Cocks crow heralding another dawn
Out in the leafy, chilly neighbourhood
Dews sit gently on seaside leaves
Which sway amiably to the dictates of fresh wind
Serenity is fast to feel

Intermittent chattering of songbirds
Sometimes breaking the tranquil passage of air
Or multiplying the rhythm of quietness
Grasp the attention of the ear

As sea waves dance toward the shore
Gliding with deft swiftness onto the banks
Escorted by soprano choruses
The soul is lifted in silent ecstasy

When the eye of the day finally opens
Elders exchange customary peace signs
Their siblings courtesy in manners imbibed
The days labour and chores resume

All day, the sun is friendly without mean
At dusk, all gather at the behest of the moon
Counting the day's blessings and tale-telling
Night falls again on natives of the bush
And nostalgic memory of creation recurs
35. Dream-atization

I will start a company, a big corporate firm
That will be second to none, a super multinational,
And I, as the Chairman, President-General
In a 777-storey building at the topmost floor,
In an expansive cool and cosy penthouse office
Will sit behind a large table, on a huge chair
Cigar in mouth, coffee on desk
And my confidential secretary taking notes

"Ah, thank you very much Mr McDonalds
The consignments arrived the shores of my country
Just two days ago and I've commenced clearing
Our customers are already standing by
To clear the stock...
Maybe in a week or two...
Oh, that will be fantastic, I'll remit the
Balance of 77 Billion dollars at once...

Yes, I will be a confidently assertive, shrewd,
Prudent, eagle-eyed and controversial chief executive
I will muster great influence in business circles globally
I will be a powerful reference point in industry and commerce
The largeness I envisage of my business empire
Will have in its employment over 77 million staff.
The population of some nation-states.
In the boardroom, I would be inspiring, yet, parabolical...

Gentlemen and women
Numbers are best in multiplication
Results are best in excellence
To your subordinates tell
Twenty good reasons for failing is woeful
One bad reason for succeeding is brilliant
Just up and up our profit
By every means possible and impossible

Yes, outside the office,
I will be a busy man and will honour all my invitations
Either personally or by representation
A gesture I will use for selfish and selfless reasons
To be in the news and to be philanthropic
To be approachable, yet unavailable
To be unpredictable, simple, yet difficult
Whenever I am to give keynote addresses, I'll speak thus...

Though I don't like social events
I accepted to attend this with pride and reluctance
Though I detest making public donations
I will yet support this event with 7.7 million dollars
I don't like photographs because I'm camera shy
But wait, let me adjust my cap
Thank you, finally I'm really not a public speaker
Only I know the public loves to listen to me speak

Beyond these, I will have two wives only and no more
To tickle the rustic imagination of my erotic sensibilities
One must be light-skinned,
Tall, leggy, beautiful and frontally-talented
The other must be dark-skinned
Rotund, pretty with inviting eyeballs and a handsome
rear gift.
What else would any man want in women?
It will be an impartial roster except one surpasses the
other in "rhumba"
To match my status, I'll acquire tremendous treasure
Hectares of land, hundreds of thousands of housing units
Jets in the air, vehicles on road, ships on sea,
    trains on the rail
Underground, underwater, under-rock, under hill.
I will make history and break records
Transcending those of the "Guinness" or "Heineken" books.
My name, when mentioned, should send shivers
    across the globe
Making nonsense of the tyrants, despots and villains
    of history.

Political power? No, not for me
The Presidents, Heads of States, Queens,
    Kings and Emperors
Of nations will queue to have a chat with me
Submit for me to peruse
The proposal of their countries' developmental plans
I will establish in each country's capital,
A 77-storey building liaison office.
Here, individual country's requests will be attended to

Now, I was born a Christian and I believed Christ came
Lived and died for the world.
I've read Islamic literature and the tenets of
    Mohammed's teachings
And so, I believe that Islam is a noble religion
I will not discriminate in religious matters
Even to the priests of *Orunmila* I will give a
    space for expression
All I know is that, I won't be a fool
I hope I am not one yet.

Well, I know a supreme power exists, the source of
man's existence
I believe I owe to that source my stupendous wealth.
I feel the supreme power everyday through the "Air"
I worship the Air. I bow down for the Air
With my wealth, I have the capacity to sojourn everywhere
See everything, touch all things except the Air
I fear the air because to the world and its creatures
    I am a colossus
But to the Air, I am a fry. Everyday I will chant an Ode to the Air

    Blow me gently, oh! caress me sweetly

    Your anger I know can sweep my joy away
    Your weight I know can push my power away
Protect me from mockery never to be a tragic hero
At your ubiquitous feet, I lie prostrate
Come, abide in me, oh precious mystery
For when you desert, I too depart

This wish, nay, dream
Will make me scream
For I've just discovered
What I have long covered
As the company I envision
Is right in my possession
And I hereby claim
What I here proclaim

Note:
* Orunmila: A Yoruba deity
36. Decadence

Mother:  Yesterday
    Our fields abounded with matters green
    The air crept unpolluted to give life health
    And serenity laughed triumphant over adversity
    Wherefore the gods signed for a new day to birth

Child:  A bundle of joy!

Mother:  Today,
    The sun scorches fiercely, burning the earth
    The waves gather in bitter complaint upon the sea
    The clouds darken at noontime to shock creation
    Gloom and doom threaten tomorrow's path

Child:  A story of woe

Mother:  Tomorrow
    Dwells on a string of shrewd hope
    Clogged by webs of germinated sproutings
    Trapped in the traffic of deception
    Jettisoned on the shores of troubled waters

Child:  What hope, mother?

Mother:  Except the earth's vanities are extirpated
    Creation stands shamed with escaped sanity
37. So Common

Steering clear daily
Staunch stench filling the tracks
And epidemic foist itself
By newday in dispassionate fair.
38. Song of A Radical

(Dedicated to Gani Fawehinmi)

Wake up everybody, rise up
Oh, I am weak, sick and tired
Tired of these reptiles in human skin
Steering our canoe of life capsizing
Witnesses we are, to their atrocious deeds
Familiar are we to their insidious machinations
Gradually, our hopes are tossed on the verge of ruin
Steadily, our aspirations approach the brink of collapse
We watch them suck our milk of life to dryness
Our bones are worn with spent flesh
Wake, arise and join me
To redeem our death in exchange for life
Why do you smear me with scathing comments?
Maybe I should never have worried
Just like you and others many
Maybe I should never have bothered
Instead of a nod, I get a knock
Even you persecute me for daring death
You manufacture rumours and transport them afar
You knot forces with silent murderers
They mock as they set us against ourselves
They flaunt our disgrace before our very eyes
They hoodwink us with attractive lies
Our complacency append signatures to their madness
We must not retreat to close their ranks
Nor should we be mollified by their tactics
With me join forces to extirpate the saintly devils
Up on your feet, absolutely, resolutely
They christen our struggle, offensive
And name our comrades dissents
They initiate a battle to bastardise justice
They stage-managed a war to degrade humanity
Oh! Try, Cry, Shout, fight
Sing this song
Over and over again.

Away with dictators
Away with mutilators
Away with sorcerers
Away with murderers
Usher in bright plight
Usher in perennial peace
Usher in true hope
Usher in long life
So we can sing
Sweet sounds,
Sonorous and soothing
Sink we must not
No, don't make us drown
Else we die,
Decay
And decompose
Wake up everybody, rise up
Sing this song
Over and over again...
39. Once Upon A Head

Vile tongues
Of treacherous imps
Tarnishing and destructive
Wag restlessly

Wicked souls
With comatose conscience
And deeds calumnious
Kill laughter and joy

With shameless elders
Collusion all entrenched
They ate and drank power
Ever so transient

Once stripped naked
By the custodian of authority
Once upon a Head,
Now upon a toe.
40. Aware

If ever someone was reliable
It is no one
If somebody was ever trustworthy
It is nobody

If you believe in everybody
You have no one to believe in
Don't trust yourself either
It smirks futility
But being aware
May just be the key
Then be aware
Yes, beware!
41. One Take

He vowed and swore
Touching the earth
Pointing skywards
He wept and sobbed
Drenched in tears
Bereft of breath
He groaned and growled
Gnashing his teeth
Biting his fingers
With occasional outbursts
Of emotional outrage
He moved everyone with conviction
Of his believable innocence
Except the little boy
Who saw him pilfer the treasure
But, He was just another person
A surrogate!
Cut...
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