

I Travel Home

Iyeoka

I travel home to remember the sound of morning
I choose the evening to pray I remember this as it is
For when the city returns
When the sound of the green-line trolley cars and skyscrapers
Surround my senses diminishing this version of my imagination

I will remember this
The silence and the night time
I will remember red sand on bare feet
My skin sticky glistening in the sun
My hair like untamed wool
I will remember the air thick of Africa

I will remember my mother in the night
And the children she cares for
I will see them once more as they play
Peeking at me from the crack in the doorway

I will remember my aunti-- her famous Jeloff rice
Asking me in flawless Ishan native tongue
"Ofure... Onegbe?"... How is everything... you're too skinny"
And I, struggling to keep up, clumsily responding
"Butayay aunti?" That means, I don't know what you just said

I will remember the market place
The women selling smoked corn and plantain
The taste of moy-moy and egusi
The sound of Doris pounding yam
Fresh oranges from the Arrimogiga farm

When Boston city lights mask the majesty of my favorite constellations
I will remember the moon...
Pregnant and smiling
Because I am a poet
As if she knows that I am
Invested enough to write about it
Perhaps because I am a poet
I will remember the unseen

The homeless and the beggars, the roadside wanderers,
People just trying to survive
Children roadside selling cell phones and unwanted trinkets
I will remember the local roads
Beaten and eroded by rain and time
Huts built beside a 15 story hotel skyrise
So many having so much
Neighbors with others living with nothing
But the hand-me-downs on their backs
And the realities of poverty crushing their
Promises of tomorrow

I leave behind my rose colored glasses
In my grandfather's village
Because when my plane finally lands back in Boston
I want to believe that Nigeria changes me every time
These moments teach me how to recognize what we take for granted
Constant electricity and clean water

Hospitals on every corner
The opportunity to rise beyond our native borders
These are the details that risk a fate of becoming lost or forgotten
Like sounds of the morning
For when the city returns
When the sound of the green-line trolley cars and skyscrapers
Surrounds my senses diminishing this version of my imagination
I will remember this
I need to remember this