

# 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