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 hi”.
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.