

Poetry Series

**Padmore Enyonam
Agbemabiese
- poems -**

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Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese(1965)

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese is a Ghanaian poet, playwright and scholar. Currently he is a lecturer at The Ohio State University in the United States. He received his elementary education in Ghana at Abor Roman Catholic Primary School and later his secondary education at Abor and Kpandu secondary schools. Throughout this period his Grandma never left him uninformed of who he is. The basic statements of his Grandma's ideas and positions have become relevant to the understanding of his educational views. According to Padmore Agbemabiese, prescriptions and controversies that spring from what his grandmother perceives as literacy are vital today as they often explode in scholarship on what constitutes education or literacy across the world.

.....And Love Wept

the morning clouds have come
you were not in the shade

where were you

but
this is not why I'm here tonight
I've gathered the morning dew on my feet
hoping to catch descending tears
pretending they are hope's victory
over those sad truths
that made love wept

one day
you could spare these eyes
for seeing things
I wish they hadn't
one day
you will sing to these lips
for saying things
I wish I was glad they did

till that time
I'll wait under morning cloud
for the savanna rains in the clouds

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

A Night Without You

what is sleep
if not with my face
against your back
my ear
cradled by your shoulder-blade

what is joy
if not with your hair falling across my breast
and my arms curled
somewhere around your upper torso
and your feet locked in mine
is warmed by the robs of your sensation

when not by your side
my eyes refuse to close
my muscles refuse to relax
so what is more profound
than when waking up
I kiss your neck
and turn into a lark
singing with my heart:
I am warm by your heart?

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

A Plea

Agbo da ze me da na nyi o*
Lakle dome gbaba ebe yeda ami wu egbo**

a voice out from somewhere
calls on the bruised Heart to wait no more
ask the wanderer, ask him
down in the thistles of the desert
what did he find

the hunter has returned
humming tunes of loneliness
ask the hunter, ask him
deep in the turbulent estuary
what did he see

a woman dressed in the pain of anguish
tells the rain come and beat me
ask the woman, ask her
why she carries the bitterness of tears

a child in the agony of hunger
greet the priest with songs of sorrow
ask the child, ask him
why dirge lingers on his tongue

there is a bad taste on my tongue
to whom should I complain

I am told the blood in my veins
it can be traced to a Dawn
somehow, I am not lost in my doom
so, Grandfathers here I come
nursing swollen knees

in these hands are two white cocks
they are for the knowing and unknowing Man
to hold the Calm for my broken soul
tell Dzogbese Lisa*** I have no palm to cover my nakedness
so here, I kneel before the Gates of father's gods

pleading to relearn the wisdom
I abandoned many seasons ago

those who do not drink among Saints
do not break into a restless run
to drive against the new Dawn
my dance my steps are on trembling legs
like one deprived of dreams

hear me Tutelary Spirits
hear the funeral songs of my soul
look deep into the tears in my eyes
count not the lost decades of pleasures
but look at these bleeding arms
and weave me a rope to go to heaven

come with defetsui**** leaves for the asperges
assure me of the promise of early Morning Dews
and tack away from the hyenas hopes of wingless birds
grant this lips seasons of new songs
the ultimate song of joy
of sweet scents of Home

*An Ewe poetic expression meaning, the pot used in cooking the ram is not big enough to cook the cow.

**An Ewe poetic expression meaning, the lean lion is not comparable to a fat goat.

***Dzogbese Lisa among the Ewes of Ghana is Fate of the Creator Being

****Defetsui leaves among the Ewes of Ghana is a sweet-scented leave used for purification in the Yewe shrine

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A View From My Window

from my window on Ashen Avenue
netted with a frost-bound spider-web
I can see a sparrow in a hurricane
searching for a way....with a head full of dreams
purring for faith that can move anything

like a ship its sails are waiting for wind
maybe when the weather changes
the sparrow trapped in the hurricane
would hear the world say, it will make it
and when faith that can move anything comes
it will spread its wings and fly uphill

from my window on the Pallid Street
I still see the sparrow whirring in the hurricane
nursing swollen knees with head full of dreams
it is dusk and stars collapsed in its eyes
its mind is failing yet it whines for life
if there is a hole in the floors of heaven
to drip down tears without auguries
it will faint in the deep waters of happiness

in the shadow of a broken house
down a deserted street, lined by propped walls,
bejeweled by cold hearths, stands the sparrow
facing a phantom stair, chased by the silence
of dead feet and lost and ruined by peering moons,
soon time's stony palace will crumble it down
and with no nerve to feel nor brain to invent
all will be a midsummer's night dream

in the shadow of the broken house is a mirror
how very different we are and how alike
the sparrow turned me to the mirror
what marks the border between us, it said
in the mirror is a wolf at the door
shooting snake's eyes, the clouds are dark
and the wind so high, the sparrow
can't see the other side of the road

I looked into the mirror again
the sparrow was gone, it was me in the mirror
tending words of wisdom, words of time,
for a substance of existence, for a new breath

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Absence

these pale cold days
away from comfort's arms
leaves these wild eyes yearning
beneath melancholy's brows

like waif the spirit gropes
for a touch in the pools of love
like one that is long dead
buried behind shrouds of dust
yet with living eyes still opened

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Africa

we are the dog who caught the game
but are made to take comfort in the bones
beneath the master's table

we are the wood splintered by iron axes
we are the door ravaged by steel arms
and torn apart so they may take the prize

we are the deflowered virgin, raped
by sailors from the Seven Seas
and draped in shrouds of soft silken threads

we are the abandoned princess
waiting for the man who touched her soul
to return to free her heart in the stone

we are the vast and endless pasture
caught between delicate pale white fingers
that pluck and tiptoe away the smile on our faces

and now we shed tears, littered fragments
of our broken dreams in every alley of the world
while they rub our chests with the fragrance of death

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After The Rain

I'm still here after the rain
tending the tomatoes
pushing black pepper seedlings
back into the ground with these fingers
still startled
at why sweet onion bulbs
deleted smiles from our eyes

I'm still here after the rain
standing alone like the land I stand on
gazing into distant future
like one facing life like the view
from an aeroplane

it's after six and I'm still here
in the garden after the rain
with my feet in the mud
holding a steaming teacup
once filled with ice cream
tending words that grow like
a chimney without a soul

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After You Were Gone

after you were gone
your presence lingered
on the piano keys of my life
silence resounded with
the beauty you created
and your absence was felt in
memory of the air I breathed
and now your enchantment
remains as a lingering shadow
in every whisper of hope I have

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Alone

broken, shattered
tattered, torn and left dead
it's like a lone star hanging
I know not who I am
just a river of tears

do I have a name, a face
than a river of tears

I look back and wonder
and there's nothing worth knowing
except the field of pain

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Assurance

in times of joy
in moments of pain
in times of doubt
in moments of adversity
in times of desparation
in moments of loneliness
in times of frustration
and in times of nothingness
we need assurance
from those we call
our good friends

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Be Gentle With Me

come to me gently like petals
falling in a gentle breeze

heal my dreams like balms
make me grow taller
in my hope knowing the care
of the sun's gentle rays in your arms

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Be Kind

sometimes our hearts should not beat alone
it needs someone whose presence
speaks to our grief, someone whose words
touches our souls already lost
in a hollow full of rotting creatures
dancing in a billion-blooded sea

sometimes, alone, it seems deep inside
shoals are rimmed howling
rioting against surrounding scenes

does it take courage
to love and love sincerely?

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Because

because I carry a smile everyday
whirl and dance my eyes
across the breast of your Corridors
you don't know I cry

because I wound my arms round you
breathe and kiss the soggy air
in your dusty Garden
you don't know I have tears

because I dance
on those glassy shattering
strewn across my path
yet laugh and embrace your empty hands
you don't know I die

because you don't know
why I'm quiet when I crumble and tumble
yet I swirl and trail behind you
let me tell you the truth

those birds only nest in churches
but to find them elsewhere
like innocent flowers they hid
serpents in their buds
and their daggers is not of the mind

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Before The Drought

before the drought
there was a long season of rain
slashing leaves like doubly drums
like tin and shingles beating
it was like a commotion in the sky

then came a dead silence thundering
making ears bend in awry

every flower-head on the farm
was piddled to dust and with a sigh
sunk into the grass and the sand, where it hummed
like bees did once among chrysanthemums
and asters when the drought of winter drowned their voices

we never dreamed of this and has it now
nor was the waking to it easy

we took the pain to our gods with an oath
called on our young to girdle their loins
to be jealous of death and watch the sleepy brow
of smiles in every slumber and heart at the door
we remember the Flood that once roared near
and our spirit remembers being mute
when They came and took our Voices away

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Before They Died

anytime I look at the sky
I remember the talks
like the clouds that drift slowly away
what were they before they died

anytime I see leaves gone from trees
I remember the walk through the fields
like the stand of flowers in our hands
what were they before they died in our hands

I will take a long time to know
how long the lotus in the lake
catches the eye before it dies

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Beware

I'm not yours to be lost
like candle in the wind
like salt in a cabbage stew
I'm delightfully not yours

you see me beautiful and bright,
graceful like light in the sun
I'll never be the air in your breeze
nor the gin in your juice
I am the zebra the pride of a people

a bird imprisoned in a cage
knows it is a matter of time
so do not hold my soul captive
flapping me like a taper in a rushing wind
I am the Cat, my back has a story to tell

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Broken

broken, shattered
tattered, torn and left dead
it's like a lone star hanging
I know not who I am
just a river of tears

do I have a name, a face
than a river of tears

I look back and wonder
and there's nothing worth knowing
except the field of pain

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Broken Dreams (For Aka Logan)

(for aka Logan)

as children bring into your store
their broken African masks
with tears for you to mend,
don't forget this my good friend
bring your broken dreams to God too
He is your only and last friend

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Can We Let It Go

can we push away
last year's wet clogging leaves
long dead tulips we once held dear
but are now baggage on the way?

can we welcome the sunshine
as the clouds tumble playfully
and release a potted primrose
with roots diving long into springs

the forecast may say it is frost
a falling of cruel snowflakes
enough for us to pull on a winter coat
and standing tall will give a sore throat

but after a little breathless moment
there'll be a green shoot of petals
of the rose thrusting through the snow
with the ice-crusted path crushed
and the field of life is astonishing green

My Grandma once said,
from crouching and dark desolation
sweet showers spring melting
a chill felt through woolen sleeves

can we push away
last year's wet clogging leaves
long dead tulips we once held dear
but are now baggage on the way?

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Can't Promise Anything

I can't promise you roses
which bloom of brilliant red
but I promise, when you need me
as much as possible
I will be here for you

I can't promise you perfection
for perfection I am not
I am like the rose
thorns are all I've got
and tears are what I know

I can't promise you wealth
with money to shower away
the old pains that engulf you
but I can give you my love
to share throughout each day

I can't promise you the stars
for they are out of my reach
but I can show you how to walk
gently through your stormy nights
I'll hold your hands till we cross the Gibraltar

I can't promise total happiness
and never a tear in your eye
but I can give you my word
that in every way I will try
to listen and wipe the tears you shed

I can't promise eternal life
for this is not mine to give
but I can promise you something
to love and support you
everyday in which we live

so you see I am not the best
and I'm not leaps above the rest
but then you will never know

until you've put me to the test
when we reach the edge of the river

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Cherished Friend

God knows there would be times
we'd need a word of cheer
want the face of smile
to brush away our tears

He knows there would be times
we'd need the joy of 'little things'
in order to appreciate what life brings
across our steps on this long road

He knows our hearts
oftentimes throb with aches and pains
at the door of trials and misfortunes
when the day is dark with no light at sight

He knows we'd need the comfort
of an understanding heart
to give us strength and courage
that we make a fresh and new start

He knows we'll need companionship
that's unselfish, lasting and true,
thus, He always answers our heart's call
with the gift of a Friend, like you

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Close To Nothing

not too long ago
I met a man who claimed to have
visited the shrine in my village

then I met another man who not only
claimed to have visited
the shrine in my village
but also to have made love
in the shrine in my village —he showed me
photographs of the Altar I adore
and sang me songs no one was supposed to hear
than me

so there was this man
who visited the shrine in my village and
that man who made love in the shrine in my village
and sang me songs no one was supposed to hear
than me

and since I lost the cowries in the diviner's bag
I didn't know who to believe
except one thing that I do know:
my guess is that maybe
none knew neither my village nor the shrine

or if they knew it at all
every tale has a tail longer than that of the antelope

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Dawn

it's the time the cock crows
to lift me above the clouds
into pure space of the God of Songs
and the rites begin in guttural voices
with a journey beyond time, beyond the body
in chariots, rocket ships beyond skyscrapers
and within brass walls, polished marble of Inca artwork
of the mind, each breath a word nearly Immortal

help me, Inspiration, the breath
my God of Song draws for me
this dawn, its like birds singing on the 12th Street
their song is too heavy for this brain

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Desire

she wanted to sing a song
but there was no ear to hear her sing
when someone finally turned to listen
her voice was faint and gone

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Do You Know My Name

after this long walk
you shy away from my name
curse the day we met and swear
the dream we once had is a wave
that has but rolled past the cape of hope
and now thoughts of me are bitter memories
that is dreading like a timbered night cry

our long walks have left a lifeless trace
on the streets of your mind and images
of you and me are like a design
buried between gravestones feared
by the eyes that once spoke of me with a smile

all about me is in a long-dead past
lost in the rush of madder dreams
and entangled in a cave of ghosts
without pure tender beams of life
with none to sigh and tell the story
of me except in the silence of memory

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Does The Road Wind?

does the road wind, cascade
and snake all the way?
should I come running
or rippling, beaming
or dreaming like a pale-face moon?
will the journey be comfy,
tranquil and pleasant
or it will be an adventure of surprises,
of tears with no resting place?
does the sun shine all day long
and the moon and stars dance
at night to comfort the weak and travel-sore?
tell me that I may know
help me that I do not moan
and groan like the bells
just tell me
does the road wind, cascade
and snake all the way?

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Dzogbese Akpe

Dzogbese Lisa,
give me the strength of the hills
never washed away by summer rain
give me the vigor of the cactus
always at peace with the desert storm
when weakness fills my bones
and wariness tires my soul
give me the might to walk through the blitz
and when at last my weary days sink quietly to rest
in night's cool arms I will count with ease
the rugged steep roads I did climb
and the many storms I weathered on the road of life
let me sing it in the lowland, hilltops and the valleys
that folks may shake their shoulders
free of bonds that hold them close to earth
let me tell all they have the stars as companions
even if the night is like grim volcanoes
pregnant with the fires of molten fury
for you Dzogbese Lisa alone
gave me the strength to threadbare this pathway with smiles

(Dzogbese Lisa means God or Fate among the Ewes of Ghana)

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Elavanyo

who among us
have not planted a seed
hoping one day it will grow
and instead of that seed a flower will flourish
adorning adjoining fields of life

it is this hope that keeps our hopes alive
battling with the storm, surviving the whirlwinds
hoping dreams will flourish bit by bits
like dotted lilies adorning fields of our lives

our life as partners in love has just began
and we have to step up to the plate
together, we can achieve great things

do not be daunted or discouraged
neither be distressed to take moves
against that which brings sorrow, and disrepute
and leave a stigma on what we have

to end it all, our river of love is rising
rising with the tides and we must know the river is wide
to cross it, we will need one another's helping hand

in that lies the axiom, united we stand, divided we fall.

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Ever Since

ever since we met behind the sheets of our eyes
in every breath I take in every step of the day
your presence lingers on the breast of my soul
and I feel the rhythm in my heart
making my legs wriggle in a graceful dance

in every dream of the night
your love stares at me
and with gentle smiles I hear you say
you're the breeze in my dawn
the beam in my sunshine
and the colors in my rainbow

sometimes when I am lost among life's pains
and I cling to the pillows I once dream on
my soul swims in the deep streams of thought
suddenly, your love opens like petals of a sunflower
clothing me with your warm and tender love
let me say it all, I'm blessed to be in love with you

ever since we met behind the sheets of our eyes
I have listened to your soft splendor voice
heard your laughs rise into starlit heaven
they give me the power to love again
today as I journey on the streets of love
you are the one whose love
not even death will take away from me

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Facing Truth

you weave me webs of lies
walk me miles away from the truth
you tell me stories every dawn
that my soul should swim in the hope
that nothing will grieve me by night nor day
even if I walk through the valley blinded
that your long kiss at dawn will be
an ice on the cake of pains

I wish I knew what I know now
the avenues and sidewalks of your dreams
now my cup overflows with a vale of tears
and I walk in the shadow of doubt all alone
now and then I look silly and stupid before the world
where you have baked love so tasteless,
with my soul dead and done for long

one day there will be light upon the lawn;
I will walk and watch the sun rise
until the chill of dawn dies in my hand

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Far From Here

somewhere, not too far away
on a distant Home unknown
is my brother, my Dad and Grandma
my cousins and nieces
many more that my mouth can't count

that I can't be there, is story my tears tell

yet, I remember what Grandma once said
Tsiefe is not far from here, it is here
and they are here to still my storms
that they are here with me I need not fear
that I'm not on the distant hill unknown
I need not worry anymore

everyday I call them to attention
salute them in libations
honor their memory in songs
like the flowers others lay on graves
I dine and drink with them every hour
and rejoice in the peace of the Spirit's release
whenever we gather under the village tree

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Flames Of Love

when the flame of love lights up your life,
dreams become facts and our hearts burst
into bloom like a sun flower on a sunny day,
entwined together like little daisies
our souls dance to rhythms unfathomed

but when the flame of love dims
things seem subtly out of focus,
and things once unsaid
are heard from the lips that kissed
in bliss swearing at heaven's door
our love is for better for worse

and finally when the flame of love dies
the light of love goes out on many things,
there life becomes a tragedy
and not the adventure that marked the entrance
the pain is a flame that will never go out
even if the Fire Service keeps vigil all nights

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

For Adzovi*

Come, Adzovi, come my love.
Come let us play at resolves
along paths by the stream
and stretch our heart's desire.

Beneath the eaves of our mudhouse,
I'll wait even when the sky darkens
and the sniffing dog
is blanketed by night;
just promise you'll be there.

Ever since this note I've been
waiting at where the street cleaner
hasn't come in three weeks
and the drums of the Asafo Company**
rehearsing for the festival
are stilled by the deafening storm.

Adzovi, if you do not come this way
when do we begin mending
our broken dreams, and fade
memories of our reckless clouds
and carve essence for tomorrow?

When will we wipe off
the dust that pared us down
and made all our yesterdays fools?
Maybe, no one knows what happens
when love's boat smashes
against the Grim Reaper's scythe
and all you remember is the suicide note
written when love's boat smashes
against daily groans.

Come, Adzovi,
let us play at resolves
along paths by the stream
and stretch our heart's desire.

Beneath the eaves of our mud house,
I'll wait even when the sky darkens
and the sniffing dog
is blanketed by night
just promise you'll be there.

Ever since this note I've been
waiting at where the street cleaner
hasn't come in three weeks
and the drums of the Asafo Company
rehearsing for the festival
are stilled by the deafening storm.

[ADZOVI* is the weekday name given to a girl born on Monday and Asafo Company** is a fraternal organization of young men, who carryout relief activities of the village].

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For J.

between us
lies a desert where prayers of David
can force a rose to spring from the sand

between you and me
is the vision of a beach full of allamanda
encircled by thorns of bougainvillea

yesterday you were torn between
weed and flower
between a tourist and the true paradise

forgive me
for this morning's sake
I am in the melting fields
crumbling quietly in unsteady skies

you have known pools of fresh tears
tollled by golden bells of the Tourist Board
they've shaken roots of your plants

today, I've been left all night in the fridge
danced between shadows and light
walked like lines of ants with boulders of sugar

to my surprise and betrayal
I have been crowned
by wreaths of false laurel
drawn by a veiled figure
to own packets of an artificial sugar
this story grows in the art of poetry hardening me

but for now, between us
this road on which now rises with all power
berries will redden and delight spring like fountains
and frozen lakes crack into maps green with lilies

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

From A Grandma To A Grandson

be patient with life, despite its cruelty
often it seems careless to shed tears
for something you cherish but lost
but let it bring you hope
to laugh last is to laugh best
not all buds bloom as flowers
so take your heart that bleeds
you were not made eternally to weep

wish happiness for everyone
do not deny them their freewill
to love, to choose, and be where they want
under every word this still is true
be happy in all disappointments
in your life many sweet events remain
not in anguish, but in joy remember this
sacred things from Heaven come
when the storm of life is over

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Garden Of Friendship

with nourishment and caring
flowers bloom in spring
from tiny seeds once planted
in the garden of our hearts

with love like rain and time like sunshine
they sprout and grow
but often times they wither
like in winter when nurturing is slow

with love so tender and care so passionate
the garden flourishes and the sweet scent of flowers
like joy is everywhere in the fields

treasured are the moments
when the flowers of friendship bloom
like flowers from seeds once sown
even in seasons of winter

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Ghost Of King Leopold

they came like a whirlwind from the hillside
rushed into the mud houses and walked over
the corn fields with showers of hailstorm
we heard the startling sound with opened hearts
then all at once the air around us was stilled

where once baobab trees towered high
and mangroves tall and green danced
where once was the hollies and God's home
the groves and grotto were never seen again
the spacious altar was littered with withered leaves

the elders sing it in songs when hailstorms dropp
and withered leaves hop on village lanes
they remember those days where everywhere
they lost the nose for a breath of air
even beneath the shade of God's home

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Give Me My Mother, Not Gold!

You may have tangible wealth untold;
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.
You may be richer than I can be -
But I have a mother nobler than thee
Richer than caskets of jewels

Let me say it over and over and over
The bravest battles ever fought!
Tell me where and when they were fought.
And I will sing of who fought and died in them
On maps of the world you will find them not;
They were fought by the mothers of men.

They fought, not with cannons and missiles of battle-shouts,
Nor with swords and noble pens in men's hands
They fought from the deep side of a woman's heart
And they gave their lives and love to the children they bear

Every woman is a mother
Every mother is a fighter for the child she knows
From babyhood to the grave, it is the mother
Who fights on and on in endless wars with her child,
Toddling and walking and running along on playgrounds
Nestling in her arms her sleeping baby
She yields not to the aches and pains she knows
Till the child grows to be a man of honor
She is as faithful as a bridge of stars to the child

There are treasures on earth, that make life seem worthwhile,
But there's none to compare to a mother's smile
The kingliest victories of floral basket men have
Are the fruits of those silent sweats of mothers
You remember those selfish moods of yours when a baby
Your blind sense of wrong and pain
You do remember the tears she shed to save you, the heart
Of purest gold and eyes with love-light shining she offers

Let the moon beam bringing you dreams
Dreams of that wonderful mother

Let the birds sing of anything splendid
But hold a spot down deep in your heart,
And crown her as your spotless woman
Remember her till the stars no longer shine
Through the fields of time in your time
For there'll never be another mother
Like that wonderful Mother of yours

HAPPY MOTHERS' DAY

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Goodbye

ours was never love enough
to keep my soul dreaming
so when I say goodbye
its going to be the herring's long journey home

I don't regret the times we had
but hate the times I cried
for with every tear I shed
a part of me died

should I fake a smile
hold onto darting eyes, a biting tongue
shining my teeth like your slaughtering
is an exotic pearl essential to me

should I do this
I will end up dead

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Goodbye Love

all my life I've searched
for where the ripples on the river go
when they disappear beneath the bridge

this dawn I wondered
where beautiful music goes
when it's too far away to hear

it is noon-time and I tried to find
where all the love goes
when it leaks out of a broken heart
and there is not a soul to lend us an ear

last night I looked through the window
to see where the sun's rays go
when clouds take over and the rain come
but it has been some time now and there
is not a star to hope for

so, today I searched
for a true friend
when everyone turned backs on me
but one thing rings a bell
in the forest beyond
is it danger or treasure

first, I thought I found a friend in you
with all the jewels I asked for
but for now, I wish I had known
I would someday have to let you go
without a kiss of goodbye

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Happy Valentine Day

last night I thought of you and me
the days we spent together
and the tears we saved all the years

let me tell you this secret
deep inside my heart
I've kept a little box
it is a box of memories
I created about you

any time I miss your presence
I retrace my steps
looking for footprints of you and me
on trails in the park and in the sand-dunes at the playground
sometimes, I look for your smiles
that are engraved on the petals of the flowers
that always hang on the door at Christmas
that was when our love was full of memories

really, all these bring me tears
when I look inside the box
the box of memories inside my heart
that I created about you

sometimes, there are stories I want to share
to tell you, you are the song in my heart
that I couldn't sing
the rhythms in my heartbeat
and the footprints on my soul that I could hardly erase

all these I have kept
deep inside a little box
a box of memories
I created about you

I wish tonight I could tell it all
in your presence with a shout of ululations
to let the world know
you are the only one

my only Valentine

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Hell Is Nobody's Home

at home, we speak not of martyrdom
nor of men who must die to be remembered
with imperial drums in a Sunday service
the dreamer never dies and they don't just die

so, if we must die in this Missouri hills
with half heels in half soled shoes
clomping up and down Harlem streets
let us die a Youngman's death shaking rivers
and with these rich dark root fingers recall Home
the clan of the brave, gallant with stores of Dreams

let us breathe the breath of Agboklu
and the women mourn our wry-filled nights
let us be the Sun from Africa that tags the western sky
melting souls and voices to squat in the mud of shame

let us drown our hearts in floods of Hope
to keep our mothers' wombs warm
even in chilly strange lands
let us be remembered on village lanes
as sweet, even in gust and sore storms

let us not die in the deep, deep waterlog
of Holy Water and Extreme Unction
speaking famous-last-words
that mown down our frames through dawns
and peacefully took Breath from our pleading Lungs

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Here Is The Key

tonight,
I will give you
the key to my heart
when you enter please,
irrigate the veins with all your love
maintain the heartbeat with your fidelity
take care of the chambers with all your tenderness
and when you do this
my heart will open to you
the door to our eternal love

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Here The Sea Meets The River

down there the river glitters
the fishes leap with a dance in the sun
their joyous fins flutter and sing
and they dive back into the river again

here where the Sea meets the River
the fishes leap with a howl
their fins flap in the burning sun
and they dive back into the angry Waves again

in their nothingness they see the harvestmen
bending reeds in the blazing pool
it is noontide, the fishes are in a wanton Song
the words offend my Ears and defile my Tongue

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

If

if anyone should dream
of writing my life story
let it be known the dash
between the past and the present
are years that carry streams of tears
and basket full of camellion feaces
into which I stepped and cannot efface

they were days I loved but was not loved
there were moments I prayed
but there was no god to hear me
always and all the time I cried aloud
but
there were no tears flowing to make a big sea
so my days came and went like a pencil of smoke
lost in the thin air

if you should care to write this story
just let it be known
there were times I walked down the road
like I had no legs
yet there was the need to get somewhere

there were occasions I run so fast as if I had no breathe
and do not forget
the road was slippery yet I had to stand the ground
at times I did made a fall but I had to stand straight with only a smile

if you care to know
there were times the load was just too heavy
the road just too long
but when my heart pangs I just gather my loins
and move on.....

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

If We Must Die

she sends me news of bushfires with the rain
falling, not falling, and the pain of the old man
in the cold, biting hamarttan
she speaks of births and deaths on village lanes
sometimes like stars at harvest moon
with hope buried in palms
the diviner himself is lost gazing at the sick hills
painted with withered leaves of corn

lightly, she speaks in blues and lists what is all lost
except me, the Sun, rising behind the hills
to kill Death in the dark

I read the lines like rotten melons piled
beside my door or like baskets filled with dried raisins
sitting in my studio hoping if I could tell courage
to hide me in some banana leaves
till I touch the tip of an Envelope
from which drips Stardust like rain

here where my life seems sweet and strange
I read her wild excitement of a place
where stars fall on laps and nightingales sing long
I thought long of the broken years that don't change
and my wailing lips touched the Cross
I wish she knew how people live
and never live at all in this part of the sea
if she knew, maybe
she will not tell me if she cries

I folded the pages as I rise
tipped the envelope from which
drifts scraps of blues from home
and there are dozens of such in my closet

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Imagine

imagine being torn, folded, packed, bagged,
transported, exported, then labeled, toxic waste
then advertised, an unacceptable commodity
imported by mistake.

imagine all that and the blues and the jazz
caught me thinking, humming, musing
swaying my head like a slave ship
and the souls of those burned in the fight called

the Call came like a dreaded disease
into my pores possessing my being
conjuring the past into the present
calling my mute blood to rebel
to protest the taste of iron in my mouth

tell them, we cannot suppress our passion
mute strong voices of our bruised souls
nor bury the anger in our lamentations
we shall walk the streets with our warrior drums
we shall face the Evening with thundering feet
till the church tolls the bell and soldiers the last bugle note
to the death, that stirs the thicket of our peace

imagine being torn, folded, packed, bagged,
transported, exported, and then labeled, a toxic waste
then advertised, an unacceptable commodity
imported by mistake

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

In Her Memory

she has been many years dead
yet he kept her picture on the wall
left her rocking chair by the fireside
dressed her bed every morning
and reserved her seat at the dinning table

oftentimes he shops for her favorite fruits
and writes her name on the egg at Christmas
I have heard him call her disconnected number
and smiles on the line for a long time
last night I heard him say:
love never ends with death, it is always

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

In Your Footprints

Dear Father In-Law,
if I should wish for something today,
it will be within this little verse I relay to you,
to come home every hour to the woman I treasure
and give thanks for the blessings she gives
to be sincere and true just as you are to your wife

I've seen the joy on your face
when yesterday you lifted your grandson, Caleb
I saw you listen to all the drought talks of Camia
I've watched you hold them tenderly
so tenderly in your arms striking them with a smile
if I should wish for something today,
it will be within this little joys you bring to all

to be a wonderful Father-in-law is my dream too
to encourage, mentor, and champion love of family
that when the spring of my life has passed
and summer arrives with broken limbs
all who knew me will say, I've seen them through
with a robe pure and white and a love so warm
and if I can go to Sleep so soundly, I'll say
it was my Father-in-law who taught me
how to go gently into the night

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Is That Me?

when love comes, we sit and sigh
wanders to and fro
on the proscenium of the mind
slowly unbidden joy-drops fill our eyes
a little word comes along, 'is that me? '
it's soft and scarcely heard

when love departs, we mope apart
as owls mope on a tree
although we keenly feel the pain
we can't tell what ails the heart
slowly a little word comes along 'is that me? '
of all the eloquence of the love
what lies hidden is scarcely known

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

It Has Been Three Days

three days have passed
since the coming of death
into the village we call with love
in the days of the savanna rains

it is three days now
since I walked back into memory
went over everything we've said to one another
everything in the years when we didn't speak
those days I carried calabashes of dead palm wine
and red blood blobs fell on every song

it is three days now since I tossed in the pail
those smiles we carried with the soup of gritty tears
and I'm almost wordless

I went back to those days
when we walked proudly these lanes
picked up fragmented pictures
of when we danced towards each other with arms stretched
to embrace and embrace and embrace
and I gathered tears we wept while we hugged

I remember the night we died
and the pieces of words flying around
silently like wire
I felt the completeness of loss
carried the absence without a smile

it has been three long dead days
when the rains in the savanna lost their dance
yet what was is still there
yet we've walked this path
moved past each other by the coffee shop
without looking into each other's eyes

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Its Not The Years

its not the years we loved
its the quality of love we shared

its how we walked through the valleys
battled turbulent waves to cross streams
to see our dreams flower on top of the hill

its how our love grew together through the years
and our hearts beat in concert to pluck the ripe plum
growing on a purple tree high in the windy sky

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Just Saying, Thanks

thanks for being strength in my weakness
thanks for being hope in my despair
and mores, thanks for being there
when light walks away from the forest

along the long lonely snaking road
are cascading pike-peak thorns
they hurt the foot at where none can care
all you can hear are crickets singing their dirges
when we call for ululation to heal the hurts

when the sun rises as it usually does,
and the cock crows at the hour it can;
when the apostolic minister rings the church bells
and the congregation begins to sing the 'martins',
hear it again, it's me saying once again, many thanks.

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Kofi, Its True

we are the dog who caught the game
but are made to take comfort in the bones
beneath the master's table

we are the wood splintered by iron axes
we are the door ravaged by steel arms
and torn apart so they may take the prize

we are the deflowered virgin, raped
by sailors from the Seven Seas
and draped in shrouds of soft silken threads

we are the abandoned princess
waiting for the man who touched her soul
to return to free her heart in the stone

we are the vast and endless pasture
caught between delicate pale white fingers
that pluck and tiptoe away the smile on our faces

and now we shed tears, littered fragments
of our broken dreams in every alley of the world
while they rub our chests with the fragrance of death

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Lament

last night we set sail
with our Love fleet going north
we promised to leave behind our castles
let dirges sit beyond the bay of our hearts
we kept our dreams with hope
glittering softly in our moonlit cabin

today the sun is shining brightly
yet the sea is blue and boiling
everywhere we taste a salty spray
and our hope died before our quarter moon

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Leave Me Now

everything pains you
my presence stinks
my eyes are dreadful
my words stain
my name is cramp and long
soon, I'll smell awful

why don't you just leave me now

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Let Me Be

let me be
the scream in your fear
the moan in your pains
let me be
the voice in your sob
the stifle in your sighs
the peace under the shelter of your love

let me be the smile
that drowns the sorrow in your dreams
the only one that shares
in the agony and the tears of your soul

whatever note life plays
let me massage your hurts
let these arms
embrace the voice of your sob
this will bring my heart to share
in the flood of tears that drown your soul

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Let Me Go With Him

I have walked through
the thick and thin of life's experiences
and I've seen the Gates of Heaven opening
my feeble eyes have peeped past
the Gates into its allays
I saw Grandma and Grandpa walking
through its flowery gardens
I've seen Ahevor dancing to agbekor rhythms
arms stretched, I embraced my cousins and nieces
if this is where Death takes me to
let me welcome him now
let him take me away
from the magnificent shroud of black nights
let me fly with him in triumph
into the bosom of He who brought me
onto this opened road of nothingness

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Letters To My Sisters

braid the black dark hair
weave the supple tress
paint not the pretty face
just emphasize the grace
of your Godly queenship
come like the bougainvillea
to fill Earth with a pretty Smile

sit not with a downcast eye
brim the soul with the Morning Sun
cry not like a frightened roe
fluttering your little heart
emphasize your grace and
take on your Godly queenship
you are the Pretty One

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Life's Lilies

I have heard it told
that from the wrecks of time
and life's garbage heap
the lily sprouts

like love surviving storms
strangled by doom-filled prophecies
and maimed by poisons of malevolence
its survival is shocking

I have seen love
cursed by sleazy scripts penned by poison pens
but watered by strained struggling drops
of faith and hope
every gossipy wind burrowing through the slime
and grime of nothingness
misses the road only to return with a soothing secret melody
of inspiration

love like lilies hold pedals of
hope where life is lost in clouds of darkness

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Lineage

Lineage

in the beginning
somebody met somebody
in somebody's backyard
in a matter of days
this somebody begat somebody
many moons later somebody traveled away from home
and met somebody at the fish market
after a while they too begat somebody
when somebody's somebody grew up
somebody also met somebody
and they too begat somebody

many markets passed and nobody begat nobody
then it was the harvest season
when somebody met somebody from far away land
somebody was kind to this somebody
out of admiration somebody was promised somebody
so somebody was betrothed to somebody
when they met somebody begat somebody

years later
somebody also traveled with his schoolbag
to somebody's town
there somebody met somebody
they fell deep in love
neighbors went mad with somebody
but somebody clogged the ear and loved somebody

when the storm was over
somebody and somebody begat somebody
people came from far and near
there was drumming and dancing for days
when the drums lay quiet and the moon came out
the elders spoke of how they make one big family
they call it the lineage

I saw it with another eye

I was born to somebody many generations removed
from somebody who begat somebody many seasons ago

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Little Daisy

grow my sweet daisy
plant your roots within these veins
flourishing more so than
the grass that tickles your stem
soak your petals in the warmth
of this heart and you'll be
the gift of affection;

beyond this ivy covered day
is a warm and cozy fire
for love to snuggle together
for flames of love glow
like embers in a fire
let love begin to burn
with a long passionate kiss
for love has come home to stay

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Little Promise To Keep

someday, somehow,
love will find its way to me
and all that is lost in youth
will be mine at Harvestide
and though dim these eyes, they'll look
for the smiles and the laughter
they always wanted to have and hold

someday, somehow
though the years may take their toll
we will take what we have
share the lights and nights of the day
and spend every tick of time embracing
till Goodnight takes the Breath

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Living In Fear

the room so dark
and waterless too is like a desert,
hot and empty of love

trees once tall welcoming travelers
now rest silent like stone bereft of their buds

arms that have known these eyes
now torment like raw heat,
all they give is a sonic wave of bats

the rain-garnished sunflower in the center
of our dreams is now a lifeless leave golden-hued
its gilded petals adorned with seashells
will soon be buried in memory

humane feelings once the healing balm
has long been vanquished by the sun in a horseplay

not even a blade of nose awaits the traveler
like a figurative art to take his burden
somewhere beyond laughable appraisal

all is a dazzle, a bubble trail of daylight
set in a stare, cobwebbed and rolled
to Downside Park till dead and gone

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Lost

tonight, our love like the setting sun
slips away like a shadow behind the grooves
like a pencil of smoke it enters the thin air
till it fades like the indigo cloth with time
and now, like footprints in the sand, it is gone
washed away with the tides of time
never to be remembered by maidens
doing the bridal dance on village lanes

I believe angels cry
when soul mates part
and the tears that fall are like the rain
that drain the ugliness in the weary souls of travelers

tonight I weave you a wreath of love
of a long leave love for your long live soul
and give you this lit torch
to light your allays, to warm your chambers
I give you this torch
in remembrance of the love you smoldered into ashes
spendthrift its sentiments of oneness
baked its soul in a fiery furnace of feelings
and sunk into the abyss its broken heart

maybe, you'll take its powdery passion into the Ganges
where we wish dead souls a long goodnight

tonight I weave for you a wreath of love
of a long leave love for your long live soul
and give you this lit candle
to light your way, to warm your heart
in remembrance of the love you smoldering
into ashes

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Love Is All

love is all,
the laughter and the tears that fall
the smile and the heartbreak
the pain and the tenderness
buried in the depth of the heart

if love is all,
you'll find someday
pieces of your broken heart
buried across forgotten shores
and dancing like Humpty Dumpy
you'll remind yourself love like rose
has thorns that hurt

but in moments of your despair
in moments of your loneliness
when we say goodbye and our tears
swell to fill a cup that is when we realize
how much we love and care for each other

just because, love is
the laughter and the tears that fall
the smile and the heartbreak
the pain and the tenderness
buried in the depth of the heart

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Love Knots

after long walks on village lanes
after being in moonlit nights many market days
he showed her how to make a love-knot

her vows put his eyes on the rainbow
and at the back of her soul
she knew her screams were buried in a wall

last night their heads fell into deep sleep
like the two halves of a lopped melon
and love was hard to stop

in their entwined sleep
they exchanged arms and legs
in their dreams their hearts took each other hostage

in the morning they wore each other's face with smiles

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Love Poem

I want to write you
a love poem tall as the river
Volta with us standing
on its snaking craggy
banks and watching it come and go
trailing with it twigs from the plains
and dry leaves flapping on its glassy crust
at times we see branches
runoff beneath the crust and come out
with the ebb and flow bruised that we fear to watch
there are the screaming fishes panting at the mouth of the sea
they recall with tears the long snaking path
from the mountains to the savannah and the cascading
days that we must grab
each other and step back
get our dancing shoes
already soaked
and we must not forget
to grab each other
with the dream between us

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Mocking Bird

there's a bird in my heart that
needs to get out
but its too tough for me,
I say, get out, I'm not going
to have your song anymore

anytime I say this,
my mocking just winks
throws a gentle smile
and coos into my being

what do you think I should do?

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

More Letters From Home

she sends me news of bushfires with the rain
falling, not falling, and the pain of the old man
in the cold, biting hamarttan
she speaks of births and deaths on village lanes
sometimes like falling leaves at Harvestide

with hope buried in palms
the diviner himself is lost gazing at the sick hills
painted with withered leaves of corn

lightly, she speaks in blues and lists what is all lost
except me, the Sun, rising behind the hills
and returning to kill Death in the dark at Home

I read the lines like rotten melons piled
beside my door or like baskets filled with dried raisins
sitting in my studio hoping if I could tell Courage
to hide me in some banana leaves
till I touch the tip of an Envelope
from which drips Stardust like rain

here where my life seems sweet and strange
I read her wild excitement of a place
where stars fall on laps and nightingales sing long
I thought long of the broken years that don't change
and my wailing lips touched the Cross

I wish she knew how people live
and never live at all in this part of the sea

if she knew, maybe
she will not tell me if she cries

I folded the pages as I rise
tipped the envelope from which
drifts scraps of blues from home
and there are dozens of such in my closet

Mother's Anguish

my African child
he ain't got shoes except blues
works all day and hopes to play
like others in the sun
with a face that's tan but
at the end of the day, when work is done
he ain't got anything but blues

like a bird on a wire
like a lone soul in a midnight choir
making a living out of black-land dirt
on streets of Soweto down to Harlem
he has tried in ways to be free
like a bird out of a cage

like a fish on a hook
like a knight from an old fashioned book
like a baby stillborn
like a beast with his horns
no one reaches out for him

yet, like a beggar
leaning on a wooden crutch
like a soul hanging on a darkened door
he saved his pennies for your ribbons
and got your bills when you don't own his ills

this dark child,
ain't got anything to lose
when you watch him squirm
put him on a hook and you dropp him in a brook
everything's gonna turn out just right,
tomorrow you'll see him fry fish
with his eyes dancing with the stars
on the banks of Volta at Home

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

My Faith Looks Up To You

I look to you in every need,
help me never to look in vain
last night between rhythms of our heartbeat
and the breath-taking feelings of love
I felt your strong and tender love
in the arms you wound round me
and I knew all is well again

sometimes I'm discouraged
in the work of life and disheartened
by the load of pain and sorrow of life
faced with fears and disappointments
I sink beside the road
but when I come to think of you
a new heart springs up within me

your calmness stills my restlessness
and around me flows your quickening spirit
what I have never told you is that
you smiles always nerve my faltering will
whenever I look deep into your eyes
while your presence fills my solitude
truly, your providence turns my sorrows into joy

if there is one wish for me
my faith looks up to you
because enfolded deep in your dear love
held in your tender arms daily
with your hand in all the things I do
my feet will not lead me to unsought ways,
instead, you'll turn my mourning into praises

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

My Lune

if loving her unthinkable things happen
like we see in Harlem then living
in Harlem unthinkable things
could happen in the backyard of love
think of a beautiful ballerina
dancer twirling weaving your name
with a juice snaking coiling cascading
with a dagger to your name beats it hard
everybody in funky beat rock shock

and the dance goes on and on and the
music silver shines with the moon and the
dance and the dancers go on and on with the
silver moon high up away from the world

if loving her unthinkable things happen
remember when rain falls on thatch roof
raindrops drip into pans looking dark clean
like glass opaque they light nose-tips of
travelers lightning the long paths ahead

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

My Mother's Womb

my mother's womb
is Noah's Ark
in which I was saved.

my mother's womb
is the burning bush
it engulfed Moses
it engulfed me but
did not consume me.

her breast milk
the waters of The Nile
on whose banks I lie
and built me a home

in the absence of my father, she feeds me
she restores my soul
how fortunate I am
to have someone to call a mother,
with her presence I am safe
like the lilies of Sharon

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

No Contest

when first the bougainvillea
thrust its petals of gold up in the desert
a sudden tremor run through
green things in the dim woods of the savannah

bougainvillea in the desert
it crinkled their spears

love brought back
the crumbling sea of coal fire
its the rebirth of the Man
with wild-born things that thrill and blow

inside my loins was a dance like
the city's ceaseless roar and din

every vein made onto us kiths and kins

the dance with the bougainvillea
is far from the brambly paths I used to know

far from the rustling brooks that slip and hide
the dance is the lucid juicy aroma of the vine

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Of Milk And Honey

(Numbers 12: 1-15: 41)

O God, the land You have promised
already has someone living on it. Why
didn't I hear of that before the exodus?

do I have a choice, to leave as a gentleman or
stay and challenge the occupant. What happens if I die
as a slave to stress? Now think Lord, some other place
and let me go to it.

Before I arrived,
I sent out men to spy for me,
they said it was a virgin land and no one lives up there
but that is a lie now—nature never allows vacuum

a long-lost relative of her heart returned to town
so we couldn't come to peace, to share what we've got
nor settle down and call You to bless our sitting

the land You have promised
already has someone living on it and I
didn't hear of that before I arrived

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Old Shoes

like old shoes
you've tread with me all paths
walked by my side any where
and now in old age
you make my tears comfortable

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

On My 40th Birthday

last night
before I lay down to sleep
I prayed the Lord my shape to keep
to let no wrinkles come.
nor age spots to grow
where once my youthful vigor
radiated and I was youthfully young

I asked the Lord
not to let gray hairs show
nor my limbs to grow numb

you know what the Lord did?
he brought me to a forest of flowers
I gaped at the animation of life
nothing remains permanent, He said,
for everything there is a season
night must give way to sunrays
vapors must rise to fall back as rain
fire must beget cold ashes
so when a tree dies it is the stub that grows instead

long ago my Grandma said,
the longer you live
the more you sin against God
to die is a virtue God gave us
so everybody must change faces
like we change our dresses

this evening, I thank God for growing old
age is a price to pay for maturity
though a new broom sweeps clean,
the old brush knows all the corners best
if you refuse to grow
you'll miss a good broad smile
as to have a silver head
is like to kiss an angel a good morning

Once I Wandered

once I wandered on village lanes
lonely like a cloud floating to nowhere
where crowds gather dancing in the breeze
I hid beneath the leafless trees

where stars flutter and dance with the moon
I wonder if the milky way will ever stretch
a never-ending line for my star to shine
to twinkle within my coastline

I have seen many tossing heads
at my dream some sprightly dance their eyes
gliding their gaze like waves wondering
if star-dusts will ever fall where my dreams lay

I still remember the snaking road
the empty handshakes and stale smiles
that wished me a blissful solitude
my heart with pleasure remembers all

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

One Day At A Time

each time the sun goes down
another day we leave behind
standing at its crossroad
I wonder what tomorrow may bring
or what changes we will find

anytime the sun rises
a new path is there to tread,
should I go forward with hope in my heart
or stand still till another day

without a word
I welcome what is ahead
keeping hope alive one day at a time
I try to find a smile
till the sun goes out again

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

One Gentle Night

I saw the moonlight coming out in the dark
and remembered the crickets at home

I cuddled my soul with joy at the moon
but the crickets did not return my song

I raised my head and looked again
it was the floodlights from the street corner

slowly I lowered my head
and thought of my far-away home

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

One Windy Night

on one of those windy nights
the moon would walk us into her lofty bed
where the stars will begin their stories
which no one would hear except you and me
there I will hold your face in my palms
look into the diamonds in your eyes
and when the sun returns with the dawn
it will take my garnished dreams
through subways to your heart
there will be songs from the flamingoes
waiting for us in the lilac- laden garden

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Panic

you've shaken rivers out of my eyes
crossed Kilimanjaro to stir the waterweed
you've drown my soul and quenched flames
in these eyelids till down the silent stream
the lamp of my dreams fell

you cupped me in your palm
squeezed strength out of my Soul
and now you raft my ruins
to the sea without a rhyme

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Pearls

true treasure
is not found in
pirate ships
nor in chests of silver and gold

true treasure
is not ruby rings
and jewelry

from long ago
you don't need
to use treasure maps
to find chests
beneath the sea

true treasure is simply
the big smile
you glow like pearls
like diamonds

time will pass
life will end
and Death will come
all the chest would be forgotten
it is that smile
I'll hold true of you
till time comes

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Petals Of Pain

I sat alone last night
the world was moving all around me,
but it seemed my life was in a standstill
the doctor said its anxiety disorder
but it is deeper than that
I am a prisoner of your love

I sat long in the night again today
I wondered life without you
and it brought pain to my heart

the pain seemed to run through me
freezing me dead like a stonewall
I heard someone say, 'Be brave and move on'
but I wonder if I can move on
when I am a prisoner of your love

I can hear my heart beat fast
I can feel it in my chest
but what can I do or say

thoughts of you being far away
made beads of sweat race, fall
and run down my forehead
they mingle with the tears that drip
and gather in my bosom

I looked up for salvation
the moon over my head
offered only shadows of comfort
I called on the stars to bury my sorrow
within the fertile soil of darkness
it wilt burning coals upon my scars

now, my pain is unable to decay
my spirit is lulled by tortures
sorrow leads it to a garden
where only death exists

as a skeleton in slumber
I await the cycle of rebirth
hoping for silken waves of pity
to heal the marks of loneliness
standing before my reflection
as the only witness to my existence

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Reflections

thought about you yesterday
and tears ran down my face
as I unpacked memories
that can never be erased

though our broken hearts will not mend
every now and then
something makes me think of you
and of what might have been life with you

I remember our dreams and walks
the laughter and the warm feelings
they are the desires of ages

but when I look back on yesterday
I gather the tears and pick the heart aches
moments your smiles were away from me
times my heart was breaking inside
and our soul was buried in lamentation

I thought of all these
and I said a little prayer of hope
left somewhere in my palms

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Remembering Grandma

I miss those blessed walks
down the dusty road with Grandma
to the grazing fields of Hlorve
where we'll tether the sheep
beneath the legba-trees

sometimes I would twirl
my grandmother's cloth
round my loins and sing songs
from her favorite nyayito rhythms
at times I paddle the sheep slightly
to make them run round the bend
and Grandma would look me
with her stern eyes

at times I'll tease the ducks and the chickens
on our village lanes with a kernel of corn
falling from my hands and the ducks
and the chickens would walk by me
until I frightened them to jump into puddles
splashing their immaculate feathery coats in the ponds

I miss those blessed days
when she'll spin me around
sing a song that would never, ever end
cuddle me 'til I fell asleep
and make me know I was loved

often in my sleep my face would brighten
and on waking I yearn to fall asleep again
I never dreamed she would be gone from me
and if I had known her sun would set so soon
I would have stolen one final glance of her

these days I've listened outside her door
to hear if she is still there to sing a song
that would never, ever end
a song to make me fall asleep
and make me know I was loved

I remember those loving days
when Grandma smiled and hugged me
to give me comfort from loss of my Dad
and carry my soul away from human laughs
that tantalized my spirit like a knife thrust
to carve the soul and burst my wings into flames

those days, she dressed the scars
that my soul carried when fiery skies raped my sleep
and tickled my water's belly to divide my world
between hope and promises broken with deceit
I miss her gentle touch that soothed my wounds
and taught me to walk and grow through the years

her stories of the past and her songs
about a future so bright floated to harmonize
with the chirping, the twittering and the buzzing
of the sacred forest where the trees danced motionlessly
till the sun sank behind our mud dwellings
just to say, another day too was done
I miss those wonderful walks

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Roses Of Your Love

my love like a rose
unfolds gently beneath
your loving touch
becoming a gem in your arms
where my breath is the blossoming petals

my awareness of your deep love
is the sweet fragrance of the spirit
touching the senses of your heart

if you can give beauty to this rose
each petal would become a sweet miracle
of life where our oneness are hues of color
with which the spirit of the love
will forever blossom

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Sad Memories

not too long ago
my dreams spread wings
sat upon the seat of a heart's throne
that was long before the plane crash
reminding my soul good times never last
I remember the storm of sadness that flew into
every moment my soul was granted its breath

if I should remember vivid memories of the past
gather the scent of pure ecstasy that engulfed us
I can't wipe away sad tears of lost affection—

and now
that hollowness which drowned my heart
left my memory with broken wings

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Same As Here

I got home from school one day
with a dark spot on my eye
Masiter Kumedzro always say:
fighting was against the rules
so when Grandma got home I told her a story
just like I'd rehearsed some hours before
and there I stood on my trembling knees
waiting for the worst
interestingly, she did not say a word

when she got into the kitchen she called
she said son 'Let me tell you a secret
about a Grandma's love"
a secret she said was just between us
she said, "Grandma's don't just love their children
every now and then, it's a love without an end, amen'

when I became a father
there was no doubt my son was a stubborn boy
he was not like me but as just like my father's son
one day when I thought my patience
had been tested to the end too long
I took my Grandma's secret
and I passed it on to him
he hugged me and cried on my shoulders

last night I dreamed I'd died
and stood outside those pearly gates of Salem
suddenly, I realized, there must be some mistake
supposing St. Peter knows half the things I've done
he would never open the gate to let me in
there a deep voice spoke from the other side of the dome
and I heard those words again
it said, "Son Grandpa's don't just love their children
every now and then, it's a love without an end, amen'

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Sankofa

I want to tell my-story, our-story
not his-story stripped of my-story

I am going back to our-story
streaked with rust along the bow
trimmed by his-story to wake the dead
and frighten off living souls still staring
at where the lizard pulsed in the sun
and a false pawpaw tree strangles palm-trees

I am going back to our-story
before his-story told our-story
to rewrite our-story forgotten in his-story
not the ragged wilderness where raccoons live
it is the home where starlings stare down the doves,
and the sun comes out of the groves and shines

this will be our-story told in our story
where faded flowers come walking alive
back and forth in front of his-story
making bearded rabbis wring their hands
sending ghosts of Mungo Park to where
barracuda waits in slack tides

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Secret Pain

we've been scrubbed and scoured
like the railway workers you know
we've had whispered prayers of monks
we've seen the strong flames of love
we've counted rosaries of remembrance
said to Holy Mary's loving heart
now we carry lines of dying dreams

are dead folks not the 'liveliest' of us all'

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Sena

SENA

(for Sena my daughter)

Sena my child, my daughter, my all
keep the dream safe in your loins
keep them in alder flowers among the bougainvilleas
sanctify it in the fertile soils of hope
with the sun rising falling on your face
hope will give birth to giant hugs

how sweet things would have been
were we to live in that kind of world
for us to live together
how much smile we would have sown
and gathered between the rise of the moon
and the setting of the sun

oh how I wish we two together down here
would share each other's breath till sunset
and when my eyes fickle down the lane
blurred with age waiting for the shroud
your charm would spark fresh life
into my heart, my being to cheer

and when at last I'm done
I'll welcome death like raindrops
upon the breast of patch earth
and looking into your eyes
I will lay down my strength
like dewfalls glistening
in the light

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Short In The Dark

you've shot me in the eye
shot me in my bosom
and shot me in the dark

you've broken me like a flower in the dance

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Still Together

through all hurt and pain
even in whirlwinds that tear the soul
or the sorrowful rain that maims the heart
I still hold so dear breathes that
unfolds the thousand voices
with which I sing your love

we are young under the sun
in the heyday of our prime
wounds of each season that are past
are grieves which pierced through the breast
yet still I hold dear breathes that
unfolds the thousand voices
with which I sing your love

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Strong Black Woman

I am
a black woman strong
beyond definition
standing tall by my words
humming a song to defy my place
and claim my space till time
looks on me with tears
and renew itself

I am a black woman
poised to vanquish night
and usher in the day
veer the wind southward
that moist clouds rise for me
to feel joy that kindles blue meridian skies

I am a black woman
fulfilling my call
as a strong black woman
never to bow nor bend to heartaches and
the pain that brings tears to eyes
I am a black woman
still carrying the warm smiles of my youth

I am a black woman
gathering my songs into fiery Zulu spears
to kill tears still dancing on our foreheads
and when morning star rises tomorrow
everything will be bright before us
because yesterday ended last night

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Surprise

"E" knew it would rain,
"Y" doubted it all morn

what took her to where the father lay
while the mother remembered
it was her anniversary
made the spirits sprinkle on them
jewels of showers of joy of tears

marshes and swamps brought their smiles
the dew that lay in the flowers
nursed the words in their hearts
in the skeins of rain from her eyes
she took the Ring with the song
I do

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Talking To Myself

what am I doing here
in long dread corridors where
no one knows my name
nor loves to see me in the FrontRow Seat
what am I doing here
and I turn and show my teeth
and the fat book under my armpit

what am I doing here
hitch hiking in the cold snow
where eyes peer at me from the driving mirror
and the Highway Cop shows up
vomiting his hunger into my soul
and clutches his gun as if
I have a hand grenade in my hands

what am I doing here
away from the green fields of love
far from the cornfields, the velvet landscape
what am I doing here
away from welcoming voices
that have my name in their songs

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Tell Me

what happens to a dream deferred
does it dry up upon waking
like a stream in the desert
or does it fester and decay like meat
the hunter forgot in the forest

does it stink like rotten relationship
making you wander lonely as a cloud
and lost to a vale of tears
or it will crust and sugar like ice on a cake
with you dancing in the breeze

ours won't sag
like a heavy load of granite
maybe it will explode when next we meet
filling your heart with pleasure
like a dance with the daffodils

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Tested And Through

as we go on the winding road
I think of the days to come
each breath behind the rainbow
each rhythm in our commitment to be one
would be tested by the pulse in the stares
each tear a vision lost in the dark
will see a heart spinning with hope
this is the rhythm in our commitment to be one
that returns light to the brilliant glow in our eyes
as we go on the winding road
in our commitment to be one

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Thank You

last night
when the full moon lost its glow
over a crystal rose beneath my window
a crispy haze of solitude surrounded my soul
I saw my tears falling onto my breast
but when the moonlight gleamed
and shadows dispersed
like smoke with the clouds of darkness
your hand joined mine as our hearts combined
and with a song our passion came into life again
what song can I sing than
thank you

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Thank You, Mr. Chairman

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
for misleading us into the plains
between life and death and fathomed depths
thank you for the fragments of eternal decay
of our race and the desolation of our dreams
but long as our hearts are beating
in them there is hope

thank you, Mr. Chairman,
for the torrid blood stained fields
the cries of silent grasslands
the fettered and the beguiled souls
perishing in the sound of distant drums
but long as our hearts are beating
we'll see life change in the turning of a page

thank you, Mr. Chairman,
for the kindly words
graced by the hum and embrace
from the wolves and beavers' lodge
thank you for the spark in your eye that thrilled
upon the living chords of a heart's deep lyre
but long as our hearts are beating
our souls will purify the horrid past

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

That One Night

I still hold to my heart
memory of that one night
where the touch that was soft and fond
the arms that were warm and tender
and the whisper that was full of passion
left a gasp of wonder on my lips
and a look in your eyes
drew tears enough to wet
the green grass beneath our feet

do you remember that one night
where no words were spoken
except longing to hold each other
long as the night could go
even without the stars

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

The Grave

dark and silent grave
that keeps in trust the dust
gathered on the sharecropper's farm
as the last days of August disappeared
and holds in the pain in the story of our days
when the tired sun sinks behind the grove

immaculate grave
console the wanderer with no cough drops
berth the ship of the weary soul
heal the breath that never smiled on the dirt road
take care of this soul soaked in sweat
and lost in the circuit between the womb and the tomb

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

The Nearest Smile Are These Tears

I'm not so young but not so very old either
yet, I have walked since dawn
praying not to distress the hearts of Bees
along this way to the Ivory Tower

I have heard it said in songs of pious men who
in your presence are gentle like a lamb
but in your absence are like a man devouring a wolf

in this stony blackened field
where on fat long chairs are Owls and Ghosts
you'll hope your old bones will still work
looking all so beautiful so young

but, down to the last best Owl and Ghost
we live in a Land of Darkness
where the journey of every young child to the Tower
is from disappointed Hopes to frustrated Desires
where they reap no other Fruit but Pain
and the nearest smile are the tears in their bosom

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

The Smile

the smile on the face
was the last word I heard
it gave me hope
and I carried the good-bye with joy
for the smile
lasted longer than the Night

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

The Spell

any time the sun rises
it is your face I see in the sun

every morning when I wake,
I awake with your thoughts with me

at night when I sleep
I see your eyes in my dreams

and when I hear your voice
you put a smile in my heart

I can still smell you breath on my face
though you are miles away from me

many a time I try to forget you
but I cannot sleep without mentioning your name

how can I go away
from this everlasting spell

so come to me in my dreams
that by day I shall be well again

wherever the wind blows
it brings your name to my mind

if I can tell the truth
I cannot live when you are far

I know my heart yearns for you
I know my soul longs for you too

no matter what, I thank God for someone like you
who teaches me love

so I pledge to keep this burning ache
deep inside in my heart...till the end of time

The Vow

on this day, I cross my heart
pledge to you all my love
to put your hand in my hand
and as long as the stars shine above
I'll make your dreams come true
and because you are everything I need
I promise from this moment
to stand by your side and never let you go
to be yours even in my silent memory

I vow to care and be true
when the wings of death scatter our days
to stand strong like the oak tree
when the night gets sticky and the sky so black
I promise to be flexible as the cypress
when life isn't anything but a cold hard ride
and as we share our days on this earth
I'll let the winds of heaven dance between us

I pledge with my heart
to be a moving sea of Love
a blessing between the shores of our souls
I promise to laugh and cry with you;
to always love and honor you;
thus, always bound by our love,
I will carry and treasure your ring
till the end of God's given time
my love, has no other desire but to fulfill this

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

There's A Reason

there's a reason the sun is in the sky
and there's a reason the moon adorns the night
there's a reason for every smoke to rise instead of falling
and there's a reason for the rain to fall instead of rising

there's a reason why seasons change
there's a reason days come and go
and there's a reason night is replaced by sunrise
so there's a reason for everything under this earth

there's a reason why love light shines at times
and we grab feelings of joy deep inside us
letting our love to flow like a mountain streams
and grow wild with the smallest of dreams

there's also a reason why love can't fly freely
like on a bird's wing to let the love shine
there's a reason why the old warm sweet nights
are here, but our love rites are without candle lights

if there's a reason for everything
then there's a reason we take the wonder space again
and lay under its loving embrace
to feel the heartbeat we can't hold back

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

These Tears

blue as the bleakly weeping skies
falling like sad rain on the pillow
these tears are a deluge of sorrow
upon a weary heart

what's the use of time
if it's so content to pass so slowly
and looking far away sings no song
to dry the tears that break the dam

how good times go so fast
and so quickly when you want them to last

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Time And Change

time and fate may separate friends and lovers
but friendship or love that's true will live forever
true love conquers all odds with patience
and hope keeps them alive forever
Grandma used to tell us all
things of this world will change with time
since all things have their turn to change
the sick has a time to heal
while the poor will come to wealth with time
in this world events change with the years
and the seasons will surely come and go
so everything has its time and day
so wait on time to begin a new day
to change the course of your life
for if you look around you
nothing in the universe is constant,
only true love is forever faithful

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

To You, Martin Luther King Jr.

when we come to remember
untold stories of our lives
our memories will take us deep
into dim lit caverns of our souls
walk us past bare walls of our world,
where we shall recall how many times
you brought light into our dark nights

we'll recall with songs the quilt
that marks our survival and the mosaic pictures
you painted with a swirl of wit and charm
and how with tender care you added comfort
and warmth to the images that lined our frames

whether it is from Nicaragua to Namibia
from Guyana to Ghana and from Congo
to the turbulent streams of the Caribbean
we'll look upon them fondly, bringing forth
a thankfulness that you walked in every hall
from the Mississippi to the Nile, from Alabama
to Soweto, down to the streets of hearts

with me our meeting has become a part
of my world; it has its special place,
within my being, my life, and in my heart,
your name hangs right beside my smiling face
reminding me just how drab things had been
until you entered the stage with the Dream song

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Today

today our voice
like an exiled king returns
to his throne
(in vain will you recall yesterday
with pride)

today our voice will recall yesterday
when you forced it to dance naked
in the rain and stoop in the sun
how does it feel to be cruel
to lift a king up before his children
to have them spit into his face
till he crumbled to dust till you burned
his name long carved in ebony beams?

you thought everything would mold and rust
never to smile like white souls of saints

do you hear the drums
and the trumps of feet?

listen..... and listen again
this is not a song for you
it is a declaration
of allegiance to ourselves
since the mist is gone before the light
of the midnight sun

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Today Ii

today I felt excited and scared too
I felt blessed, but this fear in my heart
are thoughts that ran through my mind
maybe tomorrow will bring answers
but for now let me just keep hope with me
and treasure what I received today

there was magic moments I remember
hidden in the eyes are the ideals that inspire
and the smiles are all that`s beautiful and rare
they hold something to cry for and love
maybe when tomorrow comes I'll take
the seagull's flight of soaring high and learn
the gift of what it means to fly to her heart

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Tonight Is The Night

tonight is the night of which I dreamt
and saw a smile on your lips and a flower in your hand
I saw tulips and bougainvilleas, roses and daffodils
they opened their petals like the sunflower
you asked me to close my eyes in delight
and when you held my hand and whispered into my ear
I heard words I love to hear and cherish forever
your love for me is wonderful passing the love of a princess

to you then I vow to make you my own
to you I give this ring to cherish till we meet at Heaven's Gate

where my eyes like petals of a sunflower
will forever look at your face
and with a smile remember the dream of that night
when first we met behind the sheet of our eyes
and the story became a song on village lanes

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Trapped

from outside
I looked at the city
surveyed it and smiled
I walked in
who would ever want to live here
I wondered
on entering
I never went back

once inside
I closed the door
and sat down to write a poem
outside a breeze was blowing
I dreamt there was a little light
somewhere emerging
I think a bicycle stood in the rain
and a child was coming home

and I wrote the poem
which had no breeze no light
no bicycle no child
and
no door
I was trapped inside
the city
your heart

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Unattainable

I, being poor,
have only my dreams,
I spread them before their feet
and they walked on it.

so, I being poor,
have only my dreams to kiss
even though I professed
on many occasions,
in their breast, doth my heart rest,
their love is still a desire
I never will reach

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Uncertain Rays Of Light

for whom the bell tolls let him know
what looks like stars on the horizon
are fires tended by seaweed burners
and like torches aflame
they burn the boats of young fishermen
whose dreams now wander in the night
with a cuckoo calling and fireflies darting
in uncertain rays of light

one cannot be sure
that life will last till evening
but still we'll live on

perhaps we shouldn't have laughed
and laughed so loudly in the pine room
full of sunbeams late that afternoon
maybe that's why your footsteps were combed
and soon would be shampooed with detergents
to erase your footprints at doors of the Dome

but, we'll live on in the chill
melting slowly like snow
dripping unhurriedly from icicle
with the falling moonbeams

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Voicemail

call me from work with a voice like a rose
tell me gently about the love you hold inside for me
tonight give me love with an opened door to your heart
'cause I want to feel your love by the look in your eyes
for these are the little things that make love so true

our days have grown into seasons of feelings
and as I sit and wonder if forever you'll be mine
something tells me to just keep hope alive
but how long can I eat the bread of sorrow
and drink my tears like wine
these are the little things that make me cry

if I could buy you a rose and call you from work
if I could forever kiss you goodnight
if I could tell you about the love I hold inside for you
I'll tonight open the door to my heart
to make you feel love in the rhythms of my heartbeat
for these are the little things that make love true

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Warnings

Grandma used to say:
where the pools are bright
that's where they are deep
and where the hawthorn blooms
know you have the sweetest tastes
and where nestlings chirp and flee
know it's danger not treasure

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

We Share Your Tears (For Aka Logan)

as the sun goes down on your anger
you seem to forget painfully
another day is coming to an end
and no amount of viciousness will do you good
so, with your family and close friends
I share a tear at the loss of your loved one

I will always wish you the peace and assurance
I know your springtime years were sweet,
and you dream of a bright summertime,
since she brought you golden, harvest years,
and so should autumn splendor shine

but you messed your old age time up royally
beyond everyone's understanding
and we pray you are comforted during this
time of grief with our tears

we know from childhood that
it is only once in a while a friend is found,
who becomes a best friend after some time
and it is once in a while a friendship is made,
a friendship that really warms the heart...
but you have messed up yours royally
and we pray you are comforted during this
time of grief with our tears

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

We Were

the song that once was in my heart
is today gone
its flowers placed in rare array
upon my best friend's grave

I tried to remember moments
we shared along the way—
sure, the good times outweighed our tears
we were the perfect pair
So I hear people say

sometimes, one of us would start a sentence
and the other will finish it
our thinking was together
we knew each other's voice

now my best friend is gone
yet, not gone in my heart

someday, maybe, I'll end that sentence too
for tomorrow comes real often
and your work on earth is through
and meeting each other
we'll remember the good old days

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

What Happend?

what happened
to the dream of the dawn?

is it deferred
or it dried up
like a date-palm-nut in the desert sun?

I remember when you stacked your tongue out—
and the old man inside me became young again

the sun has not traveled half the golf course
it is only the quarter moon

what happened to the dream
that it howls a thousand torments
cursing the sky god
whose plea for mercy
raises more dust than buffaloes stampeding

my poem limps
pallid from seasons of diet of tears
what happened
to the dream of the dawn
entangled in fetid forests
sinking in shimmering pools?

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

When Death Comes

when death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
I want to step through the door
into the festive season
of moments of life, away from pain

when death comes
its time to heave a sigh
lift our eyes to the blue sky above
while white clouds rise towards Heaven
as death is the way towards eternal life

our life is only a butterfly's dream
so while yet we live on earth below
it's time for giving, time for sharing
like the brilliant sun, always glaring
lets add some charm to life

lets strive for happiness in the Lord
re-unite our broken families,
wipe off our silent tears
with all warmth of love
lets spread peace and harmony
to fill this world with sanctity.

and when death comes at last
like the hungry bear in autumn
we'll step through the door
into festive season above
with comfortable music in the mouth

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

When Katrina Came To Town

hurricane Katrina is in town, and the tall walls
of New Orleans, the heart of jazz
and the center of carnivals so ancient
lost its word in history to the downpour
on every lip in every corner a story waits
while neighbors reeled in anguish and homes fell
we heard the expiring murmurs of distress
wailing and weeping in every front
but New Orleans could not be comforted

in times like these, we strained to sing a hymn
yet, slowly we raised our voices filled with bitter tears
we dragged our hearts and our souls with lamentation
but the sea swelled and the roaring wind recharged fears
by the Dome we wondered when cometh our help
in frenzy our eyes turned to the one who once
in our despair and bleakness raised a hand
and winds and waves were quiet, but we shuddered
at the long absence of hope in agents of our love

with sewage washed down in every alley
the lonely and the homeless with a stifled cry
watched swimmers drown in the streams
frozen in despair the sight wiped sleep out of eyes
we heard it once when Tsunami came to town
when a playful wave lapped over the shoreline
became more boisterous than ever experienced
there the wall of water walked in through the blue sky,
unsuspecting souls with no where to run, were swallowed up
with the first wave, then flushed out never to be seen again.

today it is hurricane Katrina in town
with voices misplaced, brother, sister, mother, father
and child all lost, some scattered here-and-there, the dead
glaring like dislocated architecture asphyxiated by shock
sang songs of appalling spectacles of woe like when
years ago we walked through Mississippi, Louisiana
and Alabama hoodwinked our souls to ran in murk
today with babies that lie, bleeding and torn

on mothers' breast, our bleeding souls watched from rooftops
when the confederate building buried the wounded alive

when the horrid arms of Katrina came to town
across the streets kids mourn the dead in their laps
mothers lingering in pain walked with opened arms
gathering scattered limbs beneath the rubbles
bloody, yet palpitating with yawns from the abyss
they asked for the reason of such storms
there was water, water and water everywhere
yet, there was no water to drink

surrounded by cruelties of hurricane Katrina
the rage of its furies and snares of the wind
the story of how Katrina came to town is muddled up
neighbors who once were enemies embraced each other
when their tears mingled freely with the flood
and those without hope and tired of the racking torment
without anyone to share their ills nor their lament
ended their stricken lives before the dawn came on them
but we still want to ask why no one cried when we wept

from a corner of my somewhere I want to say it all
but when my mouth opened the hole looks black
and the hole of it holds a shadow
someone kept saying to my wrecked soul
there's nothing to say boy, nothing to tell
there is nothing to cry for, it said with boldness
but the hole of our mouth holds a howl
when I think of his grace, my hope and healing
when our lives are rent, and we've lost all we built
when hurricane Katrina came to town

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

When You Return

when you return from home
we'll spent several nights
searching for something in us
to write a poem about the willowy trees
and weed-choked lawns at home

we will talk of the sneering leopards
said to be on the streets and don't forget
those rambling stories that make Blacks feel
incomplete— fragmented—with no punctuation

we will spur down forgotten roads
comb forests on hilltops and haunt fjords
for toothaches that windswept dawns
into nightmares across the ocean

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Whenever We Meet

one day some day when we meet
I will weave my songs into a diadem
I will seat on my bankrupt sofa
and tell the world to be sterile

but he who comes our way
will strew our path with palms
like we are the He who came to Jerusalem
riding a donkey amid hosannas

many will sing obscene songs
nursed on cords of sorrow
but from the corner of their eyes
they will carry hyssop to bless the day

whenever I sing the old song:
'O Come, all ye faithful'
I remember the day when first
we will meet beneath the hill of spices

and whenever we meet some day
I will weave my songs into a diadem
I will seat on my bankrupt sofa
and tell the world to be sterile

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Whispers In The Wind

what is there in love
to believe love is the Rose
that makes the heart glow
is it not only the strife and pain and tears
and the sorrow and the scars that live on
to tell the story of long footprints of woes
tell me that I may know

I have seen it all
but meeting you have changed the story

life may perish us and bring our days to an End
our young Souls may give in to Time
but your Love for me like that Eternal Flame
tells me it will never Dim nor Change

it will forever last
when all lights leave the stage
and in the grave we rest the soul

even in the grave I will remember
your whispers that are like gentle echoes
in my ears when first we met behind the sheet of our eyes

even if Death comes
and we travel separate roads
still in that moment I will remember
how we walked through Thorn's Boulevard
gathering flowers along the way and
shared the music of their fragrance

let my lips say it all with a dance
wherever my soul will travel
I will pause to listen
to the tenderness of your voice
that forever fills chambers of my soul
with rhythms of a song I love to sing

I will listen just like I did many nights

and told you dearly and truly
you are the chime of warm rain
the moon that glows through the trees
and within the luster of the evening
you are the aura that fills scenes of my true love

some day, should Time see me alone
I will give your name to the wind
sit all night eager to see your shadow pass
like the stars that shine in the sky
on seeing you I will beg you to stop
and dance with me in the clouds
and tell me with a whisper
how much you love me

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Will You Come To Say Goodbye

when the last breath of life
is gone from my body
and my lips are as cold as the dog's nose
when my friends gather 'round
for my farewell party
will you come with a smile to say goodbye

there will be flowers from those
who cry when I'm gone
and lots of tears from those I left in the world alone
and I know some will have fun at my farewell party
but will you come with a smile to say goodbye

don't be mad at me for wanting your goodbye
and dying for the smile we shared
this you need to know as true
when my life on this old world is through
I'll go away loving you still

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Woezor-Welcome

do you wish to be here
close to my heart

where are your papers
what is your purpose

are you lost or
are you broken

maybe, the chamber of
my heart is for your safety

but, remember where you came from
I was not there
I was here

if you wish to naturalize in my arms
let me tell you openly
tread softly and gently
death too first makes inquiry
before it shows at the door

in simple steps come
pledge allegiance to my tattered soul
and we'll get to the streets
that are paved with gold

Woezor: it means Welcome in Ewe, a Ghanaian language.

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Wondering

just light a candle
sit in the bubbles
draw a long breath
fling my arms wide
let it whirl and dance around
then sigh towards joy's door?

can it bridge the gulf?

just wondering
with a lit candle
in a cool evening
with a dream in my arms

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese

Your Kindness

thank you is not enough
to tell you my deep feelings
about your thoughtfulness and the gift of love
but in the absence of the right word
let this note thank you and say
the memory of your thoughtfulness
will be remembered
for many days and many nights
till this Breath leaves for Home

by your gift of love
I have come to know
you are a person who makes life easier and better
for everyone around you
your continual acts of thoughtfulness and kindness
and love brightens each day of my life
and what you did for me
will glow in my memory
reviving pleasant feelings every time I think about it

and should I not tell you in person
how much you mean to me
let this note tell it now, I appreciate your kindness
and thank you forever for the gift of love
that has made a difference in my life

Padmore Enyonam Agbemabiese