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Ibadan's Sun

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IBADAN'S SUN

You were there . . .

At that ill-appropriate hour
soaring high like the sky's crown prince,
riding the world like you owned it
. . . Just because you bloody-well could . . .

And they were there . . .

the old peasant women
elbows flexing and stretching.
Hands rummaging through astonished head-ties
then flung into the air.
Alert tears overflowing at the next nod
of their aging skulls
that made tut-tut sounds like a tongue twisted bell
to usher the dismembered into his rocket to hell.
. . . and you were there too, glimmering.

And they were there . . .

The gawky school children
in grim uniforms
running around with glee at the monstrous sight.
Delight subtly set into their innocent faces.
Eager to story for kin, this gory scene,
they cast to memory the labels on each beheaded limb
. . . and you were there too, gleaming.

And they were there . . .

the minivan-drivers
who shouted obscene slogans.
Sobered, leaning out of cracked plastic,
they assess the vehicle's worth
in miles and sweat
screwed up as it was like bin-bound paper
littering the sober orderliness of the bloodied grey tar.
. . . and you were there too, glowing.

And they were there . . .

the accursed ever-late firemen
cranky from the punctual slumber
that earned their lousy wages.
No hammer, no wedge,
grimaced expressions plastered,
they rush to tear down iron with naked hands
fit only for pounding insolent wives and the seasonal yams.
. . . and you were there too, shining.

And She was there . . .

His mother, half-naked and beside herself,
searching the passive faces of food-hawkers
for a reason to live thereafter.
Tears turn to mud as she rolls in the dust
“Free him! Free him!” she screams.
But who can unfold death’s rugged fist
as he ticks a name on its night-knight list.
. . . and you were there too, shimmering.

But he was not there . . .

His head agape,
upper half creaking on hairy hinges above his eyes.
And the lower displaying the slowing workings
of a bright boy’s mind.
Suddenly sprouting, like a switched-on fountain,
was what looked like blood
but couldn’t be
ebbing away life at a mercurial pace
down a dying boy’s handsome face.
and you were there too, burning,
not blushing not ashamed
. . . Just because you bloody-well could.