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Poems

Ama Ata Aidoo

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Abstract

AN ANGRY LETTER IN JANUARY, HOMESICKNESS - for Anna Rutherford, AN INSIDER'S VIEW - for Kinna VI

Ama Ata Aidoo

AN ANGRY LETTER IN JANUARY

Dear Bank Manager,

I have received your letter.
Thank you very much:
threats,
intimidations, and all.

So what,
if you wont give me a loan
of two thousand?
Or only conditioned by
special rules
and regulations?

Because I am *not*

white
male *or*
a 'commercial farmer'?

(And in relation to the latter,
whose land is this anyway?)

I know that but for what I am not,
you could have signed
away

two solid millions, and
not many questions asked.

Of course I am angry.

Wouldn't you be if you were me?

Reading what you had written
was enough
to spoil for me

all remaining eleven months of the year,
plus a half.

But I wont let it.

I had even thought
of asking God
that the next time round,
He makes me
white, male, and a 'commercial' farmer.

But I wont.

Since apart from
the great poverty
and
the petty discriminations,

I have been happy
being me:

an African
a woman
and a writer.

Just take your racism
your sexism
your pragmatism
off me;

overt
covert or
internalised.

And
damn you!

HOMESICKNESS

- for Anna Rutherford

This afternoon,

I bolted from
the fishmarket:

my eyes smarting with
shame
at how too willingly and sheepishly
my memory had slipped up
after the loss of my taste buds.

- Just like an insecure politician creaming up
to his boss.

Familiarly in an unfamiliar land,
so strong and so sweetly strong,
the smells of the fish of
my childhood hit hard and soft,
wickedly musky.

All else fall into focus
except the names of the fish.

While from distant places in my head
The Atlantic booms and roars or
calmly creeps swishing foam on the hot sand.

But I could not remember their *Fantse* names.

They were labelled clearly enough
- in English -

which
tragically
brought no echoes...

One terrifying truth
unveiled in one short afternoon:

that
exile brings losses like

forgetting to remember
ordinary things.

Mother,
when next we meet,
I shall first bring you
your truthspeaker's stone:

the names and tastes of fish are also
simple keys to unlock
secret sacred doors.

And I wail to foreign far away winds:

Daughter of my Mother and my Father's Orphan,
what is to become of me?

And Those like me?

AN INSIDER'S VIEW – for Kinna VI

Even a self-imposed exile is
another prison.

I opened the gate,
banged it shut on myself, and
threw the key away.
Or just misplaced it.

I thought I could get
that key again and easily
if only I could find some time, and
carefully look.

But in this nightmare world of:

Aliens Compliance Orders
Temporary Work Permits

regular applications for regular visas
permanent residence requirements
Green Cards,
 Red Cards and
 Blue...

...And not to mention:

just learning to cope
in places where
I cannot take anything at all for granted,

we know that
other doors out of this prison are open
 all the time.

But they only lead to *suminado*:
the backyard
the outhouses
the fields beyond.

So of course
I can run all I want. To
other lands other exiles.

Going home is another story.