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TO RALPH CROWDER

by

KOFI ANYIDOTTO

Crowder, Crowder,
your message came last night
Atta says you want to come
that you and your comrades-in-woe
are standing in the harbour
your tired arms stretched over the whispering seas
to this home your grandfather left so long ago

He says you said
you cannot go on like this
waging infernal war
in which you hear no promise of victory cries
with the foes daily rising, scheming
calculating ingenious strategies

Atta says you said
you have fought so long
but all this long you've been on the losing side
that the harder you fight
the more stubborn the enemies grow

So you cannot go on like this
fighting with all your blood
bleeding all the time
You wish to give up the fight
and retreat to the old old home
the home your grandfather lost so long ago

You may come
Crowder
You may come
But O! - Brother!
all is not well at home
all is not well with us

Here in the house you long to see
we continually wrestle with the ghost of death.
But Atta says your struggle is more ghastly
So I understand why
why you are anxious
anxious to retreat
retreat to the base your grandfather lost so long ago

You may come
Brother
You may come
But O! Crowder!
all is not well with us
all is not well at home

We cut the grass with cutlasses
And wait for the rains to come
Often the rains do not come at all
Sometimes they come all at once
Each year the harvest is poor

But We Do Not Feed On Stones
You may come
Crowder
You may come
But O! Brother!
all is not well at home
all is not well with us
We shall welcome you back home
We shall pour libation to our gods
But there is little, very little to give you.

Your grandfather left so long ago
His lands are now in other hands
But all the same you may come
We shall give you somewhere to start anew
We suffer here so much
But they say your case is worse
And you have fought with all your blood
But have always been on the bleeding side

So you cannot go on like this
Come
Brother
Come
But I tell you all is not well at home.

FRAGMENTS OF DISNEYLAND

(For Shelley and Rhonda, Moses and Leonard)

by

KOFI ANYIDOTTO

MEMORIES are cheats, Shelley,
Memories, Rhonda, are poisoned arrows
Unto the foggy screen of time
they flash reflections of joys that died too young
crushing the heart with heavy reminders.

All I do today
is lie upon my aching back
and
dig
deep into the ruins of our yeaterday
for
fragments of Disneylands:

our dreamy drive
down the Freeways
and
up the Boulevards
the sad, masked faces
of those
dehumanised beings
that passed us by
on their
hurried drive through life;

the half-remembered opening scene
that railroad trip to the beginning of things
the unreal realm of the primeval world
where

 roaring volcanoes vomited rivers of molten lava
and
 nameless superbirds poured their agonies into the skies
where

 Triceratops stood guard over monstrous hatching eggs
and

 Stegosauri
 wrestled supremacy from the jaws of
 Tyrannosaurus Rex

While

Brontosauri growled and wallowed in pools of mud.

These too come and go

flashes of the scene set
in the unspoilt forests of Adventureland:
the quiet majesty of those three giraffes
staring with easy grace
upon
the splendour of the zebra
and
the sleekness of the gazelle
the treachery of the rhino
and
the meanness of the crocodile.

Can you tell, Rhonda,
and you, Shelley,
Can you tell when the climax came?

That Roller Coaster Ride
when
your screams of joyous pain
filtered into my soul
to be filed away in
memory's cabinets of long forgotten joys
That Sky-Ride into Tomorrowland
when
we looked away to Los Angeles
and kept our thoughts to ourselves

And now
all I do
is
relapse into reverie
listening to echoes of
the Grand Opera of the Lost Angeles
set in
The billion-dollar fantasy world of Disneyland.