

OF LOVE AND COMMITMENT – for Omafumi

How did I know?

I knew because all of a sudden, I started doing
things I had never done before,
things I never knew I could do,
things I always knew I should never do.

For instance?

For instance like stopping longer than was necessary
to talk with
his friend after we had said the initial
hellos and how-have-you-beens.

And when

he said:

“This-and-That is at home, and
we just live around the corner,”
changing my mind about the hot comb and the hair grease.

Oh, it says clearly on the bottle:

WATER REPELLENT.

And

What’s-his-Name had a little lamb
whose hair was black as pitch.

Of course, it stands to reason that
he should have been larger than
life.

Dido
of the latter days, my Aeneas.

“And he
- with his great limbs stretched out
the hair of his beard curled in sleep –
just wondered
if I
could not
go
“natural”.

While
I sat and
loved.

He said:
“I have been on this couch, not stepped out
once
since I saw
you last.”

I asked,
with concern in my voice:
“Should they postpone the day’s committee meeting?
Do not feel guilty, my dear.
You must conserve your energies.

They should be careful and not overstep their bounds.
There is a dagger here in the folds of my cloth.
Mind you, I am not one for
keeping the people waiting:
but I shall see to it that
we have this one evening to
ourselves.”

I went,
Knowing
it was
unthinkable that I should go
and he knew it too.

Or why should he have asked later:
“What would you have done if I had attempted to?”

The house was in a quiet neighbourhood
with fear or contentment –
I can’t say now
whether it was safe or not.

The room was unlived-in,
the tap had not run for months,
the saucepans uncooked-in,
the guitar unplayed.

And I,

who had
never
been able to look after
myself,
knew
I could
look after
you.

Oh my dear,
how shall I thank you for
fathering
the mother in
me?

We prompted
one another
on the saints and the martyrs,
counting in Nkrumah:

they say he was a
Kruman you know.
What surprises me
is how they could
have deceived
themselves for so long
trusting a total stranger?

I borrowed his
Malcolm's Autobiography

to read -

Perhaps we mourned
the death of a hope,
perhaps we rejoiced at
the birth of a promise.

Stokely?

Ah yes

Stokely

He said to the cop: "I hope you let her in!"

I have wanted to assure him since that
the big old let me in – Who was he not to?

And his 25-year old face shone out with prophetic words.

It still haunts me.

Kwame Ata should not have died.

For where shall I

carry

a double soul

doubly restless,

and an incestuous desire for
my brothers?

The packing took a long time.

Or the talking did.

The night was long and very short.

A new day was being born with the new world

when

we showed the last item

- was it the dead telephone?

Or a newly-laundered jacket?

Perhaps the chequered-grey

he wore all summer?

Yes, a new world was being

born with the new day,

when we shoved the last item into the cab.

But the packing took a long time.

Or the talking did.

The night was long and

short.

It was so long,

we wrote

a poem

a short story

three long plays

a novel

finished our formal studies

saw

the kids through school

solved

other personal problems

frustrated

neo-colonial scholarship,
and
made
the revolution.

There was not time
enough
to see
what was in one another's eyes.

I hear the thunder
I see the lightning
I hear the thunder
I see the lightning
Is my love's window open?
Is my love's door ajar?
Perhaps the rain gets into his room?

Perhaps the wind blows out his clothes?
Leave the rest of my hair unplaited, sister,
Leave the threads hanging loose.

I must hurry to my love's room.
I must hurry to shut his window.
I must hurry to my true love's room,
before the rain gets in, sister,
before the rain gets in.