

Imali J. Abala,
Poet and Writer

Fragmented

He was the family's beacon,
 That star, brilliantly armored; not vain,
 For whom they gave their all: Land and cattle;
 Relatives, friends and neighbors came in droves,
 With clamor, cymbal, and gong—
 Harambee their motto of glow—
 They, too, gave their all: eggs, hens and the like,
 Full of hope and glee for their champion,
 Braving the dreariness of storm and rumble,
 The harvest of his labor, their undying hope.

8137.2 miles afar was all it took.
 Sandwiched like a sardine, travelled for hours,
 To the land of plenty dripping with honey;
 His breath suspended, the dread of flight,
 Long, bumpy, and cold touched not his mind;
 Sunward bound, a silver winged jet whirred,
 Gliding up and higher into delirious blue,
 As time melted away like refined gold,
 To his awaited landing of his celestial paradise.

The pulsating of his heart waltzed;
 It was to the jet's loud whirr,
 Muffled by the passengers' snoring,
 And vexing cries of unruly children,
 But this was no fret to a man destined for glory.

Yet, upon arrival, education,
 That noble goal which sparred his travel,
 Vanished from his mind like a busted bubble;
 Tamed by the lustrous beauty,
 Of silken hair and whispers of love;
 Then, escaping into the bottle,
 Lost his marbles and drive for greatness,
 Till the ingested poison ravaged his liver.

Today, lonely, sad, and emasculated,
 He sits in his room, mute in his silence;
 The curtains of life almost drawn like his blinds;
 His eyes, bloody red and devoid of life,
 Gawk through blinding shards of light,
 Beyond the barren tree limbs of December,

As dry and arid as his long forgotten dreams,
That speak of his brokenness, as the gloom of dusk,
Like a whisper in a storm smothers him,
But he remains absent in his present as his past:
A phantom!

The anguish in his eyes speak of his loss;
Nothing more to look forward to:
 A dead child
 A dead wife
 A dead mother
 A dead father
No papers for travel;
No way to pay them last respects
A fragmented soul.

Upon the death of my brother

My brother died unexpectedly yesterday
 It wasn't from COVID-19 he had slipped gently into the night
 But the illicit *Changaa* brew was his undoing
 From which he had indulged himself into a stupor

It wasn't COVID-19 from which he had slipped gently into the night
 He staggered home in the night drunk as his knees buckled under him
 Having indulged himself stupidly into a stupor before he left for home
 And collapsed right at his doorstep as he slipped gently into the night

He staggered home in the night drunk as his knees buckled under him
 Then dark menacing clouds unexpectedly opened in a heavy downpour
 And baptized he who'd collapsed a door, slipping gently into the night
 Through the twilight of dawn and soaking him wet like a possum

The dark menacing clouds unexpectedly opened in a heavy downpour
 As his mind, recoiled upon itself, he slipped gently into the night
 Through the twilight of dawn, he was soaked wet like a possum
 From which his wick expired becoming one with our ancestral spirits

His mind, recoiling upon itself, he slipped gently into the night
 As the wick of his lamp flickered off and a mournful cry revved the air
 That dawn my brother expired becoming one with our ancestral spirits
 Then armed men stormed his home and demanded his immediate disposal

The wick of his lamp flickered off as a mournful cry revved the air
 Truly, it was the illicit *Changaa* which was his undoing, not COVID-19
 But the law forced his dishonorable burial within 24 hours
 My brother died unexpectedly yesterday and buried without fanfare!