

Nome Emeka Patrick

Like A Million Purple Butterflies Deserting a Garden

For Gloria

a colony of fireflies paints the evening with the many glories of God,
& up above, the sky is a bed of stars in their earliest snow dreams.

in the room, we gather round my sister who jerks so hard the walls
become the only firm animal, every other thing steals the face of

a nightmare or a bad luck. my mother kneels at her feet, clinging
to her skirt, & i think she sobs & her voice —a million purple dreamy

butterflies deserting a garden. my sister, 15 & dark so much that
the blood spilling from the sides of her mouth is the way a prayer

crawls out of a body. for once in five nights, the room cold with
silence, we feel our breaths warm with grief & dry ash. crying, my

father says prayers into a rosary bead until we mistake his voice
for net cast into the hungry body of an ocean. is this how a song

fades? my palms pale & —isn't this the closest i can ever be to a young
girl suffering from an illness doctors fail to identify? i mean isn't this

the closest i can ever be to an ocean sweeping a lighthouse? outside,
the machines from the Chinese factory hum their songs, & here, when

i look into my sister's face, a lone river lies in her eyes, scared & sad
of dying; & behind the silk blinds stars disguise as fireflies dying away.

A Brief History of the Ocean

from generation to generation/small wars waged against us/become big battles

-Bolaji Opaleke

falling stars & withering magnolias/ what other dreams claim our eyes?
we stand ashore to watch our shadows beat the waves/ our voices in
unison against the tides/ every beach we find ourselves was once beautiful/
was once the body of a god smeared again/ & again/ by the rainbows/
we snatch red from the background/ just to know how peace feels/
how we can walk to God/ without our blood on the lips of the threshold/
everything we name has a history/ a woman drowned & her blood one
with the river/ i mean the sky is falling & the world do not care/ *cos* it's black/
we ignore every full stops/ & fix our children into what looks like the future/
too many birds & no tweets/ too many gardens & no flowers/
here/ my mouth has cooked itself into a skillet of dirges & requiems/
i wake up to the ghost of my ancestors/ silhouetted on every wall/
& at shore/ black bodies stand in silence/ looking far past the stars/
looking/ looking as if waiting for an answer/ to this ancestral predicament/
i open my palms now/ & a cartography of prayers slips out/ like a dead tilapia.

Nome Emeka Patrick is a blxck bxy, student in the University of Benin, Nigeria, where he studies English language and literature. He is a recipient of the 40th edition of Festus Iyayi award for excellence (Poetry) in 2018; his works are published or forthcoming in *Gaze* journal, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Puerto Del Sol*, *FLAPPER HOUSE*, *Crannóg Magazine*, *Mud Season Review*, *BARNHOUSE Journal* and elsewhere. He lives in a small room close to banana trees and bird songs in Benin.