

Poetry Series

Charlina Daitouah Smith
- poems -

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Charlina Daitouah Smith(June 28,1980)

Charlina Daitouah Smith is a Liberian who holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics from the University of Liberia.

Charlina began writing poems since she was 11 years old, for her classmates at the St. Teresa's Convent to read. What began as just a habit to entertain her friends blossomed into a life's calling.

B.C.

I present crisp dollar bills and
a human deity.

Settling in the circle of dust, hands
and interlocked feet, making bitter
obeisance.

I search for new gods. My fathers'
gods left for the city.

So, I stand before translucent
beings in the seat of gods,

who grope for answers to the unsearchable
questions of my disillusioned heart.

Charlina Daitouah Smith

Bittersweet

The white women* came out today,
shrill cries greeting their assimilation.
They came out, beads-wrapped
sinewy waists, erect breasts,
shining with new oil.

They came, gyrating trim bodies to the
heady beat of the drums, bringing
submission and love.

The white women, their excited voices
shattering the calm of the early morning,
bringing fortitude and strength.

Skilled to hold life, leaving their precious
parts in the women bush.

*the white women – a reference to graduates of the Sande society. The Sande Society is a women's association found in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea that initiates girls into adulthood, confers fertility, instills notions of morality and proper sexual comportment, and maintains an interest in the well-being of its members throughout their lives. In addition, it carries out female genital mutilation.

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Death Visited Me

She passed away.

The herald of merciless pain. What wouldn't I have
given to hear she came this way
or she is here to stay?

But no! They said, yes, they said... she passed away.

I am sure, because my heart gapes wide,
a chasm earth cannot fill.

I am certain, because our girls weep for
her. Inconsolably. Our pivot is gone.

She does not return, though her work is not yet done.

The children have needs I never knew existed.

How did she do it? I've tried, but I can't fit in her
shoes.

They've grown since she left.

I know that she has passed on; everywhere

I go people murmur never mind yah*.

Why shouldn't I mind? I boldly challenged

last night. I return every day to a bereaved
house, a companionless bed. They all go home
to happiness. They looked at me speechless,
shocked. I do not care.

Grief smothers me. The sympathizers' chatter
a welcome blast of fresh air, temporary reprieve.

My relatives whispered mouth to ear,

She did not make it.

I waste away.

They still whisper – now... He too might pass away.

I'm so far gone, they think, that I don't notice.

I turn to tell her that the car broke down again
this morning. The mechanic had lied as usual. I

was late for work. I turn, but she's not there.

She passed away.

They say she is in a better place. What place

can be better than here with me, here where our love is?

Her absence sits heavily. Tears bring no relief,

they flow painfully from the deep well that
my heart has become. Kemah passed on.
The answer I give to friends who ask of her. I
break precious scabs and blood flows afresh out
of my hurting wounds.

She passed away.

Not mere news to pass on. They were talking about me,
about my Kemah. Death has no compassion.

I hate him.

Maybe they are right. I may go to Kemah soon.

At night, I hear her soft voice, her pretty silhouette
drifts across our lonely bed. I reach out to touch her
but she's gone... my love, my woman.

*yah - Liberian slang for "ok".

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Duality

In the privacy of my mind
I give vent to rage, lies,
envy, and vices of every kind.

Taboos are enjoyed.
No one sees, no one knows.
I am safe inside, filled with empty joy.

My fantasies I fulfill
in the solitude of myself.
I am another, this is what I will.

Who knows that behind this beautiful face
murder sometimes lies in wait,
an insane desire to exterminate?

There is no way you can tell
just by looking at this gentle female
that she dreams of being wonderfully cruel.

Or, how could you ever discern
that yonder jolly gentleman
relishes thoughts of unleashing bloody mayhem?

Could you find a clear line of correlation,
between an innocent visage
and an insidious motive for abduction?

Even at your most lucid moment,
could you ever imagine
that I, I am capable of inflicting gruesome torment?
My mind is a wall
that shields me splendidly
and when you think you know me well, it turns out
you don't know me at all.

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In The Cause For Women Suffrage....The Struggle Continues

We fight for equality, but the fight is no longer the same as when we first began. Now, we fight not only for the right to work outside the home, to vote and ascend to political prominence. We fight not only for the right to be heard, to be treated as equals and not as possessions. We fight not only

to give the girl child a life in this man's world. We fight not only to abolish FGM, to penalize the hellish crimes of rape and floggings at the hands of our men. NO! We also fight for the right to change our sex and copulate with each other. We fight for

the right to legally trade our bodies, we vigorously champion the cause of vain displays of flesh, clothing vulgarity in vogue, and claiming indecency a right. We fight to legalize murder and condemn terrorism, in one breath. We fight to

topple God-ordained headship and install a demonic Jezebelic reign. We fight to wear the pants and be the man.

We then spawn a strange breed, one with a perverted identity, that thinks it quite natural to spit in our bemused faces.

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Liberia Plays Soccer

When Beckham kicks the ball on a
soccer pitch in England, it
breaks through the opponent's

defense and slams into the goal post.
It then continues over the heads of the
cheering spectators, over miles of oceans

and seas, and countries, and lands at the
feet of soccer-crazed Liberian men, who
immediately kick that same ball, again and

again, into that very goal post, in their living
rooms, in posh sport lounges, in hot, smelly
video clubs, around the ataye* tables, on the

buses, on the sidewalks. They keep kicking
that ball until somewhere in Europe, Drogba
kicks a different ball, into another goal post.

Then, Drogba's ball comes to Liberia and the kicking begins anew.

*ataye – a hot drink, popular with Liberian males. The ataye tables have grown
into informal political and social forums.

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Pregnant Male

I watched him
shuffle along the
dirt path, his
trailing cuffs gathering
dust, hoisting his
ample belly as he
ambled along, rolling
unevenly from side to side.

I observed him
struggle in full
gestation, his rotund
middle heaving with
his feeble exertions,
breathing heavily,
sweating buckets,
laboring under a
childless pregnancy.

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Transgressions

Call your chickens home,
to their coop.

Men hunt white chickens
to make pepper soup.
Virgin birds to make atonement,
secure favor and Balaam's charms.

Darkness hovers and the earth
enlarges her mouth to
gorge her fill.
Bentha, beating her chest,
tearing her hair, refusing comfort.

Her proud cock will never
come home to roost.

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