

Asibi Danjuma



August

I was not ignoring you that morning. We had spoken earlier, you were feeling melancholic and so I went to the conservatory, in search of a Bonsai tree to cheer you up. That Sunday, the sun shone incandescently, causing worm-like droplets of perspiration to dribble down my skin and dampen my dress, but I remained unwavering, sauntering past species of arid and temperate plants, looking for the one amongst all that meant something to you.

Weeks earlier, when we were newly enamoured by the possibilities within our kisses, you told me a rather curious story that you had read about in the news.

A couple in Japan had had several trees stolen from their garden in Saitama, a city located a few kilometres north of central Tokyo, in the Kanto region. One of the missing florae was a 400-year-old Shimpaku, a rare and sought after bonsai tree, especially distinguished for its resinous wood, overlaid with beautiful bark. The crime was reported to the local police and an investigation was undertaken, but when a thorough search for the plant criminals yielded no results, the heartbroken couple gave a noble statement to the local press;

“No words can describe how we feel; the Shimpaku was precious to us. We want whoever took it to make sure that it is properly watered.”

September

I insist on telling you once again that I was not ignoring you that morning. I was quite simply on a small expedition, a mission to kiss away your hurt.

At the conservatory that aforementioned day, I circled a small pond that was caught by a ray of light, thus mimicking a floating sheet of glass. The pond accommodated species of koi, white cloud , cherry shrimp and boisterous barb - you know, the rosy kind that brilliantly bobs down belly-wise, somewhat like a diamond ring, while it sinks dizzily into a watery abyss. I drifted towards the arid house located east of the conservatory, where the cacti and succulents live, there I observed a ciliate spectrum of the emerald god's hands. And then further afield was an overwintering collection of cool house orchids, their flowers tilting forward in simultaneous sun salutations. These sightings were a painterly prelude in my hunt for a bonsai, your metaphor for nature's sublime construction.

When shall I see you again? Your absence has marked the arrival of a shadow-like void. Close your eyes and imagine a kiss dispensed - wherever you wish to receive it.

October

I say with weary insistence that I was not ignoring you that day. This is what happened; a coat of sadness had weighed down your elegant shoulders and to make you feather-light, I took your heart to the conservatory, encased in a wooden box stained with the red bleeding sap of a rosewood log.

In an isolated green house dedicated to the deciduous trees, I spotted the remnants of a once majestic juniper. Its sprawling trunk laid upended and split in two equal halves, exposing an open wound. Entangled roots systems were completely uprooted and a deathbed was made of the bonsai's greying needles.

I tried to find something worth saving, a connective tissue leading me to hope. Hope for this dream that had consumed your reveries and for our now absent-minded kisses. I reached for a discarded limb that was spread apart, but the branches of the tree, shriveled at once to dust.

Asibi Danjuma is a writer, art producer and bookseller based in Lagos Nigeria. She is also the founder of PHÍLOS, a framework that merges contemporary African art and literature, in exploring the profundity of the human condition.