Peace

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Afterword by Tom Cheesman and Sylvie Hoffmann

Hafan Books Swansea

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LETTER 2 SANTA

1 Bloody Lane
War Zone
Postcode AK 47

20th December, 2008

Dear Santa,

Wi hope u will receive dis letter b 4 u buy our gift, coz it's only one thing we need dis Xmas, it's called peace, wi are sure you have had pple crying 4 it, but wat wi not sure though is if u can find it in d shop 4 sale

Santa, if u can't deliver it yourself because it is dangerous down here, may b u can ask d leaders fighting war around d glob or d promoters of war or war lords

Wi hope we received it b 4 d next bomb explode

Thank u & have a merry Christmas

Children of war zone

AWAY

I love you too darling
But please be aware that
I am an asylum seeker
But that does not mean
I am a heart breaker
What I'm trying to say
Is that I may
Not be allowed to stay
But in each other's heart
Our love will stay

They may keep us apart
But in each other's heart
Our love will stay intact
And your heart
I will not tear apart

They may take me away
But they can't take
Our love away

Don't be hopeless
If the heartless kick me away
They can't kick our love away
Coz this love is here to stay
And will never go astray

MY POCKET

In my pocket there is a hole
So I can't dip down low
I may not splash cash on you
But I can surely give you good
Loving and caring

You may be poor
But it's only you I adore
I may be financially disable
But I can make you feel comfortable

I LOVE YOU FOR YOU

When I say I love you
I mean I truly love you
Don’t ask me why
Coz I don’t know

But is certainly not because
You are black or white
They way you look, talk or walk
Rich or poor
Educated or not
I simply love you for you
Yes I love you just like that

I AM NOT WHAT YOU READ OR HEARD ABOUT ME

I wake up this morning
Just to find a bill
In the post that makes me frown
So I strolled down town
To calm myself down

While strolling
And thinking
Of how to get a meal
And pay the bill
All eyes on me
As if I was going to kill
Or steal
So I took a walk up the hill
To chill

Still all eyes glued on me
Looking at me like a fool
But I stick to the gentleman's rule
And stay cool
Coz I'm not a fool

But hang on a sec
Why me you looking at
Like that
Is it because of my hat?
Or what?
Or is it because I'm an asylum seeker
Or a refugee
Or is it because of all the bad things
You read and heard about me?

A refugee am I?
Yep
But do you know what it means to be one
Or do you really think I want to be one?

I am not a thief
Neither a criminal
Nor a bad man
But to you I'm all these
Probably coz what
You read and heard about me
In the news
Portray me as all these

But let me tell you
I am not what
You read and heard
Or think about me

And to you that
Know how to write
But know not how to write
The right thing about me
Your hand has caused
Suspicion, division, hatred
And lots of problems
Just like the finger
That pulls the trigger

So before you pick up
Your pen next
To write about me
Think straight and right
So you can write
The right thing about me

And to you that
Talk, talk and talk
Lots and lots
Like a parrot
That ate carrot
Take a walk
And think before
You talk about me again

Because your talking
Has caused pain
Hatred suspicion
And division too

Now let me chill
Up this hill
In order not to think
Too much about the bill
So I won't go mentally ill
I still got to pay
The bill though

I WANNA

Hey it's raining
I wanna be your umbrella
Can I have your number?
I promise I will not call you
In your slumber
But I would like to holler you later
Maybe we can get together

Don't be scared
I will not treat you bad
Neither will I make you feel sad
Nor will I tear your heart apart
I will keep it intact
That I can sign as a contract

I may not have a clue
Why you feeling blue
But I will make
Your grey sky blue
And to you I will be true
And stick with you
Like super glue
For real

So let's get together and chill
Maybe up the hill
So I can tell you how I feel
Coz the way you move your feet
Make my heart beat
To the tune of your feet
Especially when you walk
Pass me on the street

Girl you looking sweet
I can feel your heat
Your sexy hip

And succulent lip
Make my mind skip
From my dream gip

Girl you are always in good mood
You always looking good
Like a star from Hollywood
That why all the men are
Visiting your neighbourhood

You are lovable
You need a man that is sensible
Me tell you no liar you are irresistible
I believe you are reliable
I can't see any sign
That you are not single
So come let's mingle
Think about the saying
A single
Bracelet
Does not jingle

NEW YEAR

It's the eleventh hour of the year *in Swansea*
Now the year is dying
Soon soon the fire
The firework will start
The light
The colourful bright lights
Will be switched on
And the celebration will start

Boom! Boom! Boom! *everywhere*
Pizz! Pizz! Pizz!
The firework has started

The light has switched on *in Swansea*
And now my heart is slowly beating
As the year is dying
Thinking of all my high hopes
Plans and dreams

Tick tack tick *everywhere*
The clock is ticking
It's 11:59 pm
That's one minute to midnight
One minute to the New Year

The cars and motorbikes *in Freetown,*
Are honking their horns *Sierra Leone*
And now my heart is
Beating faster and harder
But growing bigger and stronger
To hold and work on my plans

The boats, ships and ferries
In the sea are honking their horns
And now my knees are
Vibrating shaking

Like a diver's canoe
In Bafi River

Now the bells *everywhere*
The church bells are tolling
A new day is born
And it's New Year's Day
Happy new year to all

Bafi River is in Kono region in Sierra Leone: diving for diamonds.

MY QUEEN

Don't cry baby
I will kiss away the pain
You know I am your healer
Your pain killer
Have no fear
For you I will be here

Coz you are the apple of my eyes
I never want to see your
Beautiful face in tears
I will tear apart the stress
You know you are bless

Ease up your brain
I don't want you to go insane
I will take away the strain
Kiss away your pain
Flush it down the drain
And shower you with
Good loving and caring

You are the apple of my eyes
When I look into your eyes
I see my prince and princess
Yes you are my queen
And I will always love and
Serve you with loyalty
Treat you with dignity

Come darling
Come let me put you to sleep
You look tired
You need a rest
Lay your head on my chest
Where my heart beats
Let me put my hands round you

Let's sleep in peace
While the bright stars and moon
Shine through the quiet peaceful night

So we can rise up in the morning
Like king and queen
And smile to the chilling
Morning sun and listen
To the peaceful bird
Singing sweet melody

COMING OVER

It's freezing evening
Darling I can hear
Your body calling
And for yours
Mine is yearning

O darling this feeling
Is a good feeling
But I'm afraid I can't
Hold it no longer
Coz it's getting stronger

But it's alright
Coz I'm catching
The evening flight
To come over tonight
So we can treat each
Other right

I will make your
Dark winter night
Shine so bright
Your grey sky blue
And stick with you
Like super glue

Don't worry if you
Run out of gas
I will be there
To keep you warm
Give you nice
Juicy kissing
And tender loving
Satisfy your feeling
And make you touch
The ceiling

TRUE LOVE

Take back your cheque
It's you I'm in love with
Not your cheque
The love you have for me
Is the only thing I need
So please close that bank book
And give me that sexy look
That always drives me crazy
Better still take the phone off the hook
O! Hang on a sec
Let me put the intercom on private
So that we can have some privacy
Before we get busy
Till we both feel dizzy

I CRY

I cried my painful heart out
I shed tears
Tears of painful memories
Of loved ones I've lost
My tears dripped waterfall

I cried for consolation
But who will console me
A pretty city girl
Was standing round the corner
Watching me from the
Corner of her eyes

Her ball eyes
So round
Like a fish ball
I watch her gently
Her head light
Pointing out so bright
Her back yard
So nice and round
Like it has never touch the ground

She smiled to me
A smile which was supposed to
Ease my pain but it was like
Adding salt in to an injury
Coz her shining lips
Remind me about my girl friend
Succulent lips
She walks towards me
Her walk worsen my pain
Because she walks just
Like my sexy body girl

She paused
I watched into her eyes
I saw love in her heart
And loving burning
Flame in my heart
She smiled this time softly
My lonely heart says
Follow me and goodbye
To melancholy

MY BELIEF

Even though my heart is broken
I can't give up my belief
I am a true believer in love
And I will never give up that belief

You can say love is my religion if you like
But peace is what I practise
Sharing, caring and understanding
Is how I worship

Unity, equal rights and justice
Are what I preach

Maximum satisfaction in
Any kind of love is what I give

Above all love is what
I strongly believe in

LIVE IT UP

Go on go for it
Fight for it
It's your dream
Don't give it up
Live it up
Be bold
Don't be cold

Go on keep on fighting
As long as it's a good fight
Fight for it

On the way you might face heat
Just stand on your feet
And resist it

Some will try to stop you
And push you against the wall
So that you can fall and crawl
Just stand tall
You got the height and might

Don't lose your footing
Remember the saying
It's only a toad
That will get up on its feet
And fall on its knees and crawl

So stand up tall
And maintain your concentration
Don't let no one divert your attention
Just remember only a fool and water
Will go the way they are diverted

TIME

Tick tack tick
The clock is ticking
Time is going
Things are changing

So get changing
Change
Changing according to time
Change for good

Is full time you start investing
Stop wasting it in
Gambling
Partying
Party wisely
Spend it wisely
Proud of your own sweat

Stop wasting
Start investing
Get changing
Time is going
And it's still going
Don't wait for the rush hour
The rush hour is when
Things go slow
And man can't go fast
Because of age
And precious time and
Energy wasted yesterday

Stop relying on tomorrow
You can build a better
Tomorrow today
Today should have been
Better if only you could
Have worked hard yesterday

But don’t worry
Start planning
And get going
Stop waiting for tomorrow
Remember today is the
Tomorrow you were waiting
For yesterday and yesterday
Was the tomorrow you were
Waiting for the day before

Stop dreaming
Wake up and start living
Start planning and
Get going
The strength of a building
Depends on its foundation

PEACE

Ever since I was a little kid
I've always been hearing
People crying for peace
Peace! Peace! Peace!
We want peace!
We want peace!
Give peace a chance

Since then I've been searching
Searching for peace
And have seen a lot
A lot of bloodshed
Killing and survived
Survived a bloody war
Yet still peace is nowhere
Nowhere to be found
And the cry of the people
And my search for peace continue

Yesterday has gone
Tomorrow is unknown
But today is here
Now the sun is dying
The place is getting dark
Another day is about to die
Without seeing any sign of peace

The cock has crowed
'Kokoriyoko'
A new day is born
Now I've given up my search
I'm no longer interested in peace
All I need now is
The stronger ones to stop bullying
The weaker ones
Telling them what

And what not to do
In their own houses
And taking away their stuff

No bloodshed
Or shortcut to power

Understanding
Inter-cultural
And inter-religious faith
Among people
Inter-racial brotherly
And sisterly love
Freedom, unity, equal rights
Justice and love for all
Hatred for none

WINTER

The sun is shining
The weather is nice
Nice and warm
Women in their fancy clothes
Looking very attractive
Men in their designer gear
Children in the park
Everyone enjoying the weather

But soon soon the wind
The wind will start
To undress the trees
Leaving them naked

The tidy roads
Will be scattered
And painted with heaps
Of colourful leaves
That will sing the chorus of
The beat of our feet

And everybody will
Willingly become prisoner
By locking themselves indoors

Most people
Will become bluffers
With their hands
In their pockets
Slim people will become fat
Fat people extra fat
As thick jumpers and coat
Build up their bodies
As if they were going to the gym
Some people will imitate
Goalkeepers and boxers
By putting on big gloves

Everyone will become singers
Singing the single of the season

It's very cold today
Yeah! It is
It's freezing inni'?
Yeah I'm freezing
It might snow tomorrow
This is winter
We should expect that

SUMMER

It's freezing
The weather
Is dark and horrible
The sky is crying
Farmers are happy
Crops are growing
And nourishing
Flowers cheerful
Looking wonderful
Trees shower
Ready to put back
Their clothes on
Men are taking off
Their heavy defensive
Clothes they put on
Against the Rhino

Now the sun is rising
Rising from the east
Like a crippled baby
The weather is getting bright
Men are out
Welcoming the summer

Now the weather is lovely
Everyone is out with their 'Julie'
Coz the weather is nice
Nice and warm
The beaches are full
Full of people enjoying
The summer sun
Some are lying on the sand
Chilling
Chilling with their darling
Some are playing
Playing games
Of different types

The fresh air is covered
Covered by smoke
Barbecue smoke

The parks are full
Full of children
Playing
And enjoying
The hot lovely
Summer sun

Now the sun is
Going to its sleeping
Place in the west
The pigeons are
Heading to their
Sleeping places

The sleeping moon
Is awake
So are the stars
Children are asleep
Lovers are out
In their lovers' garden
With high hopes
That the sun
Will surely come out
And shine tomorrow
Coz it is summer time

THE GUN

Why do you choose gun
Do you think it's fun
When you bus the gun
Now you think you big Don

Don't you know you might
Get gunned down
By the gun
Or if caught
You will be locked down

Anyway how do you feel when
People see you and they run
Can't you see the bloodshed
In our cities
Is not pretty

Can't you see how many
Friends and family you made crying
And how many mothers mourning

Come on stop the violence
Don't you have conscience?
It's no excuse to say
You're using it in self-defence
Don't you know
To carry gun and knife it's an offence
And you might go down for life
If you take away a life

So throw away the knife
And put down the gun
And use your finger
To write against pulling the trigger
And join the campaign: 'Don't Trigger'

UP IN HERE

Music pumping
Clubbers clubbing
Dj mixing the mix
I man swinging
We all dancing
Ladies shaking
Guys grooving

Dj shaking his head
No one thinking of his bed
We all keep on having fun instead

So don't come up in here
With your gun
Don't come and spoil our fun
We don't want to run
From this fun

Don't sneak up in here with your knife
No one wants to lose his or her life

If you want to join the fun
Put down the gun
And come join the fun
Value life
And throw away the knife

SWANSEA WORLD STARS

Bright stars
Colourful stars
Mix stars
Make the pitch
A beauty to behold
Even in the cold
A pleasant sight
In the eyes of all

Stars from all over
North east west and south
Arguing all the time
But no problem
Except communication
But the power of
Football (soccer)
Just like love
We all speak the
Same language
For 90 minutes

After a long 90-minute fight
(Civilized war)
We shake hands with the opponent
What gentleness
(Sportsmanship)

Swansea World Stars
The asylum seekers
And refugee team
Supported by locals
(Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group)
Swansea World Stars
The racist free team
The colourful united team

OFFICER

Hey officer what's up
What's happening
Why you looking at me like that
You don't like the way I'm wearing my hat or what
Or am I blocking your path
Or you don't like the way I walk or the way I talk
Or do you think I sniff
Look I'm not a sniffer dog
So I don't sniff
But I do sneeze
So why you following me
All this while you have been at my back
Is it because I'm black
Or do you think I deal in crack
Or you not happy coz I hang out with Mark
Or are you mad
Because Christine was chatting
To me and my friend Augustine
Or you not happy coz I had
A good dinner with my friend Hannah
Or do you think I take coke
For your info I don't take coke
But I do drink coke
And that's not a joke
Anyway I'm about to take the next route
Where your car can't go through
So peace out for now
Coz I'm bending round the corner
To link up with Hannah
To catch up with Rob and Bob
To dance to some ruba dub
Not to rob
Coz I'm not a gentleman of the road

MY ANGEL

Yeah! It is like
I was drowning in a well
Life was really like hell!
Then came you into my life
Now everything is well
Girl you are my angel

Oui toi la belle
Ma chérie coco

MY BED

We relax in my bed
On the pillow I rest my head
On my chest she rest her head

While we listen to Gregory Isaacs
'Night nurse'
Because by my nurse I'm well treated
And with my good loving she is well fed

In her heart like wild fire my love spread
And in mine faster and bigger hers grow than my Afro

LET'S TALK

Let's talk about
African history
Yes, let's talk about
Africa's glorious past
The African history that began
Long before slavery
Let's talk about
The lies that have been told
About Africans and African history

Remember Marcus Garvey once said
"The history of African people
will have to be written by themselves
if the truth is to be told"

Let's talk about
How our ancestors
Had once lived as kings and queens with kingdoms
Emperors with empires
Before slavery and colonial rule
Let's talk about
The empires and kingdoms that flourished
In Africa long before
Slavery and colonial rule

Like J. E. Caseley-Hayford
An African nationalist from Gold Coast
(That's called Ghana now)
Said in 1922
"Before even the British came into relations with our people,
we were developed people
having our own institutions,
having our own ideas of government"

Let's talk about
The university of Timbuktu

In Mali, west Africa
One of the earliest learning institutions in the world

Let's talk about
The world-famous pyramids in Egypt
The Great Zimbabwe Palace
Built without mortar or cement
Donor country or American aid

Let's talk about
How Africans invented
The art of writing
Building
Communication
Methods of travelling
Music
And painting
As Chief Musamaali Nangoli told us in his book
No More Lies About Africa

Yes, let's talk about
How Africa is the birth place of civilisation

As Chief Musamaali Nangoli told us in his book
No More Lies About Africa
European civilisation was built
Upon the achievements of the Greek civilisation
And the ancient Greeks in turn built theirs
Following in the footsteps
Of the ancient Egyptians

So let's talk about
Africa
The true and full history of Africa

Based on Musamaali Nangoli's book No More Lies About Africa*, A&B Books, 2003.*

WAR

All they know is war
Now bloodshed
They don't want to see no more
Their health is poor
All because of the war
Always they feeling bad
Their happy faces are sad
Coz conditions are always bad

But the players in the game are glad
Coz they getting more
They don't want an end to the war
So they can get some more

Because of their greed
They don't even care
If their people breathe or bleed

But please! Please! Warlords
And promoters of war
Hear the plea and cry of the people
Give them what they want please
All they ask for is peace please

Afterword

Alhaji Sheku Kamara writes poetry from the heart. You can call it 'spoken word poetry' because it sounds like he's talking to you. Read his poems and straight away, you can hear his accent, the accent of where he's coming from. That's the war zone in West Africa, where for generations now there has been brutal fighting over the rich natural resources, such as diamonds and rubber and before that, slaves. He talks about that, he talks about the war profiteers (some of them are here in the UK), and he talks about living in the UK as an asylum seeker and as a refugee (he got his status a few years ago). He talks about being hassled by some police and some members of the public here in Wales, for being black and 'foreign'. But in these poems, more than anything else, he talks about loving.

Alhaji Kamara came to the UK in 2003 fleeing from war in his home countries, Liberia (where he was born) and Sierra Leone (where he lived as a child). He has

seen a lot
A lot of bloodshed
Killing and survived
Survived a bloody war

and he is glad to be alive! He is a politically conscious young poet with a strong message, a call for peace, both internationally and in everyday life, on the streets and in clubs, right here. But he also celebrates the joys of life. Even the sad poems have something to make you smile. He says "goodbye / To melancholy":

Lovers are out
In their lovers' garden
With high hopes
That the sun
Will surely come out
And shine tomorrow

Be glad to be alive: that is the main message of these poems. They tell us that the poet's painful memories are not forgotten, and his troubles are far from over, but also that he's happy to be distracted by happiness right

now. He's living in the present. He's nobody's victim, he's a fighter for his own and others' rights, and above all – he's a lover.

I can't see any sign
That you are not single
So come let's mingle
Think about the saying
A single
Bracelet
Does not jingle

He seeks and he finds romance, and love, and luscious kisses – and more, we can suppose, but he's very discrete, even in a poem called "My Bed". He's a gentleman, as well as being a very gentle man.

The last lines of "My Bed" are a good example of Alhaji Kamara's skill with words. His words make music, and make you smile. Listen to the beat of this (you have to read it out loud):

In her heart like wild fire my love spread
And in mine faster and bigger hers grow than my Afro

These poems have a special music. It's the poet's own, but he's building on the strong foundations of African traditions of poetry and music, and on the traditions of the African diaspora too, like reggae music and hip hop. English is just one of the languages Alhaji Kamara speaks (nearly everyone in Africa knows several languages). The main language in Sierra Leone is Krio, which combines English vocabulary with the grammar of African languages such as Yoruba and Twi. Some of these poems were first composed in the poet's mind in Krio, but when he came to write them down, it was easier for him to write in English. So the rhythms of English are dancing between the lines with the rhythms of Krio. Like the poet dances now among the bluffers of Swansea …

Tom Cheesman and Sylvie Hoffmann

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