

Whispers of a pandemic

Christabel Jibromah & Olupayimo Akinola

Whispers of a pandemic from a faraway land
 Now it is close
 Closer than you think
 Even your next-door neighbour is a suspect.
 Lockdown, lockdown
 All Sade could think was how she would survive
 First week slides, second week runs
 "All will be well my dear," her mother comforts
 Third week, fourth week
 She gets a call... "She has been fired"
 How? when? where? what?
 "How do I cater for my two children?"
 is the question that occupies her mind
 Suddenly depression seems to set in
 Why did my husband have to die?
 How could he leave me all alone to fend for myself?

Mummy G.O., Mummy G.O.
 There is now a lockdown
 What? Oh no!
 How do we fend for ourselves?
 Pastor needs the flock to function and
 Lockdown means no church service
 No church service means no members
 No member means no income
 No income means HUNGER
 All of a sudden, the truth spills in our faces like oil in a river
 and then, the whole world comes crashing down.
 Yemisi is 32 years old with 3 kids and a man
 Shut away from the world in a sad emoticon she calls a home
 She's brought closer to the man who she thought gave his love,
 his heart to her.

But as each day tangles, COVID is uncovering a lot of things
 Like a funny attitude of resentment, like God reacting to sin.
 She has become the cleaner, the teacher and the cook.

While he settles day in, day out, on the sofa, flipping through channels
 until there's a power outage, when he yells, "where's my food?"
 These days, she has to move swiftly, her bruised feet from yesterday's
 punching
 To avoid today's boxing.
 COVID has brought them close enough for him to make her bleed through
 every hole in her body.
 These are tough times, but he forgets that love in hard times is not proven
 with thrusts.

Beatrice, a trader who sells petty things
 is forced to stay at home against her will
 Her husband, a driver
 cannot bring home enough to satisfy the aching bellies
 They lie in wait.
 So, they hide their tears in their laughter
 and pretend it is from over-laughing,
 Hoping that sooner or later this one too shall pass.

Lockdown has brought many partners so close
 For them to see how far apart they really are
 Some homes are surviving this asteroid that hit
 Some are collapsing from it
 But in each house is a recurring question
 "How do we fend for ourselves?"