

THE MASQUERADE

by

Chibueze A. Aniebo

And then we cross our hearts  
and wait  
at the supposed ascension  
of the spirit.  
The owl cries -  
and we remove our heads from us  
and dispel the fear that comes  
from the tumulus

It is time  
for our departed brothers  
to walk abroad,  
and surrounding an ant hole  
we beg leave of one of them  
to come hither  
and enchant us  
in the gathering of the clan.

We are each of us alone,  
living in our individual fears,  
But the women  
shall behold us in terror  
guardians of the secrets  
We who bring back the dead  
to join the dance  
among the living

It is done!  
He emerges from an ant hole.  
Brother Oriekwe is it you?  
And holding tight our losely  
held *opripas*  
we hit the ground with fronds  
to further confuse the women  
Thank you my ancestors,  
what a *beautiful* masquerade!

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*Chibueze A. Aniebo is a student at the University of Ife, Ile Ife, Nigeria. Some of his poems have appeared in Nigeria Magazine.*