

**EXODUS**  
**Daniel Aôndona**

Before our feet touched this dust, our fathers had trekked it all. Before we learnt to swim through the Great Sea, our fathers had at first, mastered the drowning. It does not always take a ceased pulse to walk into death. Somehow, we are already dead bodies only hauling the shadows of our existence through places that we are not needed. Today, like our fathers, we trek these dusty paths with sour mouths full of songs void of butterflies. And beside me, is you, a boy whose story is scribbled on shredded sheets with the smell of memory and exile. When I ask you of home, you tell me it is war, it is a bullet chasing after its very own. It is graveyard for boys like us. I tell you, home is misery. Home is a black boy with a tongue set on fire. See? We have already had our shares of death away from home before our legs dashed into exile mimicking our fathers' footsteps. Only that this time, the chains are tied not to our waists but to the most tender dreams we have ever held. We continue to drag ourselves through the dust till the sea meets us. We sigh. We look back, a long dusty way we have come. Our hunger becomes Pharaoh's chariot calling for our demise but there is no Moses to split the waters and maybe, we may never be Israelites enough to cross. Is this the edge of surrender? I tell you, I have never swum before. You say there is always a first time and we dive in. I beg that you write my name on your chest if the water becomes too thirsty for me and if we make it to the other shore, may our skin not betray us. May we not be too black to be loved.