

Human Animals

If you and I were animals

You'd be a lumbering elephant, in a rumbling herd

Creating a caustic quagmire out of a neat, mud-walled
homestead

I'd be among horses

Fine muscles gleaming in the evening sun

As we gallop rhythmically over green hills, under a pale blue
sky.

If you and I were animals

You'd emerge from the dirt as a termite

Your colony having turned all before it to dust.

I'd be a honey bee

Producing, with my comrades

Sweet, golden nectar for the world to sup.

If you and I were animals

You'd be in a swarm of locusts

Laying waste to neat ancient olive groves.

As a butterfly, my paintbrush, floating on a canvass of air

Will be as welcome as morning dewdrops on languid leathery
leaves.

If you and I were animals

You'd be a rough-necked vulture

Waiting for the lion to breathe its last

Before gorging greedily from its guts,

Deep in the stinking caverns of its rotting carcass

I'd be the vivid-hued kingfisher

Diving into clear still water for my fresh fish

Or the flamingo, resplendent in the setting sun

On the banks of the Jordan river.

Yes, nature in all its wondrousness

Created animals of all kinds

And placed them together on this lush, fragile planet

It is the ugly, evil human animals

Jealous of the beauty and goodness in the rest of us

That rain down fire, borrowed from the devil

On those that plant pretty pearls of poetry

Gifted by God.

Planted in the knowledge that

Our seeds will spring forth through the rubble

and blossom

The laughter from their bellies

matching the beauty of their faces

Their hearts full of love

Full of joy

Full of Freedom.

© Tayo Aluko, April 2024