

An African Elegy



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WINNER OF THE 1991 BOOKER PRIZE

P O E M S

## **An African Elegy by Ben Okri**

We are the miracles that God made  
To taste the bitter fruit of Time.  
We are precious.  
And one day our suffering  
Will turn into the wonders of the earth.

There are things that burn me now  
Which turn golden when I am happy.  
Do you see the mystery of our pain?  
That we bear poverty  
And are able to sing and dream sweet things

And that we never curse the air when it is warm  
Or the fruit when it tastes so good  
Or the lights that bounce gently on the waters?  
We bless things even in our pain.  
We bless them in silence.

That is why our music is so sweet.  
It makes the air remember.  
There are secret miracles at work  
That only Time will bring forth.  
I too have heard the dead singing.

And they tell me that  
This life is good  
They tell me to live it gently  
With fire, and always with hope.  
There is wonder here

And there is surprise  
In everything the unseen moves.  
The ocean is full of songs.  
The sky is not an enemy.  
Destiny is our friend.