Poems Emerging from Stillness
by Charles P. Gibbs

Into Ever Deeper Water

One moment you awoke
no longer content
to continue treading water.

You set out for the farther
shore beckoning you from before time,

patiently, subtly, insistently
awaiting your deeper listening,
your deeper opening

to the awareness
that being truly alive
offers only one choice:

set out, one stroke at a time,
into ever deeper water
toward the far unknown shore
where your Self awaits,

knowing surely that, opening
in the journey, you will arrive
and know yourself as your Self
for the first time.

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At The MJ Hotel

Sitting in remote Kabala,
Koinadugu, Sierra Leone
on the veranda at the back
of the MJ Motel, whose front
features two large banners of
Martin Luther King, Jr.,
on a morning thickly hazy
with the smoke of so much
burning across the valley below me.

The white kleenex blackens
as I wipe fine ashes
from the tabletop
to the music of birds
in the trees around me –
the red earth, the dry grass,
the lush green banana trees
hanging heavy with fruit.

The music of Krio flows
as the motel workers converse,
breakfast just completed,
lunch already cooking slowly
over a nearby charcoal fire with
whisps of pale smoke rising.

Ahmed, the manager, ambles over.
Greets me. Your first time in Africa?
My second time in Sierra Leone.
He arches his eyebrows.
My second time in this hotel.
I was here two years ago.

He pauses.
Then the recognition –
Yes, two years ago,
before Ebola.
Yes, I say, before Ebola.

You like Martin Luther King, I ask?
He replies, Yes, and Gandhi and Mandela – non-violence.
I say, I have some of his speeches on my computer.

I Have a Dream, he almost whispers.
I Have a Dream, I had that once.
Could you download for me?

I had it once.
Before Ebola.
Before our need
to hold and be held
became deadly.
I would like it again.
I would like to have the dream.

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There is a land –
a Motherland of vast
imaginative spaces and absolute
belonging her open heart a deep well
where all draw and drink
freely and fully the waters of life,

where we meet unknown
immediately recognized neighbors
share the water wander together
through imaginative spaces with
paths of potential to our
transformed tomorrow today

yes scorched land here
and there but not barren
our neighbors seeming poor
possess invisible wealth
waters waiting to be
tapped and shared

knowing we belong
to each other and this land
let us abide in peace
and possibility; invite and be
guided by our neighbors’
invisible wealth water
the scorched land plant
transformed tomorrows
together today

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New Day Awakening

I am not
different from everything
or anything else
that is and yet
I’m not the same.

The rising sun
turns the ribbed clouds
into an inviting canyon
stretched in unfathomable
depth across the dawn sky.

The wind tousles
the tops of the towering
poplars and pines
swaying as I am
entranced by the beauty
of this new day
awakening. I feel
an invitation
from the clouds, the sun,
the amber washed across
the sky, the breeze, 
the trees, the damp grass 
under my feet and 
the tiny random daisies – 
release, they say, forget 
and remember.

Be more than 
only an observer 
in your own life 
in the great life 
we share. We are 
not different. 
We are not.

We are.