

# RELIEF

*a journal of art and faith*

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as masts and sails  
of a dangling armada  
gently bobbed on an invisible main,  
rocking us at anchor in a harbor of air.

## PORTRAIT: DAVID

*Kristina Erny*

*Freetown, Sierra Leone*

i.

Cucumber sliced &

white sliced onion. Bowl

cradled gently in  
lap. Offer story,  
offer to mend pants.  
Practice Krio. Shame

when we feel sorry

for ourselves. For we

know nothing in this  
crack-white-plastic  
folding  
chair. Aunty took you  
in. Took you to her

self, as her son. You

fight like it. Like love.

Here in this compound,

Guide.

The first night fire

& fires after. I  
am not that brave.

Rat-  
rustle the trash pile.

ii.

Remember the night  
you told us your  
father could *wakha* through

walls?

We read Lazarus.

*Yu* spoke soft, quiet  
kerosene flickering.

*Mi papa bin abul wakka* through walls  
but he *no bin abul komot na grev*.

iii.  
Man-child,

heart a kola  
split in the

teeth.

Bitter bone spit  
into palm.

You build your heroes

from long dead memories.

Stitch, brother,

stitch yourself  
a home.

## LANDSCAPE: VICTORIA PARK COMMUNITY CENTER

*Kristina Erny*

*Freetown, Sierra Leone*

o we never knew self      never knows greens      *lek* green thing      *lek bad bad* never  
slice one that straight *fawe* or mango      or coconuts      or sweet machete made milk      it yeah  
or dust      or singing      hapless help      lest the overwhelm      with her seams  
the whole youth center      a domino math game      & victoria park      my  
undone      & the spider pulled & quartered      he laughed so hard at that part      for that  
mouth krio too      anansi greed *bra yu* never *gon do am*      hell be      curves  
terrible story began & they lived it      has not ended yet street on its side  
all right      by frenetic artery of stalls      who      them neighbors armless & footless  
the road by we shortbread lady      her stack so neat & the symmetry      invisible hands with *wi* fleshmade one  
we had to shake his hand      with our tendons      this road's tendon's stretch or etch themselves into *wi*  
skin      a loveapple tattoo in *di* forearm it's still there      under tree      the one screeching &  
rustling with all bats o