

I am waiting to catch you,
to expose your cover,
to catch your form as an augur in my thoughts
on an argument about justice.

Undercover, I am afraid.
My heart beats over the beta blocker.
What if we could have saved you?
What if, after all, you choked on our love
and died of overexposure?
Are we then guilty of murder?
I think so; and, in this poem, suppose
you alone know the answers
and that my certainty is just another point of light?

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This is the problem:
it is your second coming;
you, broken by these plains,
these flat lands,
profound season,
returning in the guise of a proletarian
with a second language.

So I will go along
as Obeah, Shaman, Crow,
inherit the territories,
resurrect immigrant beginnings
sing the way clear: Shango, Shango.
Le pido a Shango.
Shango, Shango,
le pido a Shango.

Ellis Island was never much
to the Tainos or the Arawaks
to the Caribs or the Africans
O Shango, Shango
O le pido a Shango,
yet who should see their faces
ancient as the gods
arriving around the curve
of the Golden Circle on Flight 262.

Suppose, after all,
we tramp through Brooklyn, Harlem,
your haunt near Chinatown,
rummage in the aromas of buildings—chickpeas and rice,
bananas overripe in the bodega;
may I then come to this:
you are more than just woman
homing on the scent of identity.

EN LA BODEGA

I imagine bananas hanging in the window
And men, mostly, sitting around
Sharing cigarettes, sneaky pete and gossip.

Relief mothers coming at twelve
With the numbers for last night's dreams
To play for a quarter or fifty cents—not a dollar.

En la bodega, one buys the long and short:
Rice, island fruit and vegetables
Bad fish from Brooklyn and Schaefer's beer.