

THE SPOON RIVER Poetry Review

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Spice Trail

for Lucia

Workout

On Thursdays when what's left of the sun
slips in remote places and stars
fall between coconut trees
land in the belly of the Caribbean
we six gather where plants walk through windows to sit
in pots in the corner
we wash the past and we cut scraps and fat from pages
of our lives save crumbs somewhere under the table for make
overs young poems emerge like difficult births
we eat hug laugh recycle
metaphors from mind-country
(old rags in new quilts, you know the story)
from memories in the album you gave me
the day I walked into myself
you placed in my hand the little nutmeg
and grater to let the spices free
I float on the scented wind cradle my haunted dreams
(ancient as cotton trees, those dreams)
and fear-rocked sleep rocks me

Moonshine Rhapsody

"Cry-cry baby moonshine darling take off your clothes and go to bed..."
tonight women who walk with tribes on their heads
take center stage and weave tales only they know
since they remember
when cotton trees were young
when drums grew tongues and called down rain
when drums walked over mountains
stopped at your door called you by name
tribal names that drank oceans and cut a straight
path right back to where forests grew so deep your eyes
turned just looking into them
only those women know because they remember
when spider was king and donkey dog and lion could talk
tales seal those lids
cry-cry baby go to bed...

Patchwork

my mother guides my daughter's hands
needle plunges green on hibiscus strips of calico
eyes glisten as patterns come right and whole
someone must learn the gentler arts of the family tradition
my fingers shrink since the day the cloth crimsoned
and flesh stitched into ma's patterns that never vary
I watch their heads conspire
my daughter is drawn into the circle
another warrior for how else will you last
you who write no books keep no journals
you who needle and stitch
the canvas of your life

Fragments

my soul scatters like dust on paper
nutmeg from the grater
so I reach for crumbs
(there's no moon in Illinois and mountains are far out of my reach)
the day you crack the shell
and let the spices out
I convert corn and soya into gentle seas in the house of words
listen to the waves from a broken Gulf conch
adjust the frequency to the distance