

*Opal Palmer Adisa*

## WATER WITCH



sometimes  
she clasped her hands  
to both cheeks  
shook her head violently  
and hollered out loud  
*ah not gwane tell them*  
*ah not looking*  
*me nah look*  
but everyone could see  
her eyes were glued  
to the water  
her reflection  
murky  
the old women clicked their teeth  
smiling said  
*poor thing*  
*is seeing she is seeing*

she didn't wash clothes  
at the spot  
where the other  
women did  
she went off a ways  
and stripped  
to her bra  
and panties  
sitting on a  
large white rock  
mesmerized

by the river's flow  
for a long time  
the other women  
glanced her weary  
hers was a gift  
they did not envy

at the birth of her first child  
she seemed to settle down  
until one day  
after drinking water  
she flung the glass  
that shattered into  
tiny diamonded shards  
*miss tremblyn's husband*  
*dead tonight*  
she declared  
and bright and early  
the next morning  
news of mister trembly's passing  
was whispered around

gradually  
even grudgingly  
they started  
coming to her  
bringing their own  
cups cans and bottles  
of water  
didn't matter if it  
was from the spring  
the river or the tap  
if there was something  
to see she saw and proclaimed  
marriages deaths  
betrayal financial disaster  
even murder  
until her head throbbed  
and she covered her eyes  
with a piece of black cloth  
and wrapped her head with bay rum  
but even then  
if one of her children  
brought her water  
if there was something  
else to see she saw

including her husband  
leaving for the store  
and not returning

from then on she read  
the water in her own body  
the moisture buried under the earth  
cultivating the plants  
the dew on the leaves  
in the morning  
the perspiration  
dripping from people's brow  
every where there was water  
she saw and choose  
what to tell and what  
to keep to herself  
like the tears  
she all too frequently  
sucked in

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