

*Cheryl Boyce-Taylor*

## WILD SORRELL



*Fight – if dem chiren hit me today, I go hit dem back. What about you cheryllallison, what you go do? Praise Dara’s dare and her spell of words dangling in thick air praise my swift backhand and the girl that fell tearing her ass wide. Praise to father who did not tell mother, praise the shy girl learning to be tough. Praise the dust and the girl that rose, the tongue that swelled with pride, and the chest that puffed to bursting- the swollen chest raised with new breasts tucked in blue bra. Was it love or poverty that made my first homemade bra: Mamie and tanty Verna’s hands speeding to the slick buzz of 1950’s Singer sewing machine, each singing to Calypso Rose, *fire, fire in meh wire, wire, oy yo yoy...* or was that too early for women in calypso.*

Who stopped to snap her fingers, shake her tiny butt, run the tap water a little til’ it ran clear, who made the lime aid drank it without ice.

Who wiggled to young Elvis, *take my hands my whole life too- or was it through.* He the new blue-suede-shoe crooner, they, black pony-tailed half-girls bright red bindi in the middle of their foreheads, milk still warm in green-mango breasts. A hip slung low, the new piece of moon bright in her narrow dress. A feverish rush of rain, blue-corn silk ribbons holding breeze at bay. My Trinidad, her red Ixora flush of dusk. When Deisha married my boy she carried, Flame of the Jungle flowers, red Ixora’s, he wore one lace of Babies Breath in his pocket, her eyes a swatch of raw silk torn from full moon. That Sunday, a bright salmon flute ran down my center, sky running to catch up with me. Somewhere behind an orchid cloud tears flew.

Mamie feeds me Castor Oil for cleansing, and worm grass tea for cramps every Sunday, tears, castor oil straight, then orange soda for chaser. Years later orange soda soothes my monthly cramps. Is it because the color is reminiscent of the ripe mangoes of my childhood, or does it remind me of the orange center of papayas, jellied and damp as an inner womb. The pale bloat and tissue readying my scarlet-bowl womb for twin boys. One would stand before Oya, the other

d would clap and whirl, spin words. One would hear river talking, the other write it down. One would change the world, the other leave it.

At nine, the harsh teeth of menstrual cramps rode and bit all night, called names of the dead. It was an organized massacre on my small frame, after the storm, I grew so beautiful... It was hard to find the cracks. My spine an elastic hammock string. Once from wind's beak fell two seeds, one a bird, the other a girl, turned wild Sorrell tree.