

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