



*don't you remember*

The brothers say they were better off  
than many. They were the ones with a drum.

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## Lost Spirits

Daddy was laughing but he sat quite still  
the day he told us what he had seen:  
an Obeah man with one eye, smiling.  
Daddy, young, played alone, as he often  
did, or with boys from the next plantation.  
He was laughing but sat quite still, his  
eyes brooding as he remembered racing  
up the hill he was forbidden until he came  
upon the Obeah man with one eye, smiling.  
We loved his stories of *Papa Bois*, of *douens*  
with backward-facing feet, of old traditions  
because he was laughing while sitting still  
and looking beyond a great distance, knowing  
between *Papa Bois* and death is a connection  
to the Obeah man with one eye, smiling, but  
he just looked at us then winked his left, said  
*I ran away before anything wicked happened.*  
Again he laughed but sat so still as he spoke  
to us of an Obeah man with one eye, smiling.

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## White Flight: Los Angeles, 1961

The woman in the window is a dead ringer for  
Donna Reed. Minutes ago, she sent her reasons  
for living safely off: her husband with his flask  
of milk, his Dragnet special; their daughter with  
Heidi-hefty curls of gold; their sons perched atop  
their Schwinn and armed with news about some  
preacher named King; her man's *don't take chances*  
drumming in her ears—*avoid the windows and lock  
the doors*. Across the street, one of the neighbor's  
boys (she can't tell them apart) re-mows the freshly-  
mown lawn, transistor blaring Sam Cooke's *Chain  
Gang*—surely no good can come of that. The boy's  
father, his Caribbean-breeze-of-an-accent soft, leaves  
earlier than her man, and that irks. On the telephone  
wires above their houses, a flock of white-crowned  
sparrows raise a squawk sensing the presence of a  
blackbird, red hidden in its wings. *How do they know*

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she asks later, *when it's time to fly? By their sense,  
of imminent doom*, her husband growls, spits, reading  
about a sit-in at a southern Woolworth's, a version of  
the 5-and-10 where his kids buy Coke and waxed lips.

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