

ALL THE DEAD, ALL THE LIVING

At Jouvay, it eh matter if you play yourself
or somebody else.

Play your dead eighty-year-old granny,
who had tongue like scorpion pepper,
two foot like twinned fishtail in Caura River,
a smile like a butterknife cutting through hot sada.

Play your living mother,
who made of more parts glitter than flour,
who teach you softness have more than enough space
to leave a cutlass waiting,
glistening between fat folds,
ready to chop yuh from a bed of ample waist.

Play all the dead and all the living in you,
in yuh shortpants,
in yuh badjohn drawers,
in yuh ragged fishnets and curry-gold battyriders,
in yuh half-top, in yuh no-top,
breasts swinging under electric-tape nipples,
panty forgotten in a culvert overflowing with holy water and hell liquor,
your own perspiration sliding between bodies at play
like the wetness from your body is purgatory-unction.

Play yuhself.

Clay yuhself.

Wine en pointe and wine to the four stations of the cross,
dutty angel,
bragadang badting,
St. James soucouyant,
deep bush douen come to town
to make a killing in mud and mudder-in-law
on fresh doubles, after.

Play like you eh playing in your public servant office on Ash Wednesday,
calves aching and twitching in sensible slingback heels,
a pulse in your lower back blossoming
each time you bend down to file a papers,
salute a clerk,
say grace before ashes.

You know where you are, really.
Just how you know the clerk is a chantwell,
the office is a concrete antechamber before the final mas,
the pavement is a busshead-convergence,
the parking lot is a gayelle,
the savannah is a arena where paint and abeer might wash,
but spirit does linger.

You eh waiting til next year.
Where you plant yourself this Jouvay
is where your spectral, midnight lagahoo rattling she coffin,
turning wolf
to woman
to wolf again.