

don't you remember

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

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.

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*

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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