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### Haitian Village Lady

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*College of DuPage*

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## Haitian Village Lady

*Judith C. McArdle*

Village lady,  
I look at you  
Eye to eye to eye.  
Picked out from all around us here  
    like lint from a dark dress,  
I fix you on this paper to remember.

I hear you are a widow woman  
    who lost her last son.  
I see grief cling to you like black salve,  
    and emptiness weight you down.  
I know beneath your rags  
    lies the belly that housed him early  
And held him wet with birth from your  
thighs.  
Your breasts old avocados now  
    once had the blue white milk  
That gave him laughing teeth  
    and long bones.  
Your arms that hang down heavy  
    rocked him baby,  
Hips rode him child,  
Back that brought him to the cane field  
    bore him sleepy in the sack.

"Mamu, Mamu"  
    he calls to you.  
His calling sound  
Rings round, rings round  
The gold in your ear  
And swims like fish in your head.

He is no more.

Your sisters tell you cry!  
Dance the rage of death!  
But your tears lie like stones on a cave  
    floor.  
And your legs stand like tree stumps in  
the ground.

He is no more.

Papa took him from you.  
He took him  
Not like the others  
Who sleep with women under the bush,  
Wear stiff shirts,  
And trade their blood for salt.  
He took him with a knife  
Because he would not go.  
He cleaved him in two  
    to feed the earth a body  
And the sky a soul.  
Now he belongs to no one.  
Papa wanted him for fear and death,  
You wanted him for fields and fruit.  
Papa for powder, black and  
    white.  
You for fire and drum  
For morning's rain and play magic.

Neither yours nor his now,  
    he is no more.  
What is left of a lost last son  
    a mother full of sorrow,  
    a despot full of worms,  
And no one who hears the birds sing  
anymore.