

Fire Woman

Keisha-Gaye Anderson

What a way she bright, though,
eeh?
dat fat gyal
dat fiyah woman

Is who she think she is?

Market hips
rocking like
a rum shop
before day light
rolling like a river
swelling to meet sea
after the devil and
him wife did ah fight
flashing tears
from the clouds
streaking the faces
of hibiscus
pulling colors through the curtain
of the sky

See her there,
rainbow snake charmer
higgler
rude girl
Mami Wata woman
wind chime laughter
shattering
the queen's english
morning stride
twisting greenwich mean time

A carnival of adornment
from the temple of her
ankles
to the crown of her head

Red hair
green hair
no hair—
she nuh business
and black, she black, she black
so till

Till she become a memory
and a promise
a double dare
a heckle in the
in sunday mass
a line in the sand
cross it,
if yu tink yuh bad

A body tolerating
uniforms of commerce
all for the sake of a tightly packed barrel
school fees
and lay away on satin and sequins
designed to hug every living curve

Don't command her
don't test
or expect
the original holy word
to be unsheathed
from the holster of her mouth
and linger
near your ear
until just the right time
until you get comfortable
forget to use
the code words
the safe slurs

Third world
Urban
Inner city
Under privileged
Disadvantaged
Developing
Primitive

Flimsy arrows aimed
at pernicious life
sail through
stardust template
pre-time goddess
unscathed

She is still here

From clarendon to brooklyn
call her Iris, Lilith
call her Isis, Kali
call her savvy

But don't call her out
her name

She's got no use
for girdles and bleaching cream
coconut milk never killed
anybody
candles and white rum have their place
everything inna darkness
must
come
to
light

She's got stamina for the
marathon of creation
sucks her teeth
at your corsets
for jubilation
blinders wrapped
in greenbacks
promises called
pensions

And she will wait
as long as it
takes for her garden to
grow
for her children to
know

About the author

Keisha-Gaye Anderson is a Jamaican-born poet, author, screenwriter, and journalist. She is a former fellow of the North Country Institute for Writers of Color and was shortlisted for the Small Axe Literary competition in 2010. Her work has appeared in *The Killens Review of Arts and Letters*; two volumes of *Small Axe Salon*; *The Mom Egg*; *Afrobeat Journal*; two volumes of *Poems on the Road to Peace: A Collective Tribute to Dr. King*; *Sometimes Rhythm, Sometimes Blues* (Seal Press); the *Women Writers in Bloom Poetry Salon* blog; two volumes of *Streetnotes*; and two volumes of *Caribbean in Transit Arts Journal*. Her poetry was also included in Caribbean in Transit's 2011 art exhibition, "In the Spirit". She is a founding poet with Poets for Ayiti. Proceeds from their 2010 poetry chapbook, *For the Crowns of Your Heads*, are helping to rebuild Bibliotheque du Soleil, a library razed during the earthquake in Haiti. Keisha's poetry chapbook *Circle Unbroken* was self-published in 2003. Her television work includes documentary production for CBS, PBS, and Japanese television. Her feature articles have appeared in magazines like *Psychology Today*, *Black Enterprise*, *Honey*, and *Teen People*. Keisha is currently enrolled in the M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program at The City College, CUNY and has taught African American Literature to CUNY undergraduates as an adjunct. She lives in Brooklyn, NY with her husband and two children. Visit her on the web at www.keishagaye.com