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Yemoja De Pwe Mi O (Yemoja Calls Me)

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Yemoja Calls Me



**Camille Adams
Thesis
Poetry**

Yemoja De Pwe Mi O

(Yemoja Calls Me)

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Creation

Yemoja,
the silver orbic eye
peering out of the tilted ink bottle sky
that has spilled its blackness.

She also
this coast-bound, waving darkness

over which the moon-mirrored train
of her pearlescent dress trails

to the earth-
husked sand that fails
to sound her hushed approach
at the birth
of the silver, oval eggs
appearing under the giant turtle's tail.

Attendant Yemoja
– moon – sea – mother of all –
these new ancient lives hail.

**Remember me,
Your authenticity**

Here,
relegated to the recesses of your life
lived now in disharmony,
I, your self,
in silence
wait.

When Mummy went away
she

who came to take my place,
seeking by which to earn love
her mother once gave
freely,
cajoling dramatics and
these stupid antics –

to bat geisha eyelids, to give
girly giggles, egos and
erections sucked too early to stroke –

learned.

Book-loving, Austen-quoting,
vegan life style-preaching and
into the quiet retreating me
would have been
too nerdy for your friends clung to
so desperately

you
clubbed nightly, and skimpily
dressed, the better
promiscuity to practice
that you pretended pleased

you
and after

agreeing to the conditions for your aunts' acceptance (finally)
you, your reluctance
to make

Jesus Christ your personal saviour denied,
and went along
seeking their favour
in His water, where you felt the great spirit
of Yemoja, origin of all our Yoruban Orisas,

Your Mother,
were baptised.

Come here, silently, I call you
to regain,

 putting aside this plethora of personas –

 Letting go of the diva,

 the need too to be an entrancer, to entertain,

 exorcising Christ-believer to just be,

me again –
good enough,
remember.

Knowledge

In the water you saw me
unskinned
as I really appear.

My head, tied, was not the reason
that – baptising – you could not see
my black, coiled hair.

It was donning a blue dress in Yemoja's bosom,
the drums, bells, and incense that drew from
my frame my skin
naming me human.

My scales reflected was your conundrum.

What were you baptising, snake
or young woman,
in the water where you saw
my true form
expecting only to see my vocation.

I withdrew to see your confusion

and your disgust
written across your face
you who had dunked a woman
in the ocean

and was seeing under the waves
a symbol to you of treachery
unfurling in my place.

How confused you must have been
you who had unfortunately
- inquisitively- just seen

a woman unsheathe
a serpent.

Now you have died
just as I have come
to know

ten years later what
that expression
on your face meant.

Invocation

The priestess calls to the Earth: "Cleave!
Call forth your magic, and have me receive.

I am returned.

Let your forge burn
away my remaining skin
and deem me spirit.

Mistress of Wind.
Venturer from The Sea.

Conch shell to Elements,
I call.

This serpent revives
Memory.

Okuti

I am the serpent.
I bear Yemoja's message.
I am the serpent.
Through me she addresses
you.
In my dreams, through my words.
Listen. And know who you've heard.

I
am Yemoja's snake.
Lives change in my wake.

Bound

This is a road I have walked many times,
times past and
times present.

I do not hope for a future,
my soul is tired of this adventure,
the living, the dying,
the growth, the crying,
the vying for return.

I want in this lifetime to have learnt
the lessons that will afford me stay,
to have performed the deeds
that will take my breath away
from the flesh that binds me
to a world of pain,
guns, murder, selfishness, greed,
ignorance, unlove, hunger; all
perpetuating need
of knowledge I bring to this sphere.
Except, I do not want to be here.

Grant me rest in Orun,
in sunshine,
in Water's bosom.
Grant me rest among the trees
grant me privilege as Ancestor,
to come and go as I please;
let me inspire dreams.
Let me teach as Spirit.

But before this,
I must remind my people to remember –
their dead,
the Egun, to honour,
the Orisas to supplicate,
the Earth to venerate,
the shackles to sublimate
under remembrance, reclamation
of our worth.

Before I return,
I must fulfil the duties
of this birth.

Yemoja's Message

I came from Orun (for you)
I came from your prayers

I came from The Sea (for you)
I came from your tears

I came from The Earth (for you)
I came from your call

I came from the dance (for you)
From where your feet fall

I was birthed from The Fire (for you)
I came for your memory

I was borne from Dream (for you)
I came to show you reality

I came from The Blade (for you)
I came to make you fight

I came from The Moon (for you)
I came to give you sight

I came from The Winds (for you)
I come on the breeze

Emanjah has sent me.
I come from The Sea.

Warrior

Rise in the power of The Dark Moon
She who has many faces

Strap on the battle gear of Ogunte
She who the fight embraces

Wield the sword round your head
She who the battle calls

Survey the land before the kill
She to whom duty falls

Hear the charge of The Darkened Sky
She who sees the light

Call forth The Moon that lives inside
She whom Yemoja has given sight.

Ode ibi ija de mole. (Move beyond strife)

When intuition asks you be
opposite of everything
with your eyes you see
do you do battle with your soul?

Are you prepared for the toll
obedience of either road
exacts?

The ignore-acne of those
readily asserting "facts"
of how life *really* works.

Or can you handle disappointing Memory?
The unremitting admonitions
of "this isn't who you're supposed to be!"

And when neither offers reward?
And you're left in The Wind tunnel's void
which then do you choose?
What are you prepared to lose?

Respect of those around you who,
had they been true
would have offered encouragement,
support of the endowment
of a gift they'd also feel the need
to have expressed to the world?

Or
any "promise" of security,
surrendering to the swirl
of Oya's skirts dancing thoroughly
through your life
coming to resemble,
not the deliverance of any blessing,
but a chain of unending strife
as She destroys everything
 ev-e-ry-th-ing
and nothing is left standing
but the call

before which idol do you fall?

Egun
- Sound The Bones -

Awake The Ancestors.
Alert Them to my need for answers

that I cannot get pass Esu's confusion
that I am exhausted and alone in Yemoja's mission,

that I am afraid to trust, though I know I am right
and struggling to accept this carving of my life,

afraid to trust so fully in my dreams
except, how else shall You speak to me.

Am I absolved from,
- above some's

use of shells, nuts and chains.
Your word plain

when You speak to me directly.
Do I not need Odu or community.

Is my seeking "of the flesh"
since my life cannot trespass

Yemoja's design.
And thus my need to *wake* You is
but figment of an anxious mind
You have warned me to divorce,

leading me already
in Your ordained course.

Compulsion

My Sea is
literally
calling
to me.

Every time
I complete a task
She comes

to demand
rather than ask
I remember
Home.

She leads me
on
down the road
past the curves,
an urge

to go,
to run
desperately

to the beckoning
waiting
Sea.

I thought prior
it was borne of my own
desire

to return
to the land
of my birth

but now
I recognise,

shifting perspective
from my
eyes

that saw me
as subject
- arbitrator -

the only one
with agency,

that is Her
it is She,

it is Yemoja
calling to me.

To Yemoja, Yoruba and Yonder

been lost in white man's land too long
it's time for me to go on home

I hear my ocean sing her song
it's time for me to come on home

my soul aches for the place where it belongs
I know it's time to push on home

been struggling in vain ' name uh being strong
but my spirit pleads for me to go on home

there is nothing to be gained, and no reward
in denying time done come to go on home

I'll make my way to her shores 'fore long
cuz time done come to go back home

salt water tears shall meet my own
Emanjah greets her child come home

rocked in her arms my soul'll be borne
to the place my Ancestors call our own.

It's time for me. I'm going Home.

Guided By The Sea

Open
your arms
to me,

Omo Yemoja

and I,
quite safely,

will carry you
across our water.

You long
for your home,

it is in your heart
and not lost.

Do my work here
first
and I will take you
home.

It is mine too.
But you I own,

and together
we will write.

I am your memory,
your guide
and your sight.

See through my eyes
willingly

and blessed with success
and the things we love
you will be.

My daughter,
own me.

Poet's House

I will go to the river
unbound from Dream
and there ask
what She would have of me.

Yemoja, your child writes better from motion.
I am static
in this journey to Your ocean.
Hands free of a wheel stationary,
forward only
I have no option.

I am bored, my life empty
full of undecided resolution;
Like I dare or can even
transgress the directive of Your hand.

I come to the river
unbound from Dream.

Yemoja, mi Iya,
what (more) would You have of me?

Promise

My Fate is to live a life exiled
until I fully comply
with the dictates
of the promise
I pledged
wedged against
wheels I implore
another path to explore.

They budge not.
It is I that forgot
The Crossroad's choice has expired.
My prayers thus inspire
none
but my own spirit
to say, "save your breath.
You are under fealty
to the abiding decrees
of *that* death."

Bound
to the oath
whereby
I died
from Orun.

Born here,
my spirit remembers
what she swears:

I write.
Yemoja will have
Her message brought to light.

Inside

The rain falls on my sadness,
my feeling of inescapability,
my feeling of being trapped
inside this haunting reality.

Outside this grey, rain-soaked city
are my sunshine and ocean loves.
Outside this window, my bedroom,
and vocation is the adventure
I am being kept from.

Let me escape the computer
and write in the sand.
Let me walk on The Earth
telling Her story
through my soles,
through my hands.

Let me dance the rhythm
of the line
in the waves
my whole being craves.
Let my end rhyme be
the meeting of sky and sea
in a sunset horizon.

Allow me to escape from
concrete images and walls.
Let me live inside the conceptual.
Give me audience, please,
with the forest, with the trees.
Let *their* wisdom teach me.
Let the plants be to whom I bow.
Let their knowledge of how

they are to be used for medicine
be my obsession.
Please let me out
this concrete bauble
where machines and man rule the day,
where my worship of You, the Goddess
renders me strange.
Let me come again, to Your shore

allow me to offer my prayers there

and flowers into Your arms.

Let me not have to remember You

in a distant land,

in a bowl of water,

with seven of your shells,

in a dance over concrete floors

accompanied by manufactured drums.

Where is the goat skin? Where is the hum

of Your arrival unto the earth?

Where is the sense in this

estrangement from the place of my birth?

I understand. I understand,

Yemoja. Your work.

Though nightly I grieve

for the sunshine, the trees

the warm air & Your seas.

Will doing Your work

let me arrive at these,

- Please.

Iya, this I pray.

Dwelling in me dwelling in You, you know these words.

Ase.

Omo Yemoja

When you open your arms
unto a constructed altar

it is not the words
but the heart
full
of the matter

the Orisas investigate
and seek
to answer,

coming in dreams,
to give
reply

to the heart's
true cry.

*

Once you open your heart
it is theirs
to search

Forget the elected words
and issues
you've perched

upon a prayer,
given wing
by ceremonies

conducted in care
to impress,
striving to get it right.

They care not.
Your soul sings
its own plight.

Dear Yemoja,

For a woman who wears a crown
you sure have no qualms
about knocking mine down.

Every space you lead me to
humiliates me more.
No door
of deliverance,
no ascension from misery;
no agency
to extricate myself
from these homes.

You threaten me when I show
a revulsion
for the situations
you place me in.
I have seen no growth, no positives.
So what is your reasoning?

I am at the mercy of people
intruding into a space
I cannot call my own.
Goddess forbid I have a desire
to take control
of where I live.

But You like your daughters passive.

I hate You in this moment,
let the record show.

There are other ways to get your work done
without me having to live with nasty roommates,
or an evil mother,
or in this old, cold house
where I am always bothered
by a roof that leaks,
a boiler that breaks,
a dumb country 'aunt'
who doesn't understand space,
or a mother next door for that matter
who cannot resign herself to the fact

that I want nothing to do with her.

Why always lead me, Yemoja,
to places I will hate
that make me seek to run away?

Except this time I can't.
Threatening me, in dreams, with sharks,
in "reality" causing unanswered phone calls
and unproductive job interviews.
Your hand is huge,
and cannot be withstood.
But what is your point in reducing me
to spaces I would leave if I could.

You have taken away my agency
and nobody would believe me
if I told them how you control my life.
A Goddess, an Orisha,
our mother,
why would she heap strife
on her child?

All the while
"olorishas" claim to be
owned by You
in specific roads
they do not know
your true children can show
that You are stern
and loving and a warrior and deaf
and are the witch from whom we learn,
drowned in your waters,
seven years passing
without breaking surface.
Your true children know this.

That You ride us hard.
And it's not just possession in the yard.
It's You. there. always.
In our dreams,
in our homes,
demanding altars,
displacing lovers,
choosing, creating,
commanding our road –

one singular fate –
that we are goaded to follow.

The “initiated” don’t know
you are not to be found in a pot
or a “path”
that you are not Malewo *or* Ogunte
or Okuti
but that You are all of these
to us You make serve.
We who know all your faces,
us who You’ve chosen from birth.

I have served you before, Iya,
in all my other lives.
I have risen Native American hands
and Chinese eyes
to celebrate your Moon.
I have danced African steps
and have sung Hindi songs
to the mysteries of your Womb.
As man, as woman,
I have known your faces.

But still you drag me to these
unseemly places.

I already own no home
that is apart from your Waters.
Will you destroy my heart further?

Or do you provide me with anger
to tell your tale?

Everything returns
to the work You’ve placed
upon my fingers
that throughout my running prevails.

Re-Lease

I give myself freely
to the thing that is trying to destroy me.

I give my
Self.

Take it.

You want me?
My soul is fatigued.

I am tired of your plotting.
I am tired of my allotting
growth to this pain.

You want me?
I am here. Again.
Punished and withdrawn.

I am done.
I don't care anymore.

Nothing *I* do matters.
Your road. Your soul. Your cause.
I abdicate the loss
of my head.

I give up. I give *you*.
Beast of burden. Horse.

Take me.
Selfdom is shed.

Single path

I am without mentor
I am without peer

I am without divination
I am without fear

I am without need
I am without trust

I am without aloneness
I have those who I must

walk alongside,
that guide

me to where I alone can go.
I am without mentor.

My Egun would have it so.

Soliciting

Eyes turned inside
she greets the world.

They have discovered her secret
she wears it on her skin.

They come to her unbidden
asking her to heal their lives.

Priestess of Ocean
Ancestor of Old.

They know she holds
the secret to their lives of disrepair.

They want sex.
They think flesh will take them there.

She walks
to dislodge the mind.

Their eyes follow.
She leaves them behind

Lay Not

Do not lay with the enemy.
Your soul still remembers their dread.

Do not lay with the enemy.
Your soul still counts its dead

at their hands.

Do not lay with the enemy.
Your soul still inhabits your body
born in other lands.

Do not
lay with the enemy.
Your soul still remembers why it came.

From your enemy's hands
your dead to reclaim.

Remember...

*For my memory,
I thank you.*

Memory

*I unlock the portals in my mind
to find:*

I persist past death.
I know all The Waters

I, a man, bear the staff
before Her living altars

I don the chief's red,
crowned with balded head

I have watched the plague
I have covered their graves

I have mourned to Black Waters
I have served Her no matter.



I enter memory to see:
I have borne the grief

my tribe has died
I have buried the village

I have stayed alive.
The Ox has walked at my side.



I am the same person, pleading with my people,
trying to stave their death dealt by betrayal.

I am the chief,
My soul knows this battle.

I have known what I know
I return to wage the fight

death does not conquer me
I search with The Night.



I will right the wrongs
I will my people bestow

My heart will know rest
I will avenge its sorrow

I will save my herd
I will uncover their ghosts

I will find them in new lives
I will unbury their souls

I will open their eyes
as I seal their graves



My people will be reborn
knowing their mistakes

My people will be reborn
The earth they will shave

My people will be reborn

I promise through my change

I will remember the chief

I am yesterday.

The Drum

I have an old tongue
I speak a foreign language
I know an old people

I am the child that they manage

in dreams, meditation,
memory,
and omens,
I am the one
they've selected. I am their token

here to tell their stories
they'll make sure get told.
The words have been imprinted
through lives
aging my tongue
old.

I am of a people who once were sold.
I am of a people I will unfold
in poems
of our gods
in stories of our days
in memories of our joys
in songs of our ways.

I sing of a people old
and true
I sing to the African,
me and you.
I sing
of a people of whom I am
one,
of my people from whom
I was born
with their words upon
my tongue
to act as a horn

to signal to my people
of our time
to return.

Words with a purpose imprinted
from whence
you will learn
who we are.

We have wandered now
too far

from Home.

Dis en' power

What exactly do the hot coals
of four centuries of white male approval
on a 4' 10" Black woman's frame
look like?

It is her tight
black kinky curls
hidden out of sight

beneath a straight blonde
kankelon weave

It is the stiff shift she adopts
since
so sorely does it grieve
her to walk and shake

the ample hips
of unmistake
bestowed unto her
undulating figure

by our curvaceous begetter,
her mother,
and mine
Yemoja.

It is the fake, plastic lashes
shrouding
her blue contact-cased
pupils dashing

back and forth
despairingly
searching every black
and every white man's face
for signs of attraction.

It is the evil contraction
of her booty
and the soft, round curve
of her belly –

oh, but the breasts
can remain.

It is the high-pitched voice
that repeats "like"
again and again.

It is her damaged
bleach-lightened skin
and weekly trips to the Korean

nail salons
to have applied
her poisonous acrylics
or cheaper press-on.

What IT
looks like is
the aesthetic that steps away
from Origin
as far as humanly possible.

It is the sign
obvious to me
as viewed on the train
in the office
and on the TV

that my race is in trouble.

Inspired by *Power* by Audre Lorde:

"Today that 37-year-old white man with 13 years of police forcing
has been set free
by 11 white men who said they were satisfied
justice had been done
and one black woman who said
"They convinced me" meaning

they had dragged her 4'10" black woman's frame
over the hot coals of four centuries of white male approval
until she let go the first real power she ever had
and lined her own womb with cement
to make a graveyard for our children."

Emancipation

The war I wage
is one

against the minds
happily confined

in ignorance
of their gods,

our culture,
our inherent
connection to nature,

worshipping an idol
held up on a cross,

a symbol
of the enormous loss

inflicted

on my people,
perpetuated

by their unresistance,
their accepting assistance

in the slavery
shackling their souls

to a father
figure not their own.

Mine is a war I wage
to take my people
Home.

The Universe

“The Universe” has names!
But you insist on playing these games
of anonymity
like you don’t remember
the name of The Sea.

Like you don’t know
the giver of your Rain.
Like The Sun is no longer
a father
you claim.

Like The Wind bearing souls home
has not her own agency.
Like The Wind bearing souls Home
has no known identity.
Like Oya doesn’t exist!

Like Olorun is a myth.
Like Sango, mighty king, is dead.

Come to the shore and
Let Yemoja, mother of memory,
sit upon your head

to recall

all the names of “The Universe”
already
among The Orisas dispersed.

Return

Return to The Earth
and allow the rebirth
of your soul
by those who know
your path through this world.

Allow the death
and grieve not
the wretch
you had been.

Shed the skin.

You shall return
when,
who you really are,
you have learnt.

Ase.