

Ruthelen (a dream revisited)

Dreamt of grandma's house again.
It was not framed in turquoise, back porch
facing the sun. That is the photo of my childhood.
Nor was it the winter white cabana I wished sat
on a Malibu hill (we did have all of Hawthorne
and El Segundo sprawling before us).
That is the hue of my rebellious years.

A rubbery conscious shipped me to the Google image of
Ruthelen. Chocolate and tangerine made tacky by
inhabitants who dared haggle a bit price for the palette
where I laid my head. They were there too, all tall, slender and
Igbo just like mommy said. Wonder how I created them in that space,
hodge-podge from her description, their bright brassy esteem
drawing out the lines of their faces.

Wonder why they appeared at all. Never black enough for
West Africans, Okonkwo shot side eyed glances, seeing no progeny in me.
Mutt's blood will do that to you.

I floated, as dreams do, about the house, warping my fingers
across Grandma's furniture. Her cream and mint green sofa survived
my adolescence, free of plastic because I grew up.
But her favorite chair, a Victorian with carved ball and claw legs,
couldn't hold a blink and lasted like mist that was once fog.
Didn't realize it was a throne until now.
Didn't think to ask about a crown, doubting she'd give it to me.

I started for her room feeling no floor, nondescript like the empty
frames on the wall. I think it was brown vapor. It seeped from
what should have been a bedroom door. I imagine their matriarch
sitting upright on the other side in my grandma's bed,
Machete in hand, ever ready for my transgression.
Wonder if she sits cross-legged on the bed too.
Wonder if she hears grandma's laughter when others hear static.

Locked out of a door with no knobs, I woke up from the last of my Ruthelen escapades.
Shaken then that grandma's summer colors summoned my sleep where only appliances
met me there. Never warm faces. No answers to her riddles since she alone kept the lyrics.

Now that the mind has painted my maritime home in peanut butter cup and orange crush
staffed with guardians who will always find me wanting, I suppose I should rest since
Grandma found paradise, leaving her pain on blood smudged sheets. I gather I've earned
sweet slumber, having sung her to sleep with angels. Still remnants linger, why the
grandchild and not the daughter. No matter now, the dream's changed and since ceased.
Apparently Ruthelen is done with me.