



**Speech  
Anthology**

*From the*  
**Jamaica  
Creative Writing  
Competition**

*Selected Award Winning Works*

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## FOREWORD

This JCDC 50<sup>th</sup> celebration would not be complete without a brand new speech anthology loaded with only new works, all from the award winning entries selected from our Jamaica Creative Writing Competition and Exhibition.

The selected prose and poetry entries will give speech performer materials to sink their teeth in, so to speak and cause all audiences to be engaged with the variety of stories, thoughts and emotions from well written materials; it is just left to be well performed.

Since the Speech Competition Syllabus requires prose in many categories we trust individuals and groups will find suitable content from the rich selection offered. This anthology welcomes male and females performers to choose works befitting their age and maturity as well as taste and or preference.

This Anthology offers prose from three major, albeit Jamaican sources, essays, novels and short stories with the aim of diversifying the offering while celebrating some of our award winning works from Jamaican writers.

**Andrew Brodber – Subject Specialist, Speech, Drama and Literary Arts**

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# **EXTRACTS FROM POETRY**

## "A Lifetime With You"

I wish to tell you that my thoughts awake on you  
That the sun sits on your smile as the moon does at nights  
That loneliness is no more a substitute to darkness than you are to my dreams  
That the darkness is only angered when it misses your smile  
As life is even happier when you are with you me  
I wish to tell you that time only stops to see you glide  
Such breaths of calm as you float on air  
Bringing closure to the past, befriending each day  
Quieting all fears whilst setting me free  
Nothing comparable to the beauty I see  
I wish to tell you that life is more beautiful looking in your eyes that I'd spend  
forever just looking at you  
Placing each second in beautiful frames  
Creating memories that dance in my heart  
Traversing reality approaching my dreams  
Of things come to pass and those to be  
I wish to tell you that eternity is not too long  
To bask in the beauty of an angel's glow  
To tickle your lips until you smile  
Or to wake up in heaven as I lay in your arms  
I wish to tell you that you bring purpose to my life  
That each day begins and ends with you  
That the wind only calms to see your face  
That moments with you can never be erased  
That dreams are even sweeter when they finally come true  
As reality brings to fore a lifetime with you

*Shane Shaw, Clarendon*

## "Let Them Try"

I couldn't take it  
Seeing you standing in line  
In this time  
With a meal ticket

Your black felt crown shading, just barely  
Your majesty's face  
From the blazing Miami sun  
Coming down without mercy  
As you waited patiently, off stage  
For a meal  
You had already paid for in Trench Town

My father takes my hand and sit  
I will serve you  
For how could I, how could they  
How could we not know better?  
When you had given us so much  
With your song dance sermons

How could we not know?  
You stopped this very dance from crashing  
Long ago...  
Giving us love melodies  
That kept us dancing  
Holding us together as one  
When hungry belly suffering threatened  
To make us all victims

How could we not know you are a pillow?  
Of the movement that gave us out culture  
That you soared before Paragons and Heptones  
Feathering from Brown to Berris  
To Sanchez crooning  
And all the rest of us who hide  
Behind blinking facades,  
Trying to deny you your legacy

But let them try

For no longer will they see  
Feel a weeping willow rocking steady, center stage  
No longer will they feel  
See black man tears bursting flowing  
The gully banks of a black man's face  
No longer will they hear the cock crowing  
Sunday coming...  
Prepare the sweet seasoning  
For the one day of the week when  
Sufferers had a good dining

No longer will they know  
That love is all that matters between being souls  
For forever I'm still in love  
With you girl will linger

The deejays will still spin you  
Yesteryear souls will rock steady, get closer  
At Merry tone gathering  
Choking up reliving, celebrating

A time when love meant something  
When the music was as sweet as honey

Pressed from live wax

Losing you is hot...

Like seeing yard without blue mountain peaks

Unfathomable, undeniable.

*Malachi D. Smith Miami, Florida  
(Jamaican)*

## **“Be Yourself”**

People come and people go,  
Total strangers and People you know,  
People who try to be themselves,  
And people who die trying to be someone else.

I know in life there will always be,  
People worse and better than me,  
So I'll not try to be another man,  
Instead I'll be the best I can.

I'll do my own thing and so should you.  
And always to yourself be true,  
When you are you, your confidence will soar,  
And people around you will respect you more.

Everyone has strong points and flaws we all share,  
Nurture those talents, as they are so dear.  
And as for the flaws, improve what you can.  
And for those that seems unchangeable, keep working on.

You can be anyone you want to,  
It is quite easy to be someone else.  
But the greatest joy can only and must only be found  
When you are yourself.

*Christene Marshall, St. Catherine*

## **Domestic Affair: The Helper Strikes Back**

Broad hips, moon face, quick smile and temper,  
Perfectly describes the form and nature of my Helper.  
If I tell her to cook Curry,  
She's almost sure to cook Stew,  
Helplessly I tell her: "I don't know what to do!"

Not liking to be reprimanded.  
She says: "Fire mt ma'am if wi caaan 'gree'  
"Better yet, Nelly (says i), why don't you listen to me?"  
"Last time mi check. Miss Mary, slavery done long time-  
"If mi spirit say no Curry' den I sure to follow mi mindö

I looked at her in amazement;  
what does that have to do with the argument?  
If I didn't know any better,  
I'd think my money wasn't well spent.  
But inspite of her surliness and feisty attitude.  
I can't charge her with insubordination,  
As she's never really rude.

Her round about logic makes sense  
in some obscure way,  
and how she runs my house-hold  
Makes her worthy of her pay.

*Haneefah Seid, St. Ann*

## Sunni (to poet, healer Sunni Patterson)

You stand

Firm

Feet planted

Anchored

Bald head

Balled fists

Balls of fire

As eyes

You tilt your head

Pendulous earrings

Hanging from your lobes

Like love

Your lips drip

Drops of life

Word-elixirs

Trickle down

Ravaged throats

To harrowed hearts

Clearing clots

From atrium

To ventricle.

You raise rants to cauterize collective wounds

Stitch flayed flesh

Back into place

Reconnect ligaments ripped

From broken bones

Stretch shorn skin

Back over carcasses

Breath life back.

Into the bodies of dead children

Massage scalps  
Braiding the hair  
To cover head trauma.  
  
And somehow  
I know you  
We know this place  
You (re) kindle a flame  
Long burning  
Graft words onto my tongue  
Anoint my head with the oil of words from your womb  
My cup runs over  
To speak volumes  
Luminously lyrical  
Mother/father/sister/brother tongues.

Sunni  
Dear sister  
From the land of levees  
Thank you  
For being  
For writing  
For speaking  
For singing  
Catharsis  
Exultant and thick  
Heavy with harsh realities  
Yet lightened by iridescent truth  
Crafted with uncommon prowess  
Spoken with unequivocal eloquence  
Reverberating reverence  
That rises  
Then rests  
In my soul.

*Fabian Thomas, Kingston and St. Andrew*

## Midday and midnight

Midnight and midday occurred at the same time today  
Her body was the dark night but her face was the sun in its glory shining bright  
She uses cream to wash away her centuries long reproach  
And cover the shame she feels when she looks in her mirror who could love her she  
wonders this nappy headed girl that looks back  
Blinded eyes look beyond the lips, the hips, the reservoir of curves and contour that she's  
got and sees all she lacks

So afraid to face the world and her fears  
She hides behind eye lashes and hair that are as synthetic as she appears With every rub a  
piece of her dies  
She uses as her disguise the colour of her long deceased oppressors  
Whose ghosts return through the portals of time  
with chains that once held bodies but now binds minds  
to remind her that anything that resembles her people is lesser

Midnight and midday came at the same time of the day today  
Yet this is a sight that we see in our country everyday  
Her body black like her mother's pure unadulterated African genes which they say is bad But face  
white like the loving dad she wishes she had  
"You nuh see how mi brown and pretty", She says  
"A true she nuh know", me sey, "what a pity"

*Seon K. Lewis, St. Catherine*

## “Kumina King”

Kumina King

On a blue moon stage

Garvey, Nanny, Miss Lou in front row

Marley, Trevor and the ancestors

Enjoy your majesty's grand entrance

Silence, silence

Teardrop dead silence

A kete drum speaks an African dialect

You answer in Jamaican steps

Movement to the right

Movement to the left

But always center stage

Your brilliant blackness, white hair

Illuminating Caribbean space

For all to see

The Kumina King dancing

And a one and a two and a three

And a four and turn

And a one and a two and a three

And a four and spin, spin

Turn, turn

Feet firm in tradition leaping

Through and above theatre sky

To sky god's heaven For he too is watch

As a whole nation joins in

Discovering the beauty of culture

Beaten and woven from African traditions

Europeans, Spanish, Tainos, Siboneys  
Jews, Lebanese, Chinese, Indians  
Out of many one

Dancing, dancing, dancing  
Movement from dance to intellect  
Speaking In tongues  
Lecturing the world

Dancing across space  
Into I-story  
Telling my story  
Telling our stories  
Of slavery  
Of beat down, batter down  
Of rape, of starvation  
Morant Bay, Sam Sharpe rebellion

Of free peoples and indentured servants  
Of betrayal and forgiveness  
Of hell fire and finding the cross  
Of dying and surviving  
Of damnation and salvation  
Of peoples breaking apart and uniting  
Singing songs of redemption

Kumina King  
Making us proud  
From dance to tongue  
Lifting us higher  
With every movement  
Defying time and space  
Dancing in our face

Dancing in our space

Silence, silence

Tear drop dead silence

The kete drum speaks

Your name

Kumina king

*Malachi D. Smith , Miami Florida  
(Jamaican)*

## **“Attack”**

Without warning  
he leapt  
fangs bared  
pounced  
for his pound of flesh  
  
the summoned onlookers said nothing

his serrated teeth  
punctured my skin  
drawing blood  
he stiffened  
quickened by the taste  
jaws locking  
shaking his big head  
from side to side  
drool dripping  
feverishly

they remained silently complicit

acidic accusations  
verbal venom  
shredded my name  
sullied my reputation  
pierced my soul  
disbelief trickled down  
hurt gushed freely  
pain washed over me in waves

still there was silence

the clawed onslaught continued  
phone calls dialled with prejudice  
covert consultations  
clouded conclusions  
jagged judgment  
ripped into my gut  
gavelled my head  
to a bloody pulp  
the familiar speechless jurors bore witness  
the bloodletting & silence crescendoed  
i almost lost consciousness  
but wrenched my flesh free  
his forked tongue stung  
i gathered the torn shreds  
of my skin  
tourniqueted my soul  
resuscitated my spirit  
sutured my pride  
  
in the deafening silence...

....i cried:  
rabid lies cannot  
define  
defile  
derail me  
i know who i am  
tongues sting & burn  
but will not deform  
revived  
strengthened  
resolved

i press on  
wounded  
but healing  
bruised & battered  
but not broken  
this too shall pass  
i will not lose the lesson  
still i rise and so it is....  
  
...i embrace the silence

*Fabian Thomas, Kingston & St. Andrew*

## When Moses Drunk

Lawd Miss Daisy, yu ever si mi trial!?  
Moses get drunk and come a church fi prayas,  
Im stagga an ben, im rock backwod and forwod,  
Im go sideway an come back,  
An im mad fi drap.

Im staut a piece a singing,  
Im vice louda dan de choir.  
Im feget seh im nuh deh a Mass Joe Nigh -nigh  
De drunkard soun like im a alia.

De choia member dem staut fool,  
An den staut fe sing outa chune  
De poor congregation try fe memba wey dem deh,  
But wen dem coud'n kip it no more  
A pure laffing bruk out

Pasta jump up wid judgement in a im yeye,  
Two bredda jump pan Moses  
In a directing choia style.  
De licka was a talk in a Moses,  
Wray an im Nephew an Dragon wid im Red Stripe'  
Jus full im up a vibes.  
Im swing an bop an wheel in a style.

Everytime im bop, de church bredda dem bop wid im  
De two a dem trengt put together  
Could'n ole de dragon in a im.  
Ma, me could'n tek de embarrassment  
An lose all me merriment.  
Me pu dung a piece a cow bawling  
An de ole church pop up a laffing.

Pasta step dung fe jine dem,  
An staut fe rebuke de devil out a im.  
Moses bawl out, "Lawd, Pasta, pray fe mi sar!"  
"De Beer jus a gi me pure war."

Dem ole Moses an put im outside,  
An watch im a stagga along de roadside.  
Im staut de loud singing again,  
An de church fall silent  
As dem listen Moses going down de road,  
Creating more excitement.

*Donna Hall , Clarendon*

## **If You Could See**

If you could see If you could know  
Then you'd see the tears I do not show  
If you could see the scars I hide  
Then you'd see I'm dead and torn up inside

If you could see  
If you could know  
Then you see I've been through so many things although I'm yet to grow  
I'm too young to be made a bride and too young to be taken for your ride Like a  
tender tree to grow so if you really love me let me go

If you could see the pain I gee  
Then you'd see I'm getting a raw deal  
How can I survive such an ordeal?  
What will it take to melt your heart of steel?

If walls had eyes and roofs had ears  
Then you'd see the source of many fears  
An ocean couldn't hide these tears  
If you could see them you would know  
But I'm afraid so I do not show

*Seon K. Lewis, St. Catherine*

## **We will not forget**

(The story of the enslaved Africans brought by the middle passage)

By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down yea, we wept, when we remember Zion

They want us to forget but we will not forget

They want us to forget but we will not forget

For we are a proud people A strong people

A brave people

The people of the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Mali, Oba and Dahomey

We are now in Babylon but are loyal to Africa like Ruth to Naomi

They want us to forget the savannas of Africa the motherland

The Congo Basin designed in God's master plan

The days we sat by the river Niger and Blue Nile

In the midst of paradise where I grew up from a child

They say that we are Savages brought to civilization

Taken from a place of plague, death and devastation

But they don't know we're from the mother of all civilizations

We're proud children of great African nations

They want us to forget home

That there's a place where they love our colour and embrace us as their own

A place where animals roam wild and free

Where the lions roar, the monkeys swing from tree to tree

Where ruby, diamond, ivory, gold, the treasures of the earth are there abundantly

They want us to forget the beads, the costumes, the jewelry

That we knew before they bring us to work in their fields and brewery

They want us to forget the nights we danced barefoot under the stars

To the flute, the millet and the reed

And it was all ok for the earth supplied all we could need  
the energy the vibe of the music  
How could we ever loose it  
The songs, the horns, the drums, the masks, the costumes,  
the painted bodies that danced to the music  
God knows we could never loose it

And we will not forget for the music beats in our hearts  
The dances moves are in the way we move our body parts  
The music is in the blood that pulses through our veins  
The dance beats are in are feet  
And our words live on in the way we speak  
A fire burns in our eyes as the sun upon the African plains  
You take us out of Africa but African we remain

They want us to forget but we will not forget  
They want us to forget but we will not forget  
And though your wipes break our back  
We will never pledge allegiance to the union jack  
For this is not my home  
We are not their own  
For we are a proud people  
A strong people  
A brave people  
The people of the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Mali, the Oba and Dahomey  
We are now in Babylon but we are loyal to Motherland like Ruth was to Naomi

*Seon K. Lewis , St. Catherine*

## **I woke in the middle of a movie**

I woke up this morning in the middle of a movie Bay  
guns and war, soldiers and police cars  
I woke up this morning in the middle of a movie  
I mean sometimes you can't believe what you read in the star

I woke up in the middle of an action movie  
Mi step out mi door and it was World War Three Me  
hear gun a cry, watch bullet a fly by  
Without warning these scenes occur before our very eyes  
The youths them pon the corner them head hot like them marijuana say  
them a defend the border and so many a them a die

I woke this morning in the middle of the matrix  
The youth them a move like them can dodge bullet  
Them say the politicians don't care a just bay tricks and them have some hungry belly  
And them haffi full it

I woke up this morning and it was like Hollywood came to Ja  
Soldiers a jump out a jeep like a D-Day  
I saw Wesley Snipes with him ak on the avenue a shot at Tom Cruise  
If you nuh believe watch it on the news  
Lights, camera, action movie start

The guns tek over from the dog and a bark  
Jason and Feddy went on a killing spree down a Half-way tree  
Headless, heartless zombies a create anarchy  
Them a roam the streets so you can't even trust you shadow Down to  
the dog a wonder if him a go see tomorrow  
Unnu tell me a when we sweet sweet Jamaica turn a movie a horror

I woke this morning in the middle of some blues  
I mean sex in the buses, sex in our schools  
Children having children because them cant wait  
Nuh virgin nuh dey again, them broke out from age eight

I woke up this morning in the middle of a movie By  
Guns, war, and soldiers and police cars  
I woke up this morning in the middle of a movie  
I mean sometimes you can't believe what you read in the star  
So I don't need to go to the theatre  
I have front row seats on the roadside  
Plus I can watch Prime Time News later  
Where it's safe inside,

*Seon K. Lewis, St. Catherine*

## "The Unfolding"

I have opened up to you  
Like a flower to the sun  
And how I have enjoyed the unfolding;  
For a flower was meant to bloom  
Not stay a bud.  
So when I think that we might part  
I know the petals would stay closed,  
For there is only one sun  
And neither moon nor stars  
Can give enough light  
To make this flower unfold again.

*Sharon Williams Brown , Kingston & St. Andrew*

## Sixteen Different Shades

Bleach, dem a bleach out dem skin,  
Follow dem a follow di Teacher teaching;  
Bleach dem a bleach out dem skin,  
Follow dem a follow di Teacher teaching.

Dem mix di toothpaste wid di curry powda  
Fi tone down di skin whe dem nuh proud a,  
Dem believe Ham black cause him curse by God  
But a here me deh here fi tell dem, dem maaaad.

Yuh no need no Neprozone nor Ultra brightening ó  
Dem deh sumptin mash up yuh melanin,  
Fi destroy God's temple is a big, big sin,  
So listen to di message di preacher preachingí

Bleach, dem a bleach out dem skin,  
Follow dem a follow di Teacher teaching;  
Bleach dem a bleach out dem skin,  
Follow dem a follow di Teacher teaching.

Melanin protect yuh skin from di rays a di sun,  
Yuh think yuh haffi brown fi go road  
Go have fun?  
Which part we live is a tropic island,  
Tourist come yah so simply fi tan;  
We look fool-fool a try look like dem,  
When all dem want fi do  
Is look like we yuh know mi friend?

All some gyal whe brown and look good like me  
A bleach out dem skin,

Me nuh know whe dem a pree,  
And di yutes inna school wid di pants pon dem knee,  
Dem look funny yah man,  
Me sure yuh will agree!

Bleach, dem a bleach out dem skin,  
Follow dem a follow di Teacher teaching;  
Bleach dem a bleach out dem skin,  
Follow dem a follow di Teacher teaching.

Black people need fi know  
Dem look good as dem is,  
Fling whe dat!  
Run di Chiney man outta business;  
Dem have slant eye, dem no try look like we,  
Dem sell bleaching cream fi tek whe wi moneeeeeey.  
When we bleach out we face and lef di  
Rest a we body,  
We look pitch patchy just like a monkey;  
Di African race is so versatile,  
We have sixteen different shades a black  
Yuh know me chile?  
If yuh want look good  
Cross breed wid yuh race,  
Yuh no haffi go a shop go bleach out yuh face.

No bleach, no bleach out yuh skin,  
Follow yuh fi follow di Empress teaching,  
No bleach, no bother bleach out yuh skin,  
Follow yuh fi follow Marcus Garvey teaching.

*Aneefah Adilah Seid, St. Ann*

## Hallelujah Fifty!

Deacon Mac, I tanks you kindly!  
For dis truly opportunity  
Fi share me owna testimony  
Of what di Lord have done for me!

Amen?!

Me cup is full and running ova!  
Congregation, me have much to tell oonu!  
Me won't tek more than a few minutesí ..  
But it start back in August 1962!

I was a likkle girl chile then  
Wid five odder bredda and sista!  
Mama dress we up fi go Stadium  
Me memba how me foot dem did blista!

But we hop pon di bus and we head out  
Fi jine di Independence sallebration!  
We neva really undastand doze days  
Dat it was di real birth of di nation!

But as likkle as we did was then,  
When di black, green and gold flag hice up!  
We jine in the cheers and di clapping!  
And everybody round we heart did full up!

Deacon Mac, don't pull me frock tail!  
Me coming right down, you will see!  
You wondering what Independence  
Have to do wid me testimony?!

Well, bredren, I grow up wid dis country!  
Me see democracy bloom and grow!  
Me bless fi see music and tourism  
And sports have we nation pon show!

Amen?!

Me see strong leaders come and go, church!  
Di economy ups and it downs!  
Me share in de struggles and triumphs,  
In di districts and cities and towns!

Me live fi come see fi we peoples  
Put togedda and write long-term Plan!  
Fi build up wi country and devel-it-up!  
A Vision fi every Jamaican!

Yes Deacon Mac. I is finishing!  
Mi did just want to share fi mi pride!  
For we country celebrating Fifty!  
And me feel a big Hallelujah! Inside!

Amen, church!

*Collette Robinson, Kingston and St. Andrew*

## **Bus. Blink**

No story  
just a second split  
a blink through bus window  
one atom of a smell  
no story  
don't make one up  
this need not connect  
disconnect the moment and  
move on  
there's no story here  
no movie  
nothing to follow on twitter  
just one raindrop in a storm  
one grain of sand  
one blink

*Michael Bailey, Kingston and St. Andrew*

## Locks and Keys

If education a di key  
Tell me who change di lock  
Is like di more we get degrees  
A di more wi haffi knock

Knock, knock  
But no door nah open  
Opportunity slip through like a glass  
Dat broken  
I not jokin

An yuh dreams dem shatter  
Right before yuh feet  
Yuh feeling lifedoan matter  
Swimming in defeat  
Cause di system got yuh sick  
Wid all its twist and turns  
An di more yu learn  
A di less yuh earn

Yuh spend time studying pon a student loan  
Den yuh look fi a job, like a dog hunt a bone  
An wen yuh get one, dem chop it up wid a axe  
Education, income and a million tax  
Is jus ðPay as You Earnö Like yuh a ðPay cause you learnedö  
My dreams of a degree lookin very rare My dreams \_ecoming a nightmare  
If education a di key  
Tell me who change di lock  
Is like di more we get degrees  
A more wi haffi knock

Knock, knock  
But no door nah open

Opportunity slip through like a glass

Dat broken I not jokin

Mi modda say *ft* work an doan give up

Tings might look grim but gwaan live up

Cause if we doan have dreams we might as well be dead

As mi write mi exam, mi hear har voice in my head

So although the door to college might look lock

Mi ago work hard in school, keep on knock

Until mi open di door to my life as a doctor

An live di dream of takin care of mi mother

If education a di key

Tell me who change di lock

Is like di more we get degrees

A di more wi haffi knock

Knock, knock

Until di door open

Ambition a di key

I not jokin

Knock, knock

Until di door open

Ambition a di key

I not jokin

Ambition a di key

I not jokin

Ambition a di key

I not jokin

*Sabrena McDonald, St. Catherine*

## **A Tallawah Chorus**

Through the tribulations of slavery and servitude,  
We found each other.  
A battered, tattered clan.  
Bandaged from remnants of tribes still unknown.  
We, many voices, sang a tallawah chorus.  
As from callous colonial fists we shook our child.  
Fiercely, we share and love this beautiful imp.  
For a day will come when this, our gifted child,  
Will grow to embrace true emancipation,  
Not as a birth date, but as a birthright...  
As a family, we pained each other.  
Holding one another too close.  
Enmeshed, intertwined.

Just as bitter cerasee cleanses bad blood,  
So we yearned the time to dance  
The time has come for festival revival.  
Heeding the moan of the abeng  
We converge in Middlesex,  
This time we dance as one,  
A strange, unsteady, mystical step,  
Still we move in unison  
Until we find the rhythm of our promised peace.

*Leighton Spence (Jamaican) Miramar Florida*

## Leave Drugs Alone

Cho.

Leave di drugs alone

It wi reduce yuh to skin an bone

Once yuh start usi, yuh become a slave

Drug addiction sen yuh to yuh grave.

There was a bright bwoy name Dayne

Who practise fi sniff cocaine

Im lose him memory an tun fool

An gradually drop out a school.

Then dis nice girl name Miranda

Meck friends go give har ganja

Har behaviour became downright rotten

Then di pickney dis tun good fi nutten

Yu hear how ecstasy mash up Tom brain

An how it drive Obidiah insane?

Now im rummaging through garbage bin

An im very clothes a drop off a im

Leave di ecstasy an di crack

Dem wi destroy yu jus like that!

Meek di heroin an LSD stay

Bi sure fi keep outa dem way.

*Patricia Whittle, St. Catherine*

## Hard-Ears Pickney

A feel it fi yuh Miss Fanny,  
Mi really feel it fi yuh mah  
Fah mi know seh yuh a one woman  
Weh grow yuh pickney dem propa.

Dat is why di news bout yuh dawta Sue  
Hav eberi baddi mad fi chop up di bwoy name Rue  
Mi deh yah a wonda why  
Him woulda tell dat deh dreadful lie  
Seh Sue a di one weh gi him the Aids disease.

Yuh si how libati caan come tru kalisniss mah  
Fah dat deh tempataion Sue shoulda surely resis  
Fi goh mix up wid dat de famili  
Fah fi dem story it nuh pretty  
A fi him puppa did tief mi husband goat  
An wen him canfront him, Him nearly cut him throat.

Memba dat dem hab family including pickney  
No victimize dem an meek dem life unhappy  
Memba dat AIDS no respect nobaddy  
When him choose a next victim, yuh could bi dat smaddy.

*Patricia Whittle, St. Catherine*

## Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking very rampant Ma  
Dem prey pon di needy an vulnerable ya  
Dem offer dem a better life  
Den deceive dem an sell dem fi a price

Yu memba di coolie girl from Elm street?  
Shi was so pretty an sweet  
Is one whole year shi disappear  
Nobaddy can fine har anywhere  
Dis man help Miss Mag fi go Merica  
But as shi reach him nuh seize har visa  
Him force har fi work as prostitute  
Now shi de a foreign destitute.

Newspaper advertise fi dancer  
Delia did want di job so shi answer  
When shi go a nothing like dat  
Is a job in di sex industry she gat.

Dem have children working on farm  
Dem no hesitate fi do dem harm  
Dem teck dem from dem decent society  
An go indulge dem inna pornography

Don't think se di victim dem stupid  
They jus fall victims to di wicked  
Di criminals inna organized gangs  
It hard to jail dem for the wrangs

*Patricia Whittle, St. Catherine*

## My Space

There are too many tiny details slips of paper bytes of data  
riding the myriad floating dust notes  
that are the cloud that is all the minutes of my life  
every hour of my life all the rushing time and crushing space  
that crowd and push me till i want to  
grab squeeze stretch stretch  
each moment each meter  
every cluttered inch  
to pull atom away from atom  
pour thoughts and memories out  
through the pores of my skin  
of my bone of my skull and  
make space  
make space  
make space to sleep with limbs spread wide  
to dance free from  
gravity and heavy history that  
weights my walk stumble crawl  
through this unending one room maze and  
i must make space  
make space  
push back the  
walls of my room and my head my  
race my riches and poverties and  
genius and lies tears and truth  
let me delete  
delete, delete  
make space make space

*Michael Bailey, Kingston & St. Andrew*

## **Losing the moon**

Night was my saviour  
I would soak up  
that cool light  
the moon would sink into my pores

but my skin  
has hardened  
become like mirrors  
I lose the moon  
the salt  
tide rises in me

*Michael Bailey, Kingston & St. Andrew*

## Hopes and Dreams

Like the flames of a candle dancing in the wind  
so they burn within me  
Like the roars of a lion behind prison bars of iron  
so they cry to be free  
Like a cage bird sings of things denied  
so they ask to be allowed spread their wings and fly  
High above the clouds in the freedom of the empty sky  
Like the flowing river hard to tame  
so they refuse to be silent  
Like the African drum beating in our ancestors veins  
As they fought back bullets with machete and an empire with small bands of men  
so they are resilient  
For they are the hopes and dreams of better days  
From the ashes of despair and defeat they raise to cheer us on saying never  
surrender, never give up we shall overcome  
For as sure as night follows better days will come  
Sown in the darkness of sorrow and pain  
They bloom in the radiance of sunshine that comes after the rain  
Frail and weak like new born babes we hold them close to our hearts  
For sometimes they are all we have and their promises are our reason for living  
With these small seeds all great deeds start  
for the mind is the beginning

*Sean K. Lewis, St. Catherine*

## Lost Love

It began with joyous words at its birth,  
Ended with tears and regrets covered by earth.  
In between there were smiles, laughter, chatter, Enough memories to overflow life's platter  
Celebrations unending,  
Soft whispers at night resounding,  
The silence,  
Now deafening.  
So much love given,  
Harsh words easily forgiven.  
Every touch left an imprint that was never enough.  
The hugging,  
The kissing,  
Nothing left now,  
But the missing.  
The pain still throbs,  
The wounds are still fresh,  
My heart now a headstone,  
Because you drew your last breath.

*Diana Brown*

## Loodie Night

Friday night was Loodie night  
Clockwise, one dice instead a two  
Everyman siddung wid dem flim cup  
Confident, dem nah go lose

Pan di likkle eight by eight veranda  
Roof light and street light bright  
Loodie board set pan di likkle table  
A who ago win tonight?

Me one side a comb mi dolly hair  
But a pay attention still  
While mi brother and sister a watch TV  
Me outside a learn di skill

Diggle was the star player  
Dem seh him had Loodie luck  
Him jig up himself and blow pan di dice  
An six woulda drop outta him cup

After hours a everybody a kill off dem one anneda  
Diggle finally get a break  
Two a him man dem gawn a heaven  
After throwing three six straight

Miss Myrtle was the next to go heaven  
She laugh an clap har han  
Cause now shi safe, and could relax  
And mock dem odda one

Now that she had a man in heaven  
She and Diggle had a master plan

Diggle should concentrate on winning the game  
An she was to kill off dem odda man

Miss Myrtle lack pan Mr. Stanley Gate  
Mr. Stanley cuss whole night  
Him nuh know what kind a game dem really a play  
Why a him one a get a fight

But Thaddeus treatment neva betta  
Every move him move him dead  
Him never complain like Mr. Stanley though  
Him just calm and a rub him head

Diggle throw a five  
Mr. Stanley count it slowly, right pan Miss Myrtle head  
Mr. Stanley face light up  
Cause a dead Miss Myrtle man dead

Sorry Myrtle, mi caah do betta  
She seh kill di man and gwaan  
Mr. Stanley jump up, tek up im cup  
An Miss Myrtle throw a six an bawn

Diggle start run wid him two man  
One fi watch di odda back  
Bi the time him near to Mr. Stanley gate  
Miss Myrtle know she had to pull di lock

She beg fi six but get a five  
She move one man five spaces up  
When Mr. Stanley shake up di dice  
Six drap outta di cup  
Di next throw him throw, was a five  
Miss Myrtle next man dead

Den him start show off pan Thaddeus  
Seh a him one a go get heaven less

Now Diggle throw di dice  
Six! Him move one man up  
Him throw again, another six  
Him seh Stanley - Pick it up

Now di way clear fi Diggle run  
Thaddeus confess, him want a Bath  
Throughout di game him bearly get a six  
One man can really suh salt

Mr. Stanley throw six and bawn  
But at this point all him can do is run  
Cause Diggle three man a relax a heaven  
Di forth a wait pan three fi come

Mr. Stanley get excited  
Two six and then a four  
If on him next throw him get a six  
Him will be standing at heaven's door

Diggle a throw and caah get a three  
Thaddeus nuh wah fi play nuh more  
Like a spite Miss Myrtle throw Six  
And har odda throw is a four

Poor Mr. Stanley  
Him han too weak fi pick up di cup  
When di dice slow roll and lan pan three  
Mi sense him just give up

Thaddeus finally throw a six

Followed by two more and a five  
Diggle finally throw di three  
And di game dun fi di night

Mr. Stanley seh him dun wid dis  
Not annada Friday night  
But every time him lose a game  
Dat was fi him cry

But like clock works every Friday night  
Back when me was a chile  
These adults entertained me  
Every Loodie night

*Valrie Ellis, Kingston and St. Andrew*

## Jungle Justice

One sits on his chest,  
Another wields a machete,  
ōInnocent until PROVEN guiltyø  
they seem to forget.

Did he commit it?  
He won't admit it.  
The avenged crime had no eye witness.

The chain now weighs a million tons around his neck,  
Stained silver, crimson wet.  
Neither soul nor steel remains stainless,  
As the leader once again raise his machete.

The sword glistens in the sun,  
Guilty or not, they want his blood to run,  
I averted my head- can't bear to watch,  
As spectators cheer this gruesome match.

The punished abhor it,  
The avenged adore it,  
I could NEVER condone it.  
This lack of discourse in jungle justice.

*Janieze Mitchell, Clarendon*

## Dear Mummy

It seem like ages since we had a talk  
exactly five years since you took me to Emancipation Park,  
when daddy left us you said he was a jerk  
that you're all I have now but all you do is work.

The helpers are nice enough to do whatever I ask  
but I'd rather be close to you and not to your staff,  
all I ever wanted was a little attention from you  
and while you're at it, you can say you love me too.

But you're always traveling, always on the move  
networking and socializing getting in the groove,  
so I say everything to make you angry and to get you cross  
but seriously mummy, my role model is not the 'world boss.'

Should I write you a text or send you a ping?  
I've got so much to say, I'm just not sure where to begin.  
I'm not that dense but from where I stand abstinence hardly make sense,  
all you do is warn me that from sex I should stay away  
why not tell me what to do should I decide to go astray?

Don't you remember that you too were once a child,  
and like me you used to be wild?  
Now that you've brought a child upon this land  
you're acting as if you just don't understand!  
Sex is used to sell toothpaste and it's used to sell clothes  
so it's not really in my head, it's right under my nose.

If you'd only listen to me  
you'd realize that I'm smarter than you think,  
it's just that when I enter High School I sort of make a link  
between what's wrong and what's right  
what's cool and what's hype.

So although It's a lie I say I'm having sex just to fit in but you  
wouldn't understand, it's a teenage thing.

I wont ever get pregnant and drop out of school,  
being fifteen and pregnant is so not cool.  
So while I'm still not sure about what I want to do  
don't worry, I'll probably end up a lawyer just like you.  
It's funny how I take for granted all the things some people ever wanted,  
they say to be poor is a crime  
but so is not having you around most times.

So on this my birthday  
instead of showering gifts like you do each year,  
why not get on a plane and stop thinking about your career?  
See my friends urge me to make wishes no-one can hear  
yet my one and only wish is for you to be here.

*Nattalie Gordon, St. Catherine*

## I Remember

I remember how she watered my mind  
Like a tender plant she nurtured my soul  
My mind bamboozled by her many words  
You can make it, you can make it

No clichés she says metaphors are wise  
I never hesitate stories I create  
I unfold like a flower, words break free  
I blossom and bloom in literature

Her voice a mentor to the words I write  
My pen my closest friend, I hold her dear  
Many words like the sun shining down on me  
I bask in the presence of poetry

I hear her voice clean and clear in my ear  
Her praise sits on me like a butterfly  
Pen to paper becomes an easy task  
I grow and glow spreading my own petals

*Treisha Williams, St. James*

## Abandoned

Why? Why? Did you bring me here?

I keep telling myself

Maybe one day you will care

I am the child who others would jeer

Who was always dirty and not nice to be near.

I got so little attention that hunger became my friend

Sometimes I wish I had just five dollars to spend

She put me out to take him in

It was head or tail

I guess she took her spin

I asked myself, "What am I do with my life now?"

I had to find a way to survive somehow

I had to take my life into my own hand

For she had forced me now to become a man

I took to the street with much hatred to release

And a few items of clothing that had been tainted with grease

I looked at children passing

And was filled with rage

They looked so happy and playful

And they were about my age

I found me a spot and called it my home

Although there was really nothing there for me to own

I learnt so quickly, that way of life

To be used then discarded like an old broken knife

I did what they asked

To be accepted

For all my life  
I had been rejected

I started collecting trophies of my own  
And began to reap where I had not sown  
I spent most of my days basking in the sun  
And retired at night to clean the gangster's gun

I listened to their stories  
I became like their son  
And all too easily  
I began to have fun  
A scavenger by day  
A gangster by night  
Returning to my cover  
Before daylight

I will graduate soon  
And get my degree  
And soon even the Commissioner  
Will be, pretty scared of me.

*Kellee Drummonds, St. Elizabeth*

## Anancy Nursery Rhyme

It was Anancy who frightened Little miss Muffet  
That cheeky spider should be locked in a closet.  
Anancy Anancy that sly spider man  
Who stole Mary's Little Lamb.

Anancy ate Peter's pumpkin with a knife  
That's why he could not keep his wife.  
Anancy Anancy that greedy spider man  
Who ate Peter's Pumpkin, as much as he can.

Of course it was Anancy who pushed Humpty Dumpty off the wall  
Humpty Dumpty knew Anancy would eat eggs and all.  
Anancy Anancy that greedy spider man  
Put Humpty together again if you can.

Little Jack Horner stuck his thumb in his Christmas pie  
Only to find Anancy sitting by.

Anancy Anancy that greedy spider man  
Who ate Jack's Pie, as much as he can.  
Anancy ate all the fat from Jack Sprat  
That's why his belly is so fat.

So if you see Anancy dressed in wool  
Eating hot cross buns till he is full.  
You'll know baa baa black sheep  
Is about to weep.

Anancy Anancy we haven't a clue  
What next you'll do to Little Boy Blue.

*Twande Rolle, St. Catherine*

## The Art of Poetry

I am a poem;  
You cannot grasp me at first glance,  
My essence is not easily perceived,  
My truth lies in the depth of my thoughts,  
My exterior is a path down a decoy alley,  
I can only be unearthed with an open-mind,  
Coupled with eyes that  
Are able to extricate details,  
My purpose is conveyed in metaphors and similes,  
If I did not represent one thing I could easily be misinterpreted as  
Anything,  
My surface aims to distort but if you search deep within the context then our  
minds shall  
synchronize.

*Mavric Webb, St. Catherine*

## Stony Gut

Hard times turn rockstone inside bellies  
children wailing on stony mountain  
louder than waves lashing  
shoreline footprints of wandering peoples  
coming to God's little paradise cove  
to plant grains and fish turquoise green waters

Stony Gut children cried louder, their suffering  
bitterlike cassava poison water  
fathers couldn't sleep picked up machetes,  
hoes, walking sticks trekked across the face  
of burnt brownfire burning earth,  
parched foot bottoms couldn't stop  
the message to be delivered to Eyre

Violent wind whistles across lawns  
English lilies and orchids  
white and pink as governor's skin  
high arched ceilings just below heaven  
polished floors knees bleeding

Governor hears the wailing  
his big belly full of pork and the children's milk  
pension secured in England  
just bidding time to sail calm seas home

Inside his mansion, mountain cool migrate  
sea breeze tickles pink  
the blushed red cheeks of a well fed infant  
whodreams  
of one day becoming a plantation owner

öWho the hell are they to come to my white house  
with noises in their bellies  
full of obeah in their veins  
to give me their diseases  
soil my polished marble with their ugliness  
send them away, back to Stony Gut.ö  
Sons of Negus blacker now with vengeance  
hairtwisting into ropes of fire  
eyes ablaze like comets  
wouldn't stop to eat sugar cane, sweet orange  
star apples, mangoes, sweetsops  
only bitter grass, only sour orange  
only aloe syrup, sinkle bible, bile  
strength to stand sea wind battering

Inside a court house they marched  
not in single files or colonial tunics  
no masks or armaments of sovereign gods  
black face, black heart, black pride  
fear vanquished at the governor's gate

öShut up!  
lower the Union Jack and raise our flag  
si it yah, black, green, gold  
adat wi a defen today  
your ropes will not kill us  
your guns cannot silence us  
your laws cannot stop us  
we are children of Negus.ö

But it took time, white man time long  
black man suffering longer  
after lynching, showers of tear drop rains

wash down Stony Gut paths  
to the boiling sea,  
to crowd a John Crow heaven

These were days when we sat  
by the rivers of Babylon  
when it looked like independence  
only meant black man cutting sugar cane  
while copper skinned brothers drove tractors  
sat in mansion as governors

So now belly full  
never forget the fertile hillsides,  
on which you stand, were once  
impassable stony gut tracks  
cleared by clever hands  
you must build on this dream  
celebrate the battles we have won  
the distance we have travelled  
the mile still to run  
a nation, out of many one.

*Malachi D. Smith, Miami, Florida*

# **PROSE / EXTRACTS**

# **FROM NOVELS**

## **‘Extract from Novel – Dog Heart’**

The three boys stood by the zinc fence in the shadows, waiting. The tallest of the three had one arm and a massive torso. He was about seventeen; facing manhood. He could see over the fence and he gazed out into the night. The second boy was thin with wiry arms, nappy hair and scars on his face. He might have been fourteen or twenty. The third boy was the smallest of the three and had suffered a recent beating - one eye was still swollen half-shut and his mouth was split, but healing. His head was bandaged. He was almost fifteen and had not yet learned the still watchfulness of the other two. He seemed exhausted, shifting from one leg to the other, squatting and getting up, rubbing his wrists as if to restore circulation.

Across the dirt yard, a group of men sat on the verandah of a slab-roofed house. There were lights on in the house, but the men on the verandah sat in near-darkness. The door into the house was open and behind the men, women moved around, putting food on a table. The voices of the men rose and fell. The waiting boys could not hear all they said but they heard the men curse and they heard the word "blood" many times. The men smoked ganja and drank white rum, except for one man who sat apart from the others. He spoke little and did not drink or smoke. His hair was styled like a woman's with plaits and beads, dyed reddish blonde and he looked no older than the boy with one arm who waited in the yard. He wore two sets of earrings in each ear and a heavy chain around his neck. He was the don of Jacob's Pen and he would make a decision about the three boys soon.

*(Extract from Novel- Dog Heart)*

Two older men stood in the corners of the verandah, their eyes moving from the three boys in the yard to the don and back again. They wore loose shirts over the hand guns stuck in the waistbands of their trousers. It was their job to ensure the safety of Merciless, the young don, and to carry out his wishes. Those wishes could include the summary execution of the three boys that very night or simply an invitation for the boys to join the men for curried goat and reasoning until the early hours of the next morning.

"You know Lasco from time, " one of the seated men said. "Dese two, mi no know. Di one wit' di one hand, Boston - him is from Nevada - mi hear say is A.K. chop him hand clean off. Him tek it like a man, so mi hear. Di odda one, Dexter - dey call him Matrix - him a fryer. Bloodclaat Babylon pick him up inna raid last month. Him mek bail by a white man; one lawyer. Is dis new bwoy mi nah check for. Mi hear say him have big man frien'. A pure crosses dat. "

"Is not di first wi a deal wit 'fryer, " another man said. " We know what fi do wit' dem. " The light from the room behind him framed his dreadlocks and he took a hit of a large spliff. The smell of marijuana and roasting breadfruit wafted out of the house and the boy who had been beaten fidgeted more urgently. A thin, brown dog walked from behind the house and lay at the front steps of the verandah, looking up at the men.

"Plenty heat dey pon us now, all di same. Nah make sense do tings bring Babylon a Jacob's Pen again, " said a third man, sitting completely in darkness.

A silence fell and the men looked to the don. "Mi hungry, " Merciless said. "It late. Make di bwoy dem eat wit' us. Dem can sleep inna Jambo house down a street. Tomorrow wi deal wit' dem."

*(Extract from Novel- Dog Heart)*

The next evening, the boys had been given the assignment their lives depended on. They were fryers -young aspirants - to Merciless's Racehorse Gang and they had to pass a test. They had eaten and slept well for the first night in many days and were grateful to the don. They thought little about what they had to do. The boy who had been beaten, Dexter, had been given a gun and shown how to use it. A white Nissan Sunny had been provided; only the one-armed boy, Boston, could drive. The car should have been automatic - they had told Merciless this ô but the Sunny had a gear stick. The don had been uninterested in this obstacle. "No worry, " Lasco had whispered to Boston, "mi will change gear.

We practice down a di river first. "

Dexter was nervous and wanted to talk about escape routes. "Yout' man, you a watch too much TV, " Lasco told him. "Is only a white woman. We look for one old one. She nah have no gun. "

To gain entry to Merciless's gang, the three boys had to commit a crime. Reports of the crime had to appear in the newspapers, so the don would know his orders had been carried out. Within a week the boys would either be wanted men or dead. They had not expected to live to adulthood anyway.

*Diana McCauley*

## **‘Extract from Novel - The Mountain of Inheritance’**

Two stark alterations in the physical environment immediately captured Joel's attention as they came in sight of the house. The driveway had been newly paved and the harsh smell of cement tickled his nose, while a huge chunk of the roof to the side of the house was missing, exposing the gaping wooden framework. Papa was sitting on the veranda with his head bowed, sharpening a machete on a strip of leather that was strung up between two columns, when they drove up. When he looked up and saw them alighting from the vehicle, he immediately jumped up and the tool fell to the floor and made a loud clatter on the polished red tiles. His hands were moving like leaves in a tempest.

Papa scrambled down the steps towards them and Joel tightened his fists as he regarded the man with whom he had hardly exchanged a dozen words in as many years. Something that felt like a cold lead pipe started forcing its way down his throat, all the way to the pit of his stomach.

When the elder man reached Joel, he shamelessly threw his arms around him. "Thank you Jesus, my son come home at last."

Joel winced as he felt the coarse hairs rubbing against his cheek. When Papa finally drew away, he cleared his throat and introduced Laurie, who held out her hand to his father and said how good it was to meet him. Papa took her hand, kissed it, then let it go and embraced her tightly, too. "Come this way my love; come inside and meet Miss Annie", he said to her, turning around and walking side by side with her across the dry grass and up the steps. Joel dragged his feet behind them.

(Extract from Novel -*The Mountain of Inheritance*)

For him, it was like walking back through time, unearthing a mass grave and discovering skeletons with his own face grinning back at him. An unrelenting pounding began at the back of his head and he could almost feel himself shrinking when he stepped inside and saw that in more than a decade, hardly anything had changed. On the living room wall were the same pictures in the same positions they had held for umpteen years, moved only for dusting or the occasional paint job: a reproduction of da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, a Madonna and Child portrait with a beam of light around the head of both figures; a postcard-perfect representation of the sunset along a seacoast and a ballerina in a pink tutu poised as if for takeoff. There was still that same table with the leonine legs in the centre of the room. On it were several black-and white photographs, including one of Lois in her crisp, white uniform and a faded one of him at the age of eight or nine dressed in a sailor suit complete with hat, and wearing a startled look on his face.

Laurie picked up the photograph of the young Joel and remarked how 'cute' he had been. And then she said, "Mr. Martin, who's this?" She pointed to one of the other pictures. "I think we passed him on the way up here.

"That is William: him is the baby of the family", he said.

"Where Mama?" Joel cut in abruptly before his father had finished speaking.

"She inside laying down. Her pressure gone up, so she taking things easy."

He and Laurie were then directed -- *to* the bedroom where Mama, who had been taking a nap, woke up as if by instinct the moment his father pushed the door open wider.

*(Extract from Novel -The Mountain of Inheritance)*

On seeing Joel, she let out a shriek, and despite being under the weather, she still possessed a firm grip as she seized him and nearly choked the very breath out of his lungs. When she released him at last, Joel presented Laurie who was given a thorough inspection as if she were a racehorse being sold at an auction.

"So what is the big occasion why you manage come here today?" Mama asked, sitting up, while Papa motioned Laurie to a chair a few feet away from the foot of the bed. As usual, she did not beat about the bush.

*Carol Dunn*

## **‘Extract from Novel – Hurricane’**

The waterfront. The place where the city of Kingston met the harbour. She remembered the Palisadoes peninsula, which held the harbour in a jointed embrace, but she had only the haziest mental picture of the waterfront on the city side of the harbour. Kingston lay on a plain between the foothills of the Blue Mountains and the harbour and downtown Kingston - near the waterfront - was dangerous. Everyone knew that, especially Portlanders, who considered themselves a cut above Kingstonians. Portland was the most beautiful part of Jamaica, and the safest, and the most famous, gilded by its association with celebrities - Errol Flynn, Robin Moore of *Green Beret* fame, the Princess Nina Aga Khan, the shooting of the first Tarzan film, Johnny Weissmuller swinging from thick lianas in the Portland bush. Kingston born, but Portland grown, Leigh doubted she had ever been to Kingston's waterfront.

"Hey?" someone said. Leigh looked up. A homeless woman stood inside the front door and Leigh saw she was drunk or stoned at just past nine in the morning, swaying on her feet, her supermarket cart parked outside. "Packet?" she mumbled.

"Of course," Leigh said, reaching under the counter for the packets FoodStop provided to the homeless, containing vegetables that were too damaged for sale. They gave away surprisingly few packets - homeless people did not really want vegetables. They wanted hot dogs or liquor. Leigh knew most of the homeless people near the FoodStop outlet, but this woman was a stranger.

The woman took the damp paper bag containing a cabbage, three carrots, a wilted head of red leaf lettuce, and a few runner beans. Leigh had opposed the preparation of jackets in staff meeting - expressed the view that homeless people had few opportunities for preparing vegetables. "It's better than throwing them away," Marlene said.

"Please. We do not throw away our vegetables. They nourish our compost," in had sniffed.

There had been a time when Leigh would have pursued the matter - was that the anyone could do for the homeless? Something a notch above *throwing things away!* how she was too weary. Her thirtieth birthday had come and gone, unnoticed by anyone, n Kevin, with whom she'd had a lacklustre affair. The vegetable packets became official policy; there had even been an article about them in the New York Times, which v hung in a frame on the wall. FoodStop's fifteen minutes of fame.

The door chimes tinkled as the homeless woman went out with her packet. Leigh watched her stop on the sidewalk and look through it. She took out each vegetable, Then, with neither anger nor disappointment, she dropped them all. The cabbage rolled o the street, the paper bag was whipped away by the wind, the other vegetables lay ere they fell. Leigh sighed and went out without her jacket. Her co workers smiled at : way she often walked outside wearing only a T-shirt - it was her Jamaican roots, they d, she's never become used to getting dressed to go outside. The wind bit at her. She lit down and picked up the vegetables. It would be warm in Jamaica. She went inside d pushed Andrew's letter into the pocket of her jeans. She would read it later.

*Diana McCauley*

## **‘Extract from - Jamaica - Land of the Lost Boys’**

**A Documentary made for the Our Story Channel**

**Narrated by: Gua, spirit of the last Taino elder**

### **I Lamentations**

Hail the great I Am who knows all and who sends his servant Gua into the world to bear witness for the beginning of the great change that will come to His people. Yea, the Great I Am has allowed his servant to see through the ages and therefore to understand the manifest fullness of His Will. Here I speak to you from a transplanted Garden of Eden, in the island of Xaymaica. With mine own eyes I spied when the great canoes arrived. They were men like us, seeking a greater knowledge of the world, but soon, others came with greed deeper than that the darkest hearts we had yet known. Oh people; we saw, but we did not comprehend that it was the beginning of our end! Our bodies fell one by one, but this land was bequeathed to us by God, and so our spirit stays in the gentle winds and in the storm. We sleep between the grains of sand in the beach: our every sigh is the last wave that slapped against the shore. The Iord giveth and the lord proclaimeth that this land is ours until the very end of time. The wise vulture could tell much, but he has been banished to silence, so heed the cling cling and the hummingbird, the gaulin and the tody; they have been speaking to you for so long, but you listened not. So the time of our Lord has come for me to speak and show the wonders of his majesty and the lamentations of his people. Thus saith the Lord.

**February 29, 1976- April 1986**

"Light the lamp. Lily, light the lamp!" Not for the first time, the midwife was irritated with her apprentice. She had been working with her for two years now and the girl had

*(Extract from - Jamaica - Land of the Lost Boys)*

no initiative. Babies almost always came at night and in these deep rural areas, behind God's back almost, one had to think on one's feet. After fumbling in the inky humid darkness of the room Lily finally struck a match that got the lamp lit, and she held it above the midwife's head. Its light settled on the bed bathing the mother and newborn baby in a warm glow. Exhausted from labour; perspiration dampened her brow but she now eagerly examined the child. He seemed all right. Ten fingers, ten toes, one head and right beneath his legs, his parts were just as a man-child's should be.

"I can call in Miss Pearl now?" the midwife asked Catherine the babymother as she tucked the ends of a clean sheet into place, while nodding to Lily to bundle the soiled linen into the corner of the room. Catherine nodded so Lily opened the door, called softly and allowed a fourth person into the room. The lines on Miss Pearl's face not only spoke of years, but of hardship. The room appeared soft to her as the cataracts over her eyes made the bed float as if it were on a grey rain cloud.

"Cathy, you all right?" Miss Pearl asked, and when her daughter nodded, she drew closer. "What you had: boy? I did tell you! Mek I see him." She edged closer to the bed and bent low to coo at his face. "What a pretty baby, and big! But him born just as the light gone, him born in the dark... I wonder if that mean anything." No one answered her. because no one knew. But as mother and grandmother gazed at the miracle of the newborn child, the midwife collected her things to leave. It had been a straightforward birth and she had done all that was necessary for the mother and child to be safe.

Tomorrow she would return, but right now she wanted to know who won the election. The midwife had a lot hanging on the election; if her party got into power she

*(Extract from - Jamaica - Land of the Lost Boys)*

was sure to secure a small loan to buy a car. Her contemporaries in the city all had cars even though they worked in the hospitals and did not need it as much as she did.

She would do the paperwork for this baby tomorrow: anyway, he was nothing special, just another boy with no father.

Lily was puzzled. When they were outside of the house she put forward a question. "Nurse Barry, how come we never make no notes in your book. I have a new ball point pen." You see them kind of people? Nothing no usually do dem pickney. So hush up and come on."

With the midwife and the apprentice gone, Catherine spoke to the older woman.

*Gweneth Harold*

## **‘Extract from Novel – Feet of Clay**

### PART I

*"...and there before you stood a large statue, an enormous, dazzling statute, awesome in appearance."  
-Daniel 2:31 1*

They left early on the morning of Christmas Eve, which Amanda didn't mind. She wanted to maximise her time away. A buzz of excitement came over her as she settled in the backseat of Phillip's SUV and they cruised along the Mandela Highway which took them out of Kingston and into the neighbouring Parish of St. Catherine. They bypassed Spanish Town, Jamaica's old Capital and sped into the Bogwalk Gorge, a lush green area with a two-lane road chiselled out in the mountainside with the Rio Cobre River running alongside it.

As they left the urban belt behind, Amanda brought down her window so she could inhale the scent of the fresh rural air and bask in the tropical sun. During her time in University not a day had gone by that she hadn't looked at the wet, grey of England and longed for home.

In the front passenger seat, Phillip's girlfriend, Kelly Anders combed through his case of CDs giving careful consideration to the serious matter of the musical selection for the three and a half hour journey. "Who should we start with?" she asked, flipping through the plastic case that held Phillip's prized collection. "Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, Dennis Brown..."

"Some D. Brown would be nice," Amanda cut in. Phillip had no objections so Kelly slipped the CD into the elaborate console that her boyfriend had installed in his new car. Within a few seconds the smooth voice of Dennis Brown filled the vehicle. "Love and Hate can never be friends," he crooned.

*(Extract from Novel-Feet of Clay)*

Amanda closed her eyes and savoured the few seconds of elation that stirred her heart whenever she heard any of her favourite Reggae songs. She loved the vintage stuff that brought back so many memories of her childhood. Whenever she heard the songs of that era, she was momentarily transported to a happier and simpler time.

Phillip himself was an unapologetic Reggae lover but he was equally as passionate about dancehall music, which had morphed out of Reggae in the 70's and 80's. With a bill that matched the stalwarts with rising stars, Veterans and Hotshots was tailor-made for people like him.

Amanda was really looking forward to the concert. Growing up her mother had not let her go within a one-mile radius of any such event. The summer when he turned sixteen Phil had asked permission to go to Reggae on the Beach, a weeklong Reggae festival that was held every August in Montego Bay, the answer had been an emphatic "No."

*Camille Taylor*

# PROSE / EXTRACT FROM ESSAY

## **‘Extract from Essay – Cricket and the CCJ’**

### **3. What are advantages of having the CCJ?**

Politically, the creation of the CCJ may be perceived as an act of sovereignty. Many nationals of the region see continued reliance on the UK Privy Council a regrettable 'dependency syndrome' that should have been ended years ago. They consider its persistence a travesty, in the light of having gained political independence decades ago. Perhaps then, the CCJ may be justifiably described as the 'final cut' of the political umbilical ties between Britain and her former sugar colonies.

The creation of a Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for the purpose of greater cooperation through the instrumentality of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) will require necessarily a legal entity to interpret the CARICOM Treaty, seeking to handle matters of travel, access to markets, quality of products, contracts of all kind for production and administration, etc.

Economically, the CCJ is critical to the success of the Caribbean in the new world order of globalization. The CCJ is necessary to make the region's best expertise available to more persons, of more limited income. Travel to the UK is a high cost unnecessary for litigation in the Caribbean, not to mention the cost of engaging UK-resident, legal firms and representatives.

Granted that travel from Jamaica to Trinidad and Tobago is about a hundred miles farther than from Kingston to New York, the cost of air travel for litigants from both Kingston and Port-of-Spain traveling to London pale in comparison. Interestingly, while the CCJ is to be headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago, the Treaty provisions allow for an

itinerant functioning, stating clearly that the justification lies in consideration of cost and convenience.

What this means in practical terms is that if the CCJ has five cases originating in Jamaica, requiring 20 persons to be in attendance, this number could be cut in half if the cases are heard in Jamaica, where already 10 persons would be resident. The cost-saving effect would be substantial.

Sociologically, the CCJ provides an unprecedented opportunity to use law as a 'tool of social engineering' to re-define and re-shape Caribbean legal culture authentically. This means, to make Caribbean jurisprudence help make Caribbean culture more true to the image and reality of indigenous desire and demand - in contradistinction to inauthentic legal presumptions, whether invariably Euro-centric in UK attorneys, or subtly autochthonous in British-trained attorneys and politicians who are Caribbean nationals.

Indeed, the CCJ is anticipated to creatively shape Caribbean jurisprudence from the vantage point of nearness rather than distance. Judges, familiar with Caribbean culture, are expected to make decisions, consistent with the first proposition of the Preamble of the Treaty, to have a "determinative role in the further development of Caribbean jurisprudence through the judicial process".

#### **4. How will the CCJ be financed?**

According to the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), it has used its very creditable AAA rating to access the international money market and thereby provide the CCJ with the needed US \$100-million. That total is to be put in a new independent Trust

*Extract from Essay – Cricket and the CCJ)*

Fund, and income from the investments of the Fund used to finance in perpetuity the capital and recurrent budget of the CCJ. The CDB says the mechanisms for the establishing and operating of the Fund are already in place.

*William Hall*

**EXTRACTS**  
**FROM**  
**SHORT STORIES**

## **‘Extract from Short Story – Freda's Harvest’**

It was a sweet Tuesday morning. The smell of freshness swirled lightly about as droplets of dew yielded place to the yellow rays, slowly glazing the tops of the magnificent mountains. Fire flies had gone to hide, for the night to find their secret places. Even the fog felt good. Like a light, friendly spray of moisture, seasoned with wild flowers and new grass. Freda Martin breathed deeply of the cool, clean country air and thought, as she had often done before, that people who boasted about being born "under the clock" were truly to be pitied. They didn't know what they were missing!

Freda moved with the effortless feline fineness of a jaguar. (Arthritis was not on her list of problems.) The huge basket of vegetables on her head seemed simply an extension of herself. Only now and again did a pebble move. For Freda had been treading this path for close to forty years and she had known these pebbles when they were still big stones and she was a young woman. That was about the time she had met and married Samuel Martin.

Unlike Freda, Sam was not from the district of Lushvale. He had come for a brief visit with his uncle who lived there. They had met, fallen in love and were married in a matter of months. Together, they worked the land Sam had leased from a land owner in the village. It was hard, back-breaking work but eventually they would be able to use their option to buy the land. The years passed and Freda had just about given up hope of ever having children, when Clive came along.

Sam's joy was boundless. He accepted and treated his son like a gift no man before him had ever had the good fortune to receive. He had great plans for his boy. The only

*(Extract from Short Story - Freda's Harvest)*

way to realize those was through money. The only way Sam knew of making money was by working the land. So when everybody had finished working for the day, Sam continued by the light of a bottle torch.

Freda warned him to take it easy. She told him he wasn't getting any younger. But Sam would not stop working, till he was laid to rest in the ground he loved so well. Clive had been quite young when his tendency to avoid work became apparent.

"Why you don't carry Clive to bush sometime?" Freda asked Sam one morning.

"You want mi to stop him from school to go to bush?" Sam asked.

"No. But tomorrow is Saturday. Him can come wid you tomorrow."

"You don't see dat Clive don't like bush work?"

"Clive don't seem to like any work at all," Freda observed.

"All him lik is money!" "Don't say dat Freda!"

"You spoilin' him, Sam. Him soon begin to feel like him betta dan you."

"No sah! Him jus' don't cut out fi dis kinda work. An' you know say I want betta tings for him."

"What could be betta dan plantin' food?"

Fred asked. "Everybody mus' eat."

Sam walked away as he usually did when Freda was winning an argument.

Clive had as little interest in school work as he did in farming. When Sam asked about his school work, Mr. Bryce - his teacher- had not the heart to tell him that Clive was the laziest boy in his class. So while others of his peers qualified for high school through effort, Clive rode in on the back of the money his father had dug from the jaws of the

*(Extract from Short Story - Freda's Harvest)*

earth. He did so poorly in his final exams that his father had to shelve his plans of making his son into a lawyer.

Since he seemed to have something of an affinity for figures, Sam got him into a commercial school in Kingston. True to form, Clive dropped out after a few weeks. He turned up with his suitcase, complaining to his parents about the poor quality of the tuition. Sam took a day off work and went to check out another school. Freda was dead set against the idea. For she saw what Sam refused to see; that Clive was a lazy, selfish boy who cared for little more than his own comfort. But Sam was a stubborn man and he wanted success for his son. The new school cost more so Sam worked harder.

Clive was nineteen when his father died in his field of a heart attack. Freda held him hugely responsible for what had happened to Sam but she was determined not to show it. She would continue to help this son of hers, even if she was doing so only in deference to his father's memory. "When you plan to go back to school?" she asked him after the funeral. "I don't plan-tago back," Clive said.

"What! Is what you sayin to mi now, Clive?"

"Well Mum, is time I try to help out now."

Freda couldn't believe her ears. Was Clive finally beginning to grow a conscience? . .

"What you mean?" she asked him. "Somebody was telling mi bout a job in Church Town." (Church Town was the nearest town to Lushvale).

"Job?" Freda asked. "But you dont finish school yet." ."

Not quite. But I learn all dere is to learn at dat school."

*(Extract from Short Story - Freda's Harvest)*

"You comin wid dat foolishness again?"

"Is not foolishness, Mum. Listen to me:

I can work now; I can help you pay fi dis lan'."

"No, no!" Freda disagreed. "You listen to me, Clive:

All him life you daddy did want little more dan fo' you to get a good education. ðYou going back to school. You hear mi, Clive? You goin back to finish up an graduate!"

"Take it easy Mum," Clive cautioned. "You goin meek everybody hear wi business?"

"I don't care who want to hear!"

"Mum, sit down. I have somethin' to tell you."

"I don't want to hear one ting excep' when you goin back to school.

Jus' go get you tings ready cause I want you to leave here by..."

"Mum, I cant go back. Even if I did want to."

Then the story came out: Clive had been expelled from school some weeks ago.

When Freda asked why, he gave her litany of excuses ranging from his teachers being too hard on him, to his fellow students' inability to understand him. He had been hanging about in Church Town, too ashamed to come home, when he got the news of his father's death

Freda was quiet when he had done talking. She wondered if, in some mysterious way, the news of Clive's dismissal from school had been communicated to Sam. Maybe he had finally been forced to accept that his dreams for his son would never be fulfilled. Sam, Freda began to think, may have died not of a heart attack as the doctor said, but of a broken heart.

*(Extract from Short Story - Freda's Harvest)*

Unable to do otherwise, she went along with the idea and Clive went to work. For three weeks. Then he got the sack. Freda nagged him constantly about his laziness so he got into a pattern of getting and losing jobs. For the good of her own peace of mind, Freda felt compelled to accept this situation. She never saw a cent of the money her son made.

Sam was dead, Clive was useless and Freda had to find a way to pay for the land. So she planned her first work day. Her next door neighbor was the first to arrive.

"Mornin Miss Freda, Tom said. Mornin,

Mass Tom. How you do?"

"Me a'right. See a piece a yam here."

He handed her about three pounds of yellow yam.

"Thanks," Freda said as she took it. "Sally comin?"

"You well know how my wife love cookin'," Tom laughed. "Of course she comin! An' it look to me like is everybody comin to help you today."

Freda wiped away a grateful tear as she watched him walk off into the field, carrying his machete. By the middle of the morning, about half of the farmers in Lushvale were present and working hard.

It was a beautiful day. The crackling of the fire-wood flames, the happy chatter of the women cooking, the men singing as they worked, was such an over-powering display of sincere goodness, that if the Devil had been passing there that day, even he might have forgotten himself and smiled. Nobody seemed to remember Clive who slept the day away. On his twenty-fourth birthday, this young man had a whale of a party. Freda hated the

*(Extract from Short Story - Freda's Harvest)*

music so she left the house to spend the evening with Sally. She got back at some minutes to eleven o'clock. The party was over but Clive had a guest.

This was not the first time he had brought Blossom to the house but they both knew that she did not like the girl being there so late. Freda went to bed. She woke up in the small hours of the morning to the sound of feminine laughter and went to investigate. Blossom was still in the house. Freda was outraged and she said so.

But Clive did not take kindly to what his mother said. He told her that he was a big man now and was perfectly within his rights in inviting his girlfriend to spend the night if he wanted to. In fact, he told her, Blossom would be spending many more nights there. He was his father's son he informed Freda, and as such, he was fully entitled to living with whomever he wanted to, in the house Sam had built. Freda swore it was the booze talking so she went back to bed. Before she left for the field that morning, she made it clear that she did not want to find the woman there when she returned.

She did. And Blossom had a suitcase too. Freda didn't do much more talking and for the first time in his life, Clive saw just how strong his mother was. Firmly and without ceremony, Freda flung his belongings, his behind and his Blossom out of her house. In the years to come, Freda often wondered if that was the night on which Petal Martin was conceived. If so, she thought, it was not such a bad thing for her to have put up with Clive's slackness that night. For Petal was a fine, fine child. The joy of her heart. Sam would have loved her. Just like everybody in Lushvale did.

Petal met her grand-mother when she was less than two weeks old. It was October and the field was ripe. Ripe yet green. Freda's heart skipped a beat as she viewed her

*(Extract from Short Story - Freda's Harvest)*

plantation - cabbage, banana, callaloo and gungu peas. At that moment, Freda was convinced that God's favourite color was green.

Today was to be another work day and she was up earlier than usual. She was coming down the steps holding her biggest pot, when she heard what sounded like a cat. She ignored it at first but as the sound continued, she decided to do something about it. Next thing this puss would come to try to mess with the food she was preparing for the men!

Freda approached the direction from which the sound was coming. This puss was just too bright, she was thinking. It deserved a good lick! With stick in hand, she crept stealthily closer. She didn't know when the stick fell from her hand. For there before her on the ground, was not a cat but a baby.

"Sally!" she called out. "Sally, come here quick!"

Freda picked up the little bundle, still shouting for Sally who came rushing. She was complaining that Freda had woken her up too early. Then she saw the baby. "Lawd Freda, is what dat?"

"Is not a 'what' is a 'who'," Freda said. "Mi jus' find it outside. You know is who it belong to?"

Sally peered at the child.

"No," she replied. "A wha dis now!"

"A inna bush mi fine it," Freda said. "

Wi have to find di madda." "You keep sayin 'it'.

Is a boy or girl?"

*(Extract from Short Story - Freda's Harvest)*

"Girl," Freda told her friend.

"But is who coulda wicked enough to do a ting like dis?"

Sally asked. Both were puzzled.

"You know anybody inna Lushvale who pregnant or jus' have baby?" Freda enquired.

"No....Yes!" Sally was thinking hard. She asked Freda, "You rememba dat girl who was friendly wid Clive?"

"Who,  
Blossom?" "Yes,  
Blossom."

"Is what you tryin to say now, Sally?"

"I not sayin anyting," Sally replied. "But it look funny how as dat girl time come to have baby, you fine a baby almost inna your yard."

"But you don't know if she have baby yet," Freda countered.

*Ditta Sylvester*

## **‘Extract from Short Story ó After the Storm’**

After the storm, the hardware store was thronged with people. Trevor sucked his teeth at the vehicles parked askew, taking up more than one space, some with their doors open, sound systems issuing forth. "This is when Jamaicans go and stock up for a storm, when it gone already! Eedyats!" he hissed. Janet knew he expected the parking lot to be near empty for his convenience, except, perhaps, for a security guard, who would be deferential and efficient in his post as Director of Parking, that the long aisles of the hardware store would be stocked with assistants waiting to do his bidding, and that he, Trevor, despite the place of his birth, did not include himself in the category of eedyat Jamaicans. She held her peace. She knew why the hardware store was jammed - first, it was open (many places were still closed or inaccessible), and secondly, everyone was doing exactly what she and Trevor were doing, running out to buy those items the storm had shown were needed to secure their property against future storms before they forgot what they were. And there was already another low pressure system in the Atlantic -much better to do these errands when any storm was not an immediate threat.

She glanced at the list. Rawl plugs, wood screws, a tarpaulin, batteries. And a sheet of plywood. This was why Trevor was involved in the trip to the hardware store - a sheet of plywood would not fit in her Corolla. They had brought along the old towels they had used to sop up the many leaks in their house to protect his pickup from the plywood They parked and walked across the parking lot. A security guard wearing a vest with reflective snips (stupid vest in the broad daylight, Trevor said) nodded a greeting. Trevor ignored him. "Morning," Janet said. "Everyting okay at your house?" Trevor lengthened his strides and left her. She knew he was irritated by her inclination to speak to those he

*(Extract from Short Story - After the Storm)*

termed "ordinary" Jamaicans. "For God's sake, Janet, why do you have to try fren-fren up everybody?" he'd say.

"Yes, Mummy," the guard answered, smiling. Being called Mummy by a stranger was still a shock to Janet, who had become used to dawta or nice gal. Without noticing, she had crossed a line. "We lose a sheet a zinc, but we find it back, and everyting cool now."

"That's good," Janet said and hurried after Trevor. She knew it would be easy to lose him in the store's cavernous aisles and he would become even more irritated if he were ready to leave and couldn't find her.

The store was teeming with ordinary Jamaicans. Several members of management were out front, wearing pale yellow shirts with logos, scrutinizing the receipts and bags of those who left. Janet could tell they were uncomfortable with the crowds even as they welcomed them. She hoped she and Trevor would be able to get what they needed before stocks ran out. Her husband would pass from irritation to anger if he had to go to more than one hardware store.

She couldn't see him anywhere. She walked down the dimly lit aisles, lingering in front of the huge fans that tried to cool the enormous building. The days after a storm were always sweltering. She hoped she would not see anyone she knew; she had simply thrown on an old T-shirt and a pair of jeans before leaving the house. She had not even combed her hair. She looked down the cross aisles, hoping to see her husband, but he had been swallowed up in the interior.

(Extract from Short Story - *After the Storm*)

She thought of hardware stores as theme parks for men, full of the things they found interesting - PVC pipes, drill bits, flashlights, screwdrivers. These days, there were also aisles for women, of course, but somehow hardware stores retained that macho air, no frills, and a certain challenge in finding what you wanted. You needed expertise to prevail in a hardware store. Janet knew if she were alone and asked for wood screws, the response would be something like: "Three-quarter or half inch?" She would not know the answer. Janet always thought, *homo habilis*, in a hardware store. The handyman. The toolmaker. The erector of structures.

She remembered the months during which she had laboured to renovate the house in which they now lived in, when every Saturday morning involved a trip to the hardware store, and every spare dollar in their household budget was sucked up by concrete and steel. After storms, she was always clear about the fiction the house represented - how really, it wasn't safe, it wasn't waterproof, and the roof could be taken in any one of a thousand gusts of wind.

During this storm, they had watched water pour through the tiny hole made by the newly installed cable for the TV. "Eedyats!" Trevor had pronounced. "Why them never seal it properly? Monday can't pass before them learn the length of my tongue."

And it wasn't that you could fix all the weaknesses in the house, once and for all, no matter how much money you spent. This storm, water leaked through the cable. Next storm, it might be under the back door. The house stood on a tropical island and, every

*(Extract from Short Story - After the Storm)*

day, the sun and the rain and the various insects with an appetite for wood worked steadily on it, trying to take it back to the soil.

Janet remembered the storms of her childhood and young adulthood, the Flora rains, when school closed for three days and the gully in spate near their house swept away cars, and Hurricane Allen, which scraped the north coast clean of trees and one room houses. She had been living in Runaway Bay at the time of Allen, and had watched the huge grey rollers pound the coast, the Caribbean Sea transformed to Atlantic Ocean. Then, the Met Office issued bulletins, but no one hunkered over computers watching satellite pictures. Then, you had to imagine what a storm looked like. When Janet was a child, she thought new storms brought with them the detritus of old storms and the whirling rattle against the house was not just wind and rain, but nails and toys and window panes. Houses already destroyed, wanting company.

"There you are! God, Janet, are you in a daydream again? I've been looking all over the blasted place for you," Trevor said.

"I've been looking for you too," she said mildly. It was best to simply get their stuff and go home.

"You go and stand in line to pay. Here are the smaller items. I'll go and deal with the guy outside about the ply." He walked off, shaking his head in exasperation. She watched him go, trying to call back the years when she loved the column of his neck, fitting so neatly into the breadth of his shoulders, when she used to watch him play dominoes with his friends, before upward mobility cloaked him in disdain.

She stood in line. It was long and the cashiers worked slowly.

*(Extract from Short Story - After the Storm)*

There were additional measures in place, the need for picture IDs and a signature from management on every credit card receipt.

Here, in the line, the noisy atmosphere of the parking lot was absent. Janet thought these people had lost things, perhaps everything. They were mostly women in her line, buying bottles of water and tarpaulins. The woman in front of her was fat, dressed in a very tight low cut shirt, her breasts bulging, her hair unkempt, her cheeks streaked with tears. Janet was both repelled and saddened.

She wanted to say something to the woman, but was stymied by how to address her. Miss was too young. Mummy was too old. Sistren would sound fake. She settled on no title. "Are you alright?" she said. The woman did not seem to hear her. Janet tried to imagine what it would be like to wait out a storm in a board house on the edge of a gully bank, only sheets of ply between you and the weather. It was impossible.

Just as it was Janet's time to pay, a boy stepped in front of her. He was perhaps ten, thin, ragged, barefooted, dirty, his eyes tired and old. She opened her mouth to remonstrate with him about breaking the line and closed it again. He held one item - a cold soft drink. "Put his drink on my bill," Janet said to the cashier. She thought the boy would not even notice he had not had to pay for his drink; he seemed catatonic. But he turned his face up to hers and smiled with a full joy. "Thank you, Miss," he said.

"You're welcome, son." Janet wished he had tried to push in front of her with a brimming basket of groceries. She paid and went outside with the receipt. She could see Trevor supervising the removal of the ply from a stack. She became aware of shouts

*(Extract from Short Story - After the Storm)*

behind her and turned to see what was going on. A short middle aged man in khaki shorts and a sleeveless shirt way too young for him was yelling at her. "You! Yes, you! You in the jeans! I am talking to you!" She saw the boy with the drink behind the man.

"Are you speaking to me?" she said, caught between responding to the man and joining her husband.

"Yes, mi a speak to you! What you buy mi son a drinks for? You feel sey mi cant buy him a drink?" The man's fists were clenched and Janet feared he would become violent.

"That boy?" Janet said, pointing to the ragged youngster. "He's your son?"

"Yes! Him is MY son. And you dont need to buy him NUTT'N, you hear! Facety and outta order woman? Who you tink you is?"

A crowd was gathering and Janet felt hot with embarrassment. Trevor was still engrossed with loading the pickup. "I'm s-sorry," she stammered, "I didn't mean to cause offense. I just thought..." I was just trying to help, she wanted to say. He was barefoot. Dirty. How could you take him out looking like that? She heard the whispers of the people around as they tried to figure out what the uptown woman had done.

"You never tink, a di problem! All like you..." the man did not complete his thought. He turned on his heel and grabbed the boy by the hand. She saw the man held a pair of children's sandals in his other hand. "My boy have Nintendo at home, and you go buy him DRINKS?" he yelled over his shoulder.

*(Extract from Short Story - After the Storm)*

"What was that all about?" Trevor said, coming over, his face sweaty, uninterested in the answer. "Come. You have to show the receipt before we can leave."

She walked through the crowd over to the pickup, and the people stepped back to let her pass. She heard a few sounds of disgust, but no one said anything. She gave the receipt to the man working the pile of ply. "Thanks, chief," Trevor said, handing him a folded bill. "Buy yourself a drink."

"Aaaright, sah," the man responded.

Just down the road, they stopped at a traffic light and a child approached the window. He was thin, barefoot, dirty and his eyes were old and tired. He opened his mouth and started to speak. "Spare me the sob story," Trevor said, opening his wallet. "I will give you money. Here. Now get away from my car."

At home, Janet helped wrestle the ply into their garage. As she washed her hands at the sink, she heard Trevor in his study, the creak of his chair, the swooshing noise his computer made when e-mail arrived. The sounds of her marriage; her life. "Hey!" he called out. "That low pressure in the Atlantic? Is a tropical storm already..."

*Diana McCauley*

### **‘Extract from Short Story – Fear/Fair’**

I sitting on a wooden bench inside the Tower Street police station, waiting. Been waiting now for what feel like forever. I starting to think I going off. Nothing bout this situation make sense. It come in like is a joke, and though it sound strange, me kinda want laugh. Is bite me have to bite the inside of my cheek to stop myself. Although I did tell Ruth was to stay and continue look, I really wish say she was with me right now. I hear a woman behind me take in her breath and I look round. She trembling and pointing at the wall. Nothing but a big brown lizard looking calm calm back at her. Some of the other ladies them get up too. I hear the men laughing. I stay where I sitting on the tough bench and give the frighten woman a half smile. I turn back and continue to look ahead of me.

Not long after I did first come into the station, two police walk in, a man and a woman, holding on to a rough looking man who moving up and down like him trying to escape, and hollering out him throat bout how them violate him human rights. Him have blood on the front of him shirt. The police them don't pay him no mind and just push him go forward with him hand them cuff behind him back. I don't see where them take him but we can hear him from wherever him is, bawling out every now and again bout how him know the two police them face, and him have witness bout what them do to him, and how him was going call Jamaicans for Justice. Beside me on the bench now is a boy round 15 who crying soft soft to himself. Beside him is a lady in a business suit talking on her phone. Somebody thief her lap top out of her car in the parking lot. She telling somebody to take Imani to the house and not to her office. All round me people talking to each other or to the police 'bout whatever bothering them. Although the day outside bright like nothing, inside the station it come in like a whole other world with all the benches full up of people and them trouble. Every now and again somebody walk in, the police at the front desk ask what them want, maybe give them a form, then tell them to take a seat. The boy who crying, somebody shoot him grandmother. Me, I lose my son. Please, please God. Please let Samuel be safe.

Few mornings ago, I was by one of the swimming holes with Miriam, Jael, and Deborah. It was the middle of the day and too hot to stay inside the house. Miriam and Jael them was digging up something in the mud and Deborah was sitting peaceful on my

lap in the water. I look up and I could see a rock that someone spray paint with "Gaza". Samuel never want come which is not normal for him. I never yet finish packing him and my things for the trip to town the next day and the heat did take the little energy I have. I hug Deborah tighter to me and she laugh. Yes, I did feel bad but me did know for a fact, I was sure, one hundred and ten percent, that we was doing the right thing sending Samuel to town to live. The girls screamed and run towards me well frighten, making Deborah jump up from my lap. It was a water snake. I laugh after them and make them come back and look at it. Yes, it did funny but the truth is, them can't get into the habit of running from every little thing. Life hard enough.

As I was sitting in the water, I could hear the river nearby slap slapping gently 'gainst the stones. The tall trees above us was chatting in the breeze and I could hear some birds and crickets like them was answering back. I could smell a little bit of smoke. Hardly anything change here. The river might dry up sometimes in August but it always come back when the rain fall, if not this year then the next. My father did tell me the river was here when him was a boy and when his father was a boy and him father before him. I look up in the sky. I see the blue through the space between the leaves. Some of them trees here is hundreds of years old, and was there from before slavery. That was the same sky. I close my eyes and pray: Jesus, help me make this sacrifice. The next day, me and Samuel leave for Kingston.

It was his first first trip to town. Him was mad and never want go. Samuel is my oldest. I have him when I was 17. I had was to leave school and I never get to take my subjects, but I give that up willingly after a while. I mean to say I was sad. I usually be a very good student and I would have pass my subjects, but it never work out. I meet Elkanah and that was it. Skin catch a fire, all of that. He had me. I mean I couldn't think 'bout anything except for him. Not my school book, not my father threatening me, nothing. And then Samuel come. Sometimes I think the reason why him like study so much (I try take all my children to the library once a week) is cause when I did first pregnant I use to wish I could turn back into the good girl that only listen to her father, that only study, that don't know nothing bout... man. (Yes, at first I was kinda bitter 'bout being pregnant.) But even so, Samuel, him so much smarter than me when I was his age. Him just bright is a shame.

And maybe is cause him is the eldest but him really independent. I mean him hardly cry for things even when him was small. And the other ones look to him. Trust me, is just cause I give birth to him and him kinda want look like me and him Daddy why I know that him is my child.

In the police station the officer call to me and direct me to a door. As I walking I hear somebody praying Psalm 23 over and over again. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Inside the office is a police lady sitting at a desk. By the time I reach inside and she start to take my statement I can barely talk. When I talk I hear my voice just trembling and then I start to cry, I can't help it. I tired, I worried, I vex, I everything. The police lady suppose to use to deal with people like me. She just say to me, "Alright. Take a deep breath." She have a kind face and she wait. When I calm down she take my statement in one big book. She ask me for a picture of Samuel and I never have none on me. She say okay and she tell me that they going send out two police to look and she going send a message to all the police downtown for them to look out for him. I give her my number and Ruth number. She tell me that I must pray and I nod my head. I know that children go missing in Jamaica all the time and them don't find them but I want to believe that this not going happen to me. I want to believe that I not going lose my child, a child who I force to come to town. No. God is going to take care of my child.

I send Ruth a please call me and my phone ring few seconds later. She tell me that she outside Bashco, the big one. I walk over and meet her.

When me and Samuel did reach town few days ago, we come off the bus on the boulevard, say bye bye to the driver, and walk it to Ruth house in Patrick City. Ruth, a cousin on my father's side, him sister child, grow up in my district with me. No one woulda guess that when we was children both of us run through the bush together, that my mother teach both of we how to light wood fire, that we both did have to use the same pit toilet as kids. It really funny cause anybody watching us as children would think I was the one who was going be a teacher and Ruth was the one who was going to be pregnant at 17. I not bitter.

Really. I not. Life just funny bad. I have whole heap to be thankful for. And though some people might find it strange and wonder how I manage, I love that I live in the house my father grow up in.

I did happy to see Ruth you see, and I hug her for a long long time. Even when she start act like she want me stop I still hold her close. Apart from some few extra pounds she look the same as the last time I see her, which is now maybe five years ago when she come to Waverly to visit. Samuel did five then. Ruth don't have no children. When we was teenagers she did have a abortion which up to this day nobody don't know 'bout. Then later she did come town and meet her husband, if you want call him that, but him dead round six years now. Them shoot him for him car and is she alone ever since then. Ruth is a good woman and she was my best friend growing up, plus she is family. I know for a fact Samuel going be safe with her.

That night I sleep in the same bed as Ruth, and Samuel sleep by himself in her extra room. At one point in the night him cry out but when I go and check on him, him still sleeping. I ease him over to make space on the bed and drop asleep watching him face - him dark skin, him tiny eyes, and him ears what stick out.

In the morning, Ruth have a extra lesson student to meet. She putting on her clothes and listening to a CD with a foreign lady voice saying things like, "You can do it. There is no one better than you. This is your life, whatever you want, go and take it." I lay down on the bed and watch her take time put on her makeup. She seem sulky this morning and I start to worry little bit. What if she change her mind and never want Samuel board with her again?

"So Ruth, how you doing? You enjoying teaching still?"

"It's okay. I could do with some more money for sure but I'm okay."

"Missis, that a everybody. I know I don't give you all the money for Samuel yet but I will give you as soon as I have it."

"That's fine." She put on her lipstick. I couldn't tell the last time I wear make-up.

I sit up. "Thanks again for doing this, Ruth. Elkanah and I really appreciate it. I mean, it really pain us to have him so far away but is for the best and I know you will take good care of him. You get a new son, my cousin, without labour pain." I laugh a little.

"Hannah." She turn her head to look on me. "You know you are that child's mother and nothing will change that." She turn back around to the mirror. "I will take care of him. Just like you and your family took good care of me."

I start feel little bit frighten now. "What you mean?"

"I mean, when my worthless mother left me with your father and just never bother to show up again, it's your family that took care of me." She look me in my eye. "Don't worry, I know your mother never like me but that don't mean I'm going to treat Samuel any way." She put down the pencil and comb her eyebrow looking in the mirror once again. "When we were young we were like sisters. Sam is my nephew and my cousin and my godchild. You don't have anything to worry about."

I believe her but how comes, I ask myself, she sound so far away. I never say anything.

"Okay." She smile and start put back on her make-up. "Let me finish getting ready so I can go to this child's house, get paid, and then come back and help you get Samuel ready for school."

Is funny. I love Waverly, I love the simplicity of it, the green, the smells - wood fire, fruits, and flowers all mix up; but I also love downtown Kingston. I love the excitement, the whole heap of people, the music and the noise, the heat. Is so funny: everything big downtown but at the same time squinge up.

Is this very morning that me, Samuel, and Ruth walk down King Street. We was looking to buy book and pen and paper for the boy. Him was still sulky and lagging behind us so that I had constantly to be looking behind and making sure him was okay. To be honest, him was kind of getting on my nerves. Plus, though I love downtown, you have to be so careful, and I always think that town people can smell that me's a country girl. We go into the book store and Ruth help me pick out the stationery item them. I promise you we wasn't in there long. Is when I in the line to pay that I ask Ruth to go collect Samuel cause we leaving soon. I was waiting for them outside when she come back, alone. She couldn't find him.

I go back in the store. I search all over. None of the cashiers notice a little boy with a brown parcel (we did get him uniforms just this morning) leaving. We go outside and walk in and out of all the King Street stores on both sides before we check back with the book store. The cashier them look serious.

No nobody don't see him. At this point now, the little cloud in me change to a heavy stone and drop to the bottom of my belly. Me did 'fraid and me did want bawl. We walk cross Parade with the vendors clogging up the streets and onto Orange Street. We go in all the stores and then we go back to the book store. To me it look like the faces on the cashier them now a little hard. Like them did sympathetic but not sure how a ten year old child could get lost with him mummy and auntie nearby. I look at Ruth, no clue what to do next. That's when I walk to the police station.

When I meet up with Ruth after I leave Tower Street I ask her where she look while I was there for the two hours. Ruth the kind of person that like to always be in charge, don't want nobody question her. I know how to deal with Ruth but right now, me don't have the patience. Too bad for her, I am Samuel's mother. So I tell her we going walk and look on all the streets below Parade again and then we going to go and look on the streets above. She shrug her shoulder. She looking very worried. We walk up Orange Street in the hot sun and the place stink of urine and sweat. We pass the people selling beds on the road, pass the ladies selling underwear, blouses, and shoes, pass old men playing dominoes.

We walk up and down the streets and I still don't call Elkanah to tell him. I giving myself until 6 o'clock and is 3.30 now. Samuel was missing from round 11. Then Ruth cell phone ring. Is one of the cashiers, Angeline, from the book store calling. She see a boy that she think is Samuel at the bus stop. Right in Parade by Orange Street. We hustle back and I remember the cashier. She wasn't too friendly, face well screw when she cashing the goods, like she so afraid she make a mistake she can't relax. Before when we did ask her if she did see Samuel, she squint her eyes and look at me hard, moving her locks from out her face. So although we were rushing to get back down to Parade and although I really wanted to believe and have faith, I wasn't sure we would see him because one I sure she never like me and two I sure she never see Samuel good she was focusing so hard on cashing.

We reach back to Parade and stand up looking for him, the both of us breathing hard. Then, I see him and I feel my breath hitch in my throat and then come faster than ever. Him just standing 'mongst the people, watching them get on the buses. And I realise why him in that spot.

Earlier when we was passing I told him it was these buses take people to the country. So I stand there watching him watch the people getting on the buses. So that mean is Ruth is the one who go towards him, who go and grab him from where him is and into the road, almost bouncing into a hand cart that coming up the street. . .

She shout at him, loud loud, and I see Samuel eyes full up with water. People staring and turning them head to look see what going on. Him don't have the uniform package anymore. Is when I see him wipe him eye with the back of him hand that I go between him and Ruth and hug him. Him arms circle my waist and him bawl. I tell him, "You don't have to stay. Is okay. You can come home." I mean it. I hate him leaving and right now I too tired to force it on him. What is the point? All of we sad, him father, him sisters, me, him. Why we doing this? So him can grow up to be rich? It just don't seem worth it.

The three of us go back to Ruth house. I make Samuel bathe and all of we eat dinner together. By the time we finish I feel little bit calmer and my head little clearer. I put Samuel to bed like him is still my little baby. I know him not though. Him growing and next thing you know him going be marrying and having children. Him fighting sleep cause we talking. Him move him arm from the pillow him hugging and rub him eyes. Him little boy face still chubby but I can see him cheekbones pushing through; I can see the man inside just slowly coming out. I try and explain again what we want for him.

"Samuel, I know you don't want come Kingston but this is the best thing."

"Why? Why I can't go school at home?"

"Cause the school here better."

"You and Daddy went to school at home."

I think 'bout our life. Elkanah right now was sleeping, dog tired from working. I know that from early hours him was on the farm, sprinkling little water on the plants that him catch up in a bucket from the river.

Usually me's the one to go for the water early in the morning. Then we pick the vegetables or the ripe fruit or dig out the yam or potato and I take them to the market.

Whichever day I don't go market I go by Miss Junie to do some day's work. Elkanah do the farming, clear the fields, prune the crops, plant new seeds.

If anything there so that him can earn little extra money him do it, and sometimes him travel out of the parish, like if there is any construction work or so.

What I say to Samuel is, "We want better for you than what we have. We want you to have a better life."

"What if you stay here with me?"

I feel bad but I say it. "I can't. I have to take care of your sister them and your father."

Him start cry again. "You said I never have to go. That's what you tell me. That's what you tell me." Him turn him face into the bed sheet and I rub him back. Eventually him stop cry and drop asleep.

Ruth sitting at her dresser. Her face clean and she have on a cap over her setters. "Is he okay?" "No. Him not okay. He's not okay." I go and lie down on her bed. "You sure this is the right thing?"

I sit up, angry now. "I don't understand you. You want me leave him in the district to become nothing? To become like all the other time wasters or worse, like me, working so hard and can't reach no where?"

"I was just saying thatô "

"What? Is only you must become something?"

"Lord, don't bother come eat off my head."

"Don't get me wrong, I love my life and my family. But sometimes, it would be nice to be able to rest for a minute, catch my breath. I know Mama wasn't always nice to you, but me and Daddy, God rest his soul, we so proud of you." I take a deep breath and I forced myself to smile. "If it couldn't happen to me, me glad it happen to you."

After a while she speak in a quiet voice. "Sometimes I wouldn't mind being in Waverly. Sometimes, I wish it had happened to you. You deserve it more than me. You were the good one, the smart one."

I move to the edge of the bed, closer to where she sitting on the stool in front of the vanity. "No, that's not true. You deserve it." I take her hand but she pull it away.

"The reason why I want Samuel to stay with you is cause I want him grow to be like you. Him bright. Him really, really bright. Like you. I want him to strive and become something. I know it hard for him but I don't know what more to do."

She nod her head. "I need you to push him. To make sure him do him work. You need to remember that this is what is best for him. After a while, him will settle into it and then him will come to realise I was right." She nod again and sigh.

Early, before daylight, I start to pack my things.

I go to Ruth room to tell her goodbye. She open her eye and look on me. "Alright," she tell me and get out of bed so she can lock the front door after I leave. As we reach the door, Samuel come out of the bedroom and see us. I tell him to go back to him room. God, I feel bad but what else I can do? "Where you going?" him ask me.

I lie. "I just going out for a little bit. I coming right back." I start make haste and walk through the door now.

"No." Him run come to me and reach me before I get outside. Him put him hand round my waist.

"Samuel, I soon come back. Let go, you holding me up, man." I try to get him off of me, but as hard as I trying is how hard him holding on. "Samuel! Stop it." Ruth she helping me but when we get him hand off from round my waist him drop to the ground and hold on to my foot.

Samuel shout after me. "No! You not coming back, you not coming back. I want go home." Him not crying, him mad and determine. Lord help me, is now I get vex. I tired. I hardly sleep last night, is pure worry I doing over this boy and him acting the fool and damn ungrateful on top of it. I think to myself: him have opportunity what me and him father never have, full government scholarship to the best boy's school in Jamaica, something what even Ruth never have; I save up my little money to buy him the uniform them and the things what him need for school plus lunch money, and is so him behaving? I take my hand, reach over and give him one box straight cross him face. That shut him up. I hear when Ruth take in a big breath, she so shock. Him start to bawl living eye water down by my foot, and for some reason, when I feel the water on my leg that him still holding on to all through the bawling, it get me even more vex.

I reach down and I slap him again. Lord forgive me, I slap him and I slap him and I slap him until him move and let go. When him let go, I walk through the door.

I hanging Miss Junie clothes on the line. She inside on the computer complaining 'bout slow internet and the stupid phone company and how she can't get to send a email

to her daughter in foreign. The time hot and I think bout Samuel with my mouth full of clothes pin. Last week them keep prize giving at him school and me, the girls and Elkanah go. Oh, my God, did I cry. My bright boy get so much prize and him look so happy joking 'round with him friends that my heart just want open up. I remember one boy and it make me laugh. Him sing some song 'bout Mary but him was so nervous him voice crack. Him mother was in front of me, a chubby brown lady, with her French manicure and her nice pumps who look so proud of her son who can't sing that I almost laugh. I look around at the other parents. There was all kind of people there. I never see anybody looking like us. All of a sudden I did feel so angry. Then the poor boy crack another note and I laugh, couldn't help it. Poor Elkanah squeeze my hand smiling at me trying to get me to stop not understanding. Other parents look 'round, some snickering too. I stop. Ruth was on my other side, quiet and as usual she seem far away. I take her hand and only let go when we leave.

After, we have dinner at Ruth house. Samuel set the table and we eat together, pack up like sardine round her little dining table. The girls and Elkanah go by him brother who have a house that can hold everybody and I stay by Ruth. After she go to bed, me and Samuel sit in front the TV talking.

Him the same but not the same. Him father don't see it but I know him more conscious of when him to talk properly and when him to relax. Him relax with us, with me. We never talk 'bout the morning I leave him with Ruth before, so I say to him, careful, "Samuel, you remember the day when I leave you here with Auntie Ruth?"

Him stop laugh and nod. My heart start to beat fast.

"I sorry I hit you like that. You know I never ô "

"Is alright, Auntie Ruth explain it to me so many times already.

It's okay." I hug him and him hug me back.

Now, in Miss Junie backyard, I can't breathe. Maybe Samuel was too special for Waverly. I trying to take breaths but something stopping the air from going in.

What if him come home and turn up him nose at who we be, country people? I so 'fraid, frighten that now I dying in Miss Junie yard.

My chest feel tight and tears come down my face. What if him forget how to dive into a swimming hole? I look 'round and nobody not here to help. I drop to the ground on my knees. The grass look like green waves sake of the water in my eyes. Crying and gasping

*(Extract from Short Story – Fear/ Fair)*

still, I try calm down, try relax. I close my eyes. Then suddenly, the air rush back into my chest and I can breathe. I start bawl and stay on the grass for a good time crying. Then I look 'round, get up off my knees. I go to the drum with the water catch up, grab the container, fill it up, and rinse off my hands and eyes, vex. My blouse too dirty to use dry off so I start back putting the rest of Miss Junie clothes on the line and just let the sun burn the water off my face.

*Karen Nicole Hutchinson*

## **‘Extract from Short Story – Coconut Water’**

No one ever listens to me. That's why I'm here, in the Barclay Psychiatric Unit. I'm not mad and I didn't try to kill myself. It was an accident. But they won't believe me. And if they think you tried to kill yourself, that means you're mad, and if you're mad they don't believe a word you say. Unless it's what they want to hear. It's so unfair.

But it's been the same all my short life. Like the time when I was about seven and I presented my maths homework that I'd worked exceptionally hard on. It was bound to please the teacher and get me a star or a team point, but no!

"Who did your homework for you?"

"I did it."

"Who did your homework for you?" "I did it."

The teacher's voice rises to a crescendo, and the class falls silent.

"Who did your homework for you?!" "Mummy," I mumble, looking at my toes.

"Then why did you lie? Why didn't you tell me the truth in the first place?!"

There follows a lecture and a scold about not letting parents do your homework for you, which I listen to in submissive silence, and slink back to my desk.

As if that wasn't bad enough, at the end of the day when I was looking forward to putting it all behind me, I ran up the playground for one quick go on the slide before home time. But it had been raining, so when I slid down I got my skirt wet, and when my mum came to collect me she wouldn't believe I hadn't wet myself. She wouldn't let me go to Linda Barr's party and I had to stand there in silence while she made up a lie to Linda's mother.

That sort of thing happens to me all the time. It's so unfair. Why am I always punished for things I didn't do? 'Cause that wretched brother of mine is too clever to get caught and he always stitches me up. Sometimes though, it's just my rotten luck, like the slide thing. Somehow, the weight of evidence is always against me.

Now I'm here all because I drank a small cup of bleach. No one made me do it, it's true, but it was still an accident. How can I explain it, when my mother has always drummed the cry wolf story into my brain?

"If you tell lies all the time, when you're telling the truth no one will believe you!"

But I tell the truth and tell the truth and tell the truth and no one believes me, so I have to lie, Just to be left alone.

*Verone Johnston*

## **‘Extract from Short Story – Olivia’s Branch’**

The two girls told the old lady goodbye and left with Maria trailing reluctantly behind Olivia, through her grandmother's gate, back down the road and then through Olivia's gate.

'I am back Mama and Maria is with me,'

Olivia called out as they went around the side of the house to the backyard.

Mrs. Brown was surprised when she heard Olivia's voice and even more surprised to know that she had brought Maria back with her. Olivia stopped, 'This is it,' she said apologetically and turned to Maria.

She breathed a sigh of relief as Maria's brown eyes roved over square metres and square metres of pasture, three cows, a sow and her five squealing piglets and trees of every kind. Jackfruits were growing from the trunk of the tree and the tangerine trees were laden with fruits. There were clumps of sugar cane too. All these were behind the house. Some distance away of course.

'May I pick a tangerine?' asked Maria as they passed one of the trees.

'Of course,' replied Olivia, happy that Maria had found her voice.

Maria picked two and immediately began to peel one.

'It is sweet, isn't it?' asked Olivia.

'Yes it is,' said Maria.

'This is mine,' said Olivia stopping under an avocado tree that was laden with large green fruits. Juice from the tangerine was all over Maria's fingers. 'Yours?' said Maria licking her fingers.

'Yes mine,' said Olivia

'How did you get it?'

'My grandmother, not anymore, planted it when I was born. My father has a breadfruit tree, and his sister has a coconut tree.' 'What does your mother have?' asked Maria.

'Mama doesn't have a tree,' replied Olivia. 'Her mother was from a different parish. I am sorry about your aunt.'

'I am sorry too,' Maria said. She looked up again at Olivia's tree. 'I was going to remain with her in New York after my summer holidays this year.' 'What about your father, would he live in New York too?' Olivia knew that Maria's mother had died when Maria was a baby.

'No, but I would visit him often and he would visit us. My aunt thought that I needed a woman to mother me.'

'I see,' said Olivia. 'I am sorry that she is dead and you cannot go to live in New York, but at least you still have a father and a grandmother. From now on you can spend your summer holidays down here. Ask your father to send you.'

'I will,' Maria replied politely, looking at her hands.

'We could visit Negril sometimes. You can wear sandals then and we can wear shorts and darkglasses and look at the tourists.' Maria looked up, 'Did you say Negril?' she asked.

'Yes, its not far from here. You will like it,' said Olivia enthusiastically. 'Yes,' said Maria.

'And we can go to Lucea and Bay,' said Olivia warming to her subject.

*Patricia Headlam*

## ‘Extract from Short Story – Sylvia’s Diary’

### May 18

Shakera turn a big woman now. She have baby. Nice little boy. Mi glad, you know, but a wish she did wait. She not working, she don't finish school. I hope she don't think that is me going to mind it. Seven of them me raise. Is my time now.

### September 15

The little boy bright you see. Anything you ask him, him know. Him shame Miss Watson son the other day. I did want to laugh but I couldn't mek her see. Imagine a big *horse conscious* boy like that don't know him times table. And you should hear my grandson. Only seven, and him put Miss Watson son to shame. A proud you see. *Lord have his mercy on him*. Shakera better watch out though. When dem so bright so young, people get jealous and just take a set on them. Same thing did happen to Willie, and where is Willie today, *God rest his soul*. One thing 'bout Miss Watson son though, look like him have ambition because me see when him go inside afterwards and take up the book.

### June 24

*Who God bless, no man curse*. The little boy pass the scholarship. For a good high school, you know. No little *Jing bang* go there. Miss Watson son gone to Comprehensive. Me *tell* you that the little boy brighter than him. *Alleluia*.

### August 10

Shakera is of no use. She take up with this careless boy and since then, is pure crosses. Nine, ten o'clock in the morning and him still in bed. Everybody else have to get up gone to work, but not him. Stay in the bed the whole day, playing the worse kind of music. Gully boy, you know. Can't expect any better from him. When I consider how I used to tief Miss Williams' food, and take Miss Williams' things so that *my* pickney dem could get a start in life. And this is how the girl pay me back? Take up with careless boy? And then he treat the little boy so bad. Throw his clothes outside; take big belt to him. Is the living eyewater me bawl when me see how the careless boy behave towards mi grandson. And the mother don't say a word! *Lord have mercy*.

**February 16**

Me see the gully boy with one big gun today. Him was showing it to the little boy. Me was *so* frighten, but me couldn't make him know that me see him. What? You want the man come kill me? Lord, why Shakera take up with this ole criminal? And now that him have gun, dog *nyam* we supper. All me know, anyhow anything happen to him, him deh pon him own. Is just the little boy me concern 'bout.

**April 5**

If you ever *know* the worries with the little boy at school. Them say him is a ghetto youth, so what right him have to be attending that school. Like them buy the school and put down. Is just vex them vex because him get better marks than them. The boy bright you see! But they just won't give him a chance. Maybe Shakera should switch him to Comprehensive. Me hear that Miss Watson son is a big thing down there.

**July 26**

The little boy get expel from the school. Him get in a fight with another student and according to them, him pull a gun. Now where that child must get gun? No mus' the careless boy? Me talk to Shakera till me tired. *Get rid of that man*, me tell her. Him is *no* good! The man don't work, but pure cargo roun' him neck. The other day me hear sey him gone to Miami. Where him get money from? And anytime I say anything to Shakera, the girl mad to malice me. She say is *her* life an' is *her* man. Man-to, as far as I'm concerned. From I know myself, I don't trust a man who wear dark glasses at night. Must be a criminal! And now the little boy get mix up. From is a gun crime, no other school going to take him. And the boy bright you see. But no guidance. Bad company.

**November 13**

The little boy not doing a thing. Shakera say she don't even know where he sleep sometimes. All he do is walk around with the careless boy. Now you tell me, what a big old man like that doing with a 15-year-old boy? He nuh mus lead him astray? The two of them just up and down. Up and down. And the mother can't talk to none of them. From she take up with that careless gully boy, pure worries.

**March 6**

Me and the little boy have a big argument last night. Me catch him smoking weed. Him not living right and me tell him! Is *my* grandson and me have the right to talk! If you ever hear how the boy back-answer me. If you ever hear the words that the little boy bring to me, his grandmother. Now that him have the careless boy as backative, nobody can say anything. The careless boy tell him say me is an *old fowl* and must mind me own business. If you ever hear how the two of them handle me. And the mother don't say a word! Not a word.

**September 9**

Me see Miss Watson in the market the other day. Her son finish school and get scholarship. Me couldn't even congratulate her good, the way how mi heart full, because me *know* that her son not brighter than my grandson. Shakera say the little boy only move around at night now, him and his crew. Pure gunman as far as me can see, but when me say that to the mother, she get upset. What she getting upset for? None of us not blind. The little boy is under no control. And when I consider how him was so bright. Anytime me see a police car now, me feel weak.

**November 3**

Miss Watson son dead. Drive by shooting. Three men in a white Toyota just drive up to the gate and shoot him. Him did turn big lawyer, you know. Me hear that him was trying a big cocaine case and look like him refuse the bribe. The police say they don't know who kill him but me hear people a whisper. Nobody don't say anything to me, so me nuh say nutten to them.

**March 17**

Mi ask Shakera where the little boy did deh last night, but she claim say she nuh know. She say me mustn't ask her any question. She just a wash, wash. Pure red a run inna de basin. Pure red. Mi go fe say something but mi see the gully boy him a watch me. Forgive me Lord, but if him could a jus' dead. Why the wicked prosper, year after year,

Lord? Why? You see if it was first time, when me was young? The box I would give that good-for-nothing *jiggerback* would send him straight from here to Jericho.

**March 22**

Mi grandson dead. Police say is a shootout. Dem say him did have a gun. Shakera she a run up and down. Say a lie. Want everybody to demonstrate. She want justice. She a call down God as witness say she a go do the policeman something. But she never see when the little boy a turn bad? She never see? Me feel the pain right down inna mi belly bottom. Me heart tearing out but ah can't say nutten. The little boy did bright, you see. The boy *bright*] Oh my God. O God. Him was such a bright little boy.

**March 26**

Watch the gully boy him. Just siddown with him dark glasses. Ole criminal. Lead mi grandson astray. Lead the boy astray, and watch him now. Is him shoulda dead. But trust me. The Lord don't sleep.

**April 6**

Me see when them come for the gully boy last night. About three or four man circle the house and hide. One of them call him out. Me was sitting on the verandah and the gully boy say to me: "A who dat a call me?"

"Me nuh know. Must be one of you frien' dem."

Me see when the man hide the gun behind him, and call out again.

Me say to the gully boy: "you frien' a call you."

Him come outside. As him reach the door, me just pick up mi things and take time walk go inside. *Thy will be done.*

***Carol Edwards***

## **‘Extract from Short Story – I Still Here’**

Comfortable, and me contented and comfortable too. So I rest my dutty foot pon them table sometimes and laugh in them face. My head still lean from the brock neck, so I have to set sideways, and if them drink too much, me get crazy too, and take them bench for me toilet Cock a fart! What if them did know?

Sometimes I go upstairs and take in some cool breeze from the mountainside - Is the last thing I did ever see with living eyes, cause them put me to face East to the rising sun. Upstairs, where the breeze blow sweet like a blessing, I look at all my boys pon the wall. I can't read, but I remember the whole of them cause since I come on here I don't leave. I watch them from them a little bit of boy; I take them for my children and I love them right through till them get big. I help them too, you know. Yes, I help them to hold them bat straight. I use my body and my fingers to hold back the wind when it too strong. That is what I really born for, to mek children be smaddy in this world. It better to be dead smaddy than a nobody. Is Kke me was the only one that did believe that, but make me tell you, death better than slavery and love is so strong, it will kill.

I was a mother once, and my master was a real high class gentleman, the Governor Beeston. From me did little them used to say that I trouble in my head, so them put me to work outside in the yard and in the bush. I pick the fruits, I cut the grass and I wash the clothes. I did have one baby for this carpenter boy, and from the baby ketch month and a half, them put me back to work. I was round the back by the well washing some cotton sheet when the vision did come to me clear and simple. Right then, I know what I had to do. I put down the brush and take up my three-month baby right where he was sleeping beside me on the ground. I put him in the pan of water and washing soda, and hold him down at the bottom till him just lie there Him did pretty you see, just like baby dolly, but prettier, cause him skin did soft. I watch him like a little Moses in the underwater, a little deliverance baby. I work hard enough for bakra already and I never want to be plagued to raise a child into that life, so I put my baby in the water and save him.

After that a whole heap of things happen and plenty people had a lot to talk about. Them send me to the asylum, then them take me up to Half-Way-Tree courthouse and

ask me a whole heap of question. I try to let them know that is save, I save die child, but it look like them never understand. The magistrate save me from a beating when him did send me to the asylum, but him never save my neck. One morning, early, them come for me and put me in some chain and carry me back here to this nice place, just above the parish border. My master, the Governor, did think that it was a good idea to use me as a warning, and I did glad for that. People would see that more mothers should save their children. Is him pay for the nice gallows that them did build for me, and when I did stand up pon it the day, I did feel like a real queen.

Big crowd did come, nearly a thousand idlers. I did see slave, free blacks, poor white and some top class white people. I was above all of them and look over them head right down to the harbour where a ship was loading. I try, but I can't remember if the sea was blue that day cause just then, them did turn me to face the mountainside.

I was glad that it never take long cause the sun was in my eye. Them say that them had was to hang me cause me is a pickney murderer who was of sound mind. I curse them proper when them did say that. Who them think them was? Me never insane, me did mad.

I did think that I would-a reach hell, but all now it can't come. When the trapdoor fly, the rope grab me neck and me soul get lick out of me body, and drop right in front of some children who did come to watch. Them did fraid, so I blow up some dust in them face so that them did have to lock them eye tight, and when them open *it* again, them see where I cut down a piece of coconut bough. As you quint, them take it up and start a game, and is so I decide to stay to be with the children. After a while I hear them calling, calling up my name "Come mek we go Sabina Park. Them reach Sabina Park yet?"

After a while old Beeston dead and them develop the place and build some nice house and rent them out to people. That time I never understand how to hide myself properly and for a long time people used to fraid and say that duppy haunt the place. Then them sell the land and turn it into a playing ground I did glad for that, but it get me craw to know that I don't get any *credit* for this place that name after me. It vex me *spirit*, but me seh, cho! Gwaan and tek me name nuh. The power in it, it can't done.

Today them draw long chair and don't know that is sake of me why them reach anywhere at all I lay down me life for that pitch. You don't see how it hard? How it take a bruise and a bounce; how water can't soft it down for nothing, how it keep it own shape, even after a heavy roll.

It never happen just so, you know. Is me, Sabina Park, mek it! The love that I could not give in my life, I spend again, and again in my death. When you jump up and cheer and wave you hand and prance, when the noise reach the roof top and the tree top, I glad too, but these last days I think that you disrespecting me too long.

***Gwyneth Harold***

## **‘Extract from Short Story – Foresight’**

After dark, light in Hope comes from kerosene lamps. The Prime Minister keeps promising electricity but the district is small, politically unimportant and easily ignored.

You need to drive through only when the highway to Montego Bay is blocked, as it occasionally is by flood rains. If you happen by before nightfall, stop at Ben's and invest in a cold beer -- he'll have one on ice -- and ask about the death of the bighead boy, Delroy.

Ben will tell you that Delroy's mother, Mavis, is a gentle soul, but problems like hers would drive anybody crazy. For years, she and her husband, Josiah, couldn't have children; then came a baby with "water on the brain."

Delroy had to be taken to the clinic regularly for the fluid to be drained off, and the medical expenses nearly drained his parents. Two years of drought added to the difficulties on their small farm and eventually it was only the ganja Jos was supplying to a big man from Kingston that kept them afloat.

One day Jos got fed up, told Mavis their struggles didn't make sense, and packed some ganja into a false-bottomed suitcase. He tried to smuggle it out of the island but, not having the right connections, he got caught -- and fifteen years.

Now worse, off. Mavis she did what most folks in Hope do when they're in trouble: she went to see Mother Elsie.

Remember passing a thatched roof house with a red bougainvillea fence and coloured flags on poles? That's Mother Elsie's balm yard. The law calls her an obeah woman, but she does good deeds and is blessed with the gift of foresight.

As Elsie is her older sister, Mavis didn't take money as the rest of us do when we want advice, a spirit-removing bush bath or a love potion. Unfortunately, Elsie's work isn't effective if she doesn't get paid with silver.

Don't ask me why. It's just a law of a higher science we don't understand fully. The Bible says, "Now we see through a glass, darkly..."

So though she wanted to, Elsie couldn't help Mavis. But she did tell her a dream she'd

kept secret for four years, from Delroy born:

"A big head boy from Hope will become Prime Minister."

"What dat have to do wid Delroy? Him brain won't develop properly. Him can't turn Prime Minister."

"I think is Delroy soul I dream. De soul of de future Prime Minister enter de wrong body."

"How dat could happen, Elsie?"

"You remember Rosie have baby same day as you? De soul was supposed to enter Rosie baby, but Delroy head was bigger."

How I know about that conversation? Every word came out at the trial.

So Mavis left Elsie, without getting advice, bath or potion --and no better off. But as she was returning home, a mongoose ran across her path. Now, everybody know that mongoose crossing in front of you signifies bad luck. Mavis had to turn back to where she was coming from and set out again.

That's how it works. Don't ask me why. Higher science. As she went back through Elsie's gate, an idea struck her.

"Elsie, what going happen now dat Delroy soul not in de right body?"

"Don't de doctor tell you Delroy not going live long? When he die, the soul will come back in another body." "Oh. Elsie?" "Yes."

"I need some poison for a mongoose dat been stealing me eggs." "A mongoose?"

"Yes. You have a poison dat will kill it?" "You know what you doing, Mavis?" "A painless poison."

"I will go pick de berry to make it. Come back later."

And later Elsie told Mavis how to soak bread in the berry juice for the mongoose. Elsie also prophesied that the police would arrest them for the poisoning. Mavis would be sentenced to prison for life -- with parole possible in about 15 years -- while she, Elsie, would be sent to Bellevue, the mental hospital, for six.

But prophecies are not always precise. It was Elsie who got sentenced to prison

for Delroy's murder, while Mavis went to Bellevue.

Yes, man, drop in at Ben's if you're passing through. You'll get details from him that even I don't remember.

Oh, Elsie's dream? You know, we feel she made a mistake there, too. You see, Rosie just had another baby, a girl with a big head -- but healthy and pretty. Everybody in Hope is watching her. We think she'll bring us light.

*Micheal Reckord*

## **‘Extract from Short Story – Blessed’**

We leave, me in a blue dress and my aunt in green because she prefers to dwell on hope and life rather than on death. The neckline at the back of her new dress falls almost to her waist and reveals a little white spot which her floaty scarf cannot hide. I have never seen the spot before.

The people on the road say that my aunt does not know her age but she is still young and everything that she wears look good on her. The green dress though is not suitable for church and funeral.

We walk to the church because it is nearby. It is just a roof on pillars with sides open to the elements. We see James' mother standing at the entrance and although she looks as if she herself is dying she revives long enough to ask for Joel. My aunt mutters a reply and James' mother sags again. I know that Joel is in serious trouble.

We sit for only a few minutes and then my aunt drags me along to look at James lying in the coffin. We wait in line. Everyone before me, including my aunt look and say James is looking good, as if he is asleep. 'Him don't even look dead at all.'

He looks dead to me. That thing lying there is not James. James snored and he had lips that were full and beautiful. My friends and I used to say that James' lips were his best feature.

The turn out is good and there are many items on the programme. The pastor says, "If James were here he would want us to be happy,' and the congregation perks up. But, I feel sad. I want to do a lot of things after I leave high school and university. I want to travel to many places and I want three children. A girl first and then a boy and then a girl. My husband and I will be professionals. We will live long and be healthy. James was only eighteen. I will be eighteen two years from now. What if I do not live to be eighteen or even seventeen. It would be terrible if I don't.

Granny, who is my great grandmother is ninety-five and her brothers and sister are still alive. I come from a family of long livers. Long long life is in my genes. May God give me long life too.

It is a comfortingly breezy day. The yellowish tall grass next door is luxurious and silky as the wind passes through. A large flock of goats roam aimlessly until a brown dog gives them purpose. They scatter.

Is that little egret chasing that goat? No, it is only trying to keep up. I am going to Sonia's house this evening to listen to her new CDs. Surely this service can't go on much longer. My eyes are burning.

I can feel my aunt's stare and would like to tell her that I am not sleeping but I can't be bothered.

'Blessed.'

Joel? I look up. The boy with the microphone in his hand who is standing at the rostrum is Joel.

'What the hell is Joel doing up there like that?' whispers my aunt, suddenly trying to arrange her scarf more correctly.

'Blessed,' Joel says again defiantly before saying that he is going to do a tune for his friend.

*Patricia Headlam*

## **‘Extract from Short Story – Blood Lane’**

The news that my grandfather was sick was all the excuse I needed to board a plane and be on my way to Jamaica. I had spent the last two years working at three menial jobs, earning little and not seeing any way out of my present condition, but the idea of crawling back to my home village, defeated and unsuccessful was unattractive to me. The memory of my mother walking through the community proudly telling all that her daughter had gotten the opportunity many longed for to "go a forein" and make something of herself in the land of dreams and opportunity made me cringe. Now my grandfather was sick, a severe stroke had left him partially paralyzed and speechless; of my meager earnings I had been supporting him. I was his favourite grandchild and it was the most natural thing in the world that I should return when I heard that he was on the point of dying.

My little village is called Pinewood. It is situated about twelve miles north of the parish capital of Mandeville, nestled comfortably in the hills of Manchester. Manchester is Jamaica's most prosperous parish, made so by the influx of returning residents, who had spent the majority of their lives working in harsh and cold conditions and saving as best as they could, finally coming home to spend their latter years in the land of their birth and taking the power of the currency they had earned overseas with them. In contrast the residents of Pinewood were poor, most of the men were small scale farmers who sell their produce in the Mandeville Market, the women earn their keep doing domestic work in the big, palatial Mandeville houses.

I arrived in Pinewood by way of a Coaster bus in which forty persons were squeezed, although maximum capacity was supposedly twenty-nine. Had I arrived in like manner at any other time it would have been shameful. Where were the expensive car, the doting husband and all the other ostensible sign of riches? Villagers would snicker behind their hands, and they would be pleased that I had confirmed that really I had achieved no more than their daughters who at my age were already the mothers of two or more children. The bus let me off at the gate of Pinewood Primary School and I felt the memories swamping me as I looked inside. The school was originally built in the 1940's, back then it had been little more than a run-down board structure with only two teachers, underfunded and uncared for as schools for black children were then, but the thrust for free.

*Celeste Morgan*

## **‘Extract from Short Story – River Muma’**

After that every evening slave mother and free mother walked by the river crying for their children. Remembering as they walked in grief how both girls, golden topaz and magnolia white had had hair flowing and tumbling past their chin. One child's hair as black curly and unruly as the moonless night, the other's gold and smooth as the sunlight. Now they were both gone. Vanished, like all the other children with hair that flowed past their chin. Vanished into the realms of the River Muma. And the Urubu, and the ancestors once again heard the wails of anguish as the double-sided sword of vengeance broke two mothers' hearts, not caring that one was black and the other white. Then it was that the black mothers understood the Urubu's warning and his great sadness as he granted them vengeance.

Today mothers can only warn their children, especially those with long hair not to play in the river, for the River Muma still haunts the rivers of this land. The River Muma, who does not know or care that the children of this land are no longer different. And on nights, when the full moon sails across the sky, many say you can still see and hear mothers. Shadows walking and wailing by the Island's rivers. Reaching out their ghostly hands, pleading with the River Muma to let go of vengeance and return their children. But the River Muma just sits on her rock and combs strands of hair, silky smooth or curly coarse. Midnight black and golden brown, dark brown, red or sunlight gold, It matters not to her as she works them through her silver comb before she hangs them on the river wall to dance in the clear water.

*Jean Forbes*

## **‘Extract from Short Story – The Victim’**

The news as it reached me from the radio on the table beside my small bed was unbelievably shocking. A third victim had fallen prey to the inhumane maniac who seemed to be on a cruelty campaign, viciously chopping his victims to death with a sharp instrument.

It seemed so unreal that something so horrible could happen here. The last murder had taken place in a neighbouring parish and I was worried that somehow sorrow would find itself at our doorstep.

The folks around here were not worried though, nothing really serious had ever happened here except the men brawling at the domino table down by Mas Ezroy's shop. Miss Joyce who was the oldest person in our district said that nobody ever killed anybody in these parts. In fact, she said that little Rock had angels guarding it, protecting us from evil.

I stood there by the window, under a charade of calmness which belied my uneasiness. Across the street, children played; their joyful shrills and happy laughter at any other time would have been appropriate but now seemed distant and alien, and I wondered if they knew how cruel and unkind this world could really be.

I forcefully pushed these unpleasant thoughts from my mind as more pleasant ones came forward to take their place.

My thoughts drifted to Carmen. We had been friends ever since Miss Julie's basic school where we were the only two children who were not accompanied by a parent on the first day of school which Miss Julie kept at her yard. Carmen was the only person who could convince me to change my mind. She was dark in complexion, just like me but where I was plump, she was slender with a mass of unruly dark hair which she almost always wore in plaits that fell below her shoulders; evidence of her Indian ancestry.

She was an extremely pleasant person who smiled even when things were not going her way, and her gay and playful attitude was sometimes irritating though catching at other times and yesterday was one such time as she got me excited as well.

Carmen and I had big plans today. We were supposed to go over to her cousin Enid's house so she could help us to create new outfits for the biggest social event in

Little Rock's history: Becky Walters' birthday party.

Fortunately for us, we had been saving every penny for the past couple of months so we could attend her school's annual fair. Each year we could not go because we could never afford new clothes and our ordinary clothes were too ragged from years of washing and beating on the stones down by the river. So we were saving our money to buy a piece of the nicest fabric in town to make new outfits which we imagined would make us look like movie stars.

It was now a month from the fair and our cache was coming on quite nicely when we both decided that Becky's party was a much more spectacular occasion to gate, she ran back to make arrangements for the following day; she hastily hugged me then rejoined the group which continued on up the road.

Saturday morning dawned bright. The air was crisp and cool and all seemed well. Despite the uneasy feeling that still lurked somewhere deep inside me, I was excited and did my chore with an unusual fervor. First I tidied the house, which did not take long then I gathered my clothes and took them to the river to be washed. I did not spread them on the rocks to dry as usual but took them back and hung them on the line out back. I wanted to get everything done in time so I could polish my nails with a bottle of nail polish that Carmen had borrowed from Cousin Enid and comb my hair decently which would take some time.

After hanging out the clothes I immediately went to the kitchen to begin preparing breakfast which I always did on weekends; part of my upbringing according to Aunt Melba who I could see in the distance, cutlass in hand.

Breakfast was ready by 11 o'clock; the usual time for a Saturday morning. We sat at the small rickety table and ate in silence for a while before Aunt Melba started asking me questions about my plans for the afternoon, what time I was leaving and when I was expecting to return.

I told her what I knew she wanted to hear, finished my breakfast and began clearing the table to take the plates outside to be washed. Aunt Melba quietly went back to her farming.

My chores for the day were finally finished so I took a bucket to the river and filled the pink bath pan that was kept under my bed with water. I then undressed in the bathroom outside

where I took time lathering myself with soap then scrubbing myself from head to toe till I was clean.

I finished my bath, went inside and dried myself thoroughly and put on my duster over my naked body. Then began the task of combing my hair, but after a few minutes I gave up; put my head through the window and hollered for my neighbour Esmie, She was by my side within ten minutes and within another twenty minutes she had it all done in rows of cane row plaits that went to the top of my head which gave my face a pleasant change in appearance.

I was about to tell Esmie thanks when I remembered that old people said you were never to say thanks when someone combed your hair or it would all fall out and seeing that I did not have a lot to spare; I was not willing to take that chance.

Esmie left and I lay in bed listening to the radio and waiting for Carmen who was supposed to come over so we could dress together.

I glanced to the side of my room where both outfits hung, neatly ironed, on hangers on a nail.

I must have dozed off as I woke with a start to find Carmen standing over me, arms akimbo.

"Lazy bones, she remarked, her way of acknowledging me. Once again she had failed to call and had just entered my room.

We spent the next hour chatting and giggling as we got dressed. We donned our outfits and preened in front of the mirror while complimenting each other and we unanimously agreed that we looked great.

*Chandice Dalhouse*

## **‘Extract from Short Story – The Day Jesus Came to Mount Airy’**

The next morning I woke up in a cold sweat? What if he really was Jesus? I was going to have a whole heap of explaining and begging to do.

I brushed my teeth, washed my face, and then checked the sofa where my mother had slept. It was cold. She had probably left before daybreak. I went over to my room. The bed had been made, and the Bible that belonged to my grandfather on my father's side was between the pillows.

The light by the bed had been left on and when I went to turn it off, I saw Jesus praying under the mango tree my father had planted. I didn't want to interrupt him with my questions, so I went and made myself some breakfast.

I made my breakfast and ate it, looked out the window and Jesus was still praying. I washed the dishes, dried the dishes, and put them in the cupboard and he was still praying. Someone had to stop him, for I needed to confess.

As I walked out the back door, Jesus looked up and he saw me. He was wearing my father's clothes, but I didn't say anything because if he was really Jesus, then he could do anything he wanted.

"Jesus?"

But before I could say anything, he put his fingers on his lips.

"It's all right, Macky. Why are you always in a rush? Take it easy, man. Take it easy."

He rose, brushed the dirt off my father's pants, and looked down the hill to the sea. The fishermen, who had been up before dawn, were pulling their boats on to the sand and hanging their nets on the sea grapes.

"Come, let us walk."

"Where are we going?"

"To see Garfield Holding. He and I have some business."

Uncle Garfield knew Jesus? Everybody had said that he was a big man, but now I knew.

I closed the back door, but by the time I turned around, Jesus was already out the gate. He wasn't walking fast, but I could tell he was on a mission. I locked the gate behind me, and ran to catch up with him. We were about half way down the hill when we met Captain McKenzie who lives at the top of the hill. From his house, you can see all of Negril and all the land his family

used to own. It was because of him that many of my friends have to walk miles and miles, sometimes to Montego Bay because they are afraid of having sex with their own sisters.

Captain McKenzie was out for his "morning constitutional," and he was frightened when he saw me and Jesus. He hadn't spoken to me since the morning I was walking with Uncle Garfield and Captain McKenzie said to him, "Garfield, I hear your boy in prison. What you going do when him turn battyman?"

And Uncle Garfield said, "The same thing I always do. Send them to see you daddy. He's never complained to me."

Jesus just nodded as we passed each other on the narrow path. My eyes met the captain's when we both turned around to look at each other, but Jesus kept on walking and enjoying the sea breeze rustling through the breadfruit trees.

When we reached the bottom of the hill, we saw Miss Mabel at the crossroads. She was probably coming home from the rum bar and all the church sisters, who were coming in the opposite direction, were passing her as if they didn't know her. I could barely recognize her; the rum had twisted her face. We rarely go to church, only Easter and Christmas. But when we do go there, she is usually up there in the choir, singing her life away in every note, and then falling asleep near the end of the sermon and showing the congregation the other kingdom.

"You are a very rude boy," said Jesus, "but you will grow out of it. Now hurry up and make yourself useful."

***Geoffrey Phillip***

## ‘Extract from Short Story – Bammy Man’

Serve as a side to the ackee and saltfish.

Last week she served bammy with escoveitched snapper fish. The flavour was awesome. Mr Mckenzie was very pleased, he particularly likes snapper fish. She had washed the fish with limes and seasoned it well with salt and black pepper and some garlic. He was very pleased, and he was especially nice to her last week. She was certain that it was because he enjoyed the snapper and bammy. She thought it strange that the Bammy man had still not arrived. His stall was empty and though she had walk around the market several times in order to purchase her goods ... 2 lbs of tomatoes

- a tie of skellion and tyme 2 dozen oranges

- a piece of pumpkin for Saturday's soup cho-cho

- sweet potatoes and a dry piece of yellow yam

..the Bammy man was still nowhere in sight. She took the things she had purchased so far, to her car and packed them neatly inside the trunk. There were still a few more things to purchase. "The Bammy man will soon arrive" she thought, for he had never failed to show. Each week, she would find him somewhere in the market. He was very consistent, he was always there. She could set her pot on and wait for him.

She thought about how she was drawn to him. He was not particularly good looking or handsome. He just seemed to understand customer service. He was always pleasant as he served her and other customers. If he could not find the exact change he would say "Alrite pay mi next week, pay me de difference next week". "Such a pleasant fellow" she thought.

She had concluded that bammy was a universal food in the Caribbean. For in her travels, she met it in St Lucia and Dominica, though it was called by another name. In Barbados a friend's mother told her how to use it in the stuffing for baked chicken.

" ..instead of using breadcrumbs to stuff the chicken, cut up the bammy or just use the cassava flour, farine. Mix it with the seasoning for the stuffing., like you would with the bread crumbs. Then fill the chicken cavity with the seasoned bammy mixture and bake as usual."

*(Extract from Short Story – Bammy Man)*

Her bammy stuffing was a success at her last Christmas party. She had purchased extra bammies from the bammy man. As she brought them from him she remarked, "You know that bammy can be used in the chicken stuffing?". He looked surprised and then said, "Bammy well versatile". They both laughed.

"Where could he be?" she wondered, now that she had completed her shopping and he was still nowhere in sight. She knew that this was strange and an eerie feeling crept into

*Sophia McNamarah*

## **‘Extract from Short Story – Summer’s Mother’**

It's almost summer. The mangoes are hard and safe on the trees. The sun begins its day earlier, knocks off later and the 'schoolers' are getting restless. It's 2029 - the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first Facebook posting, and Jamaica along with the rest of world has been celebrating since the official February 4th anniversary. And Summer Breeze Simpson at sixteen years is very much like her namesake - long.

Imagine a female version of Fido, the 7Up doodle - long, slender limbs, honey brown hair - unprocessed - care of Summer's insistence on 'the natural'; bright, sparkly eyes like a hill's river and a mouth that was more often puckered than not. Imagine too the beginnings of a perfect 8 frame and excellent skin - thanks to her mother's religious water consumption while carrying Summer. But all that's physical, there's something else that makes Summer Summer Breeze Simpson. Summer hates her mother. As far as she's concerned, her mother is absolutely, positively the worst mother in the world - an overseer standing over her with the whip; "Don't talk to boys Summer!" ready to lash her with if she but looks at a boy.

It's the biggest puzzle how she could have named Summer Summer Breeze. I mean what's the use of such a cool name if you can't even say; "Hi, I'm Summer, Summer Breeze," to some pimply-faced sixteen year-old, and walk right by, leaving him weak in the knees. I mean, what's the use of being so cute, with such a cute name, only to hear the whip crack; "Don't talk to boys Summer!" if you but look at a boy.

"Daddy are you sure you didn't name me Summer Breeze and Mommy begged you to give her that one so I would like her, even just an intsy tinsy bit?" Summer kneaded her father Marlon Simpson. Marlon Simpson wasn't the blaming type, but perhaps another husband and father would have blamed his graying temples on his constantly warring wife and daughter. He was always the referee in their lives. "Summer, look at the logics, why would your mother think her unborn baby daughter would hate her? She named you from in the stomach Summer." This explanation was now an old record for Marlon. "Yeah, but maybe she's psychic and her ESP powers told her she'd nag the daylight out of me and I would hate her, so when you named me from before I was born, she begged you for that one."

"Summer, I didn't name you, your mother did. Now stop being so hard on her." "Me, hard on her, Daddy are you ...?" Summer was going to continue but she stopped. After all, her mother

was his wife, and women had a hold on men didn't they? The same way she would have a hold on some man one day if her mother wasn't around to crack the whip; "Don't talk to boys Summer!" Imagine, she thought, the ripe old age of twenty-six unmarried, no children and Mommy old and grey with the whip; "Don't talk to boys Summer!" She let split a laugh and headed for her room.

As expected, a teenager whose mother hated her and hated boys, had neither telephone nor cable in her room. There was an old TV that only showed TVJ, CVM and LOVE TV. There was also a Barney telephone - an old toy now a protest piece prominently displayed on her night table. When not having a phone got to her, as it often did, Summer would lift the Barney receiver and laugh and talk so loudly to the air on the other end her mother would appear at the threshold, arms folded, looking right into Summer's mouth, her own lips puckered in annoyance. As the routine went, Summer would stare right back at her mother as she hung up the phone and either pick up the book beside her and read, or settle down to some TV.

This time though there's no protest, Summer is just slumped on the bed watching TV, convinced that if her mother had her way, it would have only showed LOVE TV. And Latoya Simpson is in her room - the one she shares with her husband - crying.

"My only daughter, my only child hates me Marlon." With a Kleenex box on the bed, crumpled tissue beside her long, outstretched legs and tissue gripped by immaculately manicured nails, Latoya Simpson is the perfect Kleenex billboard. "Latty, she's sixteen: why don't you talk to her? Explain things babe. You know she's smart and mature. She understands things." This was now Marlon's regular plea to his wife. I really think it would change things Latty." Marlon rests his hand on his wife's leg as he finds her eyes.

It's another boring day at school - a single sex school. Summer had wanted to go to Campion or Ardenne but her mother vetoed it. Just as she was about to fill out the form indicating which school she wanted to attend, Summer had a desperate, last-minute idea. I'll tick M for male, change my name to Sume and write Campion, Ardenne, St. Georges and Wolmers. Hopefully I'll get in one of the first two, but if I pass for any of the others, I'll cut my hair, talk low and act real dumb like a boy, she thought. But then the reality of her mother hit and the flight crashed. There's no way her mother would allow her to go to a co-ed school, even if she

passed for it, and there's no way she could disguise herself as a boy under her mother's hawk eyes. And plus, there was the problem of the birth certificate.

And despite the virtual lack of a life, the virtual lack of privacy, running away was a foolish option for Summer who loved her father too much to be mad at him, much less to take herself away from him.

Her father was older than her mother, but definitely the younger, more fun one. It was he who introduced Summer to old school Jamaican music. Once, when the radio was playing some old school reggae, her dad just flipped and started dancing like a Pocoman to Chalice's Revival Time. "Come on Summer," he snatched her from the homework table and twirled her around chanting, "Me sey woow, woow, hallelujah, come mek we jump it in revival time, me sey yeah, yeah, hallelujah..." It was as if her dad was a boy again, hearing the song when it was new. "One 'im is a lawyer, two 'im is a fief, free 'im is a sinner wit' de mark a de beas'. Mi sey woow, woow....," her dad was dipping and twirling and grinning and spinning Summer to a squealing delight.

*Ann Margaret Lim*

## ‘Extract from Short Story – Flash’

A hammering on the door sent Flash scuttling under the bed.

"Where Flash? Me want talk to him." That was Weesie's drawl.

"Him not here. Him gone a country," said Grandma, slow and steady. "When him come back me wi' tell him you want see him." Grandma had an intense dislike for Weesie, partly because he supported a different political party from her, but mainly because he gave Mama cocaine to carry to England. It was his fault she was still there, in prison.

A guilty feeling had been gnawing at Flash ever since Mama had been sent to prison. She had carried the drugs to make some money to buy food and clothes, and so he could go to school. That was after Papa went to America to work on a farm and never came back. They used to live in a nice house near Sabina Park. Papa had taken him there one time to watch cricketô West Indies against England.

After Papa went away, Mama couldn't pay the rent, so they moved to Grandma's house. It was in a bad area, where garbage piled up for months; where rats were bigger than cats; and where mosquitoes carried diseases.

Grandma closed the front door and bolted it.

"Flash," she barely whispered his name. His real name was Abijah, but everybody called him Flash because he ran everywhere, fast.

"You have to leave. Weesie asking for you. Pack up your things and go to your Auntie Flo. Tell her why you come." Grandma's eyes brimmed with tears. Flash hugged her and she held him tight. "Take care, now. Me wi' come look for you soon."

Flash didn't need telling twice. One of the boys in Weesie's gang had already tried to recruit him. He had said,

"You can run so fast, we can use you as a look-out. When you get big, you'll get a gun."

"Me too young."

"How old?" he had asked.

"Me just turn ten." Flash had run off, not waiting to hear more. He didn't want to be one of Weesie's Warriors. Once a member, you could never leaveô it was like selling your soul to the devil.

Optimist

So he gathered up his few belongings and made his way to Auntie Flo's apartment,

only this time he didn't run, not all the way. He moved like a Maroon stalking the British soldiers in the Cockpit Country, constantly on the look out for Weesie's Warriors. Once he was inside the housing scheme where Auntie Flo lived, he felt safer. They called it a garrison because the people there all voted for the same political party, the same one Grandma voted for. Gangs were there, too, they would stop Weesie's men coming in.

"What you doing here, boy?" asked Auntie Flo, opening the door to him. She frowned, making her eyebrows look like two furry caterpillars going head to head. Flash put on his wide-eyed innocent look, which never failed to soften her heart, making her forget that once inside her house he became a jumping bean. He told Auntie Flo why he had come, and gave her some of Grandma's home-made coconut drops.

"Suppose I don't have a choice. Come on in," she said. "Don't give me no trouble, and don't get my Derek in trouble neither." It was more likely to be the other way around. Flash's cousin was two and a half years older than him. He attracted mischief like a magnet attracts nails, and had a knack for getting the blame pinned on someone else, usually Flash.

The cousins left for school at the same time. Derek was in seventh grade in a high school on the other side of town, and had to take the bus. When the bus was out of sight, Flash doubled back. He took the key from where Auntie Flo had hidden it and let himself in. He changed into shorts and a black tee-shirt, and hid his school uniform under the bed. One of Weesie's boys might see him if he went to school. Anyway, school was a joke. Most of the time he only half-understood what the teacher was saying, plus, it was only two weeks until the holidays. He left the apartment and ran to the waterfront.

*Helen Williams*

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