CARIBBEAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Book Festival

Marjuan Canady - *Callaloo: A Jazz Folktale*

Lauren Francis-Sharma - *Til the Well Runs Dry*

Leslie Saint-Julien - *More Than Me*

Book Festival

Every year during Caribbean American Heritage Month the Insitute of Caribbean Studies ensures that it recognizes the talents of Caribbean writers. The Caribbean culture imbues the work of its authors with a unique and vibrant perspective that needs to be celebrated.

At our book reading we have several authors who have worked to produce books that reflect the Caribbean experience. Canady's children's book is based on Caribbean folklore, and draws on the mysticism these tales are known for. It brings to mind the feling of wonder felt as a child listening to elders tell these stories. Francis-Sharma's novel explores that one universal feeling that will appeal to anyone, whether or not they are Caribbean: love. Saint-Julien's book holds up the mirror that we are all afraid to look into. Hopefully through her reading, we will be able to follow her lead in regards to introspection and self-exploration.

In addition to the readings from accomplished authors, we asked for submissions of short stories and poems from the Caribbean community. This year, we chose a theme that embodies the June celebrations: Losing and Rediscovering Caribbean Identity abroad. It is an issue that the majority of Caribbean-Americans can relate to. How do we maintain our Caribbean idenity while integrating into a foreign culture? How do we reconcile our accents, cultural tendencies, and mannerisms, with a new society that places different set of demands on us? Are we using a foreign country to escape or hide from our pasts? We wanted to explore these issues in literary format, and we have six pieces that we believe really reflect these ideas.

Thank you for being a part of the CAHM book festival. All books may be purchased on Amazon and other retailers. The books read by the authors are available for purchase at the Pórtico Bookstore.

Marjuan Canady

Originally from Washington, DC with Trinidadian/Black American roots, Marjuan Canady is a published writer, actress, playwright, director, educator and producer for both film and the stage. Her original works have received commissions from Harlem Stage and DC Commission on the Arts.

Her one-woman play, Girls! Girls? Girls. has been featured Off-Broadway, at national festivals as well as at over fifty national universities. Her second play, Callaloo: A Jazz Folktale has been seen at the Ellington Theater in Washington, DC and IATI Theater in New York City. Canady also served as a featured playwright at the 2013 Lincoln Center for Performing Arts Director's Lab for her play Callaloo: A Jazz Folktale. A Matteo Ricci and Schomburg Mellon Fellow, Canady has worked as an educator and image activist at various schools, community centers and institutions across the country. She is the founder and creative director of her production company Sepia Works. Her diverse body of acting work includes plays, films, television, commercials and voiceovers. In 2013 she published her first children's book Callaloo: A Jazz Folktale which she was recognized by the National Library of Trinidad and Tobago in their First Time Author's Program. Currently she is directing a documentary, Girls! Girls? Girls. set to release in 2015.

She is a graduate of Duke Ellington School of the Arts and holds a B.A. in Theater/African Studies from Fordham University and her M.A. in Arts Politics from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

Callaloo: A Jazz Folktale follows Winston, a young inner city boy who goes to Brooklyn, NY to get ingredients for his Aunt's callaloo dinner when he is magically transported to the Caribbean island of Tobago. There, he encounters the mythical folkloric characters that roam the island. Winston's fears and fantasies fuse together as the reality of his situation becomes dire. He must find his way out of this haunting paradise or risk being lost forever.

www.marjuancanady.com

Lauren Francis-Sharma

Lauren was born in New York but became the gal she is today in Baltimore, Maryland. She likes to think that the water fountains at St. Matthew School that inspired Tom Clancy were the same that inspired her, but in all likelihood it was the blacktop playground where every child born before municipal parks became fashionable, learned to fight and dream.

After graduating from Baltimore Polytechnic High School with no hopes of ever becoming an engineer, Lauren graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan Law School, distinguishing herself as a lover of baggy sweatshirts and bottles of Snapple. She practiced law in New York, D.C. and Maryland before giving what was left of herself to raising her two children. After several months of building her stamina with Sodoku puzzle all-nighters, she began to write 'Til the Well Runs Dry, a novel set largely in Trinidad and loosely based on her grandmother's story.

Lauren lives in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. with her husband and two children and she is working on writing as many novels as time will permit.

'*Til The Well Runs Dry* is a glorious and moving multi-generational, multicultural saga that begins in the 1940s and sweeps through the 1960's in Trinidad and the United States. The novel opens in a seaside village in the north of Trinidad where young Marcia Garcia, a gifted and smart-mouthed 16-year-old seamstress, lives alone, raising two small boys and guarding a family secret. When she meets Farouk Karam, an ambitious young policeman (so taken with Marcia that he elicits the help of a tea-brewing obeah woman to guarantee her ardor), the risks and rewards in Marcia's life amplify forever.

On an island rich with laughter, Calypso, Carnival, cricket, beaches and salty air, sweet fruits and spicy stews, the novel follows Marcia and Farouk from their amusing and passionate courtship through personal and historical events that threaten Marcia's secret, entangle the couple and their children in a scandal, and endanger the future for all of them.

'Til the Well Runs Dry tells the twinned stories of a spirited woman's love for one man and her bottomless devotion to her children. For readers who cherish the previously untold stories of women's lives, here is a story of grit and imperfection and love that has not been told before.

www.laurenfrancissharma.com

Leslie Saint-Julien

Leslie Saint-Julien is a child of God who keeps her "ear glued to the sky, listening for instructions on how to read the finished and mapped out sequence of her life" (Creed). She believes that her purpose in this world evolves daily, according to her Master's plan. It was in college that Leslie began writing Spoken Word poetry.

What began as a class assignment became her love. Leslie presented her first poetic spoken piece, Invisible Man, at her University's sponsored event. She has continued to write eversince. Writing is the way she expresses her soul. Born and raised in the East Flatbush town of Brooklyn, New York to Haitian parents, Leslie has been exposed to Hip-Hop and Caribbean culture her entire life. She enjoys highlighting her roots in her writing. Leslie is a born Leo, so her gifts are limitless. She breathes creativity, emotion, and love. Having many passions and growing frustrated with deciding on which one to pursue, Leslie is most happy pursuing them all! She is many things in spirit and believes it is a depravity not to use all her gifts and share them with the world. Leslie will undoubtedly use her gifts to be a force in helping others which is her greatest passion of all.

One of her mentors describes Leslie by stating: "The empathy and patient humility with which she embraces the concerns of others is a true gem. She has a fervent moral compass which guides her ethically and spiritually as she navigates herself through life." Leslie has Terrapin pride as a graduate of the University of Maryland. *More Than Me* is her first published work.

In her book *More Than Me* Leslie invites us to look into her mirror and stare as she tells you what she sees. For the first time ever, this young woman is speaking with her soul and instructing the world to hear with their heart her every word. There are many tones and emotions expressed in this collection of writings which is why More Than Me means more than you imagine. To know love, to know pain and to know joy is the journey of this book. *More Than Me* compels you to go deeper into yourself and explore the corners of your soul that have yet to be introduced to you. *More Than Me* was arranged at a time where Leslie realized that she was not alone as she navigated through life and overcame so many obstacles. She realized that God has been and will always be with her at every step on her pathway and it is more than her own efforts that have gotten her to where she is today. Finding a love that makes you want to sing, enduring a painful experience that makes you a strong giant and feeling such joy that it seems like a summer breeze even on the coldest day. This is more than you think and more than you. This is *More Than Me.*

El Eco De La Memoria (Memory's Echo)

Daniel Torres

A veces, sólo a veces
doy vuelta al sillón de la sala.

Lo pongo frente al ventanal
y me siento a escuchar los recuerdos.

De aquel balcón en el Trópico
con sus voces y aguaceros dispersos.

Las imágenes de siglos que se vuelcan
en un instante o en un momento.

Llegan todos ellos y se sientan
y comienza la tertulia que nunca acaba...

Los oigo hablar como hablaban,
levantarse como se levantaban.

Ir y venir por la acera de en frente
comentando enfermedades y males.

A veces competían por ser el más enfermo
o por saber cuáles eran los mejores remedios.

Pero siempre llegaban a la paz del regreso,
de hablar del ayer como un ahora.

"Se acuerdan", se decían unos a otros,
y desde entonces los escucho en el eco de la memoria.

Sometimes and only sometimes,
I turn around the rocking chair in the living room.

I place it in front of the window,
and I sit down in order to listen to memories.

Of that porch in the Tropics,
with its voices and scattered showers.

Images of centuries that come at me,
in an instant or in a moment.

They all come in and sit down,
and the conversation that never ends starts…

I hear them talk like they used to talk,
get up like they used to get up.

They come and go on the front sidewalk,
talking about diseases and conditions.

Sometimes they compete to be the most ill,
or to know which remedies they could use.

But they always arrive at the peace of going back,
of talking about yesterday as if it were today.

"Do you remember?," they said to each other,
and since then I listen to them in the memory's echo.

La Libreta

AJ Sidransky

Adela stared out the window fascinated by the frost and the pattern it made on the glass. She touched the surface of the pane. The pattern reminded her of the lace that edged the neckline of her wedding dress, tiny, perfect, and delicate. That was only a few months ago yet it felt like another lifetime. She wasn't prepared for life here in the Bronx. How could you be prepared for something you had no conception of? Santo Domingo might well be on another planet. She wouldn't feel its warmth anytime soon.

"Mama." Rosa tugged at her dress.

"Sí."

"Do you have my notebook?" Adela paused. She had told Rosa to speak to her in English. No more Spanish. She had to learn. Do you have my notebook? Tienes…? she translated in h er head. She looked at Rosa. "Lo siento mija, notebook?"

"Libreta, mama."

"Ay sí, aquí, I say here, notebook, libreta." She repeated. "This Inglés, she is killing me."

"No mama," replied Rosa, "you are doing good!"

Adela turned to find her mother-in-law waiting in the hallway. She handed her a shopping list then addressed her in Spanish. "Pick these things up on your way home please. I can't go out today, too much cold and snow."

"Por supuesto mama," Adela said pulling Rosa's arms through the stiff, heavy winter jacket Javier had bought for her. It was too big. He said she would grow into it. They couldn't afford a new coat every year.

Javier, she chuckled to herself, she loved him but she hated him all the same. He brought her here but where was he now? There was no work for him here in the winter. He went back to Santo Domingo to make what money he could and send it back to her. Meanwhile she struggled with the cold and the language and the loneliness.

"Vamos," Rosa said. "I don't want to be late for school. Where is my notebook mama?"

"Caramba," Adela said. She walked back into the kitchen and took the thin writing book from the counter and placed it into the pink Barbie knapsack already slung across Rosa's back. "Besa tú abuela," she said.

"Inglés," her mother-in-law said as she bent and kissed Rosa on the forehead.

"Jes," replied Adela. She couldn't understand why it was so important to her mother-in-law that she learns. She had been in New York thirty years and barely spoke a word herself.

Adela took Rosa's hand in one hand and opened the front door of the house with her other. The cold blast of air smacked her in the face. She bent over and slipped Rosa's scarf over her nose and mouth. Rosa immediately pulled it down under her chin.

"No," she chided Adela, "I can't breathe like that,"

"Mija, is too cold." She pulled the scarf up again. This time Rosa left it.

They climbed over the mounds of snow that had turned to ice and began the walk up West Tremont Ave to the school at the corner of University. The merciless cold cut through Adela's coat. Javier had begged her. They had fought in the store. He wanted her to have a down coat. It was the warmest. She wouldn't spend the money it was too much. She had picked out this one not understanding how cold it could get. He gave in because she was so stubborn.

She remembered the first time she asked Javier about the cold. They had been together about a year. He had just come back from New York. They lay together naked in his bed in his house. It was so hot and they had just finished making love. She only wanted to be cool. "What does it feel like," she asked him.

He couldn't really explain it. He took her hand and pulled her up from the bed. He led her into the kitchen and opened the door to the new freezer. They stood there naked in front of it. "Put your arm inside," he said.

She laughed. "No." She covered herself with her arms to protect herself from the cold that creeped out of the open freezer door.

"Put your arm in there and stand there for five minutes then you will understand."

She wrapped her arms around him and kissed him. He picked her up and carried her back to the bedroom and made love to her again. That was the morning they made Rosa. She felt the warmth of him between her legs as she walked up the cold frozen hill that was West Tremont Avenue, Rosa's little hand in it's mitten in hers wrapped in a glove that did little to keep out the cold.

At the front door of the old school building Adela knelt down and hugged Rosa, kissing her on the cheek. "Estudia, bien," she said then stopped and slowly said, "study good." Rosa hugged her back and ran inside.

The walk to the subway on Jerome Avenue was equally as brutal. The streets were slicked with ice. She wore sneakers almost all the time now. Despite them she slipped more than once. She missed her old shoes. Fashion wasn't a consideration anymore.

She checked her watch, already late. She had work as a housekeeper, filling in for Javier's various relatives when they went back to Santo Domingo or to Disney World for vacation. Though she hated it she was lucky to have the work. It was impossible to find anything suitable because she didn't speak Inglés.

Adela wrapped her coat more tightly as she waited for the elevated train. The wind whipped around her. She closed her eyes. Javier's voice was in her head.

"I want to marry you, bring you and Rosa to New York."

Had she really heard that? They had been together for many years. He never brought it up. She was afraid to ask. Rosa was already five years old.

"She can't get an education here," he said. "I want my daughter to be something. There's no future for her in this country."

She was elated but her heart sank at the same time. It was about Rosa not her. He wanted to guarantee his daughter's chance in life, not hers. He knew she would never let Rosa go without her. Rosa was her whole life. She would never let him take

Rosa without her. So, she believed, was the reason he married her. What was he doing now, alone in Santo Domingo? Was he alone there?

He had a reputation. She knew that, but she loved him anyway from the first moment she'd seen him. In the end after all the tears and the doubts and the accusations and the other women she was so sure he had, she was here and she was his wife.

The doors opened. She pushed into the subway car and squeezed into a seat unable to lean back all the way. She needed to sit down. She had been up for hours with so much to do in the house before she went to work, laundry and cooking and cleaning. Now she would go to someone else's house and work, laundry and cooking and cleaning.

At 161st Street the woman next to her got up. She slid back into the seat and closed her eyes. The warm air from the heater flowed down on her. Laundry, cooking and cleaning, it wasn't what she had trained for.

She wanted to be something. Her father was dead. Her mother had nothing. Her brother sent money from the United States but her sisters needed the help first. They had babies and husbands who didn't or couldn't find work. She was accepted to the University and she asked Javier to help her. He said of course. He paid for school. She earned a degree in Business Accounting.

She had grown up in the slums. She barely got an education but she was determined to go to college. She loved school. She studied for her entrance exams at night while she worked at a pizza restaurant near the Malecon during the day. For two years she went every day, happy to be there. She didn't know exactly why, but she liked the orderliness of accounting, everything in its place, sort of like cleaning. She hated cleaning.

She would stroll down by the Malecon in the afternoon after her classes with her friends, the warm breeze caressing them as they joked with each other. Many of the boys asked her for a date but she always said no. She had Javier and she was happy.

The doors opened at 86th street. Adela pulled herself up and shuffled off the train shoulder to shoulder with the other passengers. She filed up the stairs to the upper level and then the next flight to the street. She pulled her hat down a little tighter over her head as the cold struck her in the face again. She checked the address on the small piece of white paper that Javier's aunt Maria had left for her the week before. Second Avenue at 84th street. She hurried. At least here the streets were clean. The snow and ice had been removed. This was a white neighborhood and a rich one at that.

The doorman sent her up in the service elevator. She walked down the hallway to the end as Maria had told her to do and knocked on apartment 32A.

"One moment." The door opened. A well-dressed woman of about 40 stood in front of her. She extended one hand as she fidgeted with her earring with the other. "I'm Alice Waldstone."

Adela smiled and took the woman's hand. "Nice to mee you, Misse Wall.." she stumbled.

"Oh just call me Alice," the woman said then added very slowly, "you speak English?"

"Jes," Adela lied.

"Come in then, let's go over a few things quickly, I have to leave. I'll be back in about three hours."

"OK," Adela said, following the woman deeper into the apartment. She marveled at the size of the rooms and the view. The furniture was beautiful, different than anything she had ever seen before. Simple and straightforward with clean sharp lines. Not like the tortured dark wood her mother-in-law favored.

She followed Alice into the kitchen. Alice spoke continuously instructing Adela as to how and what she wanted done. Adela nodded her head and smiled repeating, "Yes" at appropriate intervals catching about every third word of what she was saying.

Tia Maria had warned her about this before her first day cleaning. "These women are very particular about what they want done and how they want it," she said. "You just simply smile and say yes then do whatever you would do otherwise. They rarely stay in the house while you are working and never notice what you do anyway."

Alice turned and walked toward a small room off the kitchen. Adela followed her. It was the laundry room. She pointed to several piles of clothing and gave specific instructions for each. "You understand?"

"Jes," Adela said though she didn't.

"OK. I've got to run. I'm late already."

"Bye," Adela said. She began loading the laundry. The machine was much larger than any she had used in Santo Domingo and any she had seen here. The little pile of cloths barely filled the bin halfway. She could save herself time if she combined it with another small pile, one less load to do. She looked at the various dials and buttons. Nothing made sense. For a moment she became very tense. How would she turn on the machine? Were the settings correct? She looked at the little pictures next to the various buttons and sighed. They didn't make any sense. She had to learn English. She closed her eyes and pushed what she thought might be the start button. The machine jumped a little, the sound of water flowing into the bin evident. "OK," she mumbled.

She walked back into the kitchen and took the large carryall with the cleaning supplies to the main bathroom off the hallway by the bedrooms. Cleaning the bathrooms was the worst part of the job, on your knees on the cold hard tile floor. And there were three bathrooms here. She sprayed the tub, sink and toilet and began scrubbing. Dripping with sweat after a few minutes, she stood up and grabbed glass cleaner from the carryall and sprayed the mirror over the sink. As she wiped it off she saw herself, sweaty, disheveled, her blue uniform wet with residue from the cleaning products. She closed her eyes for a moment and remembered her first day at work at her job in Santo Domingo.

It was so exciting. She dressed in the same flowered print wrap she had bought for her graduation and put on her red heels. She walked the path down to the street from La Augustina and waited for the guagua. She paid her 50 pesos and took the 40 minute ride downtown to the business district.

Señor Martinez welcomed her at the door. "Señorita Guzman, bienvenidos. Let me show you where you will sit. He walked her to her cubicle complete with a desk, a computer and a file cabinet. She

took out the small, framed photograph of herself with Javier and placed it on the desk.

"Tu esposo?" Martinez asked.

"Mi novio," she answered. She brushed her hand over the edge of the padded back of the desk chair. Martinez introduced her to her co-workers. She sat down and read the employee manual. Martinez came back a little later with her first assignment. She poured over it. She was educated. She had skills and a degree and a profession. She was someone.

Adela finished most of her work by the time Alice returned some six hours later. She had only to vacuum the floors in the bedrooms and empty the dryer and fold the wash and she would be done. The woman smiled and waved at her when she came in. A moment later she heard her scream. A moment after that Alice was in the bedroom with her screaming even louder.

Adela didn't understand and couldn't remember everything the woman had said but she did remember one word for sure. "Idiot, idiota." That hurt. She was poor, she didn't speak the language but she wasn't an idiota.

The woman waved laundry at her while she screamed, "No dryer, no dryer. Do you know how much this top cost? You've ruined it!"

Adela didn't know what to say. She didn't know where to put herself. "Lo siento, I sorry," she repeated over and over.

"Out, out," the woman screamed.

This much Adela understood. She grabbed her coat and walked toward the front door.

"Out," she screamed again.

Adela took a deep breath. She stopped at the door for a moment. "Money?" she said finally.

"Money? No money," she screamed even louder. "Out."

Adela didn't know what to do. She was so embarrassed. She walked out of the apartment, the door slamming behind her. The journey home was punctuated by tears and sobbing. More than once on the subway women asked her what was wrong. Almost always they asked in Spanish. They were women like her, Latino women adrift in this foreign world where more than just the weather was cold.

She trudged down the hill on West Tremont Ave. Her tears were still flowing, her face stinging from the cold wind. She didn't think she could continue. Coming to New York had sounded like a good idea but it had turned out bad. When she was in Santo Domingo she wanted only to come here, for Javier to marry her and bring her and Rosa to America. Now she was here, she was no one, she was alone, no mother or sisters to help her and he was in Santo Domingo without her. She would go back. She would take Rosa back. She didn't want her daughter living here with people like this who had no heart.

Adela stopped in front of her mother-in-law's house and wiped her face with her scarf. She didn't want them to see her crying. They would know soon enough what had happened. She turned the key in the door.

"Mama, mama," Rosa called out to her from the kitchen.

"Si 'toy yo," she called out as she took off her coat. She rubbed her arms to warm herself then turned the corner from the foyer into the kitchen. Rosa sat at the table with Adela's sister-in-law and mother-in-law. Her notebook was open in front of her. On the top of the page was the letter A with two gold stars.

"Mira," her sister-in-law said. She got the top grade in her English lesson."

Adela sat down at the table. She wiped her eyes again. Rosa hugged her and sat in her lap.

"We know what happened," her mother-in-law said. "Maria called from Santo Domingo. Those white women they don't waste no time. She had Maria's cell number."

Adela started to cry again. "I sorry," she said in English. Shem kissed Rosa. "I so proud of you."

"I'm proud of you too mama."

Adela looked at the notebook. She touched the two gold stars. She was filled with joy and sorrow at the same time. Three moments flashed before her, her graduation, Rosa's birth, her wedding. They faded away in an instant. She knew what she had to do.

http://ajsidransky.com/

Cascadu Love Affair

Nneka Edwards

Harry says he'll die,
If Leela (who really likes him)
doh sen' him some cascadu

~.~

Doux-doux, leh meh try yuh han'
Salt fish cook-up wid nice, steam yam
And if yuh want meh stay fuh true
Then ah want yuh make some cascadu

Curry it sweet or stew it nice
Dat goin' good wid bagee rice
O gosh, gyul, ah tastin' plantain too
Ah feelin' fuh a cascadu

Yuh could steam it up wid melongene
And pepper it wid some bird cayenne
Make de ting however yuh choose
Dis fellar lookin' fuh cascadu

Yuh could fry de fish in a big coal pot
And make sure it servin' hot, hot, hot
Yuh could colour it up wid some red roucou
Gyul fix meh up wid cascadu

Yuh know ah done gone quite Canada
It does make cold like hell in November
So me eh care if you is warahoon
Ah beggin' yuh, woman … cascadu!

Dis place have all meh pores raise up
I lookin' like how when chicken does pluck
It doh matter if ah wear ten socks and shoes
Lawd, Fadder hear meh! … cascadu!

Ah have one sweet job up in Toronto
An' meh wife dey she eh want
me to go
She does put plenty stay-home in meh food
O Lad! Meh only hope is cascadu!

Boss-man an' all eh' want me leave
He fixin' meh papers for permanency
Meh head so hot, me eh know what to do!
Ah beggin! Sen' meh some cascadu!

Ah doh want to be in no cold, cold town
Ah feelin' to be Trinbago bound
But ah 'fraid meh visa get renew
O Gawd gyul … cascadu!

I like yuh doux-doux, I like yuh bad
So even if is jus' wid green salad
I dyin' to come back home fuh true!
Lawd! Ah beggin! … cascadu!
I like yuh! Doh feel is mamaguy
When I see yuh ah only givin' sweet eye
So cook up some fish wid nice coo-coo
Meh mine only stick on cascadu

Mail it by some express route
'Else ah go freeze gyul! … cascadu!

Twitter: @joiedelens
Official website: www.nnekaedwards.com
Facebook: NnekaEdwardsArtist
You Tube: Nneka Edwards channel
Blog: http://www.joiedelens.blogspot.com/

Blood Rising

Carol Mitchell

"I thought you woulda been in Church."

The bedside clock showed eight am. It was eleven in St. Kitts.

"So why did you call the house?" I responded.

"I have to call. How else you gone know ah still breathing, eh? I can't talk long, today though. I just come from Church and I have a pot on the stove."

The scent of my mother's Sunday dinner wafted into my consciousness as clearly as if I had been there yesterday; black-eyed peas bursting on the fire, a mélange of herbs--thyme, cilantro, and more--stewing in the chicken.

"I asked pastor to say a special prayer for those who fall by the wayside," she said. "Those who been captured by the devilish ways of modern society; Those who forget where they come from and who they people be."

Of course I was the primary target of these prayers. When I was growing up, my mother put me before Christ and I had followed, attending her Church and absorbing her literal interpretation of the Bible. She kept me straight with the threat of eternal damnation.

And it had almost worked.

Then I moved to Minnesota and, surrounded by the desolation of bitter cold, I was able to think clearly and to realise that the needy, often vengeful God that my mother worshiped was nothing but a character from a fairy tale.

My mother prayed for my salvation every Sunday, but that morning, for the first time ever, I put down the phone in the middle of her barrage. I stared at my hand on the receiver for a moment as if someone else controlled it, forced it to commit that treasonous act.

I turned over and, still deep in thought I caressed the straight black hair splayed across the pillow next to mine.

"Your mom?" Nikki muttered.

"Yeah," I replied.

"Everything's okay?"

"Yes."

This was our Sunday ritual.

Nikki rolled over and the motion stirred a passion in me that supplanted all thoughts of my mother.

Next Sunday morning when I awoke the bed was empty. I checked my watch; ten am.

I walked into the kitchen. Nikki was putting something into the microwave that was mounted over our seldom used stove. I kissed her on the cheek.

"You left me," I murmured, nuzzling her neck.

"You were having nightmares. Who's Joshua?"

My body stiffened. Nikki turned towards me but said nothing. She knew when to leave things alone; she was just like me, putty encased in an impenetrable shell.

"Your mom didn't call."

I know that she thought she had changed the subject, but she hadn't, not really.

"She's angry. I hung up on her last week," I said.

"Will you call her?"

"Nah, she'll call when she's ready."

But I was worried. My mother's calls were my only link to home. When I migrated to the US I ignored the myriad of invitations from the tiny but vibrant West Indian community to join, eat, party, and worship. I kept to myself and re-engineered my accent until there was nothing but the tiniest sway in my walk to identify me as a foreigner.

But I couldn't refuse my mom. Sometimes her calls were rushed--she might be cooking, weak from a cold, or entertaining a visitor--other times she would linger on the phone, sometimes preaching, sometimes gossiping. Whichever way, fifty-two weeks a year, for ten years, at eight am, she had always called and always expressed surprise to find me home and not at Church.

Four pm. The phone's shrill ring clashed with the smooth tones of Miles Davis' trumpet. Nikki looked up from where she lay curled in the couch; her feet hanging off so that they wouldn't dirty the pristine white upholstery.

"Your mom," she said. No one else called our land-line.

Bracing for my mother's anger, I rose from my leather recliner and headed for the bedroom.

"Hello," I said.

"Walter? Is Uncle Tones. Is so long I ain talk to you boy."

Every teenage boy should have an Uncle Tones, especially a fatherless one like me. A well-known musician, he spent his adult life playing the sax all night and sleeping most of the day. He was the uncle who would take you and your friends to lime on the beach, turn a blind eye to the things boys got up to, and ultimately guide you when the worst possible trouble happened. He was the closest thing I had to a dad.

My mother tolerated his 'sinful' ways with drink and women and when I compared myself to him she would say, "He done grown, I cyan fix him again. You I could still work with."

"Uncle Tones!" I exclaimed. "What's up?"

"Boy you sound like a real yankee, eh? Your mother's always boasting how you're a big time accountant."

"Where's Mommy?" I said.

"That's the thing right there." He spoke slowly and I could picture him running his long fingers through his beard. I wondered if his hair had finally succumbed to the grey that had peppered it when I last saw him.

"She in hospital boy. Took in right after Church today." He paused and I waited for the worst. "It not looking good."

Something shifted inside me and I had to grab the bedside table to stay upright.

"What do you mean? What's wrong with her?"

"They say is her heart. She's unconscious, Walter. Is time to come home."

Uncle Tones continued speaking but my mind was far away, reliving the last time I had seen my mother, in the visitor's gal-

lery at the airport waving her big white hat so that I could identify her in the visitor's lounge as I crossed the tarmac to board the airplane. She had probably been singing at the top of her voice, blessing my journey with her favourite hymn, "I Surrender All".

Minnesota to New York, New York to St. Kitts, I traveled alone. White-skinned, slight-bodied, and quiet, Nikki was the antithesis of most of the women who had influenced me growing up. Her presence would highlight just how much distance I had placed between myself and home. I had no excuses to offer for having ignored my mother's pleas for her only living child to come home. Of course in the first few years there was no money, but that had changed once I got my CPA. I couldn't produce evidence of commitments that would have kept me away; no photographs of a wife and children and who would accept that my accounts were so precious that I couldn't entrust them to anyone else, not even for a week?

I closed my eyes and saw my mother floating on her back in the ocean, her eyes closed, her arms spread wide and her legs crossed at the ankles like Jesus on the cross. Her body, brown and water-saturated resembled a prune. But it was her face that was most disturbing, pale, as if bleached by the brilliant sun that soaked it. Her skin hung on her cheek bones as if it would slide off at the slightest touch. I waded towards her body and when I was just close enough to touch her, her eyes opened.

I must have screamed. The lady in the seat next to me jerked her arm away from our shared arm rest as if she was afraid to catch my madness. I knew what the dream meant. Although I saw my mother's face, the person in the water, pale, tied, and drowned was Joshua and it was time to face it.

My mother raised two well-behaved, God-fearing boys but in my last year in high school I rebelled. My best friends were Gary and Jeffrey, two 'D' students who didn't seem to care. With them I became another guy--pushy, daring, even ruthless. My mother grew grey. Only Uncle Tones understood that I needed to stretch my wings out from under my mother's thumb.

"Better to do stupidness when you young," he would say as he drove us down to Old Road Bay to hang out on the pier.

Then one day my mother made us take Joshua with us.

"Why we got to hang with your baby brother?" Gary groaned.

"Half-brother," I corrected. Joshua's dad had claimed him and Joshua had spent his eleven years shuttling between us and his dad.

We sat shirtless at the very edge of the pier, our legs dangling over the water. Gary opened the first beer. He passed it to me and I took a swig. Joshua's eyes opened wide. Gary grinned.

"If you want to hang with us you have to pledge. Like in them American colleges," he said. An avid watcher of the few US channels we got on cable TV, Gary was the expert on American culture. He looked around for a suitable challenge.

"Jump off the pier. Yeah, jump off or you can't hang with us."

Joshua looked into the water.

"You mus be mad," he said. "Down there full of rocks."

"You frighten?" Gary said. He laughed.

"Leave him alone," Jeffrey interceded. "He's just a baby."

I opened a second beer. I didn't usually drink more than one, I couldn't risk showing up at my mother's house drunk, but with Joshua around I had something to prove.

"I'm not scared," Joshua said. "But I'm not stupid."

"Baby," Gary taunted. "Go sit in the car and suck you finger or something."

"Mommy said you have to let me stay with you." He directed this at me. I stood.

"When we're out here you do what I say," I said, stepping closer to him.

Joshua wrinkled his nose and waved one hand in front of his face.

"I goin tell Mommy you been drinking," he said.

I took another step toward him.

Jeffery said, "Leave him, let him run to Mommy."

"He need to jump," Gary taunted. "Show us he's man enough to hang."

There was no fear in Joshua's eyes. They were focused on something behind me. I glanced back and saw that Uncle Tones was standing by the car, one hand forming a cap's peak over his forehead, blocking the sun from his eyes so he could see. It annoyed me that Joshua felt that Uncle Tones' presence would protect him.

I stepped closer to Joshua. I wasn't much taller than he was--he had inherited his father's height--but I blocked his view of our uncle. I nudged his left shoulder with my right one. He stumbled and fell. He didn't even have time to scream. The only sound we heard was a splash.

The blood rose first.

Uncle Tones was halfway down the pier before the body floated. Gary and Jeffery fled in the other direction, choosing to make the long trek home on foot.

Once Joshua's forehead was above water his whole head popped up and his body quickly followed. He looked as if he was floating on his back as we often did in the ocean. Only the blood marred the scene, the blood and the body's absolute stillness even as it rocked in the water. There was no saving my brother. Whatever he had encountered under the water had ended his life.

I felt a hand on my shoulder. Uncle Tones was next to me.

"I pushed him," I screamed.

"You didn't push him, he fell," Uncle Tones said.

"I pushed him," I repeated. "I pushed him and he's dead."

Uncle Tones gripped my shoulders and looked me in the eyes.

"You didn't push him," he said. "You hear me. Your mother just lose one son, she can't lose another in jail. He fell."

Ten years later I could still feel the pressure of Uncle Tones' hands on my shoulders.

I absorbed Uncle Tones' version of the story. I hadn't pushed Joshua. Now that I had finally allowed myself to relive the scene, I knew what I had to do, confess and accept punishment for my terrible deed. I closed my eyes again and despite the discomfort of the plane seat I slept

more soundly than I had in ten years.

I didn't give Uncle Tones when I was coming because I knew that West Indian hospitality would dictate that he come to meet me at the airport despite my protests, and I wanted to rediscover St. Kitts without the burden of conversation. I took a taxi straight to the hospital. Uncle Tones had said that Mommy was still there, unresponsive but breathing; alive.

I relished the wave of heat that rolled over me as we drove out of the airport. I breathed in the scent of ocean and of sugar cane. I was amazed at how much had changed. The road from the airport was twice as wide as it had been when I left and dotted with huge well-manicured roundabouts. A Rastafarian had set up shop on one of the roundabouts. He lounged on a folding chair sheltered from the sun by a pink umbrella. He had one arm outstretched offering slices of sugar cane for sale.

I entered the hospital. I had never been there before. No one paid me too much attention as I strode inside to the medical ward. It felt dismal, dingy and I decided that I would fly my mother out as soon as I could, get her some real help.

I found her room and walked in. There were three beds in the sparsely furnished room, two were empty, my mother lay in the third. She was connected to a few monitors, all beeping at a regular pace. A woman was bent over her. I cleared my throat and she turned to look at me with the softest brown eyes I had ever seen in an adult. She was beautiful with high cheek bones and a wide friendly mouth. Her hair was natural, loosely pulled back into a bun that made her look youthful.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"I'm her doctor. Who are you?" she challenged.

"I'm her son."

"Walter?" she cried. "Oh my God, Walter. You don't remember me? It's Tasha."

I remembered Tasha from school, we had been friends in the days before my rebellion. She hugged me and I let myself be pulled into her genuine, welcoming hug. My body relaxed although I hadn't realised that I was tense. I hugged her back. When we finally broke the embrace, Tasha stepped away blushing.

"You're a doctor?" I asked. I was immediately embarrassed by the incredulity that I heard in my voice.

"Yes." She blushed again.

"I want to take her to the US."

Tasha's manner changed. It was as if she put on a mask of professionalism. I realised that I must have offended her, first by my surprise that she was a doctor and then by implying my dissatisfaction with her care.

"You certainly can, she's stable, all her vitals are good. I think the problem is with her psyche. Taking her out of her comfort zone might do more harm than good. Things are not as backward here as you think. Think about it. Pray about it."

Instead of comforting me, Tasha's words confirmed my desire to move my mother. It sounded like she was suggesting some sort of black magic, all this talk about my mother's psyche and prayer.

"Thanks, I'll think about it," I replied. Tasha left the room.

My mother lay on her back with her eyes closed. She looked so peaceful, as if she was just enjoying a lovely nap. I took her hand.

Mommy?" I said. There was no response. "Mommy?" I said a little louder.

I gave her shoulder a shake. No response.

I sat in the chair at her bedside. I figured I should talk to her, but I had nothing to say. I looked around and saw the King James Bible on the bedside table. I picked it up. I knew the words would comfort her. A page was bookmarked. I opened and began to read a paragraph that was highlighted.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"Forgiveness," I breathed.

"I'm in heaven?"

I looked up to see my mother's eyes open and staring at me.

"No, Mommy. You're still in St. Kitts, still alive."

"You? In St. Kitts? Reading the Bible?"

Her eyes filled with tears. I couldn't help myself, I started to bawl and it was like the flood gates had been released. I cried for Joshua, I cried for all the years I had isolated myself from everything that was important to me.

"I pushed him. I pushed him," I said when I was finally able to speak.

My mother ran her fingers through my hair and massaged my scalp, just as she did when I was a boy.

"I know darling," she said.

"You know?" My tears dried up immediately as I looked into her eyes.

"Yes, I saw it in your eyes when you came home. You told me in the nightmares you had after Joshua died. I saw it in your face when you said goodbye. I heard it in your voice as you turned away from God. Plus," she gave a slight smile. "I asked Uncle Tones. He told me. It was an accident."

"It wasn't, I pushed him."

She put her arms around me as well as she could with all of the tubes that were connected to her.

"It was an accident," she said. "God done forgive you long time. You just have to forgive yourself."

Lying in her arms I thought, 'And maybe, just maybe I could.'

The Journey Through Time

Soraya Kalpee Loutoo

Your voice is like a musical song
But I am having problems understanding
What is your native tongue?
The words spilled from the man interviewing

A lump of disbelief appear
(Breathe, remember articulate, speak a little clearer)
The Queen, her language we share
(Breathe, remember to speak a little slower)
Trinidad was also under her care

Data entry would be best
You will love it there
No meetings with clients yet
There will be nothing to fear

What rubbish, my mind screamed
But my strict,
don't answer back, up-bringing,
grudgingly agreed

To college I went at nights
A good education my West Indian parents said makes things right
At the Bank I practiced the art of speaking
But yet again
I was passed up for management training

My sense of humor hid the pain
I still was not ready to assimilate
I now had to divide me to reign
Be a Trini at home only; to integrate

I changed my fight
I shaped a different me
I began to absorb this life
My kids, they needed me
They will live here, you see

Sadly, hubby did not see the need
So we each trudged our own pathway
My parents hung their heads in shame
Indian women are trained to obey

Years rolled by
My faith returned as my guide
I finally found my voice
I finally found my pride
I am no longer a lost girl who cries
I am a blend of two worlds
Showing others where the journey lies

The Theobroma Procedure

Rhea Ramjohn

The life of a cocoa bean starts in a dark, moist, warm, type of womb, stirred to consciousness by the echoes of a throbbing. Warmth, warmth, warmth. Everything feels tight, compacted round its siblings in the darkness of a rib-caged pod, each bean knowing nothing of the world orbiting outside its cocoon. It lies in the cushioned gel of mother's milk, feeling greatly attached to some throbbing larger whole. However, with the passage of some time, the cocoa bean begins to feel its separateness from each sibling, from the pod, from the taste of its lactating mother. Once in a while, the marching and singing of plantation harvesters wax and wane under coats of sunshine and in reaction, a great rattling of the pod occurs. It is a large disturbance; nevertheless, the brown little beans clutch the slimy sides of the milky gel and wonder when the shaking will bring them one day to the brink of their unease. The anticipation lasts no long torturous amount of time, for the pod is cut sharply one day with a cutlass from its clasp of the bearing tree. It goes reeling and tumbling into the hands of an aged woman, head banded up with a head-scarf and a basket strapped around her back. Her powerful right hand bears down with the sun-blinding hot blade of a cutlass and BAP! it makes the linear cut straight into the center of the hard cased pod. Her left hand, holding the split fruit, angles it open and in another swift motion the aged harvester's blade slides alongside the casing to scoop the jellied beans into her back basket. The hard darkened pod, now halved and hollowed, gets tossed beside the roots of the cacao trees. The rhythm of the cutting, slicing, scooping, and tossing, makes music when it meets the voices of the laborers. This calypso of melody resonates in and around the beans, soothing them as they quiver in their mother's milky jelly, vibrating to the walk and thump of the laborers stride. More and more cocoa beans are tossed in the hand-woven orb, crowded in their own sweat. They have no concept of the journey ahead, nor of the demanding refinement that will lead to their recognition and appreciation. The reeling and feeling of weightlessness overcomes them again as the harvesting women toss their baskets over the rim of rectangular boxes located at the edge of the cocoa fields and next to an expansive paved flattop. The beans slip and slide against each other into the metal cases and plop fat, bouncing until the movement abruptly stops and the case is covered. The darkness enveloping them is unlike the blackness they knew before. This enclosing has no thumping, no throbs to assure them that they are in the grasps of something protective. Now the dark permeates with heat, a heat emanating from within that surpasses the blazing temperatures outside the metal box. The milky jelly begins to liquefy and oxidize, oozing past the smooth bodies of the brown beans to pool in a vat of decay at the bottom of the bean pile. Days of this fermentation continue until the beans reach their peak of ripeness. The heat traps the rotting stench until it exhales swiftly like a deflated balloon the moment the metal lid is lifted off the box. A tall sculpted young man lifts his right leg and straight-facedly uses his nimble feet to push the boxes over onto their sides. The goop of beans and brown decayed liquid spills out like a beachy wave onto the concrete flattop. Time to dance de cocoa! calls out a beautiful woman leaned against the beams of the cocoa house. Its pillars support a high-ceilinged roof and are fitted with wheels allowing the workers to glide the house over or away from the flattop. This large structure dominates the fields of the plantation, and from a far away hill, looks like a dollhouse in the back garden of some titan toddler. Now it is being parted, rolled aside by methodical men to reveal the baked stone slab on which the fermented cocoa beans are tossed. Alongside the pitch, young boys sit with their drums between akimbo knees. Slim women with bundled crowns walk flat footed balancing waxy blue buckets of water upon their heads. They approach the limber men on the concrete pavement. These men bend over with the ease of weeping willows to spread the slippery cocoa beans into an even plane of organic mess. They stretch, bare-backed, donned with something like a cropped dohti; their posteriors wrapped with a coarse cotton garb around the waist. The first drumbeats pelt into the afternoon air. The women raise their long arms high above the water buckets and stoop with straight backs to pour the water like waterfalls over the assembly of men and cocoa. Wet and energized, the men begin to stomp their powerful feet purposefully mashing the cocoa beans out of their filmy sacks. Each bone of their bodies matches the rhythm of drumbeats pouring over the scene, crystal clear like the water falling out of the lines of buckets the women are bringing ceaselessly to the pitch. They all begin to stomp their bodies-dancing the cocoa. The splashing water moves the decayed jelly off the small oblong beans and the hard bottoms of the men's feet slosh away all the bits of creamy membrane. In the waves of the dance, the cocoa swishes chaotically, lapping up the freshness and vitality of the river water. The drumbeats and voices of the plantation workers inspire the feeling of belonging in all the cocoa beans. They toss about freely feeling replenished and unafraid. They soak in the solidarity of their surrounding siblings and leap uninhibited out of the water. They feel no torment under the dancers' feet, rather a soft squishing when passing through toes and under heels. Some beans are actually wiggling out of their jelly swaddling while others are being forced out with the heavy thumps of a bare foot. Regardless, it is the dancers' rhythm that causes the beans to spontaneously skip from wave to wave, inhaling the breezes of hot air zipping over their washed bodies. The dancing continues into the dusk until the shiny beads sway soft and tired and clean in clear puddles on the concrete. As the drumming eases off into playful call and response of teenage boys, the dancing men slow to towel themselves off and the women rest their plastic buckets to the side. The beans are evened out with old, yet dependable rakes into a waxy brown carpet. The men push the wheels of the cocoa house straight on its tracks so that the damp washed beans are covered for the night. The next morning, the house is again pushed on its tracks to uncover the resting field of cocoa. The rising sun hits each one, warming it once again, stealing away every last bit of moisture. The beans bask renewed and draped under a blanket of comfort and care, apathetic to the dealings being made. The routine of covering and

un-covering continues for several days until they are completely dried. Shortly thereafter, the strong bodied men appear again with wheelbarrows and asses, shovels and bags. Without alarm, the beans are scooped up unceremoniously and poured once again one atop the other into coarse plantation-woven bags aching of dust and drought.

Another thumping journey begins and there is disorientation stirring in the bags. A bevy of uncertainty about the passage of time and the meanings of distances swells inside the sack. The novel feeling of posing questions and skepticism begins to mount. They, once feeling purposeful about their assumed destinies of growing and maturing to the tempo of Caribbean life, now sense the intervention of some industrial, omnipotent hand. They become uneasily conscious of their sterilization and their absolute detachedness from one another, and more so from that long gone tree cocoon that once nourished them. Nourishment seems no longer necessary, for they are at present dry and compact and in a state of seemingly suspended animation. Their destination remains shrouded in the dust of the shipping pallets. Each bean muses over its state and speculates its role in the vast world, of which it is so acutely ignorant. The pulsing of differing movements outside the cargo box continue, some reminiscent of the swaying on the tree trunk back on the plantation, some rough and telltale that they are no longer on solid ground. On the journey, the sounds of waves licking boatsides are replaced with whistelblows and the chug chug chugging of industry. The voices that seep into the storage cartons holding the cocoa beans are not watery and melodious like those of the plantation estate, instead they sound like people speaking through pillows and such conversations leave the ears of the cocoa beans yearning for interludes of laughter. The cocoa beans are shipped to Europe- a subject, a continent, a destination that is just an intangible inkling of foreignness. They speculate their usefulness to the creatures of the new culture awaiting them on the opposite shore. When the rumblings of travel cease, the beans fall out once more from containers and stumble one after the other onto slow methodical conveyor belts, which spill into cast iron vats, which spin round and round over orange hot flames. The beans fall helplessly and singularly into the pot and are stirred dizzy in the roasting process. The soft billows of smoke flaps upon itself out the chimney and coats the small European villages with a tarnished and organic fragrance, making Pavlovian mouths of children water after inhaling the seductive scent of roasting cocoa beans. Stern overalled workers at the warehouse receive the sensitive cargo and glance gently at the master chocolatiers strutting nearby, who are boastfully instructing on the craft of refining chocolate. Following them is a small hive of hunched apprentices fidgeting in hairnets. The unrefined bean, pipes the head chocolatier, must be roasted to release the inner hearty aroma that blends so well with its cousins, coffee and tobacco. The next stage, he continues, is the milling of the beans which incidentally reveals the actually fattiness of the fruit. The crushed layers ooze cells upon cells of a butter that oils the skin and provides a sheen as if one were bathed in tubs of sunshine. The more the bean is ground at consistent pressure, the master instructs, the more malleable its texture becomes. Melted altogether, the beans create a perfect paste- a potter's clay if you will- for a master's mind and imagination. The addition of milk and sugar elevates the cocoa beans existence! insists the master chocolatier, as he thrusts a freshly roasted bean in an apprentice's face. The smoky odor clings to the hairs quivering within the student's nose and his glands respond by swelling, reacting to the robustness of the buttery bean. The instructor tosses the roasted bean into the grinding path of the in-house mill. The key element in extracting the most excellent and divine qualities of the cocoa bean, says the chocolatier more seriously now, lies in tempering. This is where the bean's bitterness is tamed. Repeated, yet measured heating and cooling of the mass will exact you your desired result. It is out of the swampy jungles of the islands that this morsel originates, mein geselle, he goes on, but it is we, the Swiss, who have plunged into the depths of it complexity and have masterfully crafted the cocoa bean into the epitome of decadence. We have elevated it from humble origins to the unique indulgence that is called schokolade. Behind walls of glass and brick, cookie-cutter white-cloaked chocolatiers stand rigid over intricately patterned moulds. Their hands, clinically white, hold bowls steady and tipped to allow flow. Light brown, like the hair on a young brown cow, the liquefied chocolate, sweetened, smoothed, and lactosed, folds easily upon itself into the konditors' moulds of lambs, teddy bears, and tulips. The master chocolatier looks away from the windowed room where his colleagues experiment and walks his apprentice from the roasting vats, past the grinding mills, and into the mixing room where steaming hot chocolate molests ones pores. All this time, the cocoa beans endure the simmering in the roasting vats and surrender themselves to homogeneity in the grinding process. Every bean is squished into the arms of its siblings again and again and their cores, crushing under the weight of the European mill, give way to the inevitability of acculturation. They morph from Trinidadian plantation cocoa beans into a luster of Swiss chocolate- a large indiscernible shiny brown mass succumbing to the will of the master's skill. An opaque wall of milk falls without interruption into the giant mixing pot and sparkles in the left corner of the high-ceilinged room catch the apprentice's eye. White flakes of sugar are added unabashedly to the mix and it churns frothy, causing every mouth on the premise to swell with saliva, yearning for a taste. The apprentice walks farther, following his master chocolatier into the confectionary parlor. He silently seats himself to observe the chocolate masters standing in a row carefully flick their wrists, holding metal whisks. The eldest motions the young man over to note the fresh chocolate's silkiness. He is lifting the whisk again and again to allow gravity to reveal the suppleness of the substance. He rests the whisk on the table and dips his little finger in the bowl. It emerges coated, and he holds it close to his nose. His reflection beams back and then he quickly inserts the finger, up to his knuckle, in the apprentice's mouth. When he pulls his finger out, a puckering sound is all that's heard. The liquid chocolate remains on the apprentice's tongue and the instructor's pinky hastily dries in the mild kitchen breeze. In his mouth, the treat warms and melts down to the back of the student's throat. The sting of sugar stirs his eyes and the adulterated bitterness of the rich chocolate climbs up to his nostrils. It leaves him with a thirst and although he knows a glass of water would be appropriate, all he wants is to lean his face over the bowl and put his lips on the glassy surface just to smear the velvety chocolate on his melanin-starved skin. His wide blue eyes

stare at the master chocolatier and his yearning for more does not escape the experienced master. Careful, it has the tendency to excite, the pragmatic master lectures to him, not due only to the sucrose content, but the cocoa bean holds properties of its cousin the coffee bean. It has been shown to provoke amorous feelings, so pay attention to not succumb to all its temptations. Extended consumption of this exotic fruit will lead to a sedentary nature, for it after all hails from lands of sultry sedation. His raised white eyebrow further warns the pupil of the addictive nature of such sweet indulgence and it forces the apprentice to swallow his desire with the cold neutrality of spit.

The pretty moulds are filled into the night with lighter and darker breeds of chocolate. The student learns to bastardize the bean further by contributing elements of cinnamon, hazelnuts, and raspberries. Glimmery balls are fashioned with granulated sugar and squares of petit fours are placed in the cooling room and the lights turned out. The chocolatier's maufacturing house in the Swiss valley lies still in snow batches under full moonlight. Inside, the chocolate is sitting coated in frills of pink fondant and crowned with caramelized wrinkled walnuts. The fanciness of it all blankets the chocolate in a powdery haze almost erasing the reality of a Trinidadian plantation, eternally bearing cocoa, half a world away. In the frigidity of that cooling room, it is stretching to remember the tingling of sunshine or the sensation of being a throbbing living thing. It reflects on the metamorphoses conducted under the skilled hands of Swiss education and how it is sculpted into a European emblem of seduction, indulgence, and craftsmanship. Yet, it knows in its natural state, cocoa is intensely bitter, ripened under lashes of equatorial sun, soaked in pelting raindrops, and coached by the rhythms of the plantation to sway to its own calypso beat. It knows that as a bean in Trinidad it would have dropped to the black forest floor and burst into the ground to latch roots. It would have grown into its cluster and endured the consistency of Caribbean living with its reliable wet seasons and punctual sunsets. The decadent morsels couldn't be recognized now as the thing called cacao.

The master chocolatier opens the heavy door of the cooling room the next morning. The trays of Swiss chocolate are placed on the packaging tables while petite women donned in white hats, shoes, gloves, and dresses, extract the delicate treats from their intricate casings. The chocolate is now accustomed to the feeling of toppling, or at least the feeling of not quite standing correctly; and here comes the sensation again. A menagerie of delicacies tumble into clear cellophane bags and the women's fingers dance colorful ribbons round the necks of the packaging to seal in the chocolate's spicy perfume. A sheet of adhesive stickers are removed from a cardboard box and placed in the midst of the nimble women workers. Each crinkly bag is smeared with the sticky label and the chocolate inside peeks from behind it. The pomp of it all, however, could not hide the bold lettering boasting the contents: 70% Trinidadian Chocolate Irresistibly Smooth. The bits of semi-sweet chocolate bump against each other as the lid of the shipping box closes them once again into darkness. The thump, thump, thump of the wheels over bricks, pushing the boxes from side to side, vibrates through the fondant frills making the chocolate throb.

Suggested Reading

Oh Gad! by *Joanne Hillhouse* is a stirring novel about a woman facing cross-cultural odds and redefining everything she understands about her family, herself, and the country she's never really been able to call home. http://jhohadli.wordpress.com/books/

The Goat Woman of Largo Bay by *Gillian Royes* is part of a set of mystery books based in the Caribbean. The hero of the series is Shadrack Myers, a jack-of-all-trades in a cliff-side bar. Shad loves to be in the middle of everything and sees himself as the local sheriff in Largo Bay, a fictional village on the eastern end of Jamaica. Barely able to read and write, he has an abundance of common sense and experience, and uses them to solve the problems that come across his path every day.
http://www.gillianroyes.com/

The Roving Tree by *Elsie Augustave* takes place in Haiti, and centers upon Iris Odys, a little girl who gets adopted by a white couple visiting Haiti, and gets taken back to the United States, where she comes of age just as the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s is erupting. Iris travels to Zaire, an African state that's having an identity crisis of its own. At the heart of the novel is the issue of adoption of non-orphans from Latin American countries, transracial adoption, women's and gender issues.

Ti Kay Nou, Kwéyol for Our Little Houses, is a charming insight into the traditional wooden dwellings in Saint Lucia. When *Elma Felix* set out to write Ti Kay Nou a few years ago, she wanted to engage readers visually, about the importance of historic preservation and the undocumented history vanishing, before it got too late. With more than 150 original, full color images, the book is organized into 11 Quarters, the historic linage of the islands' districts.

I know God (Memoir) by *Stephen Edward Sealy* is an unusual honest self exposure, matter of fact writing by a humble Saint Lucian from Garrand in Babonneau, "born out of wedlock or illegitimacy" as he pronounces early in his book. It is a book of open confessions not looking for absolution but rather with love and confidence in his God, and through the maternal love and guidance of his mother, Josephine Eunice Edward Sealy known as Ma Rod, was able to pursue his personal goals and "serve and claim others as brothers and sisters" as he followed on God's work.

Mariana by *Vjange Hazle* tells the story of Mariana, a young Englishwoman who arrives in colonial Jamaica as the wife of the much older Fernando Sykes. She meets with resistance from a strange people she struggles to understand. Sam-Sam, her husband's driver, comes to her rescue and the passion is ignited. In this island where people "love and hate with the same passion", and tropical nights are not only for sleeping, Mariana learns that love knows no boundaries.

Michael Coomb's **Sight Unseen** is about a courier who is asked to keep an eye out for a young lady who has disappeared. He is given a picture as an aid and gradually falls for it.

Spaces by *Carole Boyce Davies* is a vulnerably daring memoir, with bittersweet tales of traumatic yet transformative stories from the Civil Rights Movement through current day. It discusses topics of migration and race in a collection of short essays.

CAHM Upcoming Events

JUNE 11 Book Festival

JUNE 12 The Play's The Thing

June 13-15 DC Caribbean FIlm Festival

JUNE 14 Anansi Festival

JUNE 16 Climate Change Forum at Consulate General of Jamaica in New York

JUNE 20 CHO & ICS @ Tribute to Hollywood & The Arts

JUNE 22-27 National Caribbean American Legislative Week

JUNE 22-27 National Caribbean Restaurant Week

JUNE 28 DC Carnival

JUNE 29 Caribbean Comedy Festival