

*The Whites of His Eyes*

*TW: Eating disorder*

The ocean expanded in wide cloth, tucked in at the horizon. Yemaya lay underneath, playfully turning and shifting, creating waves that nestled and pushed the sides of the small skiff in disorienting, random motions. The man set his eyes forward, imbuing the boat with one intention: East.

Olodumare lay stretched across the sea at night. His skin, turning dark blue in the moonlight, was perforated by gleaming sprinkles of fire as intentional and prophetic tattooing. The boy's skin also turned the same shade of blue in the moonlight, yet he wondered how it must have felt to have patterns poked in it as the sky did.

When the clouds covered the light of the night, the boy played games in the sea. He kicked his feet over the side and felt the slight resistance and tension. He felt the water shift and scurry away from his feet. He prayed that one day the water would no longer fear his touch, that he may be strong enough to take the boat upon his back and walk Baba and Mama home...

The woman's eyes stayed stretched towards the sky. The white clouds made beautiful, glistening patterns across her dark irises. She whispered to herself prayers and supplications to the gods. Sometimes in the colder nights the boy saw smoke forming a pillar of incense from her mouth. He imagined it reaching up to the heavens, being inhaled by the ancestors in an offering.

When the night called the child's eyes to sleep, she unwound the dense cloths covering her body. She reached a hand in the water and began running it across herself, dissolving dirt under her fingertips. Her skin was a linen thrown over bone, her hand, as it traversed her, turned and flexed abruptly to accommodate the protruding rib and pelvis that made her. The roughness of her hand contrasted sharply with the smooth unfilled skin that hung from her arms and stomach. When she was satisfied, she wrapped the cloths around her again, filling out the absent flesh and fat in a convincing facade. Her body once sat plentiful and ripe as the motherland, a body she knew she would never know again.

She reached into the rations and pulled out a small wooden bowl. She discarded the bad parcels in her hand discreetly into the ocean, whispering prayers.

She never slept.

The man's eyes stayed stretched forward, burned and tormented by staring at the sun as it rose from the horizon. Although his body sat perched on the ship, his broken mind stood entirely on the Nigerian shore. There he pulled long chains attached to the skiff towards him, guiding them home with his pure intention. He stayed here since they escaped the dank vessel headed for the New World, with salt crusted around his feet to age his station.

He remembered being in the womb of that whale, black bodies digesting in the sordid work of sordid men. Men that had caustic hands and dogma, that when subjugated to, allowed only the choice of consumption by shark or man.

His presence sang a perpetual elegy, one like a siren's song, beckoning the boy and his mother into his madness.

The woman looked back to the sky, begging the stars to look back at her.

Day after day the woman's mouth slowed and slowed as prayers slurred into soft mumbling. The incense that once was turned into molasses that bubbled and boiled onto the ground. When the boy noticed this he took up the prayer himself. Beginning as incoherent nonsense over time the prayer solidified into a smooth line. He poured libations into heaven for the rain, for the sun, for the orange fire of the sunset.

One night in a lucid state he saw the incense rising from his mouth as he uttered the prayers. The ancestors inhaled the sweet aroma and dropped mana onto his mother in return. She layed over the basket, eyes closed and at peace as the golden drops fell on her.

The boy spent the next several days in prayer. The sky, transfixed by his eyes.

When hunger distracted his focus he began rummaging through the basket while his mother slept. The boy found a wooden bowl full of stale, painfully aged porridge, along with the remaining grain. The wooden bowl had been used by the woman, never filled, never eaten from. Realization pulled his navel to the Earth as a dreadful epiphany bloomed, scarring his heart with its thorns. The mana exchanged for the incense of prayer kept her at the fulcrum of vitality and emaciation. She endured living in purgatory, so that perhaps the boy and his father could eat another day more.

Tired, he pulled up her arm and nuzzled into her, eliding into a mellowness that he had long forgotten, not intending his consciousness to slip from him. Yet, as he softened his body, his prayer dissolved into the cool, shifting air.

The elements turned, the breeze burned to chill his skin, the stars ached to spurn his calls, yet for once, it didn't matter. He held on tightly, drunk with escapism.

He awoke to his mother, heavy and unnatural on him. The weight of every bone crushed him, like a grotesquely shaped stone. Horror gripped every sinew. Remorse pinned him inside of the corpse he created.

He grew as wide and as big as god, and burned in his anger.

The afterglow of his violent fury alchemized into a psychotic ambition. He channeled nerve, blood, and energy into his feet as he lifted his mother and father. He moved to the edge of the boat.

He felt the water run from his feet, yet for an instant something solid and infinite sat below him. And in that moment of confidence he had the audacity of hope.

The boy steps onto water. It pulls him in.

The whites of his eyes burn red as he stares at the stars, trying to see if through the water he had caught God's eye.