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Frame Work: Imaging and the Afterlife of Things¹

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Series One

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Ouverture

I want a life.
 A life.
 A life.
 A good life.
 A living.
 A living.
 Ah living. Still alive.

Breathe, boy. Breathe.
 Check. See if yuh still alive.

Remember, Spirit. Remember bone and muscle.
 Eyes, do yuh work.

I need to make a living.
 I need to. I have failed at so many things.
 Let me doh fail at this, nah.
 Let me be as I am (just not broken). Let me also make a living.
 A life.
 A life.
 A life.
 Yes, eyes. Do your work.

Hear a story.

I.

Erin is a village in the south of Trinidad. From the coast, which is eroding more quickly these days, you can see Venezuela. Pirogues skip along the waves like stones that battle in vain with the tide, interrupting the horizon. Turning inland, the exposed rock rusts, and frigate birds fly above the bickering *Corbeaux*, all of them failing to think better of themselves as this or that scrap of fish comes loose from the beak and claws of another. Further inland, past the *Balata* tree and *Mapipire*, past the misspelled signs, the gutted quarry, the water tank standing butchered on the side of the road, past the old rum shop that wore an older rum shop to disguise itself, there lives a man.

Lived. There *lived* a man. My grandfather.

I'm not yet used to referring to him in the past tense. The proof of his death remains, recalling something like dignity in the last days of a man I hardly knew. But I have more proof of him alive. (Evidence is overrated, especially when it is eclipsed with more recent happenings. I know he is dead, but I'm just not used to it yet. It will take some practice for me. Some rehearsing. I might have done better to be more mindful of my tense if I had begun with "Once upon a time." Maybe then, I would have grounded and situated myself, locating myself in time—knowing that for my grandfather, time is no longer a concern, knowing that for him, "concern" itself no longer matters. But these are lessons no one can teach.)

There lived a man. A giant.

I confess that I was afraid of my grandfather. And in awe of him—in awe of his hands. They are—were—massive things, and I thought he could crush me if he wanted to. He never did. Even when we shook hands—the two of us in quiet duel to gauge each other's strength, mine and his, passing like strangers on the road. I sometimes used to think that my hands are small for a Browne, but these are the luxuries of a mind that has never had to wonder where it belonged. I have always been a Browne, just with smaller hands. Not as small as my mother's but smaller than my father's. Smaller, still, than my grandfather's.

This matters, you see, because as a child, I thought my grandfather was a giant. See how we behave? How we laugh like there is thunder breaking in our throats, how our fears and loves are no less massive than the massive hands that held us all in place?

But what does a child who runs barefoot in the yard know of giants? What does a child, lost and found in the safety of aunts who were more like sisters, uncles who were more than brothers know? What does a child know? What does a child know of giants? What does he know of the world around him growing as he grows, becoming a harsher place, a place coming apart at its seams, too big and rich and poor and dirty and callous and afraid, a place where people (even in the midst of this stinging heat) manage to be so cold to each other—and with such crippling ease? What does he know of letdowns and betrayals, of old and cobwebbed hurts, of laughter and rum? What does he know of heartbreak? What does he know of loss? Who can say? I'm no longer a child, I tell myself. I've put away childish things. But they lay in wait for me.

They come in shadowy retrospect to ask, What do I know now of a giant who grew into a man, and whose perfected flaws made him all the more beautiful, the darkened strings of wrinkles and failing muscles making him stronger? Stronger, as he inched nearer to his death and the grave. And, having no real answer to give, I confess that I have tried, in vain, to remember things I could share, but they have lost their shape, blending one into the other, swirling into a mass of things that linger but do not stay, things that trouble my mind and quicken my heart, and though they tend to keep the spirit steady (like a surname, a middle name), they are just the remains of half-forgotten things and half-remembered things, such that if I were to share something—anything at all—it would feel as if I were making something up that never happened. It would feel a bit like magic, pouring out of my mouth as if it were someone else's memory that I had learned over time, perfecting its tones and pauses, its rising and falling, pouring out as if I had crafted a myth—as if I, myself, had been crafted out of myth.

But, for a child who could not know the measure of the man whose words were few, and whose massive hands shielded him from the world in ways he could never see, for such a child, only a myth would do. It is only with myth that I can speak to a man who can no longer hear me. Only with a story. Only with a story shaken from the constraints of history can I hope to remember a man I can never hope to forget. But alas, I have no story, only fragments of stories. Only beginnings—origins—and morals.

"Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, there lived a man. A grandfather." Mine. Ours. He became what I think we all hope to become in the end: Old, a giant growing gradually smaller in the eyes of his grandson and growing greater still. Growing smaller in the eyes of the world, but growing greater still. Grand, in a way. By the time I was strong enough to go in search of my grandfather for the stories that have made me, making the pilgrimage to the land far away, I could barely hear his voice. I had to decode the tremor of his lips and the curve of his fingers. I had to touch his brow for the nuances of miniature moles, reading his skin like braille, reading his eyes like some silent, wordless book to learn for myself that love can look like heartbreak, but only because there are tears. I want to believe that it was a blessing. I have to believe this, or what was it all for? What will become of me, then? Now that there is no theory of me, as I watched the end of my most recent beginning. My grandfather, as if no one else had such a thing of their own.

I know better than to make a fetish of the soul or an icon of the spirit. But some things are harder than others. I've been reeling for a while. I need to relax. Eat. Drink water. Rum. Alone, in mirrors, I keep saying that I need to make some kind of life out of this life I have, that I must summon what I need to exercise a vision, but I'm often at odds to say exactly what that means in my moments of doubt and desperation, surrounded by those I love and fear, those who teach and taunt in that backhand way that is so familiar to us. I say it anyway in the hope that something sticks. It's like a prayer uttered into the infinite unlistening. No expectation of a response, no flinching lip or rolled and batted eye. (I'm navel-gazing again. But it's okay. I'm safe here. No one can see me. I stand behind the memory of a giant. Nothing will harm me.)

II.

A blur, offered as received:

Coming away half-exhausted from wrestling my conscience on the virtues and blasphemies of quoting myself, I stumbled face first into a truth that will not be unfamiliar to you: all work that falls within the scope of humanistic inquiry must, at its core, be self-indulgent. Whether it is done well or poorly or not done at all, whether it scratches the mediocre surface of a potential profundity or misses the mark altogether, all of it is biographical—it's life-writing, in its basic sense, that often leads to the blindingly complex treatments of what things can mean if we do not understand them, pronouncements of what Literature (for instance) can *be*.

I know I'm not alone in this pursuit of understanding this particular condition—there are other humanists on this path, who also dare to be human in the world—but this is my story, my song. Another truth that will

also become apparent is that all works, once begun, exist in the afterlife of their respective imaginings. This is not too difficult for us to grasp—we know beginnings and endings, before and after, how we wish for things to occur that we have never seen and then we wish for others to come back because their coming was too brief. In this formulation, the idea of origin may be taken for granted, allowing us to explore where we may not even be welcome. This also means that the arts of exploration, once undertaken, can be liberatory and life-giving, rather than the harrowing mess to which we—I—have become accustomed.

Life, eh? What is that at all?

Well, it's a photograph, of course (says the photographer). What else could it be?

As you can imagine, the notion of lives and afterlives applies, naturally, to the photograph, just as naturally as it can be applied to the many abstractions that comprise what we think of as the Caribbean—or its Imaginary. I hope you believe me when I say that if I had time and money enough to support my self-indulgence to the hilt, I would delve headfirst into that labyrinth of what the Imaginary might fully extract from the image (and *vice versa*), but time is short—I'm mortal, you understand. Let it be enough to say at this point, then, that if we are willing to agree (at least provisionally) that Photography is indeed writing with light, as the name suggests, then we can move beyond that concession, going further in, farther out, and in-between to consider the *genres*—generic forms—such writing can take.

For me, that has meant the odd poem and the lyric, but mostly it has meant the memoir. That is to say, I have, for the past few years, been considering what it would mean for seeing—perceiving with sight or photo-sensitivity—to be understood not only as narrative, but more specifically as memoir. A memoir of Caribbean sensibilities as I understand them, an unfolding of a particular Caribbean heart—my own—opened up as images for all to see, its veins and ventricles re-presented as light. *Reconstituted*, certainly, as paper or ink, but my heart nonetheless, beating in spite of itself. A search for my spirit. I'm not sure by what authority I conduct this work, partly because “authority,” as I've been trained to understand and fear it, is among the least of my concerns. It *has* to be for what I hope to accomplish. (I'm still at the early stages of this work, so I may yet bend to the pressures. Time will tell, but I hope I stay strong.)

Breathe, boy. Nobody chasing yuh.

Breathe, yuh doh have time, but take yuh time.

Breathe, because nothing happens if yuh don't breathe.

Breathe. Stop reading and breathe.

I breathe.

At stake in my awkward incantation is what I consider the necessity of devising a voice and vision that is uniquely my own, as well as investigating the depths and shallows I am compelled to plumb and trawl for what there is for me to find, if anything. (I know there is something to find, but I must leave room for the possibility that there may be nothing worth finding, only affirmations of traumas I would prefer not to deal with, which will set my heart ablaze). I am, in other words, dealing with the perils of doing my own thing when it comes to inquiry. I know that by attaching my “self” as a prefix I am taking my subjectivity for granted, as a legitimate fact. It means only that I require no corroboration, that self-report matters. Witness matters for people like me, who wish to have a thing of their own.

I take this step in a world seemingly convinced that, in spite of its apparent liberalism, I have no such thing, that no such thing—no thing of my own—has ever existed, that I am perpetually derivative. And though I am happy to concede that I come from something and somewhere (the list is long and intriguing, in parts), I am as committed to the idea that there is more to me than what I might have been (a cockroach in a fowl party because the music too sweet), that I am more than a mouthpiece of a history that has loved me terribly, hated me far too well, and which will nevertheless demand that I make every effort to redeem it. And, by redeeming it, I extend its life with my life, I amplify its flaws with my flaws, I claim its benefits as my own, and in exchange it will encourage me to stand victorious on a mound of sand, declaring myself a man in control—of nothing. A man of words, owning nothing.

This history (more recent than I would like to admit) would have me believe that I am a sacrificial shade, and that my ill-fitting degrees are evidence of some kind of a haunting. “History”: no more to me than a bored ventriloquist whose routine is well-rehearsed, whose route is well-worn. I risk it all to go my own way for a while, choosing to believe that my conceptions of subjectivity mean more than to be merely subject to a past that I am duty bound to honor and perform at my own expense. Or worse, at the expense of others, on whose behalf I work, and whose attention I will inevitably seek. The result of my overt rejection of patriarchal hegemony—which was never mine to begin with—is the sting of complicity, of knowing that

I contribute to a rather deliberate representation of hurt, the unapologetic masochism of memory, which can only be called art in its basest form: to aid in explaining one to oneself. But what do I know? Not as much as I'd like.

I'm thinking, now, of archipelagoes, and the fact that I have never seen one, though rumor has it I come from one, and my efforts seem to suggest a longing for one. A "Caribbean" that keeps evading me, eluding my grasp with the agility of river fish. How can one ever *be* from a place one has never seen, or seen only in the terms others have laid down for him? What is an archipelago to such a person? That is how a tragedy gathers like a storm, swirling in the heart, I think. How "out of plateness" can harden into plaque, how home can taste like gravel on the tongue. So, no. Let me refuse that for a moment and declare instead that I wish to derive. To make meaning that looks and sounds like me. When I think I may be close to such a grand declaration—that I can make a life, actually create, or invent, myself—words fail (or, we fail each other).

Hence, Photography.

III.

So there is the image, doing its own work, but it is also the supplemental work of existing (in part) on behalf of those failing words. The image works. Pushed further, there is the increased likelihood that the image will not only suggest what I can only imagine, but that it will say what I cannot. What I dare not say. And it is this increased likelihood that is enough to spur me on—pushed as much by courage as by shame to engage vision with voice—that is, speaking to the images before trying to figure out what the images themselves can be made to address. It's a risk I have to take, of course, but I think it is one that can yield far more than confusion, far more than ignorance that unfolds into ignorance. I want to believe—have to believe—that it can help me make meaning. There's still beauty to be found, still some love in the world of words. Some joy, if not a cool pleasure and satisfaction that comes with tracing a thing through to its ends. But those outcomes are incidental. There is also, for me, the image that is both antecedent and subsequent to the frame. Far removed from those who conspired with me to make it, there is the image, dropping truth to hold my attention for a moment.

I am the afterlife of the image. As are you. As are we all.

I am the afterlife of the image, a fact that has become more obvious to me as I've engaged with Photography as a place one can inhabit. The image is the afterlife of experience, the embodiment of the interpretations that it yields, and the framing mechanism for the otherwise disembodied participants whose subjectivities and shades the image possesses, which we as viewers are obliged to experience or ignore, to remember or forget, to touch and be touched as mood or circumstance might dictate. The image is a biography of a moment, the epilogue of a present, prologue to the past, a place revisited time and time again, before its relevance fades, ignoring time and place, obliterating their relevance and mine—and ours. A story told and retold by brain and heart, by light and eye.

I want to make clear that when I refer to Photography in this sense, I refer to it in its most basic sense—that is, of writing with light—but I do not approach it as a counterpoint to darkness, of light versus dark, as it were. Rather, I view the manipulation of light, the writing that it entails, as a counterpoint to silence. A deep need to respond to it, or act on its behalf. In short, I perform actions of light not merely for their own sake but to suggest that the impetus of Photography as writing traces the path of the imaginary from inception to image (which is to further suggest that the imaginary is the activity and the outcome of imagining). I'm wrestling, too, with the deeply humbling irony of having "earned" my angst, a fact based solely on my endurance instead of on my ability. That is, my endurance of a narrative of survival that has congealed beneath my feet in this moment, as I have stood in place, marking time, as I decide whether to disrupt the evidence scattered about the crime scene that is my history.

Witness matters.

So eyes, do your work.

Ears, hear.

Photographing my grandfather in silence, I had realized the absolute necessity of finding a space to house the many voices and images that have taken up residence in my head—or, failing that, making a space. The camera may be haunted, but it is not essentially a catacomb. It may be argued that the camera is, *in essence*, predisposed for unhaunting, for evacuating itself. And while the eye may be part and particle of the universe, the vestibules, chambers, windows, and tunnels that extend from the eye and comprise the camera's mechanics are only for temporary stays, not meant for things to last on their own, without the eye.

Except, of course, they do last—albeit comparatively “unsouled,” “uneven,” “dispirited”. The urgency of this corrective is a task that leaves me with too little time to consider the fact that I have traded my absolutes for a form of ingenuity that held no promises for me, except that it would have to do. Unintended side effects of that will include hope, fear, loathing, etc. Peace, if I’m fortunate. I must say, though, that I have not been so fortunate. But one must hope. And there, just there, a small circle is closed—hope that leads to hope—bearing in that completion a form of flexibility and elasticity that will bind me and free me in the end. We’re not at the end yet, though. This is only the beginning. The beginning, where ideas are in their most potent, before language, like the laying of hands, comes to corrupt it. To heal it. To frame it.

If I am to outrun the discipline and the discretion (or, at least, to run at the pace of my ambition, my expanding indiscretion) that is required to keep me in check, then I must be content to be as much a villain as any who views the promised peace of a disciplined life as a form of heresy. It may, for example, be heresy to say that I have no interest in thinking about things that do not concern me or my being, or that of my people, present company included (as always), but that is only because breathing is blasphemy in a world that prefers the tragic beauty of black and brown suffering, of death. This inquiry asks—demands, really—that I ignore a great deal, choosing to identify with the urgencies that accompany death, that I reach out for, and attempt to grasp the ineffability of death, to die in a sense. But not only that. The melodrama of an imagined death is often eclipsed by the lived drama of one’s struggle to *unknow* what life could be in order to understand what it is. Opting instead to breathe, my defiance means that I am compelled to take a turn that is less grave, one that sees me move enough within the frame to suggest that to immerse oneself in the practice of unknowing is to shuffle off the version of mortality to which I’ve become accustomed and to go in search of spirit.

Remember “spirit?” The thing whose currency is current itself? Whose dialect is light? Whose critical orthography is the action of shutters and sensors? Spirit, whose reflection is conceived of moments we, being human, are often too slow to catch? The sublime, which is (for some) a thing far enough out of style that it may be due for a return. Yes, that. I know. The question of spirit is a tricky one to answer, even if one is dealing with material limitations, especially because one is working against invisibility and erasure and displacement and forgetting. To speak in terms of spirit, of what the enduring afterlife of images must entail—indeed, what images, in their stillness, can yield—is to embrace a vision. It is to simultaneously embrace the patent impossibility of the embrace—for how can we truly embrace a thing we cannot touch? How to be where we have not been? For many of us, the answer is obvious: we go in search of a Carnival.

IV.

A good deal of my work is located in Carnival—more specifically, in the pursuit of a carnivalesque ethos that I think is at the heart of Caribbeanist expression, if not Caribbeanness itself. So perhaps it is my good luck that one is taking place a short way from here—a whole Carnival—which makes this as good a place as any to begin a consideration of the afterlife of things. Depending on where one enters the bacchanal of discourse, Carnival can either be a festival of birth or death, a “farewell to the flesh” that either leaves one fleshless and spirited in death *or* commemorating the fact that we are consigned to life outside the womb. Jour Ouvert—the ostensible opening of Carnival—can elicit euphoria from either extreme, lasting until the end. Thankfully, Carnivals cannot be essentialized (except strategically). There are other rhythms, certainly: that of the tide that comes and goes taking trees with it; that of the tide that comes and goes, leaving children in its wake. But rotations of the earth notwithstanding, the music one hears in the public sphere is far more compelling a source.

For my part, at least, I have referred to Carnival as a ritual procession, that the performers and participants are not merely aggrieved, but also that they are in grief—that they, we, collectively acknowledge the notion that, to a significant degree, Caribbean existence is couched in the perpetuity of dispossession and lack, that our frenzied response to that notion is evidence of a consciousness at risk, that it is aware of that risk, that the outcome of that risk is inevitable but largely indeterminate, but that we may nevertheless include erasure, forgetting, and silence among its effects, regardless of how loud and passionate the aggrieved appeals may appear. Carnival, like most rituals, are for the living. They are sites—laboratories, if you like—where innumerable samples of the Caribbean Afterlife are grown and carefully or casually observed, where Mas is made, played, and discarded, and where Photography can flourish as an art and, more crucially, a practice that can later be studied.

Read, critiqued, understood.

Momentarily framed as the hardened home of ritual. A cathedral. Or, for those of us whose prayers are sometimes out of tune and out of timing, a series only somewhat materialized for the more organic purpose of memoir—my own, perhaps, in remembrance of spirit. (Remember, spirit.) It is more difficult to notice during Carnival, with music. Harder to see. But there, amid the mourners and celebrants, the weeping and the laughing, the drunk and bursting uproarious, the hard wining and the soft wailing, spirits stand around like vacant critics. And we, like heartbroken lovers, try our best not to feel, as they grind rhythm out of our bones. We pretend, like gravediggers who embalm their guts with puncheon and other overproof rums, practitioners in the art of digging things up and burying them, experts who incense their lips and lungs with smoke. But we feel it, don't we? Yes. We *have to* feel it. How else to do this work of seeing, of locating a language for the process? How else to replace the long dead with the newly dead, to replace remains with remains, to dig graves we will never inhabit, but to embalm ourselves? A *petit mort* for the missing. A *petit quart* for the living. A libation.

After life, a beginning. Like a Carnival. Like us, you see.

We know ash, don't we? Yes. We know powder and we know dirt. Glitter. Feather. Yes. We know mud. We are a Carnival people, who live in memoriam of things we would rather forget. Forced to craft new memories of ourselves every time we meet. As if it were ordained. A prophecy. A photograph. Libation. Ritual, from which we can turn to more mundane pursuits when the mud dries, the smoke clears, and the powdery ash settles.

It is easy enough to begin this work in darkness, with what you think are dark understandings. You can, for example, not have any idea what you're doing for a while. And, as they become clearer, so do other things. For instance, along with the realization that there is a great deal of work to do, comes also the realization that the romanticism that you attach to the craft (post-everything though it may be) is mostly an illusion—a hope to offset the likelihood that these efforts are just symbolic. You find that here, in this Trinidad, *Ethos* is a fisherman's boat, abandoned and rotting on the shore. (Tides no longer matter to it.) You find that courage, screwed to the sticking place, will start to come loose the nearer to reality it comes, the closer to home you get—whatever home means to you. It may be dark at first, but light is coming. It done here already. Closer to your reality, even your walk is different, the swagger of your assumptions crumbles. You become simpler, and the spirits you try to remember now hold you in memoriam. You are the afterlife of the image, of every image you've ever taken.

It may be argued (convincingly, I think) that a people preoccupied with the business of survival or the denial of it will not slow down long enough for a Visual Poetics, let alone a Literary Philosophy of Visual Forms to operate as its main driver, its rationalizing force, if you like. Its *impetus*. Life lived at such a pace may hardly even be called life—happening too quickly to coalesce. It may be mislabeled, and subsequently misunderstood, just as evasion and indecision may be mislabeled and mistaken for dancing, simply because we often find ourselves jumping from one foot to the other, dipping low, rising up. What room is there, one might ask, for a Poetics of such a kind? The answer may become more apparent in times to come, and with help. But I want to suggest that our Caribbean existence, rather than slowing down for our benefit, requires that we speed up. This is not a matter of efficiency, but one of expedition—that is, speeding up in order to find, to set a pace for oneself. Not so much a speeding up with regard to the economy of words alone, but to that of language, of symbol, of object, subject, and the unceasing interplay of meanings we derive from them and insist into them. Image, like spirit? Remember? But say what?

Carnival coming. It done come already. None shall escape. Speaking for myself, I have taken for granted the annual drone of that mantra, even as I have moved, with others, closer to the culmination of bodies and minds that meet at the pinnacle of a festival, grinding precariously as if on a needle's point as we inject overwhelming drudgery with a little life. Perhaps that is too macabre a topic, too early in the day for things so dark, with a Carnival looming, as I (and, I think, we all) contend with the onset of numbness and the push to stay relevant, even as our dreaded nightingales take to the streets. Carnival is coming. It is always coming, but what is also true is that it will always pass. What is true is that we are in it, and our passing is just as sure. Only quietly, to myself, I ask, "What is a cathedral without its graveyard?" And I try not to be too terrified with the answer because it is a fact that prepares us to engage with the photograph as a literary pursuit of a living thing in the context of its resonance, its visual affect, and the things to which we are given access—a way in, or through, a kind of afterlife.

For the living among us: Take courage. Breathe slowly. Dance badly. Remember carefully. Judge wisely. Weep openly. Love honestly. And know that there are lessons no one can teach. No one dares. Know that there are lessons not even a giant can teach. Those we will have to figure out for ourselves—and they are the ones that will define us all in the end. After life is done with us.

Coda

Carnival coming.
 People go fly.
 The dead go rise.
 The living go play them.
 Iron go knock.
 Bottle go break.
 Knee go bend.
 Tongue go confess.
 Kingdom—a Soca Kingdom—go come.
 I have listened to Rudder's "High Mas" and wept.
 I have fallen drunk and risen to the dholak that carved a spine through Shorty's "Indrani."
 I have danced with my mother at a wake for a Professor. Ken Philmore, you new ancestor you.
 Despers was my Damascus, once.
 All Stars.
 Exodus.
 Fonclaire is Revelation.
 I have spun and spun at a crossroads in Port of Spain to Ella and Devon—Eshu, Ase.
 I have terrified myself.
 I have seen a Blue Boy fly.
 I have seen a Golden Boy beat a magic drum.
 I have seen a Golden Calf become a Mad Bull.
 I have seen things, so please let me testify:
 Carnival coming.

Jump high, jump low, it coming.
 And the road will be your church,
 the Savannah will be your cathedral.
 And Soca will be your praisesong.
 Pan will be your recessional.
 And we, the people of moments and movements, of shame and of spectacle, will sing.
 So sing, my people. See, and in that seeing, sing yourselves.

Sing a hymn to soothe your weary souls from the drudgery of everyday life. It will bring you peace, a peace you must also seek. You must go out in the road, put your hands up, close your eyes, breathe deep, and wine like hell for the salvation of your Carnival spirit. Even in the silence of streets you are afraid to walk, you will remember what it is like to feel. Wring the pan and drum from your spine, wring it from your shoulders. Wring out your heart. No one will stop you. Who will dare to tell you how to feel? Who dares to silence your grief? Or mine? We dance to save ourselves out of the abyss, chipping away at its walls.

Yes, yes, yes.

Carnival coming, and people in fear will dance their terror in the hope that it will save their lives. People forced to numb themselves, who live in a country gripped with fear of death and unspeakable violence, will pulse and break open, dancing a hymn soaked in adrenaline and painted in blood. For them—us—a Road March is the theme song of a funeral procession. Public pain, set to music. We dance at funerals. We sing. And so it will come to pass that a people on an island will forget they are in a wilderness. "Rising waters lift all ships," the people will say, forgetting how to swim. A people who think themselves free will come to call themselves a "kingdom" without asking who among them is king. They forget the blind have no king. The dead have no kingdom.

But we're still here, you and I. Neither dead nor blind.

You and I. Still alive, in a way.

Since we're here, let us think together a bit.

Let us play a Mas.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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