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## Ocean Skin Old

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**Ocean Skin Old**

*for Michael Stephenson*

drums beat,  
I desire to weep

as if blows fell upon  
my own hide

I recall the sting  
of those years  
emancipation  
failed to erase

drum black drums  
and my back aches  
and my soul bleeds

beads of sweat gather,  
run, drip  
sweat and blood mix

sweet music bares  
so much pain

strain to carry history  
those years

black night skies,  
star-studded, punctuated

what passages of pleasure,  
what rainbow colored threads,  
mixed with slavery's harsh red

cum mixed with blood  
screams whips inspired,  
mixed with ecstasy, with sneezing

breezes did blow sweet off the sea  
even while this plague lasted

life's bitter-sweet  
any day, any week