

MY MOTHER'S PEACH TREE

what kind of peach tree doesn't ripen?
ignorant of season
bearing stubborn fruit
it's damaged at the root.
but have you seen what grows next door
from a kinder peach tree
it tastes much sweeter and produces fruit
and life
for you, your brother and your sister.
if not for my mother
we would replant the seeds
and start over
cut the tree from stem and foot
you remind me of my father but
in my dreams, we speak about forgiveness.
what kind of peach tree are you?
maybe the seeds were already tainted
I blame my mother for planting in a corner of her garden
perhaps
the light couldn't reach your branches
or maybe
blame the dark for what it creates
do you
like me?
is it inevitable that you would end up
following your father's muddy footsteps?
why are you
a peach tree that doesn't ripen
seeds planted in bitter soil made
hindered growth.
I sat on your shoulders and
I bent your back
backwards
I picked each peach
a job that you should do.
being patient
never was
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by Ruvimbo Gumbochuma

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AN ACCOUNT OF TIME

There's a broken clock on my grandmother's bedside table. It sits between a coaster with a Rhodesian stamp and a photograph of my mother, her sister, and husband, who exist in a museum of her making. Every day, she'll gently dust the face. The cracks form lines of longitude and latitude where it used to show time. Blue and white checkerboard school uniform in 1999. There I sit, bald and masculine, amongst the ghosts.

When someone passes, their clothes are laid out across a table and given away. Cousins, aunts, uncles and neighbours fill up the market. My house is a gallery and my mother's coats and handbags are on display. The fine china that she never used is given away to an aunt who will keep the tradition. The breadmaker that she found at a car boot sale finally made it back home but is now rusted. All the trinkets and statues that once ornamented the fireplace are missing their companion. They find a home in a storage unit, next to a clock that no longer tells time.

I thought my heart was the clock. An hour, minute and millisecond etched in time. Shards of glass scatter between memories and life around the clock persists, but it resembles a ghost. My heart is instead, marble, and the cracks form a handsome pattern drawn by a girl I used to know. She would say time evades me and I'm late for everything. Like a doctor's appointment, or boarding a flight, or calling your dad when you said you would. The many things my father left unsaid are balancing rocks. A storm that brews in silence. Gentle rain that doesn't monsoon, and thunder that refuses to roar. She would say, we're broken clocks that could never find the time. He would say, nothing.

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