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Only You Took Hold

Fredrick Woodard

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Four Poems · *Fredrick Woodard*

SPACES

*"A man understands when his life is
built on nothing; and that's a sad day."*

The lilac outside the kitchen window.
It will bloom in three weeks
I am not wearing a watch;
But I will walk into the fields that day
There will be snow as when we walked there years ago,
You pregnant for the first time.
We did not live here then; we rented the house out
To the hospital workers who did drugs
And swam naked in the neighbor's pond.

This solitude is unearned.
I am self absorbed: spring rain and sponge.
Were you here to take the walk with me
I wouldn't see you.
Your hand would be there, in mine;
But you gone from my mind;
Out the door
Down some street with no name.
I'll gather the shy sweet flowers.
Stand in the doorway and, seeing nothing, say nothing.

ONLY YOU TOOK HOLD

I take the covers under my chin
with trembling fists.
All day long, I caught glimpses of you
in the light on my spectacles,
you, moving on points chased by shadows;

I am waiting to catch you,
to expose your cover,
to catch your form as an augur in my thoughts
on an argument about justice.

Undercover, I am afraid.
My heart beats over the beta blocker.
What if we could have saved you?
What if, after all, you choked on our love
and died of overexposure?
Are we then guilty of murder?
I think so; and, in this poem, suppose
you alone know the answers
and that my certainty is just another point of light?

March 23, 1989

NUEVA YORK, NEW YORK, 1986

This is the problem:
it is your second coming;
you, broken by these plains,
these flat lands,
profound season,
returning in the guise of a proletarian
with a second language.

So I will go along
as Obeah, Shaman, Crow,
inherit the territories,
resurrect immigrant beginnings
sing the way clear: Shango, Shango.
Le pido a Shango.
Shango, Shango,
le pido a Shango.