

Tamarind Tree

There are just two people left who can speak [Ayapaneco] . . .
but they refuse to talk to each other. –*The Guardian*

Talk to me beneath the tamarind tree. Before it's too late,
let us bury our quarrel in Tabasco's lowlands. I am old and my heart stutters.
Let us talk beneath the feathery foliage and wide pinnate leaves.
Only we remember the hum and click of our grandmothers' tongues.

Let us bury our quarrel in Tabasco's lowlands. We are old and our hearts stutter.
Why do you avoid me on the street, at the market, in the Zocalo?
Only we remember the hum and click of our grandmothers' tongues.
Before our blood runs dry, speak to me of kolo-golo-nay

on the street, at the market, in the Zocalo. Why do you avoid me?
Rest on this bench awhile. Above us pods bulge white flesh.
Before our blood runs dry, speak to me of kolo-golo-nay
and skins that grow brittle, pulp that turns to a sticky paste.

The pods above us bulge white flesh. Rest on this bench awhile.
Or shake the drooping branches and watch the fruit fall.
The skins grow brittle; the pulp turns to a sticky paste.
Last week another anthropologist washed up on our linguistic island.

She shook the drooping branches just to watch the fruit fall.
What lies between us but three sleeping dogs and a litter of cracked shells?
Another anthropologist has washed up on our linguistic island.
O to be reborn, a flat brown bean along a tree's young shoot.

Lying between us: three sleeping dogs, a litter of cracked shells.
Brother, we speak two different versions of the same stubborn truth.
O to be reborn, a flat brown bean along a tree's young shoot,
but the rain falling on Ayapa sounds a death knell clatter.

Two different versions of the same stubborn truth? Speak to me, brother,
beneath the feathery foliage and wide pinnate leaves.
Listen: the rain falling on Ayapa sounds a death knell clatter.
Before it's too late, talk to me beneath the tamarind tree.

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