

How To Dream

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KWAME DAWES

How To Dream

We who live with the streets at our ear,
the flimsy zinc to guard us from
predators; we who gather in kerosene
light to hear the sweating politician
promise us bread and the dignity
of a manifesto made of our blood;
we who rest our bodies on the unrolled
mats, the yeast smell of dough
warming to a swell overnight
in the heat, the wood-smoke rising
in the mud oven where embers
glow waiting for dawn; we who know
the lamentation of the wind
in trees, or the giddy industry
of a bicycle's wheels ticking
through the night; we who bathe
in the algae-covered slate of concrete,
water flowing in a single line
over our bodies; we who cover
our bodies in talc, our foreheads
with Limacol, the backs of our
necks with rosewater; we who
leave our Sunday garments to wave
like flags in the wind; we who sleep
to the soft quarreling of Kwaku
the postman, (*Jesus, I'm drunk, drunk,
drunk, my body can't work, oh no,
Ama, Ama, Ama, Ama, Ama...*);
we pray as if there is mercy in the hills,
from whence cometh our help;
we give thanks for the music in this,
for the soft hope in these streets of standing
water, for bodies softly opening to us as a song
of the sea, for women with kindness
in their eyes, and for our rooms anointed
with the green incense of burning mosquito coils.