

# Grain Memory

By Marlanda Dekine

A wishbone branch falls  
from my Grandma Thelma's oak  
for me.

*What do you know about magic?* e<sup>1</sup> asks.

E bends e old body down, turns  
the wishbone branch into  
a cross, places it around my neck.  
I am strapped at the Black River's right shoulder,  
remembering my Grandpa Mose never wore anything  
but church.

My purple head begins to feel  
cold as clergy, parched. I ask for water.  
E gives me water and rice, says to repeat  
after em:

*I am fly from nature. Nature fly. I am fly from*

*nature. Nature*

*fly. I am fly from nature. Nature*

*fly. I am fly*

*from nature. Nature fly. I am*

*fly from nature. Nature fly. I am fly from nature. Nature fly.*

*Ah, I get it! It's an affirmation, I say*

*and e laughs in windoceansongs.*

E whispers, *Do not be trapped by language.*

E voice begins to beat my chest  
cavity in rhythm, chaff threshed from grain,  
separating me from need.

I thought I'd snapped            that wishbone branch myself. No.

I am fly from nature. Nature fly.

At dusk,  
gleaming marigolds gathered  
beneath my feet, singing:

*We were stolen            shipped across the Atlantic*

*invasive is a word            I heard*

stolen            *thrash thrash thrash            and we speak in bloom*

1 In Gullah-Geechee language, "e/em" are gender-neutral pronouns.↩

Source: *Poetry* (June 2021)