



# OBSIDIAN

Literature & Arts  
in the African Diaspora

Call & Response: Experiments in Joy  
Furious Flower:  
Seeding the Future of African American Poetry  
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# THEIR NAME IS BENBANNIK

Douglas Kearney

NANZEE

I know  
their **BENBANNIK's office**  
**a verdant austerity.**

Manager of doors and

**NANZEE crawls upright on  
the webs, mocking sneaking.**

**loud enough  
for BENBANNIK  
to hear.**

rooms  
one-ment,  
e's "Benbannik  
of salad and fr  
The great nut gobbl

**certainly, a  
pair of steely,  
ergonomic  
office chairs  
lashed  
together,  
feature.**

I know a one-them-

**(a few other  
pieces of furniture  
and supplies.**

BENBANNIK

—And we know you.

“Landlord of little rooms?”

“Great nut gobbler?”

That’s not what we’re known for.

NANZEE

Folks in the bush, bird’s in the tree,  
what they know about v

**NANZEE doesn't  
descend.**

BENBANNIK

These proverbs are fine

NANZEE

As the sun in the sky.

- BENBANNIK      Nanzee duh haosOonah cumpass?  
DunOonah laykut waydat?
- NANZEE            Boocoo byumby, Aycheni.  
Dohm wontuffnalenxDay dohmblok,  
glimmMee, beezMee-ish.
- BENBANNIK      Fo' wee na wee-ish uhdayBenbannik soli.
- NANZEE            Oona-ish uhday'kayMee, Dem-nahcroe.  
UhUm-kay.  
Shee—ponDey fless/boocoo ele...wídat?  
Fraym-rach't.  
UhdayDay Masisbay rep cyoo:  
go aycheni rep buhnneesuhp na jiggasuhp  
nah goobaGrees.
- BENBANNIK      UhdayWee Benbannik—  
haos dohm'emera eleboocoo  
pon dohm-em-yo'k eleboocoo  
  
Jiggasuhp loofooke/wee uhpsayDay.  
  
Jahnen'kay ko'pa, nanzish wudat?
- NANZEE            Mee-ish, nig/doors.
- BENBANNIK      Haos mimajont/wee wudat  
usbay'kay anznayOona.
- NANZEE            Oona-kay yo'say-mee.  
Haos UhdayMee booc wanbeez duh dahmee.
- BENBANNIK      Jiggasuhp loofooke/wee uhpsayDay.  
  
Jahnen'kay ko'pa, nanzish wudat?  
  
Jahnen-kayOona stak oona  
hoodat nanzsum beezbí!

BENBANNIK      When did you get in this house, spider?  
Where have you been hiding?

NANZEE          For ages, Boss.  
Up the corners of ceilings,  
watching, like I do.

BENBANNIK      Benbannik is enough, for us and ours.

NANZEE          I ain't yours, one-them.  
Not hers, his.  
Feh—all that extra meat on you...for what?  
Mess of anatomy.  
You's barbecue's cousin:  
that's why you eat salad and fruit  
and gobble nuts.

BENBANNIK      *NANZEE climbs  
down to the nicest  
looking piece of  
furniture.*      nik—  
c u  
—*though not the chairs.*

Everyone      *NANZEE  
stands on it.*      of our work.

*roughly.*      couldn't that satisfy?

NANZEE          Mine, fools!

BENBANNIK      You don't want what's in our kitchen.  
Hunger's your nature, spider.

NANZEE          Not just mine.  
I've got mad competition in this house.

BENBANNIK      Everyone here eats the fruit of our work.

What hunger couldn't that satisfy?

You can't count one  
who hungers here!

- NANZEE            Buss akstayOona oona, doos, tray—  
ay, feenMee oomfoo fix dun misho’bahlm-Mee.
- BENBANNIK        Yang. MaykplaynOona oona  
nah fix esblayWee oona fless/oona.  
MaykplaynOona wee tray na mímasumWee!  
AnchstayWee whadatuhday sayWee.
- UhdayWee Benbannik—  
                          haos dohm’emera eleboocoo  
                          pon dohm-em-yo’k eleboocoo
- Jiggasuhp loofookee/wee uhpsayDay.
- Jahnen’kay ko’pa, nanzish wudat?
- MaykplaynOona wee tray na mímasumWee!  
                          AnchstayWee whadatuhday sayWee.
- NANZEE            Tray beez!  
Haos dem-nahcroe duh-jecks!  
NanzsumDoos pon nanzish—  
nah oona hoodat doos dokkingsum tray beez!
- BENBANNIK        Shee! Ayshoo-oona!  
Doos hoodat beezWee oona bu—  
Day beez-kay na naw, doos naw!
- NANZEE            Yehnawsum, mahwoo-leesuh/cyoo.  
JungahsipDoos pon oona bu—  
Yehnaw-mee fix beezFless-mee fayó’sum,  
nah husnawsho’lo’.
- BENBANNIK        AnchstayWee whadatuhday sayWee,  
fix esblayWee oona fless/oona.  
Shet naw akpayMee deesnuhp.  
Rep ish go’curbMee innanuhp,  
Haos dun’kayMee. Feen go’  
atro’pay waypass.

NANZEE Well I've counted one, two, three—  
see, I need near half my arms to do it.

BENBANNIK Bullshit. You show us one  
*the longer* NANZEE you your meat.  
*talks with BENBANNIK,* and we'll cook it, too!  
*the more it seems* he say

We are B *the entwined  
twins*

*may slowly*

Everyone here eats the fruit of our work.

What *loosen.* that satisfy?

Show me three and we'll cook it, too!  
We do what we say.

NANZEE Then three it is!  
The One-two in this room!  
Y'all hunger against hunger—  
and one who is two equals three!

BENBANNIK *BENBANNIK  
pulls themselves  
together tightly.* fucker!  
re One—  
two!

NANZEE Fine, Queen-King Barbecue.  
But you've agreed to one—

I guess  
but I'll

*NANZEE walks in  
tight circles around  
BENBANNIK.*

BENBANNIK

We do  
we'll g  
Though, we've no blade anymore.  
Got rid of it long ago,  
haven't needed to hunt  
in so long.

BEN. (CONT). O'ttrayOona demdang wee na  
sayseem-wee credik beez—  
Haos fless fix pass uhdaiDis  
dahmee/asto'rpeerish!

UhdaiWee Benbannik—  
haos dohm'emera eleboocoo  
pon dohm-em-yo'k eleboocoo.

O'ttrayOona demdang wee  
fless fix pass uhdaiDis

AnchstaiWee whadatuhdai sayWee.

NANZEE        AysaiDoos nanzee patro'ishNanzee?  
Waydat digMee shet beez.  
AjbaiDoos-doos mímuhiish-doos, Benbannik!

BEN. (CONT).     Bring us a weapon  
                    and our word is bond—  
                    There'll be meat  
                    in this breathtaking house!

                    We are Benbannik—  
                    our body is a house of all  
                    in a house of all.

                    Bring us a weapon,  
                    there'll be meat

                    We do what we say.

NANZEE

*Suddenly, NANZEE vaults up  
into the web system and exits.*

                    Get your pots and pans, Benbannik!