



NOWHERE NATIVE II

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i tried calling home to a land on water where brown bodies once-upon-a-time grew on trees, almost purple like unripe fruit hanging high & heavy on the black bough. i am an immigrant-baby, south-for-winter-baby

where i meet a girl who learned a trick to swallow jacketed lead. her skin smells like coconut & she is like me, born to no body & no place to call home. teaches me how to move like an ocean, dance

like i am rising from the bottom of that deep where the bones of our ancestors turn to salt. teaches me how to speak the languages i was born with in the back of my mouth, words like *obi mgbawa*

& *wǒ xiǎng nǐ* wrapped like dry hair around my uvula, fighting against my flat tongue. first time we kiss she is teaching me how to call back old memories of wet earth between my toes, knee-deep in the paddy.

hiraeth: nearest we get to a word for *home* but she won't accept it. we were the land settled, so now we can't be still. she wants to keep moving; i wish to want what she wants. we never understand what you mean

when you ask where we come from. the country where we cut our teeth, she says, ain't a place that ever wanted us. country where we washed up on the beach like an oil spill. i am a nowhere native son, she explains,

so are you. we search for nowhere together, black & viscous wandering
coast to coast. we bubble up to daylight thru cracks in the concrete &
discover nowhere in night clubs, in forgotten suburbs rich with poverty,

in cardamom-perfumed back rooms where a lady will braid your hair
down to your ankles. we can't find a word for it but we are singing,
nowhere is a place on earth! we a stateless people, we nowhere natives