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Mine

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Mine

April Fisher

Sometimes, time opens up beneath your feet and you, but not you, ancient you, fall through to the place you are now. Other times, you're at the verge. The black edge of every universe, every perspective, even God's. But right now, time doesn't even exist; I can't feel it or see it or understand. I am happy.

Loving, I've heard, is the easiest thing (you'd better be careful) and I've at one moment found twenty more loves.

I can't speak to them. I don't know their names. I don't know their pasts, or how hard they've worked on this land that is theirs. But I do know that they live in clay huts that match the soil, these women with brown, wrinkled skin. Could they fit in my palm? Do they exist out there now, or do they inhabit only my memory? And I don't know if any of them are ill or dying. They've never heard of health insurance, I promise you. Do you they know how to drive a car? They know the entire production process of Shea butter. They wear skirts made colorful by themselves or their neighbors and hand-me-downs from developed countries. Do they know the difference between Ghana and America? Do they know I spent sixty dollars on a pair of shoes? Do they know I know that people in their town die? Do they know I see them? Do they know I don't really understand?

Listen: they don't know my name. They don't know my past, or the work I've done on a page. They know I have a digital camera (although they don't call it that). They do understand the word "television." I have to tell you, they are curious. They do invite me to dance. We're in a pavilion. They do sing and clap their hands. They do find themselves lost in energy, but they probably don't call it that. The ground is clay. They do tell me, show me things I've never understood before now. They don't speak English, they're clapping and singing; they are dancing.

We are dancing, the twenty and I.
Maybe I shouldn't tell you.

There were others. Students, three or four; teachers, one or two, but I hardly recall their presence. In fact, I make them disappear. You don't see them. You don't see the ground, you don't see the huts. If you get the feeling that I'm closing off space, it's because I am. I'm securing the beloved twenty in a cup; I'm not letting anything spill, you can't have them. (I'm closing my eyes.) It's not a place you travel to, because places you travel are pain-ridden. (Quietly now.) It's a secret pillow. (I'm lowering my voice.) It's a secret box; I hold them and everyone they love. (I'm starting to whisper.) If I can't keep them in my purse, maybe they'll fit in my womb. (It's almost silent.) They start to sing.