Title
ain't no turnin' back (a dialogue about assignment)

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ain’t no tumin’ back
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it’s been a long time/ since I’ve been able to cast my dreams/ into a world burned behind the eyes/ see/ I’ve erased all traces of being/ /I bathed myself in numbness/ and become a bundle of enhanced shadows/ kiss me and replace myself in this burning/ so I don’t have to wonder/ what life would be like/ if you loved me

what would life have been like/ if you’d loved me/ if we had created a sign/ that said No Trespassing/ under penalty of law/ and people had paid attention/ would it have mattered/ everyday/ we get closer to dying/ starting with the day we’re born/ does this sound harsh/ well/ immaturity is not an option/ in a world based on necessity/ and these are the facts/ I submit/ life is simple/ it’s the living that complicates things

in a world where/ unearned privilege masquerades as strength/ and howling wind echoes/ in veins meant for the human spirit/ can you truly profit/ from agony/ When your name is a mockery/ and your homeland/ a tenement/ and even revolutionaries/ are shedding tears/ When token success/ is equated with overcoming/ And activists are deemed unnecessary/ When the color that’s shaped centuries/ no longer matters/ except/ for those who have it/ and/ those who don’t/ When the root of power/ is deception/ and history/ is the winner’s side/ must every hole/ be a void/ and every hill/ an obstacle/ I’m telling you rain can fall/ from a sunny sky/ learn me/ and solve the riddle/ of yourself

I don’t plant roses anymore/ and luxury is no longer/ a birthright/ knowledge stands guard at my bedside/ accompanies my dreams/ and is my first vision when I wake/ it sometimes takes an invasion of blindness/ to resurrect sight/ you know/ and I know/ that words/ are mere attempts / at capturing meaning/ and giving it name/ but try to dig what I’m sayin’/ in the spirit of all things Black/ and Beautiful/ and/ Black/ success can never be individual again/ because/ once upon a time/ I learned you/ and fell in love/ with me

come/ wrap yourself in quilted wind/ and give yourself to the breeze/ wanna fly/ you gotta give up what weighs you down/ after a while/ you don’t miss it anyway/ why can’t goats and men/ piss side by side/ with a mutual respect/ for privacy/ of course/ if the rot of dying dreams/ is muted by the stench of garbage/ fermenting in tropical streets/ ... comfort is irrelevant/ and convenience is a non-entity/ this world/ ain’t gonna be nobody’s paradise no way/ give me what is left/ and I will create life/ complete with ringing laughter

here’s what I’m sayin’/ frivolous activities no longer amuse me/ I engage in necessary acts/ like playing attention to cloud configurations/ and taking notes on sunsets/ my eyes are stained with memory/ and there ain’t no/ turnin’/ back

Shani O’Neal