

Papi Pichón Prescribes Bomba

by Dimitri Reyes

*Guenaga Guenaga, dónde está guenaga
Hay me curo, guenaga, guenaga guenaga
Qué pasó guenaga, guenaga guenaga
Hay ven aquí guenaga, guenaga guenaga
El doctor guenaga*

The universe doesn't understand yes or no it just understands
so when I birthed bomba it was only to be known as the sound
of feet, a thunderclap of hands, a family of voices musing
to be the beat of its name,

*bom-ba da bom-ba da bom-ba bom-ba-da
bom-ba da bom-ba da bom-ba bom-ba-da*

beating and bouncing to the spinning of a skirt
thrusting gale force winds of espíritu santo
through an ancestor's nostrils as if the hairs
on a dancer's arms stand up to compete
with the height of sugar sweet sweat
on the lips of a drummer keeping tempo
with the sweeps of feet to the

*bom-ba da bom-ba da bom-ba bom-ba-da
bom-ba da bom-ba da bom-ba bom-ba-da*

this is bomba where the afro makes Boricua like
gold granules shimmering miracles in the precious
pressure of a river the bombazo holds in the crook
of his back. Who knew that this unearthing of sound
would take its form in the uprock of the Bronx uprooted
from the island's spirit in Africa— I did and I did
for you for the drum circle's beat is your circadian
rhythm circa the beginning of our history from the
flesh of animal to coconut to all of you is

*bom-ba da bom-ba da bom-ba bom-ba-da
bom-ba da bom-ba da bom-ba bom-ba-da*

beat changes when you rely on me and I come in
many forms. Throw me your stale bread and watch
it disappear, light my porcelain lips in palo santo, toss
me in white over your shoulder, clap, bow, and tie
a message around my ankle for I'll carry your azabache
burden. Close your eyes to feel my pulse and I'll talk,
I'll talk, I'll talk, I'll talk

*ai toco toco toco toco
Vejigante se comió coco
ai toco toco toco toco
Vejigante se comió coco
el viene a robarte
aquí estamos en la cocina
el viene a robarte
aquí estamos en la cocina
heyyyyyyyy*

I am African, Latin, the indigenous island, y la casta.
Then you'll find yourself back again, in the skin
under your skin you'll find the beat that's me under
the skin of a drum but see, you can't hold me because
I'm a feathered creature of echoes, prehistoric to the
point where you can't ask what came first, the end
or the beginning because I only am

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In “Papi Pichón Prescribes Bomba,” the italicized stanzas were transcribed from the Bomba album, *Grupo Afro Boricua from Puerto Rico* by the Cepeda family of Santurce.