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An Extract

Erna Brodber

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The Rainmaker's Mistake

AN EXTRACT

**Erna
Brodber**

'How come we here Lord?' The amazingly large enforced transfer of people from one part of the world to another as slaves needs other than economic explanations. Along with 'How come we here?' is another needy question: 'Why did we stay, Lord?' With respect to the latter, we could ask, 'Was the body of water surrounding us too large?' or 'Was the military force of the oppressor too mighty?' In The Rainmaker's Mistake I explore other explanations for the peopling of the New World by Africans. I suggest a lack of respect by one generation for the ways of their elders while in Africa and, after transportation, stultifying forces in the new home. In Chapter Nine below, the stultifying forces mentioned have waned and we watch the formerly enslaved as they try to handle freedom, and as they arrive at understandings concerning the issues and processes relating to their diaspora, settlement and stunted growth.

If I hadn't heard that Jupiter had been sucked into the Future, I would not have come home yet. I wasn't quite finished with my programme. But sucked into the Future! That was a big deal. That was a fate I feared. The Norm where I was, was bad enough. Two murders per day! Where was the love? Mr Charlie, whatever he be and whatever the truth of the yam stories, had never countenanced striking. We could not strike each other. Someone laid up because someone had hurt him and he couldn't go to work! Nonsense. The strife which brings on murderous responses was foreign to us. Woodville did use the whip but that was Woodville and more threat it was than actuality, for I now can't remember one single soul that he hit. The things they did shocked me. They even hurt those who had not actually hurt them. Thus we lived on a campus, doing work for the good of all, but we, despite the repute of our work, had to live behind rows of barbed wire topped by razor wire, two phalanx of security guards watching

each other as they guard us, watching to secure their backs against each other, watching to see that neither attack us nor let those in who would attack us.

And the Future is worse. At least those in the Norm, where I was, could claim revenge: the first man killed and someone killed him for killing that one and somebody avenges his death and so it goes on. There is some iota of sense in that but in the Future? ... their behaviour follows no pattern. The pauper to whom you gave your last dime owns a hotel in the hills but if he doesn't behave like a pauper, someone will kill him because he dares to own a hotel. Make sense? Women stand half-naked in the streets selling themselves for money to build a house in which to worship their God who is against fornication. The clergy are fully aware of their acts and of the ordinance they breach, yet selling their bodies to the glory of their God continues. There, black is white and white is black but only some of the time. Not even this equation is constant. I've never been there but I have heard.

Poor Jupiter, Jupiter, Jupiter. Jupiter with whom I chased birds, roasted birds at our Father's place. Outdoored together, they said. Jupiter with whom I fished; Jupiter swimming over to Cabarita; Jupiter with whom I seduced I-sis' birds. Teasing Jupiter who would creep up to tickle the ear with a feather and what a laugh when you jumped. Jupiter. Little Congo, Essex, Juba and Castor and Pollox and I with Jupiter were key spars. It is true, not so key in the end for I drifted off by myself to see things, but that rift was for the moment. Nothing could erase the love and comradeship of the early days. It was there waiting for us. It is there. I know. I am on my way back. But unless something really good happens – and that has been hiding its face from us for so long – the glory days of the seven will have to be the glory days of the six.

Is there a wind so ill it blows no good? I refuse to believe this. Ever since we found ourselves with more than we could eat, London has been going into that place to sell our surplus foodstuff. What I have learnt about that place has

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