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Witches

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Witches

Author Bio

Ellianie Vega is a senior with a double major in English and WGS and a minor in Japanese. She has worked on The Mercury for four years and is currently Senior Editor. For the past two years, she has belonged to the Academy of American Poets. In her spare time, she enjoys working at WZBT 91.1, writing fiction, and playing the Final Fantasy soundtracks very loudly and poorly on her untuned piano.

Witches

ELLIANIE VEGA

“The stigmatisation of children as witches is a recent phenomenon in the Niger Delta region, which suddenly exploded in the 1990s...by 2008, it was estimated that 15,000 children had been branded in the southeastern states of Akwa Ibom and Cross Rivers.”

- Marc Ellison, BBC News

Comfort lived with her brother *Godbless* at home with her parents until fate, making their names ironic, ripped their parents suddenly, unexpectedly, from the earth. Alone in the world, they become the suspect. Now, they are accused of a bloodless crime, of witchcraft, and they are beaten with machetes. Witnesses say “blood bloomed black on the ground.”

I see the pair as they look ahead, I am looking at the welts on their backs, stripes of lightning carved into dark bodies; they are looking to the future while I stare at their pasts, we both retain our anonymity as their shielded faces never reach for my eyes through the bright lake of white light from my screen.

Comfort and *Godbless* are short in stature, shorn of hair, wearing white. They bear beatings in the shape of sun through trees, as if, if they shifted, the marks would

disappear. Perhaps that was their sin:
their childlike renewal and hope
even after watching death.
Perhaps it is sin to
decide to walk this world
unmarred by a tragic past.
Perhaps it is witchcraft to
watch the patterns of this earth
and act as if they hold
no power over you.

Comfort hides in a locked room
so that no one else can accuse her
of committing the obscene unseen,
of committing crimes without being
present and without blood.
She hides so no church can
execute her for witchcraft,
so nobody can make her
a scapegoat for fear.

Believing without seeing
still makes a man blind.
Faith sits in the wings,
scheming, and waiting
to pin the sins of nature on
most innocent, the
most invisible.