*Before the Rooster Sings*

One last time, the blond flamboyance

Graced the sand with rays of gold,

And went to find beneath the sea

A secret I was never told.

The incandescence soon dissolved,

And sleuthing darkness drowned the shore.

The shadows settled; the world went still;

And all seemed dead forevermore.

O Agwé of the Streams, reveal

Your treasure sought so fervently.

Show me why our precious light

Must vanish so consistently.

Why must we dream when we can live?

Why must the warmth of day subside?

When I can seek Your darling prize,

How can I sleep and miss the ride?

The Islands of the Caribbean

Harbor such astounding things.

I will explore these worlds unknown

And well before the rooster sings.

Noah Bayard 2020

Before writing, I asked myself: what does the Caribbean mean to me? Enchanting beauty? Astonishing diversity? Throughout my childhood, its uniqueness and whimsicality have often made me want to explore its wonders. So, I thought, why not express that desire within the poem?

The first thing I wanted to establish as an important part of the story was sundown. The Caribbean islands have the most breathtaking sunsets, after all. To me, the horizon’s luminescence at dusk is one of the most beautiful sights anywhere — divine energy always seems to come from its glow. The sunlight slowing fading away was, therefore, a scene that I wanted to depict as perfectly as I could.

However, it was the emotion caused by nightfall that I wanted to emphasize — admiration, but also that feeling of longing and dread as the threatening darkness creeps in. I always wished the sun could have stayed longer above the horizon, so that I could continue exploring the world around me.

As to the speaker, his yearning for adventure is intensified by his very wild imagination. It emerges from the magic of the tropics and allows him to view the world differently. He wants to understand his surroundings, and his interpretation of everyday happenings relies on his magical understanding of the world, representative of Caribbean culture. The sun does not just disappear to come back the next day — his perception of reality is much more mystical than that. The sun is searching for something important at the bottom of the ocean.

Immediately, the speaker thinks of the Loa who rules over the sea: Agwé. It has to be his prize, and the thought of such a treasure is exhilarating. He wants to understand why the warmth of day vanishes so systematically when his tropical surroundings are filled with possibilities of exploration. That longing for adventure and knowledge was so prevalent during my childhood in Haiti that I wanted the speaker to embody that craving.

Of course, this was the main idea. I’ve tried to give many interpretations to the poem, and I myself seem to find new meaning every time I try to look at it from a new angle.