

# Fire Woman

**Keisha-Gaye Anderson**

What a way she bright, though,  
eeh?  
dat fat gyal  
dat fiyah woman

Is who she think she is?

Market hips  
rocking like  
a rum shop  
before day light  
rolling like a river  
swelling to meet sea  
after the devil and  
him wife did ah fight  
flashing tears  
from the clouds  
streaking the faces  
of hibiscus  
pulling colors through the curtain  
of the sky

See her there,  
rainbow snake charmer  
higgler  
rude girl  
Mami Wata woman  
wind chime laughter  
shattering  
the queen's english  
morning stride  
twisting greenwich mean time

A carnival of adornment  
from the temple of her  
ankles  
to the crown of her head

Red hair  
green hair  
no hair—  
she nuh business  
and black, she black, she black  
so till

Till she become a memory  
and a promise  
a double dare  
a heckle in the  
in sunday mass  
a line in the sand  
cross it,  
if yu tink yuh bad

A body tolerating  
uniforms of commerce  
all for the sake of a tightly packed barrel  
school fees  
and lay away on satin and sequins  
designed to hug every living curve

Don't command her  
don't test  
or expect  
the original holy word  
to be unsheathed  
from the holster of her mouth  
and linger  
near your ear  
until just the right time  
until you get comfortable  
forget to use  
the code words  
the safe slurs

Third world  
Urban  
Inner city  
Under privileged  
Disadvantaged  
Developing  
Primitive

Flimsy arrows aimed  
at pernicious life  
sail through  
stardust template  
pre-time goddess  
unscathed

She is still here

From clarendon to brooklyn  
call her Iris, Lilith  
call her Isis, Kali  
call her savvy

But don't call her out  
her name

She's got no use  
for girdles and bleaching cream  
coconut milk never killed  
anybody  
candles and white rum have their place  
everything inna darkness  
must  
come  
to  
light

She's got stamina for the  
marathon of creation  
sucks her teeth  
at your corsets  
for jubilation  
blinders wrapped  
in greenbacks  
promises called  
pensions

And she will wait  
as long as it  
takes for her garden to  
grow  
for her children to  
know

### About the author

Keisha-Gaye Anderson is a Jamaican-born poet, author, screenwriter, and journalist. She is a former fellow of the North Country Institute for Writers of Color and was shortlisted for the Small Axe Literary competition in 2010. Her work has appeared in *The Killens Review of Arts and Letters*; two volumes of *Small Axe Salon*; *The Mom Egg*; *Afrobeat Journal*; two volumes of *Poems on the Road to Peace: A Collective Tribute to Dr. King*; *Sometimes Rhythm, Sometimes Blues* (Seal Press); the *Women Writers in Bloom Poetry Salon* blog; two volumes of *Streetnotes*; and two volumes of *Caribbean in Transit Arts Journal*. Her poetry was also included in Caribbean in Transit's 2011 art exhibition, "In the Spirit". She is a founding poet with Poets for Ayiti. Proceeds from their 2010 poetry chapbook, *For the Crowns of Your Heads*, are helping to rebuild Bibliotheque du Soleil, a library razed during the earthquake in Haiti. Keisha's poetry chapbook *Circle Unbroken* was self-published in 2003. Her television work includes documentary production for CBS, PBS, and Japanese television. Her feature articles have appeared in magazines like *Psychology Today*, *Black Enterprise*, *Honey*, and *Teen People*. Keisha is currently enrolled in the M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program at The City College, CUNY and has taught African American Literature to CUNY undergraduates as an adjunct. She lives in Brooklyn, NY with her husband and two children. Visit her on the web at [www.keishagaye.com](http://www.keishagaye.com)