



Our Dead Behind Us

POEMS BY Audre Lorde

Diaspora

Afraid is a country with no exit visas
a wire of ants walking the horizon
embroiders our passports at birth
Johannesburg Alabama
a dark girl flees the cattle prods
skin hanging from her shredded nails
escapes into my nightmare
half an hour before the Shatila dawn
wakes in the well of a borrowed Volkswagen
or a rickety midnight sleeper-out of White River Junction
Washington bound again
gulps carbon monoxide in a false-bottomed truck
fording the Braceras Grande
or an up-country river
grenades held dry in a calabash
leaving.

Ethiopia

for Tifa

Seven years without milk
means everyone dances for joy
on your birthday
but when you clap your hands
break at the wrist
and even grandmother's ghee
cannot mend
the delicate embroideries
of bone.