

Opal Palmer Adisa



Poinsetta

Red was always a fickle color
But who cared when the flamboyant tree
Screamed off its head

Or your mother didn't speak to you
Because she was mad
And the words you needed
To speak ran off and left you

Red could be capricious all she wants
That didn't alter the beauty of the Hibiscus
Or made them any less useful for
Shining your shoes

Red was the jeer of strange men
Who made your feet want to stumble
Or the membrane that is removed
From ackee before its cooked

Dangerous or bold
As women sitting legs spread
Using their shirts to fan the heat
Between their thighs
Or the fish bone
Caught in your throat

The sun
Just before it dropped
Behind the mountain
Or the laughter that
Nudged you from the chair
Until your stomach was in stitches

Peppered shrimp
Soliciting water from your eyes
Red is that mean sometimes

