

*Delores Gauntlett*

## **KENDAL KRASH – 1957\***

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Imagine that September night when the news flashed  
to the tenement yard on Sunlight Street  
that the excursion train had crashed:  
when the man broke down and wept  
for his sister torn from her seat  
as the song died in her mouth. Imagine

How the tree trunk yielded to the wild burst,  
and the door clanged  
as the train ploughed into the yam field  
near the sleeping town of Kendal; imagine  
the priest and pickpocket lending a hand  
to someone as the carriage caved in  
and the hour sucked the oil from the lamp,

The instant when the train plunged  
like a blunt machete through the damp clay  
of a moonlit field and the cows broke  
into a dismayed gallop,  
while rich and poor alike were thrust into the texts  
of one another's lives,  
jam-packed, trying to hang on  
between this world and the next.

Now, year after year, as if to fill  
some vacant outpost left by the chill,  
the stories clamber back, of the Kendal Ghost  
emerging from the stricken stream  
to hitchhike into town (or so they say)  
then disappear, as in a dream  
of morning mist when time came to pay.

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\*The 1957 Kendal train crash was the worst rail disaster in Jamaica's history and the second worst in the world at that time

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