

CHEKWUBE DANLADI

INWARD ASPECT

A person in love may start this poem with unruffled dusk,
how it paves the way for sun in the mourning.

May confuse “mourning” for “morning” due to their condition.
Chemically distraught, they may become aroused by love’s hair

fallen in drains, by splinter and blood in love’s heir’s thumb,
may slip in the delusions granted by the worldly

kindness of wake-and-bake and morning sex.

A person in spite now forgets how it was our tattered

bodies that insistently kept us warm when the vortex raged,
or the weeping thundered, when cast out to Illinois’s lonesome

prairie. In spite, dusk raging. Some awful thing tethered
to the hottest reaches of our earth. Bequeathed to that

core jumble of burn. Maybe hesitantly, often passionately.
But dusk always comes home after a fight and pacifies

with a cooled kiss to the cheek, and harbored to its chest
–if a hand held to it–runs a kind of cord, stretched

past silt and loam and clay and uncertain interior spheres,
a cord that thrums pretty like harp strings and hauls

those vibes to where we hoard our most abounding nerve
endings. All the precipice places, since what is pleasure

if not the reward for airing out our greatest vulnerabilities?
We sang that drowsy song. Named skin the largest threat

to our armored anatomy, its remembrance of every scabbed
and excised thing. But we put the inky earth’s marker to it.

Hidden every joy in our nature. Our folk so often dream
up these abounding mythologies of loss.

Oshun lost everything. The femmes in your cosmos too.
Those same folk are the type to skirt through water, guided

by the heat bracing the bottoms of our feet. This too
a sort of cosmic reparation, the universe demanding

that we be so satisfied, even after all the years
position between us. I meant everything I ever said

about being with you forever, through every time,
and still carry the keys in my pockets. I keep to the door,

my faith in the cord held taut. When you or I reenter earth,
we will recognize the line, pluck it, and ride the quake end to end.