



Babeth Fonchie *text* · **Scott Emblen-Jarrett** *translation*
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conversation with grandmother

in seawater drenched faded t-shirts on stooped-over vertebrae and bones your fathers and brothers shuffle into the courtyard. scales and nylon merge into one. we sit in the kitchen which is also a living room, from which our gaze falls on the mattresses where the imprints of human silhouettes reside. through the window you see Friday: the day on which you strip the perch, ready for market. hastily you put down the pestle and mortar, rush outside. I follow behind you and that becomes our theme.

even my newest clothes are drenched with the scent of the everyday stories that are told about you. I am, you are

stiff cotton twisted tight between the folds under your armpits. but this tissue dissection is made up of soft balls, which require little effort to remove from their stem, to take them far from home. you don't find it hard when boundaries are crossed. was there no-one who taught you that daughters are not the property of everyone they meet, of the sex from which they came forth, of the country in which they took their first breath. and if you had been strong enough, you would not have passed these traits on to my mother. I follow you, and that is the theme.

at the end of the day you perform rituals with your sisters some traditions are too heavy to bear alone

dried scales are the best ingredient for juju spells. in your day there are no words to define happiness and later will not know what that is exactly. the smoke of burned entrails is woven into the seams of the clay, sap of human or fish seeps between the stones of the family graves. even our ancestors are not protected from what is happening above the ground. I resign myself to this, but I want for you

to learn to disconnect the toxins that are not yours from the somewhat still undamaged realm that you are. I like to follow you, and that remains my theme.

Jessica Bacuna (1996) studied illustration at AKV | Sint Joost in Den Bosch. Her illustrations are featured in Trouw, Mest Magazine and Hard//hoofd.

Babeth Fonchie (1993) is a poet, creator and Master of Laws. She is currently working on her poetry debut at Uitgeverij De Geus.