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I Coming Back, and: Night Is Her Robe, and: Love Act, and:
In My Name

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I COMING BACK*

by Grace Nichols

I coming back 'Massa'
I coming back

mistress of the underworld
I coming back

colour and shape
of all that is evil
I coming back

dog howling outside
yuh window
I coming back

ball-a-fire
and skinless higue
I coming back

hiss in yuh ear
and prick in yuh skin
I coming back

bone in yuh throat
and laugh in yuh skull
I coming back

I coming back 'Massa'
I coming back

* "I Coming Back" was originally published in *I Have Crossed an Ocean: Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe Books, 2010). Reprinted with permission from the author.

NIGHT IS HER ROBE*

by Grace Nichols

Night is her robe
Moon is her element

Quivering and alert
she's stepping out behind
the fields of sugarcane

She's stepping out softly
she's stepping out carefully
she's bending / she's stalking
she's flitting / she's crawling

Quivering and alert
she's coming to the edge
of her island forest

Now with all the care
of a herbalist
she's gathering strange weeds
wild root
leaves with the property
both to harm and to heal

Quivering and alert
Quivering and alert
she's leaving the edge
of her island forest

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LOVE ACT*

by Grace Nichols

She enter into his Great House
her see-far looking eyes
unassuming

He fix her with his glassy stare
and feel the thin fire in his blood
awakening

Soon she is the fuel
that keep them all going

He / his mistresswife / and his
children who take to her breasts
like leeches

He want to tower above her
want her to raise her ebony
haunches and when she does
he think she can be trusted
and drinks her in

And his mistresswife
spending her days in rings
of vacant smiling
is glad to be rid of the
loveact

But time pass/ es

Her sorcery cut them
like a whip

She hide her triumph
and slowly stir the hate
of poison in

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IN MY NAME*

by Grace Nichols

Heavy with child

belly
an arc
of black moon

I squat over
dry plantain leaves

and command the earth
to receive you

in my name
in my blood

to receive you
my curled bean

my tainted

perfect child
 my bastard fruit
 my seedling
 my sea grape
 my strange mulatto
 my little bloodling

Let the snake slipping in deep grass
be dumb before you

Let the centipede writhe and shrivel
in its tracks

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CALLALO

Let the evil one strangle on his own tongue
even as he sets his eyes upon you

For with my blood
I've cleansed you
and with my tears
I've pooled the river Niger

now my sweet one it is for you to swim