

this truth
Grace Manning

sandra took me to the market
on a saturday in late november
the air was still summer

i spent nights dreaming of handfuls of ice
slipped into pockets our hands
smelled like fish for hours the street wavered

through heat delirious eyes
thought i could feel mine
liquify

i spent days waiting for an orb sun
to move behind imaginary clouds
my mind played tricks

i knew what it was like
for the first time
to be afraid

when i forgot to buy water
thought constantly
about where i could get it next

the sky
seemed closer
every day

she told me to ask about chickens
we needed four
and the boy selling them

laughed
when i asked
told me,

tu les tues comme ça
and wrung the neck
of the one he held

the others clambered in wire baskets
i looked for something
in frantic eyes

his friend got me a wheelbarrow
showed me the best tomatoes
crushed and seeping

the slick *piments* dangled
in bunches above the butcher
he flung entrails at hairless dogs

his face covered in raised freckle blood
drying
thrust fish into my arms

his sister
was scaling them
she stood on a shimmering mound

i told her i was from america
she laughed deep in her throat
and she told me i was french

pfffft she whistled through her teeth

les américaines ne viennent pas en Afrique.