

# The Dancer

by Gcina Mhlophe

Mama,  
they tell me you were a dancer  
they tell me you had long  
beautiful legs to carry your graceful body  
they tell me you were a dancer

Mama,  
they tell me you sang beautiful solos  
they tell me you closed your eyes  
always when the feeling of the song  
was right, and lifted your face up to the sky  
they tell me you were an enchanting dancer

Mama  
they tell me you were always so gentle  
they talk of a willow tree  
swaying lovingly over clear running water  
in early Spring when they talk of you  
they tell me you were a slow dancer

Mama  
they tell me you were a wedding dancer  
they tell me you smiled and closed your eyes  
your arms curving outward just a little  
and your feet shuffling in the sand;  
tshi tshi tshitshitshitha, tshitshi tshitshitshitha  
o hee! how I wish I was there to see you  
they tell me you were a pleasure to watch

Mama  
they tell me I am a dancer too  
but I don't know...  
I don't know for sure what a wedding dancer is  
there are no more weddings  
but many, many funerals  
where we sing and dance  
running fast with the coffin  
of a would-be bride or would-be groom  
strange smiles have replaced our tears  
our eyes are full of vengeance, Mama

Dear, dear Mama,  
they tell me I am a funeral dancer.



Drawing by Sanna



