

Middle Finger to Modesty

Some poems are too afraid to knock the dust out the sky,
write themselves into a sword and cut into contemporary literature.

Some poems are too afraid to twerk up against the margin,
too nervous to cartwheel out of crowded subjects,
too frightened to put a corkscrew on poems that overflow
with green leaves, and not enough thorns, turquoise feathers,
purple suns. It's about time we have balls bigger than
a hot air balloon, pizzazz the page. Some poems need to
have a shopping spree in an upside-down flea market,
a photo shoot in the fitting room with knee-highs and a nose ring.

Some poems need to smoke a cigar in the doctor's office,
let the smoke pale everyone's face. Some poems need to saw-off
the buttons on their collar shirt, let the moon give them a lap dance.

Some poems need to feed a Brachiosaurus bread crumbs,
lather in pimp juice. Some poems need to cocoon into
fiery graffiti, a rowdy rock'n'b concert, a yacht filled with lunatics
and a bunch of loose lips. Too often sounds and syllables
go to bed with Plain Jane, bury themselves deep down in an old
Victorian home, won't come out and skinny dip across a sunrise,
acrobat onto an asteroid. Some poems need to Crip walk on the rim
of a volcano, throw wedding rings at Jezebel's window,
crash the castles in Ireland, whistle *Knuck If You Buck* to a hummingbird,

slap box a sabre-tooth tiger then walk straight into the afterlife
with a torch and a bottle of Hennessy. In *Poetic Justice*,
Regina King said, *the world's just a big place for us to go* and *F' up in it*.
Thus, let poems be teeth with character a place where
leprechauns can mutate to mermaids, where Abe Lincoln
can cruise in a roofless Lime Lamborghini. Some poems need to
wake up and smell the cocaine, or the Kool-Aid kryptonite,
strip themselves of pristine armor, hold onto the infested scraps,
flash them in stories. Some poems never saw the anatomy
of a prayer, never skipped down to the cemetery,
dug up who they used to be. They've always hopscotched
out of alleys, hid over the indigo of the city, blew dandelions
to the status quo, and left the page uncharted,
Some poems are just too punk to be poems, afraid to piss under
an apple tree, drag race on top of the sea, give a middle finger
to modesty, sing songs of swag because what's a poem,
if not a flat mouth? Thus, poems should dip into electricity,
guillotine the glimmer and rush into a rifle green river
wash up stones unknown to readers and thou should
sign its name

—*A Mouth Turned Inside Out*

Incandescent Light That Peeks Through Secrets

There's a whore waiting on me, tucked under a duvet.
My headlights pierce a night's sky, my shadow
bounces around brown leaves when I walk to her doorway.
I become dynasty. My car always honors me—gleaming
in the background, exhausted but nevertheless elated.
The journeys are always far-off from city lights, sometimes through
dirt roads where the woods swallow me whole; I want to thank
my car for its devotion. There's a whore waiting on me,
a cacophony underneath my rib cage when I weave
around roadkill, wipe the moon's tears with my windshield,
pray there're no nails on my path, no police predators pulling me
over out of boredom—questioning until I curl up and become
shame. I've been stranded a time or two, but never on the way
to sin. Tire tread reliable as rubbers, oil tank full as an ocean.
*Car, do you want a shower, with strawberry soap suds and a wax
that rubs you in all the right places?* I give thanks, for the heat
you blow on arctic nights helping my cologne settle in my skin,
as the D.J. rambles, playing his midnight mix and regret tries
to cruise with me. There's a whore waiting on me, looking out
her window like it's an aquarium, anticipating my pull-up under
hotel lights, my bounty hunted-bandit walk, Listerine strips
in my pocket, body wipes in the other, soul noise left in the car.
Praising my engine for never coughing up *hell no* or collapsing
on its bones, leaving me cold on the curb, unhandy, heart
racing like it does when we're panting, after.

Prince's Trombone Player Coughs up a Cat

Don't let the tiny man fool you. Godless, he was godless in rehearsals. One time he locked all of our car keys in a safe and said, *No one is going home until the songs sound insane*. I don't know where all that fire came from. A backup singer—with him since *Dirty Mind*—said it started in LA, when they were booed opening for the Rolling Stones. So much for his trench coat and pink bikini. I think Prince put it on his performance. Underneath my breath I called him a scorpion because once his poison got into you, you didn't know who you were any more. I mean, around him you became animalistic, uncivil on your instrument, screwing it for the best notes. Watching him on the guitar was sorcery. Our admiration didn't last long though. He'd walk around with that hot mug of green tea, waiting for one of us to have an off-game so he could bump into us. Don't get me wrong, he was revolutionary, the baddest rock star in heels. But sometimes he was just stone cold. One night, during our Act One tour, I missed a high B during my solo on "The Flow." Next day, Prince said, *You're gonna play that solo right tonight?* I said, *I'll do my best*, and he said, *Uh, you did your best last night*. Then he walked away. That night, during my solo, he came up to me with his golden gun microphone and held it to my head. Oh my God. He kept doing it. For a week, and I was freaking out. At that point, it wasn't showbiz. He jammed it right here. Hard. Left a mark. On my temple.

Italic lines (13-18) are references from Savage, Mark. Prince: 12 things we learned since his death. BBC News, 19 April 20

Mount Everest be Jealous

I want shoulders bigger than the Million Man March.
They got to be pronounced turtleneck assassination
cotton squealing for mercy. Funny, we'll ransack our sanity
for a voice that says we could look better. Whatever,
I don't mind the heaviness, even if it means difficulty balancing.
I want shoulders big enough for a one-man football team.
Let sweat take years to slide off my shoulders.
Ladies, don't leave me alone, 'tis the season for a new wave of sexy.
Each lift in the gym is a millimeter closer to what we may never see;
genetics should change its name to *bad news*, always reminding us
of impossible heights. I want shoulders that are a threat to goons
before I can enter a room, way too big for snapbacks to fit.
I want custom fashions to beg for my endorsement.
Place me in a *Vanity Fair* spread with only a pen and pad covering my privates.
Let me love and hate me. Save me from fantasy.
Gut out my bulky daydreams of a woman waking up
kissing me on the back of my deltoid.
Ban me from my image or grant me shoulders mammoth enough
to block it from me. And self-esteem be asleep—
says it ain't got nothing to do with it. Overcompensate my lack of happiness.
Supplement my person with boulders that belong on no human
but far off in valleys where my self-image

sometimes may drift off through mist and murk overstretching
of what's sexy in this world, but underneath, it all be too much,
abundant and plentiful, too heavy for air to even pass through.

Sliced Chapter

She said my books take up too much space,
like I'm cramming the universe in this apartment.
She found one behind the toilet, two crushing
her tampons, and one with the lost car registration.
I told her books are like dope fiends, you'll find them
in odd places. She slammed a bottle of bleach
on the dining table, then whispered that I had a week
to purge this place back to a land where love
can breathe, or she'll watch words bleed
through page to page. Those seven days were long
as a novel and I saw what I did not want to see:
Thursday, her ankles resting on books to dry
painted nails. Friday, books used as wine glass coasters.
Saturday, books shoved into a pot
to prop up silk orchids—I could've sworn
I heard one of the characters shriek. Monday,
a torn cover used as a dustpan. Tuesday, books
against the fireplace, burnt matchsticks scattered
like a newly opened puzzle. On Wednesday,
I walked in with keys to a U-Haul and a separation lease.
If it wasn't for these books, I wouldn't have
been the lyricist she loved once. If it wasn't for
these books, this story could have been orchids
blooming, thirstless in one vase.