

A TWEET I COULD NEVER TWEET CUZ IT'S TOO LONG

Now that I've gathered all my information,
I've come to the conclusion that two things gave me lupus:

- 1) That bad breakup I had with high yellow ass Brian
- 2) That two-week war I had with double pneumonia

And don't start telling me lupus ain't something I can get from a boy
or bacteria cuz I got it, and you, beautiful reader, probably don't
so get off my page!

AFTER I WAS DONE BEING DEPRESSED I CALLED BENA

& she came over & told me I got a little too skinny & my hair looked a little funny & then we laughed until she played The Fray's "How to Save a Life" & then she told me how many times she played that song for me on her way to the job she hated & that's how fast black girls catch up & forgive each other & that's actually how I started listening to white boy bands & how I got hip to Chrisette Michele. The next day I went to a park all the way in Chagrin Falls & let every song from Chrisette's *I Am* album play three times before I went on to the next song & everyday after that I took my time taking in everything I ever loved.

AS SOON AS THEY DIAGNOSED ME, I TEXTED MY GIRL IN ATLANTA

Because I believe my friends more than I believe
these sneaky ass doctors. Plus, she black, she smart, she fine,
she run, she cook, & she pushed her caring, black ass to become an army nurse.
She the one who told me lupus was an autoimmune disease.
She the one who told me it had a nickname and that's the only reason
I started dreaming about wolf bites.
Dr. Sunshine let his long & boastful term, systemic lupus erythematosus,
settle on his lips like it was a joint he was about to light up
and love. *Another black girl down*, I pictured his swirl of smoke saying.
I could've punched that fool in his face
because I was convinced he injected me on some
now-you-got-lupus type shit.
When I called my mother, she got so mad
she blamed everything on my father's side.
I laughed like something was funny.

B-SIDE PERFORMANCE, 2007

After my depression, I was on some different shit. I remember this one day I stayed in Dillard's for hours cuz I was trying to find something sexy to perform my poems in. I decided on this wine colored halter bra dress that I knew would snatch them B-Side niggas' attention cuz most of them niggas be there for the pussy, not the poetry. I knew my dress would pull them in. Before the show, I called my girls to be witnesses. Ronnie was hungry so we stopped at Eaton Place & had dinner at Bravo where this white man told me I was so gorgeous there was no way he could let us pay for our meals. Once we got in my car I had Bena play Kanye's *Graduation* just so I could hear him say, *welcome to the good life*. I was 27 and that night, B-Side was lit, meaning I had to debo my way on stage cuz half the niggas trying to perform don't believe in ladies first. For real, when the host says, *the mic is open*, niggas bum-rush the stage like the mic might be the only thing keeping all of us alive.

HOW A POEM & A WEDDING SAVED MY LIFE

So look, if that poem had never come as a hum in my ear,
I'd still be in my corner apartment tallying all the times the world did me dirty.

Poem came busting in like my mama sent it.

Poem came with some kind of god in it.

Poem said,
It is so in you.
I'ma shake the fear out you.
But you better beat the devil til he turn black & blue.

Poem had me calling Bena to see if she'd stop by even though
I had allowed the world to snatch a year away from us.

Poem had me power walking with ankle weights on all up and down Chagrin
just in case the world tried to act like it wanted some more.

Poem lifted me up in one stanza,
as if the stanza was an arm
and the arm was covered in a sleeve
and the sleeve was made up of all my brother's tattoos,
meaning all his dead friends was there to help him lift & push.

Poem was in straight beast mode.

And look, thank god black girls do in fact get married.
If not, my girl Ronnie may have never needed the poet in me.

And thank god she chose burnt orange & gold for her colors.
Otherwise, I would've never known how it feels to be a walking sunset.