

How to Save Face

I.

Men will touch you
because they think you're pretty.
They will ask you to marry them.
Laugh and keep walking.
Marriage has always been a concept.
Keep taking it as a joke.

II.

You are a face.
I don't know why you keep speaking
like people can hear past what they see.
Keep your thoughts to yourself.
Your mind is a womb
where you must suppress the contractions.
Don't say you can't live in this world.
It's not so terrible once you learn to
shut up and smile.
Let man play you like a trumpet
and call it genius.
Your body is a stage
you call home.
Let people perform
and sleep as they may.

III.

Keep your breasts warm
for him to lay upon.
Treat him like a newborn.
The happy ones don't know anything.
Be happy.

IV.

Ask God, why?
Someone will say, x.
What the fuck is a binary
when you've already lived so many lives
and this one hurts the most?

V.

Shut up.
Stop crying.
Everyone loves you.
Why are you crying?
You get everything that you want.
Let me have this, she thinks.
"I love you," she says.
Your body is a curtain call.
Women love to dance
where you once stood in place.
They tell you
they admire you.
You find out why
after God takes too long to answer.

VI.

You share your living space
with women you've only said hi to
in passing.

He sits on the couch
(dick in hand, remote in the other)
trying to decide what or who it is
he should do tonight.

He has reduced you to a fraction.
You can't make him feel whole.
She was only your friend
to crawl in the bed you claimed
when night felt most vulnerable.
These women still want him.
What do you want?

VII.

The first man you fell in love with
will probably be asking a white woman
to marry him soon.

Now it all makes sense as to why
you were never good enough,
or does it?

Ask yourself,
why did I want to be with him?
When you take too long to answer,
take it as God speaking through you.

VIII.

Silence is profound when you
understand its language.

IX.

An invisible man yanks back your gums
and you make everyone believe it's a smile.
You are more than a puppet
without strings.

Don't let these men fool you into thinking
that you are nothing more than a doll.

They were blank canvases
you tried adding color to.

They are still hanging
by your bedside.

You are afraid to let go of men
who are more afraid of you
than anything.

Drop them from your window.
and watch them fall like eggs.

It's not your job to see if they hatch
or break.

You were their home once.
What do they have without you?

X.

Arm wrestle the invisible man.

He will grow distracted with all
the strings that begin to fly in the wind.
When he looks back
and sees that you're about to win,
smile.

Compose

You play with my tongue like a clarinet;
view my body as a black and hollow instrument.

You don't want to hear me sound.

FERMATA

“How do African-Americans feel about Obama?”

Are you referring to President Obama? Hmmm, I don't know. I haven't met every single African-American person in the world. But how do white people feel about Clinton? Washington? Every other president that America has ever had?

Don't ask him any of this. Stay in shock as every question to his question is undelivered.

REFRAIN

“So like, I asked this Ghanaian guy is like, calling myself a brunei like, equivalent to African-Americans calling themselves ‘niggers?’”

Well, I typically don't hear African-Americans calling themselves the n-word. Yes. The n-word. If I don't feel comfortable using the term, then you definitely should not be saying it. ‘Nigga’ is a reclaiming of the oppressive term that was used by your ancestors/is used by your parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, friends, police officers, wannabe police officers, etc. And newsflash: Not all African-Americans use the term. And here's something else that will blow your mind: It's not only African-Americans who use it!

Do not educate her. Take the time to listen to her disrespect you and your community. She will not stop to hear what you have to say. She does not want to acknowledge that being oppressive is in her DNA. So just silence yourself. It's probably the wisest thing you can do at this point.

CODA

“Wow! She's cute for a black girl.”

So I guess all black girls are unattractive. That girl should take your mind as a compliment.

“Well... her hair is straight... so she's not really black.”

Just the word **black** makes them cringe. Black can't be associated with anything of beauty. You can't take back the n-word, but they can take back their half-ass acknowledgment of black being something other than dirty.

Just remember that when you take a bath tonight, you will never be clean.

“You should really put yourself in George Zimmerman's shoes.”

Oh. You mean put myself in the shoes of a racist pig? When you assume that someone is up to no good because of his/her skin color and because of the way he/she dresses, that's called RACISIM. That's called

racial profiling.

Open your mouth, and say that shit. Watch him walk away from you when you're finally not in too much shock to speak.

CRESCENDO

"Ugh, why does she look like that? How does she look like that?"

She is talking about a person with a mixed racial background. Go home. Look at yourself in the mirror. Remember who your father is. Remember who your mother is. Remember that God has a plan for you. Remember that this is how you look like that. This is why you look like that.

REFRAIN

"All black people in Atlanta steal."

You were born and raised in Atlanta. But just stay quiet. You can't speak for your family. You can't speak for your friends. You can't speak for your race. You can't speak for yourself.

You have never stolen anything from anyone.

But they have robbed you of everything, not even leaving you with your name.

Their skin is underclothes.
Locketts are worn beneath the white.
They open it from time to time to hear what freedom sounds like.
Your voice is a noose around pallid necks.
The swollen flesh dims darkness.

Play hangman in the sky.
Choke the moon.
Use all 50 stars to spell out justice.
White will bleed.
They will wave their flag.
Uncle will call out "mercy."

The Fare/Lady

the night i heard laughter sing from a crooked throat,
two streetlights flared--
nostrils seeping of gold blood.
tires pressed against a graveled chest as
the sky created a fort around bodies
preparing for war.

the men did not smell fear
until they sensed where i was hiding.

dry beams of honey emanated
beneath my ankles when a truck of six
roared into view.
flashlights
shone like a myriad of moons,
dancing against the darkness

of flesh.
as my smile began to bleed into the light,
i unzipped my mouth to scream over
the deafening bulge.

"No, sir."

women are the glass that create reflections.
men are at war with themselves.
the angry break mirrors as a form of rebellion.
i am a burning house
the soldiers set fire to.

the officers held my waist like an AK-47.
to be lady is to be rifled.
i am the shuffling door upon which thieves enter.

knock-knock

who's there?

police-man

police-man who?

*to police man is the job of the police and the man.
the man is the police.
the police is the man.
man is still behind your woe.
turn around
and put your hands behind your back.*

the sinewed laughter
coiled into the gutter,
knee-deep in man's nectar.
breath smelling of sewage
followed me into the back of a truck
as i swallowed the dirt
still hanging midair.

The Day I Met Bicipital Man

The first day I met you,
I thought you were a nice boy,
because you were a quiet boy.

I thought quiet boys were nice boys,
and loud boys were men-boys.

I thought I wanted a boy-boy,
because men-boys yelled at me
like daddy did when I was a girl-girl,
so I wanted a boy who was quiet like a secret.

The second day I met you,

I wanted you to fall in love with me,
because you smiled at me the way my mirror does
when it's been broken.

You fell into me
like the heaviest tree in a forest.
No one was around to hear you break
inside, and I still miscarry the stump.

How did it feel when you walked out the sky
and chose to not look back? Was the fall lighter
this time? Does rat-girl serve her demons for breakfast
while you hand-feed her yours for supper?

Fish-boy, squirming under bed sheets
thin as ice, have you taught her how to swim,
or do you want her to drown?

The third day I met you,
our laughter strummed the air.
The walls created a soundtrack,
inspired by a voiceless love.

When you handed me darkness,
I shone like the moon.
It only gave you more reason
to wave your flag
and step.

I'm not your marked
territory. You will not piss in my face,
and call yourself a lion. Have
you no spine, eel-boy? Haven't you
got a heart to go inside that costume-tomb?

I don't miss you.
I hate you.

You's a bitch
boy,
a basenji
lying on his belly.

When the fleas have bit you both down
to sin and bone,
pray.

Her knees
and mouth will know
how to position themselves.

Learn her evil for the last time.

Backwards God

When man made God

in his image
He took a rib from
His flesh and
gave it to the woman
as bone.

When the woman
grew a tail
and had it shoved
between her legs
she was
beckoned to
sit and pose as
man's best friend.

The womb is the center of creation.

We give all praise to
the Holy Father
for it is through He
that we are children
without mothers.

The carrier is not God enough
to be translator.

Woman always has a man behind, trying to bend her over.

If Adam and Eve were the first people
how did woman's name become
the abbreviation of evil
when it is Adam's apple
still lodged in man's throat?

We throw trash into the Earth
and call her Mother.
It makes sense as to why women
are still treated
as if we have masters.

Man gives the Earth
the same gender he oppresses.

And if God did create the Earth
how did Father give birth to Mother?

Daughters never had
a chance at being
suns
because it is our duty
to rotate around
the men we create.
To always keep an eye
on the burning star.
Cleaning up the fire

He leaves in His wake.

I was born in a box
shaped like the Earth
underwater
in a canvas
of mirrors.
I kicked because
I was trying to swim.
I've always been trapped
inside a woman's body
and no one ever asked if
they could touch me.

Fathers are as distant as
the God They created.
Before when
I prayed
I would witness
false prophets in suits
claiming
they were the messengers.

I don't need my dad
to hire a middle man
for Him
to tell me
He loves me.

I don't need a pastor
referring to me as she
in hopes that
I will be docile in his flock.

For what?

To eventually be
slaughtered, skinned,
and eaten as the last
supper?

For what?

To be told
I'm a fornicator
when the Holiest
of men
have tried to enter me
and escape
as if my body is a prison?

For what?
For who?

Sometimes I misspell

right as write
so for a moment I believe
my womanhood is also a
God-given gift.

But if God is a He
does that mean man
gave me this burden?

Why is it so damn hard
to say you're tired
without someone
labeling you as crazy?

Why does my strength sound
like a bark that needs to be silenced?

How dare you banish me to a cage
when I bite back?

There are times when I think
maybe if I don't wear makeup today
no one will think I'm pretty.
Maybe if I wear loose clothes
I can be invisible today.
I was once a patient
bag of garbage
waiting to be picked up
by a man's hands.

I heard a whistle
and looked up to see
a dog owner sicking
his teeth upon me.

After being rummaged through
and left in the yard to try
an apple's core and a banana peel
were all that was left
of me.

I asked the teeth why they hated me so
and they answered me with a smile.

Who is my brother?
What is a sister?
Cain and Abeline have been at it
for some time now.

I'm not feminist.
I'm not sacrilegious.
I'm not perfect.
I'm not all-knowing.
I just don't give God a sex
'cause what love came out of

objectifying the spirit?

I don't have a home in this world.
What is my place to stay in?
You can't shut me up
by putting me in a box.
I was born in one.
I know how this shit works.

I can't ask God why
gender exists 'cause
God isn't the one
who created it.

Tell me
when did my nipples become the periods after a death sentence
Explain to me
how a baby can drink from his mother
and grow up to spit the milk out onto his wife

Answer me
why are we still here
in these positions?

Time has a mouth that chews
and swallows.

The only thing it's ever told us
is that death repeats itself.