

The Revolution (is you)
After Gil Scott-Heron

The revolution is a single mother
three kids, two jobs, one prayer.
It is Sojourner Truth, Joan of Arc and Frida Kahlo
meeting clandestine by candlelight.
Betty Shabazz, Myrlie Evers, Coretta Scott King up sleepless nights
it is labor:
the revolution is a Lakota Sioux woman at Standing Rock nursing her baby
she is speaking to God
the rhythm of breath on her skin
akin to patchwork prayers, Louisiana blues
we release you from our bodies trusting the moon to watch over you.
It is Trayvon Martin walking home in the rain.
Eric Garner's final breath
Emmet Till, Mike Brown
it is the sound of a thousand broken hearts
more than one poem could ever hold
parents burying their babies is unnatural
un-Godly like bigotry, like bullets
the revolution is every grandmother, sister, daughter
who held you before you even took form
rocked you in our arms before you could speak or walk or write
but the world will not magically change over night
no one will right these wrongs for you
no one can make your feet dance or march or move
this is not a movie
there will be no paparazzi red carpet, no entourage, no groupies
there is no room for Hollywood idolatry in a conversation about freedom
we must not be distracted by complacency
pop culture trickery
the revolution is not a mainstream, consumer based, funded event,
not sponsored by Nike or Nokia, not a reality show, it is reality
where Kardashian is a household name but Mumia Abu Jamal is not
where an afternoon of botox costs enough to feed a dozen homeless families
where men in power are not held accountable for unspeakable behavior
where women are demonized for telling the truth
where money buys silence, buys loyalty, buys bodies
where every black male is a suspect
and every cop has impunity
where communities live in a chronic state of loss
this is a world

where the prison industrial complex legally enslaves black and brown
where children wake up in war zones
poor people killing/ poor people/ killing poor people/ killing poor people
look up: death lullabies rattle the heavens
be witness
the revolution will not be featured on Sunset Blvd. billboards
or a sponsored post on your instagram feed
the revolution is action
it is each shot fired
each bomb shattering the sky open
it is daring to live anyway
look the demon in the eye
and sucker punch that MF with a poem
because the revolution will not wait
not come at your convenience
there is no rewinding, no fast forwarding, no time traveling
there is only now, only now
only here, only now
the revolution is now, the revolution is here
the revolution is now, the revolution is here
the revolution is you.

His

Here to see your father?

I ask how she knows.

You look just like him.

She waves her clipboard,
motions me to follow.

It takes three nurses to contain him today.

He is a windstorm trying to break free.

Daddy, I say, sing with me.

I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield

Down by the river side, down by the river side, down by the river side

The silver smooth of the needle shines like a tiny skyscraper.

He meets its eye in resignation, watches it disappear into his arm.

I've always been the type to avert the eyes,
learned early not to look.

I don't remember the pinch of the needle sliding through skin
the blood draining from vein to tube

the waiting room or the walk back to the car

all I remember is the Polaroid of him
protocol for paternity testing, verify identity.

I was ten

and already a man had ripped apart my ribcage,
sliced the heart open
just to see.

I ain't gonna study war no more

I ain't gonna study war no more

I ain't gonna study war no more

The nurses exit.

For now, their job is done.

Eyes closed, he claps his hands.

We sing.

Our Last Days

I. *Monday, April 14th*

convalescent homes
house blank stares where
urine stank and ammonia air
fistfight florescent lights
straining to see
the million memories
suspended from the stucco ceiling
a backwards culture we must be
leaving our elders to endless claustrophobic days and cherry Jell-O

II. *Tuesday, May 21st*

prayers scattered everywhere
like rogue shooting stars dying as they soar
my voice dangles mute from my neck
as I wipe the running from his nose
console the boy behind his eyes
sometimes he recognizes me
always meets my gaze at least once during the visit
together we march this sorrowful slow dance to music we cannot remember
while earthly things like apologies and birthdays spin weightless around us
I want to relieve him. I cry into his chest,
savor the gift of time like a peasant at the Queen's feet
wish him a good journey, free him from himself

III. *Wednesday, June 11th*

Morning

We're calling to inform you that the patient has expired

as if he were a quart of milk

I had seen him on Saturday, sang *His Eye is on the Sparrow*

held his warm hand, long brown fingers just like the smaller beige version, mine

the three days between Saturday and Wednesday trampled me, a stampede of sorrow

rushed to the mirror to look at him in my face

Starless Sky

Remembering my brother's face
I hear his laughter in the traffic
a blur of passing lives
all going somewhere and nowhere
we are a funny people
eating pain
numbing ourselves with all kinds of shit
what if I just feel it
the empty loud
the arms with nothing to hold
what if I am present
here: where the moon lowers her head in mourning
even the stars can't bear to shine
there is no sun
no wild flowers
just a small black box
where my brother once was
I am flesh
looking at memory
what the earth has to say
to each fallen branch on the ground

Still

the day you died
the sky folded in on itself
the world became a crumbling sand castle
I was buried
did not come up for air
for fear that I would find you still dead when I resurfaced
so I hid
so long I forgot I was hiding
fell asleep inside myself
with a fist full of aching
hollow, but for the
clutching of my own damn heart
I whispered to no one in particular
once, this was full.