

A Hymn for the Black Boy

I see you black boy
Sweat dripping like hallelujahs
Dancing your way to redemption
Tonight being gay or black is not a sin

Let us hope no one decides to play
Judge and Jury
Certainly bullets would be mistaken for bass in this bar

I see the way you move your hips with conviction
Your teeth shining brighter than a neon sign
You would have stolen the dance floor at Pulse

With your body —

Dripping

Instead we are 2,000 miles away at a gay bar in Phoenix
I still find myself afraid for you and I
I have scouted all the nearest exits and hiding spots
Imagined throwing myself over my lover's body

I wonder if you have done the same

Because what is Stacey's or Pulse but
A name used to disguise slaughterhouses

Everyone around us chameleons their fear into excitement
Move their feet as if they are dancing instead of
Practicing how to dodge bullets

And you

With skin so dark it cannot take on anymore colors
Dance as if you are a beacon
Came in off the streets already prepared to be the first one shot
Because for you
What is "gay bar" or "the streets" or "black boy" but
A name used to disguise slaughterhouses
What is every step but redemption
What is every hip sway and night out but

A hallelujah for your existence

When did the bow begin to quiver?

When did the bow begin to quiver at your touch?

How long did it take for things that people normally fear to fear you?

Why did your soft cotton arms **compress** into granite and when did it start chipping away?

I

feel like

I watched

this world

make

a mountain

out of *you*.

Saw it rest its problems

on the edge of your shoulders.

What choice did you have but to *become* something that could stand the weight of

It?

I do not blame you for the s/c/r/a/t/c/h/e/s along your record player of a mind

stuck repeating - - - -

the delusional thoughts

triggered like a warning signal

flashing behind your eyes.

If I were you, I also would always be resting

on the tip of a deadly outcome.

I see the bow quiver, but is that just an

echo

of the

avalanche

inside of you?

Are you really just *c r u s h e d*

under the weight of all that granite,

your softness still there - hiding?

If so, I wish for the *c o t t o n* to stretch itself apart,

seep

into

every

crevice,

and suffocate all the boulders that have used your

heart as a skipping stone.

Hope for the snow to melt softly.

If not, I /pray\ to the days of tender nostalgia resting upon your hands.

Wish your hands remain \\\open as the night///.

Repeat the sound of your t

in
kl
ing
laughter like a national anthem to your

heart
beat.

I wish to understand you.
To know the nightmare terrors that rack your mind even
when your eyes are open.

Did you
form the arrow or did it form you?
Do you fear

yourself,

as well ?

Have you always been this way or did this way choose you?

Maybe you removed all the arrows in your back and
gathered them in the nook of your elbow to use as firewood.

Maybe war found you.

Maybe you had no choice but to become the hunter.
Learn to wield everything as a weapon.>>

Demanded fear for your safety.

Maybe your mind always sees war.
Maybe war always sees you.

Maybe the bow quivers because it fears for your safety
the way I always have.

Drip

the water drips
slowly
tenderly
the reservoir
unaware of the
start of
losing
itself
again
the reservoir
just got
good at
holding
softness
in its hands
learned how
to manage
the waning
and waxing of
this body
and this mind
this leak
does not
register as
slipping
away
the water drips
slowly
tenderly
the reservoir
aware
of the
void
the reservoir
tells itself
it is
half-full
while feeling
itself grow
empty
panicked and
questioning
how it could
let this
happen
again
and again
this leak
registers

as slipping
away
the water
barely drips
anymore
the reservoir
aware of its
demise
the reservoir
thought it
had a good
grip on
something
always meant
to escape
searched for
a fix to
fill the
draining
and numbness
this leak is
still happening
though there
is nothing
left to
drain
and for once
waiting for the rain
becomes a good thing
the reservoir
will fill up again
until it
overflows.

I see her ghost nowadays

I see her ghost nowadays wandering around,
slipping into the seat across from me,
flashing a smile - ghostly white.
Her teeth are porcelain carved
from the finest granite. Once, the bedrock shifting of her gums
played a Nightmare symphony too much for
them to handle. The result - a chipped tooth
ending/contributing
to her assigned perfection.

She was not pale white as you
imagine a ghost to be. Instead, she was fireplace vibrant.
Her hair burning the way it did on the night we `
first met. Myself unable to tell
where fire ended and hair began.

Back then, it reminded me too much of the
coal wind suffocation which comes about when you
fall in love with girls burning for the hell of it.
Maybe I knew my heart was not fireproof and my lungs
were already drowning. Maybe I knew if I stood in her presence
long enough I would be coated in soot --
A walking smoke signal for cupid's arrow.

I lived my life like a chimney sweep. Walked around
covered in the aftermath of her aura.
She never brought herself down to a simmer for my comfort.
Instead, she was drifted off with the wind, too
distant to see me break down into ash dust and try to
fly away with her. I was afraid of the haunting she would
cause the moment she decided to start walking through
other people's walls.

And that's the thing about fire's -- they burn and drift and
before you know it you have been consumed by them. I
could never be fireproof. Our opposition of each other, our
inability to exist without harming one another became a notice of
death. Soon the drowning in my lungs became too much to handle.
The soot began to burn. Everything I tried to endure for the
sake of keeping her, became our undoing. Now
exists too much suffering to justify the light.

As time went on,
I tried to bury her deep in
the abyss of forgotten memories.
My mind more like an abandoned building ready for a ghost
to haunt its halls. And in a blink, the wisp she left behind turned
from smoke trails to ghost tales.
She covers me these days, but not in soot.

Her aura still hangs around, hauntingly vibrant,
in places I would not think.

Storm Chaser

The word "hurricane" derives from the Taino words for "storm"
My Caribbean ancestors forced to face the destruction
Their lives proof that survival runs in my veins
You cannot scare me away

As a child I wanted to be a storm chaser
Tie myself to trees to have the best view
Take photographs of heaven grazing earth with its fingertips
I would sit with my face pressed against cold glass to be
Warmed by the sight of lightning dancing across the sky like
God was leaving paintings for whoever was bold enough to
Stay and watch
As if me staring up in wonder was an ode to
The Taino living in me

I've learned to see the storm inside of everyone and
I can chase storms with the best of them
It's no wonder I run towards you instead of away
You say, "See this storm in me,
You should be afraid"
I say, "I see the storm in you and I want to
Tie myself to your ribcage so I can see
The destruction your mind leaves on your heart"
Want to photograph the mess inside of you and
Print all the reasons it is beautiful like
God has been leaving paintings inside the cracks of your mind for
Whoever is bold enough to stay and watch
As if me staring at you in wonder is an ode to the Taino

I grew up in the lightning capital of the world
Pressed between Disney World and hurricanes
Had an obsession with the scars left behind
By lightning strikes
Wanted to know what it felt like to survive
Electricity coursing through my blood stream
My birthright the ability
To be scarred so badly yet live to tell the tale

Hurricanes were more like watch parties
Past times filled with more wonder than worry
I remember walking through neighborhoods
During the eye of storms
Danced among fallen tree branches and powerlines

Wanted the storm to hit harder
Wanted everything but my home to fall

You can warn me about your broken power lines
How you've been trying to rewire them so

You no longer misfire the electric impulses
That keep everything working right
You can warn me about your fallen branches
How nothing grows long enough
Before the storm in you decides to break things off

I warn you that my genes recognize you
That storms are the undertone to my being
That it takes one to know one
That my lifeline was birthed on an island
Where homes were constantly being built and destroyed but
My ancestors figured out how to last
How to own the storm instead of running away

The winds that course through my blood
Recognized you before my lips ever did
Your kiss feels like lightning strikes that finally hit
Electricity coursing through my veins and
My birthright is to be scarred by you
I want to press my face against your soul and
See your heart dance around it's feelings
Your feelings a glimpse into heaven grazing my earth
Afraid that the home we build in each other
Won't be strong enough to remain standing
Hit harder and watch how everything but us falls apart

Everyone of your mood has already been named by Taino Indians
Given dominion instead of fear
I will embrace you instead of running away
You are the undertone to the mixture in my blood
Your presence as strong as iron
My heart ready to be scarred by your lightning strikes and
Live to tell the tale and
Live to keep loving you
The way I've always loved storms