SLEEPING BEAUTY IN THE HOOD

In the film, townsfolk
name themselves Prince Charming,
queue up to wake the sleeping beauty.

Let’s name her Jamal.
Let’s make her everyone’s brother

or play cousin. All the princes
press a kiss to Jamal’s wax-dipped lips.

All the princes sing songs & kill dragons
but Jamal won’t wake up.

You mad? This ain’t no kid flick. There is no magic here.
The fairies get killed too. The kingdom has no king.
All the red in this cartoon is painted with blood:
the apples, the velvet robes, Jamal’s cold mouth.
BOYZ N THE HOOD 2

Let’s not mention the original
nor cast any boyz at all.

The whole thing is a series
of birthday parties for the child
who lives in the picture frame.

Every year we watch his family
light candles on a blue cake.

Every year we watch the family
watch their home burn to the ground.

The movie gets old. The boy never will.
JIM CROW, ROCK STAR

picture him up there!
seersucker cut-offs too tight

cotton shirt freshly picked
& exposed belly, pink cock rocking

a guitar made from your aunt’s bones
strung with your great-granddaddy’s
stretched out beard.

no fireworks or back up dancers,
he barely sings above a mosquito-wing hum

but you can’t turn away, his foot
pressed into the stage like a neck

masked in a hood of blonde curls.
wicked show! when’s he’s done

you can’t even clap, but the encore?

just when you think
the lights are going ghost
he scans the crowd, picks
the youngest brown boy
within reach, hands him
a pistol, whispers

*play.*
DEAR WHITE AMERICA

I’ve left Earth in search of darker planets, a solar system that revolves too near a black hole. I have left a patch of dirt in my place & many of you won’t know the difference; we are indeed the same color, one of us would eventually become the other. I’ve left Earth in search of a new God. I do not trust the God you have given us. My grandmother’s hallelujah is only outdone by the fear she nurses every time the blood-fat summer swallows another child who used to sing in the choir. Take your God back. Though his songs are beautiful, his miracles are inconsistent. I want the fate of Lazarus for Renisha, I want Chucky, Bo, Meech, Trayvon, Sean & Jonylah risen three days after their entombing, their ghost re-gifted flesh & blood, their flesh & blood re-gifted their children. I have left Earth, I am equal parts sick of your ‘go back to Africa’ & ‘I just don’t see color’. Neither did the poplar tree. We did not build your boats (though we did leave a trail of kin to guide us home). We did not build your prisons (though we did & we fill them too). We did not ask to be part of your America, (though are we not America? Her joints brittle & dragging a ripped gown through Oakland?). I can’t stand your ground. I am sick of calling your recklessness the law. Each night, I count my brothers. & in the morning, when some do not survive to be counted, I count the holes they leave. I reach for black folks & touch only air. Your master magic trick, America. Now he’s breathing, now he don’t. Abra-cadaver. White bread voodoo. Sorcery you claim not to practice, but have no problem benefitting from. I tried, white people. I tried to love you, but you spent my brother’s funeral making plans for brunch, talking too loud next to his bones. You interrupted my black veiled mourning with some mess about an article you read on Buzzfeed. You took one look at the river, plump with the body of boy after girl after sweet boi & asked ‘why does it always have to be about race?’ Because you made it that way! Because you put an asterisk on my sister’s gorgeous face! Because you call her pretty (for a black girl)! Because black girls go missing without so much as a whisper of where?! Because there is no Amber Alert for the Amber Skinned Girls! Because we didn’t invent the bullet! Because crack was not our recipe! Because Emmitt whistled.
Because Huey P. spoke. Because Martin preached. Because black boys can always be too loud to live. Because it’s taken my father’s time, my mother’s time, my uncle’s time, my brother’s & my sister’s time, my niece’s & my nephew’s time… how much time do you want for your progress? I’ve left Earth to find a place where my kin can be safe, where black people ain’t but people the same color as the good, wet earth, until that means something & until then I bid you well, I bid you war, I bid you our lives to gamble with no more. I’ve left Earth & I am touching everything you beg your telescopes to show you. I am giving the stars their right names. & this life, this new story & history you cannot steal or sell or cast overboard or hang or beat or drown or own or redline or shot or shackles or silence or impoverish or choke or lock up or cover up or bury or ruin

This, if only this one, is ours.