

FLAMBEAUX

Tipsy, I am, in Louisiana among
by the liquid flame of flambeaux—
my night to unfurl. My arms like the arms
heavy torches, and before them, the wet limbs
pleasures of dark men floating in the deep
friends at first, but I fall into a cab
of them says, *For a kiss, baby,*
My lips were on his and our scissoring
to Bourbon Street. Enveloped, I am,
with a thousand buzzing bee bodies
eights trying to sway one inch
in each other's movements
around my feet, as anonymous
to die inside the muscled swallow
only the older ripened women
spits me up like Jonah at the beach
again, eat some French fries and lick
of my finger pads. They want to dance
black people. So I ditch them again,
down to this orgy machine
He is here, somewhere in the grind
cryptic texts and loud phone calls
music we find each other at the dark
missiles ready to destroy.
of his hotel room with booming
cigarette ash in my hair like dirty glitter,
of the street still on our skin.
still on my charcoal body, an ember
night burst below—glowing fire tongues
sodden faces of Flambeaux men
laughing and hollering for dollars
middle of the luminous parade,
a volcanic wonder. A gorgeous lava

the throng of loose bodies lit
fiery torches foreshadowing
of black men carrying
of shiny slaves lighting white
throat of night. I stay with my
with some frat guys. One
I'll take you to the French Quarter.
mouths ignite my descent down
in the murmur of Mardi Gras
dancing and rubbing in fixed figure
in all directions, but all of us are stuck
above the sludge of wet black trash
hands grab my crotch. I am going
of a crowd's grip. I tell you it's
who show off their tits. The crowd
of McDonald's. I run into my friends
the tiny salt granules off the tips
to black music, but not with
and find the reason I came
in the first place—my ex-boyfriend.
of the city's slick engine, and through
of us shouting our coordinates over loud
corner of some dive bar, heat-seeking
We were on the high floor
war drums of bacchanalia below—
sticky liquor and the sweat
The boiling breath of flambeaux
that never left me as the starless
in the obsidian stew lick
and women in processional,
and flickering coins—the pulsing
pumping kerosene over their heads—
spilling down my lips, our fingernails

filthy with each other and powdered
and gators and gumbo in my teeth,
purples, golds, and greens whizzing
but the whole city fills my mouth,
throat to inferno, inside of me—
stirring underworld, flame-woven
percolating. Phlegethon,

TELL ME: HARLEM

Every day, I walked over the ashes of Langston Hughes
 & his glittering cosmogram of ancient rivers,
 stepped over the dancing feet of Maya & Baraka
 that summer at The Schomburg,
I sifted through newspaper reels like a slot machine junkie
 & on my way home
 read the braille of black gum
 on the sidewalk saying—*No, this is renaissance!*
But my mind was fixed on your footnotes.
 Yes, my mind was lit
 by the hot strips of my first Brazilian wax.
 My lust I carried up & down 135th like a throbbing beast.
Every breeze was a subway surging
 through my new bare body as I walked by splayed
 papayas with shiny dark seeds & fuzzy kiwis
 with nuclear green flesh.
A man shoved bruised roses in my face,
 Fresh flowers for you!
 A man in a sharp suit preached Nation of Islam.
 Bustelo coffee with blossoming cream
& everything bagels with sesames stuck in my teeth.
 Don't forget extra schmear!
 & steaming manhole covers simmering below
 LED billboards as brilliant as the neon sun.
The New York Times in Russian,
 Spanish r's trilling like a deck of cards—
 wafts of warm piss & baked curb trash.
 Yes, the city was ripe & found every opening
in my body to enter. Taxis zoomed
 by as the earth gusted my puffed pores.
 Oh, the tortuous mating rituals!
 My naked center ripped the burning city raw

& I bit down on every crisp and living thing.
I was smashed, a stranger—
sizzling in lavish multitudes,
my lips gnashed, tore through day & night.
Harlem, tell me, we carried each other.
Tell me, I meant something.
Tell me, you remember sucking
barbeque sauce off my fingers.
Didn't every moment seem sticky
& weren't we always eating?
Tell me, I own one of your Fourth of Julys.
Tell me, Mexican street corn
was our whole summer.
Tell me, hot mayonnaise & Cotija
danced in our mouths
the last time I held your gaze.

PARTICLE FEVER

They built a seventeen-mile circle
to recreate the big bang,
how the laws of physics crash

like a drum beat of what makes us.
Your hand finding mine in the car ride home,
as white lines on the highway blur into memory.

I do not need to know every answer.
Give me a plane ride to question my ego.
When you are mad,

give me my first name in your mouth—
hard consonant of *T*,
said with the Tip of the Tongue.

What we speak into existence
like a drum beat of what makes us.
Give me a plane ride to question myself.

Aren't we always flying,
into each other
into the mouth of the universe?

Could it be magic?
The white bunny we lift from the hat
like early fog on the road to work.

We discover foot by foot
how we grope for each other,
sway to music we don't even hear.

There is always movement—
atoms bouncing around us
like a room full of endless balloons.

The seen and unseen world.
What wanted to be born out of nothing?
Mouth open—kiss ready:

lit with charge and wonder.