

BLACK UNDER

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for Azure Iman

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ODE TO BLACK SKIN

You are dark as religion. Remember God
could not have named a modicum of light without you.
You are plum, black currant, passion
fruit in another woman's garden. You are Black
as and as if by magic. Black not as sin, but a cave's jaw
clamped shut by forgiveness. Color of closed wombs and bellies
of ships, you, dark as not the tree trunk but its every cleft.
I chart each crescent moon rising above fingernail
and rub together my thighs for want of you. I try
to find you where the pages of books meet. You hang
where men or piano keys segregate. When I miss you,
I remember the hickey the sun left on the back of my neck.
If I forget, I smoke blunts down to my fingertips
and beg you to come on my lips. This is how I pray for you
when I'm not pessimistic. I bow to your darkness like I kneel
beside a child's bed, confessing as gospel:
There's no monster here.

“I don’t want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them.”

—Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

CAREER-CHANGING OPPORTUNITY!

Overview:

Make art of the deaths you witnessed. Compensation based on commission. Commitment dependent upon your ability to consistently close sales on open caskets. There is no shortage of this sort of work. May be offered a permanent position.

Job Description:

Curate chalk drawings and teardrops on asphalt. The method: your discretion: mix media, steal life, carve projectiles, engrave shells, etch borders/cross them. For reference, top performers draw blood and conclusions; our most consistent earners chisel anything with jawbone (preference given to candidates using gunpowder and teardrops as mediums).

Responsibilities:

Pose as victim. Expose killer like photo. Make every tear duct a gallery. Exhibit grief.

Qualifications:

- High school degree or equivalent combination of court proceedings, in-school suspensions, and traffic stops
- Ability to lift body out of bed into coffin. May be asked to carry more than one.
- Possess a minimum of five T-shirts, someone else's memory pressed into them
- Willingness to operate unregistered machinery alone as well as in the presence of others
- Unfinished business preferred but not req'd

Benefits:

All employees receive an ID that proves innocence.

Disclaimer: Becomes a gun if you attempt to retrieve it.

Use the company car and credit card! Only one has been reported stolen.

[Click here to apply pressure on the wound.](#)

SELF-PORTRAIT AS OVERSEER

Imagine a ten-year-old with a whip.
In films, it's always a middle-aged man
with a haggard mouth. I also lost teeth, myself
a little snaggletoothed falsetto-swearer.
Movies never show how slaves pissed and shit
themselves, but I've seen surrender embrace
a brother's tense thighs, sheltered nostrils
from the whispered stench of the body's
final prayer.

The sobbing
not as despairing as his mouth, silent
and open for eons before throat unbuttons
its sound. Leather makes sculpture of skin.
Cotton still lashes my hand, however soft.
I'll give you something to cry for: in photos,
the overseer's clothes never quite fit, hang
over weighted bones like a father's old coat.