

Pantheon

TY CHAPMAN

The spirit aches most days.
Immense blood cost of godhood.
Our ichor free flowing
 fresh from the spigot.
Black alluring to wayward gazes.
How it pains to know they held us once
as prophets:
 pockets overflowing
 relics & riches.

How quiet burns,
 as necks meet concrete
 or more traditional means.
How it rages to know
we've given everything
& still ain't seen a cent.
Overseer's children still relish Black
sweat, so long as it's free.

~

My Black ain't Black-Black
that's what I've been told
since I came up out of pampers, yet
I was just as likely
to be get caught
 lackin
by all the roaming rabble:
walking tantrums with
automatic armaments

Yea, yea

but more so the city
its different factions and all
their twisted instruments
guns germs & steel,

Sure.

But also, the stares
of America's initiates—
cushy cult built on

unwilling offerings.

The way a stranger might
gaze & see something sub
human—wounded beast in people's clothes,
mess of flesh fit for the altar.

Their under-breath-mutterings:

*You poor thing—
you don't even see
the knife coming.*

It's cool tho, cause

I got legions behind me:

Sisters and brothers

wacky uncles & elders

who go back like four flats & all that.

The ones who seen pain, its many shifting faces,
enough to know nuance—
the way it runs a visage rugged.

The ones who offer warm embrace,

or a hand,
or a fifth.
In the face of so much wicked.

O, how we fountain of youth at functions;
the spring of sameness washing our
shimmering onyx.
How we rise each day
pulleyed by bootstraps
and still ain't welcome:

Knee on neck
face on pavement
all he wanted
was his momma.
To be held
once more
& know in his whole body
he'll be alright.

I know I'm meant to drop
to knees & praise
Caucasian savior's name
cause a killer's locked away.
You'd have me shuck & jive,
wail & cry,
as you mutter:

You poor thing.

Your daily deed a three-minute sampling
of pain—but I can't go out like that,
these scars ain't open for tourism,
this Black not yours to pity.
Not when 'justice' is a Contigo in the pacific
& the blue wave crashes endless; every day.

Our seaside palisades
a far cry from safety
beneath your elevated estates.
Ain't no kumbaya till all
the rivers run dry. The oceans drained.

All he wanted was his momma.

Don't speak to me of justice
while my people in shackles
 & graves
for getting mouths fed
 & bills paid.

While your balding dog of war
might yet feel the light of day,
the grass beneath his feet,
the way the birds sing, regardless

of which war crime took place today.

