

I Woke From the Dream

Last night I dreamed

We exchanged our

Wedding bands

for a spell to raise

the Dead.

My Boyfriend's hand

fell from my mine,

our bedroom echoed

with the clink

of rings against

the floor, the floor

shook, splintered

as bodies

of Black angels,

saints, martyrs

came unhooked

from the ground.

Up shot Tamir,

straight into

his Mama's arms.

Up shot Trayvon, Yvette, Darnisha, Myra, Reverend Sharonda, Reverend Clementa, Susie, Tywanza, Reverend Daniel, Ethel Lee, Cynthia, Reverend Depayne, all shook loose from the low,

low South,

up shot Eric,

big as humanity,

up shot Lamia

in the skin

she loved the most.

Up shot Freddie,

Unbroken, familiar.

We didn't care,

my Man and I,

we held them,

loved them like

it was legal,

watched them go

home.

I woke up,

no upshots

to be found,

my finger

still choked

by a ring,

fingers still entwined

with my Love's,

the ground still,

the ground unmoved

the world unmoved,

me, too dumb

to say anything

but *I do*.

We buy postcards when Dom is in town. He doesn't much care what image fills the front, so long as it features the words "Baltimore" or "New York" or "DC", and so long as they're postmarked from the city we're in. When I introduce him to New York on the second day of his second trip to this coast, we look for stamps. He left his in Baltimore, and I don't travel with them, but the postcards need to get sent from here. *They've never got anything addressed from New York City before. Probably don't even believe it exists.* When he tells me this, I leave the café across from the Broadway theater that will welcome us in an hour and scour every Duane Reed in a ten block radius. We will find stamps.

Dom tells me everybody has a thing they miss without having ever experienced it. His was Pizza Hut's Pizzone when it first came out. Tito's was seeing Kanye live; Bruce just wanted to see the inside of a Wal-Mart.

Yesterday, when my postal carrier dropped off my mail, Dom intercepted her, asked if he could take a selfie with her, posted it on his page with a caption about how Baltimore is full of gorgeous, professional Black women. Tomorrow, I'm going to figure out how to make a Pizzone.

Before we see Dom's first Broadway musical, before his shirt and CDs get to wear the autograph of his favorite celebrity, Dom writes a message to each of his former cellmates. We make sure we mail them from this city, so far from the facility that holds them, from the state that contains their future. My job is to bring enough grandeur to this trip for my future husband to forget that, even though he's never been anything like lucky, he's blessed enough to learn with his own eyes just many things exist.

When I lived in Omaha, I told stories of traffic and Black run businesses to everyone willing to believe me. I didn't realize that every story I told was postcard of privilege, *a wish you were here that never applied to me. Every day, the man I love teaches the outside world to men he has been.*

One day we will live together in my city, two and a half hours south from this New York, this center of the world. There will always be some Nebraska in the center of Dom's heart, a penitentiary in his mouth. *I will always wish I was there, I will always love it, I will never love it away.*

I Cobbled You From People I Love

Freddie, I look at your lips.

I taught those lips

when they were on Jerome's face,

curious and brilliant,

four out of my eight years

at the special ed school.

The Jr. cuffed to your last name

reminds me of all the friends

who don't know their dads

but drag along a faint memory

of them anyway. Your broken

swagger, that forced pride

that built your backbone

before somebody tore it down,

I sleep with that swagger,

I'll marry it someday,

it's a posture I fell

In love with when my man

carried it from solitary

and handed it to me.

Every fifth grade class I teach

is filled with you, Freddie.

When they raise a hand

behind their classroom desk,

I wonder which of those hands

will be tied behind backs,

which backs will dismantle

against the floor of a city
sanctioned cruiser, how many
I love will share your face,
your home, your destiny.