

RUNNING AFTER WILD

Nobody told Joe she was his mother. Not outright...

Nevertheless, Wild was always on his mind.

Jazz, Toni Morrison

Fire refuses stillness, even silence. Every lick,

A muscle twisting up a horse's neck. Yes, of course

She understands the crackling stampede. Its fluid heave won't maul her.

Your mother ran with good reason. My mother, too.

Flame-glow flickers on her cheeks, hot to the touch

In sweet smoke. The light, she knows, will burn itself out,

Eating all the cane it can. Next year, they'll burn the field,

They'll burn her home, again. If they can find her.

She ran from being found, from you being found.

She ran from the familiar rage, the hard hands

& wrecked mind, my mother. She knows you can eat fire

From bee's work. It glows on the tongue

During damp nights. It stirs up the scent of hibiscus,

Smothers the stubborn memory of shitsmell. Yes, she ran,

Keeps slipping your search. We love our mothers, Joe,

Though we can never reach them. They know where to find an open field,

That smoke lingers in the tattered mind.

They dart from leaf rustle to redwing flutter

To patter beneath the low canopy of sugar,

Outrunning the burn. They live, language of the woods,

Of the out-there, here-&-gone. They hold us without our knowing.

You sift through cool ash, follow the idea of her.

Let the smoke fill us. Let them go for their sakes. Let them save us.

BLUE HAZE

for James Baldwin & Terrance Hayes

Before I slip my aluminum canoe into ripple
You stitch your face across the water
For hours stretched into weeks.
You lick the battlefield,
Not yet torn into by boots
Or dying mouths.
It grips you in its grass teeth.
You nomad, mist. You edgeless idea.
You history, fuller than any record.
You future, unwieldy, air thick with water.
I hope to graze lavender at dusk
One day as you do, slipping
Among the tiny, lavish blooms,
Through the rows at the edge of the road
Nearly no one travels. You melody beyond us,
Chord not yet strummed
Yet always already fading. Hazy
Plume of thought. A knock on the door
Still stuck in a fist. Through you,
A silhouette sharpens, beckons us *Run*
Your finger along my shadow edge.
You open your maw for my average shoulders,
For Kilimanjaro's long, sleek slice
Through light. You swallow us whole.
You drape your mind across the mirror.
You wear the wind. I wear the water.