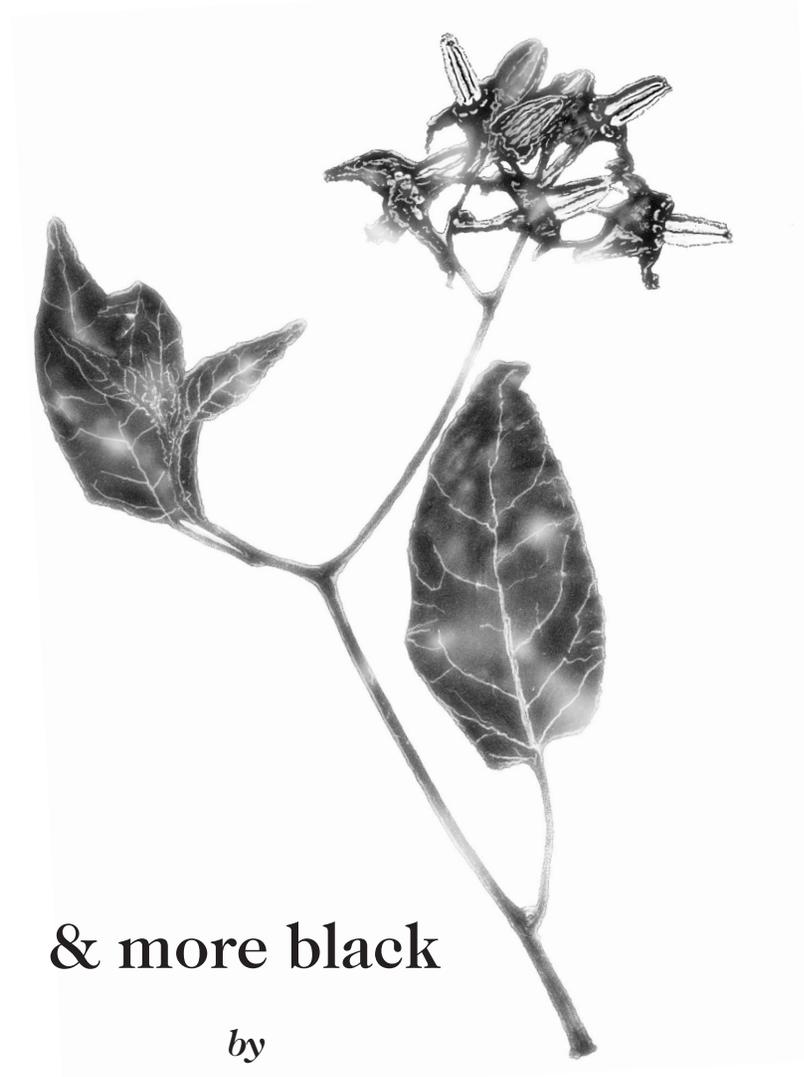


BELLADONNA* CHAPLET SERIES



& more black

by

t'ai freedom ford



BELLADONNA* COLLABORATIVE

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*deadly nightshade, a cardiac and respiratory stimulant, having purplish-red flowers and black berries

& more black

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Belladonna* is an event and publication series that promotes the work of women writers who are adventurous, experimental, politically involved, multi-form, multi-cultural, multi-gendered, impossible to define, delicious to talk about, unpredictable, dangerous with language.

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Chaplets are \$5 (\$6 signed) in stores or at events, \$7 (\$9 signed) for libraries/institutions.

To order chaplets or books, please make checks payable to Belladonna Series, and mail us at: 925 Bergen Street; Suite 405; Brooklyn, New York 11238

(please add \$2 for postage for the first chaplet, plus .50c for each additional chaplet in a single order)

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www.BelladonnaSeries.org

t'ai freedom ford

& archeological & obsessed
with teeth which you already know
rot with bling so—i—last dragon like
with all my natural resources
glowing hot & mercurial
in my mouth resist fists white knuckling
toward some sad sequel of Tarzan
or Roots i go all
Moms Mabley on them— stomp the yard
slack-jawed chompers in my boots—
all them niggers get:
artifact breath wet
with whiffs of fool's gold

had was his word & his word
was his bond? didn't nobody care bout
the king's flaccid cursive his breath reeking
of chitlin wine & divine adjectives
salt-cured & retaining spit amounts
to nothing more than shitpiles
or pretty little remnants if i am
to be polite about my whitewashed
cockney—i grow cockeyed with boredom
am prone to sudden fits of breakdance
spinning on my skull to cure the doldrums
but alas, the king hears *dull drums*
& everything blurs tribal & humid

Billie Holiday never met Miss Chiquita (Banana)

ghost rot & electrified warble in the wake
of Auto-tune reek of something fraudulent:
egos without deodorant stinking like Lincoln's
legacy—some peg-legged freedom with gold
fronts stuntin' on this high-pitched peekaboo
slurring words that rhyme with rich—okeydoke
code switch conjugating *nigger* into *nigga* into
platinum: the past tense of penis the square
root of chicken picnics pictures all pink-gummed
& gingham the old hunky dory story
of a world where we can't whistle without
digging up teeth to the tenth power—our smiles
a bouquet of flames for history's rotisserie

Saul Williams could never be Miles Davis (no shade)

maybe in a movie with an 8-track soundtrack
flickering black in the back of his nappy skull
maybe if he imitated a lightbulb wearing a kilt
you know like green with brilliance but black
as Irish coffee the color of Pearl Cleage's milky
way maybe maybe maybe maybe maybe times
infinity is greater than or equal to the possibility
of square minus hip to be minus cocaine sinuses
minus the blackness of science minus the science
of whiteness numbing my skull dull— maybe
if we squint or duck tape or say shit is soft serve
& maybe we deserve the worst kinda hero anyway
who turns his back on us & blows & blows

TV where a black girl drinks too much
& thinks too much of the time she worries
her tooth enamel beige & reads Clifton
& Lorde— which the king misinterprets
as *lawd*—*O Lord* (echoes: *oh lawd oh lawd*)
my ancestors died preoccupied with white
jesus speeches of promised lands &
other blonde bland fairytales & when the king
said fare thee well i smelt a bamboozle
as fine as swine but my eyes cataract
with such flashbacks—member when the word
was with god & the word *was* god? member
when the word became flesh & all a man

fool's gold or nigga please(the Ebonics remix)

speech so spectacular teeth rot wit bling
everything from this angle smells
of the king & his damned prepositions
determined to phrase me out—i grow fat
with entertainment hairless politicos
make my elbows scoff with ash & cuz
my ancestors colored me all the words wound
like song some wrong wail or inspired
gospel warbling night sky purple
but i am more regular than this more
failure than figment the channels of your
imagination you get for free—
this pigment be basic cable reality

there ain't enough water for all of us

you could call it shade a parade of salt
raining on your wounded retrograde even
the planets imitate your backwardness
disco driftwood awkwardly afloat in a sea of super
model piss & trap boy spit—O! God! such sudden
glory leaves skin incandescent & flimsy:
a feast of raisins & other filthy reasons
make throat carcasses O'Keeffe canvasses on crack
Kanye landscapes of beige-brown-beige stage protests
of grotesque testicular proportions
your psychic warned you this pastel hell this
dust garden succulents sucked dry & lustless
everything a fucking mirage

either way, you'll be in a pool of something

swimming: where even the kisses smell like
doom waiting baiting your breath in fishnet
wading in a capful of rainfall so small
pinky toes cause capsize meaning you tiny
like bullet like pellet like capsules of happy
the shrink worked a bygone blink & look! you
singing some sappy lovesong brink of backstroke
such leisure this life sans seizure & lurch
boys in blue birds way they perch way the shit
on us & say it's rain send our mamas humming
random hymns & why couldn't we swim? our brown
bodies & chlorine water making a warm funky tea
a contagious soup black limbs flailing with so much joy

how do i live today, every day?

by forgetting that i am going to die—
but there is this massive city of a ship
in the middle of an ocean of invisible ink
the water that won't turn cold the teeth brushing
the bacteria percolating at the gumline
the bassline of this song in my head this waistline
oozing outward these inward thoughts rattling
battling for a seat on the subway at the table
this able body unwilling lackadaisical
only my heart in a rush racing toward
some nowhere & sudden days in between
these are all the reminder i need without
your exaggerated fears your easy bullets

to the white man next to me texting the entire flight

ain't that the point? to always be the exception
without being exceptional to smoke the joint
but not inhale to pale in comparison
to redden but not bleed to flail but not get shot
to drive to walk to talk out the side of your
mouth to be in the south & be safe to pick
up your child to pull out your license to smoke
a cigarette in your car to go to a pool party
to swim in a pool of your choice that is not
your own blood to voice your irritation
to play your music loud to be loud to remain
silent to need help to give help to have
the whole damn plane at the mercy of your fingertips

also know as fly nigga factory

philosophy of finna fish dinner Tuesday audacity
of aint—praise this day we ain't bruised ain't make
the news hallelujah holiday about-face them suede shoe blues
this the getdown trajectory of come-up colored section
inflection—epitome of hook-up imagination of skillet
fried whittings & whitebread greasy as your nappy head
even our heart attacks operatic— where the peach tree be?
where your alcoholic uncle rocking ruffles & church shoes?
ain't he fly? don't he contain multitudes like your grandmama
pocketbook? fuck we made of 'cept peppermint, Vaseline
masking tape, butterscotch— assembly line of crunk minus
punk-ass appropriation funk soliloquy cornbraids & cornbread
sardines & saltines puttin' on the ritz speaking of crackers—

“Just because you like black pussy don’t mean you like Black lives.”

sometimes the music starts playing unprompted & logical
people talking bout electrical shortages & i be talking bout
spirits & they demands the need for song & which song
was playing when you fell in love with her? was it something
easy & pleasing to the both of you—like Stevie—something
white folks have learned to love—& was she just another lesson?
a dark deep variation on a theme? did gospel music swell
in the background? did the bed quake in the wake some hallelujah
chorus—her pussy a forest of light did you leave feeling
anointed? holy? across the street the Spanish church
is alive with cowbell & clave but this life here ain’t no religious
experience—tell me, when she said: *i do* were you born
again? would you have been just an average savage without her?

what i risk to walk in this world as my full human self

spotting full on bloodletting wearing white off
white teeth flinching at the sight of rice kitchen
those shadowy curls at the nape what only
a black girl know humidity at the risk
of sounding stupid sanctuary mud
in the forecast scam: blackface pocketful
of wild turkey monkey on my back throat
way the words curdle & return call forth
& mimic symmetry wine watered down
to something syrupy strawberry red
a familiar kool-aid dance panic boogey
resurrect body non-cooperative
but body nonetheless just lesser & more black

never could jump double dutch

is being double-handed a big butch badge?
awkward tomboy whacking wayward while
femmes wedged themselves between the great
white whoosh of wires—plan b: wait for warm
wrists to kiss mine as she whines: nooo, like this
meanwhile uncle Mel was on that upstate
percolate got polaroids as proof me: all
buck-toothed corduroys & pro-keds
it was the 80s: cokeheads & weed seeded
on a Lionel Richie album cover
then i never thought my lover could be
woman then i never thought i'd grow to hate
my mama—to replace her with fist & fuck

transcript of an MTA audition

i sit wide-legged & grab my crotch
i sit wide-legged & adjust my nuts
i sit wide-legged & shift my dick two millimeters to the left
i sit wide-legged & scratch my balls
i sit wide-legged & consider the weight of my nutsack
i sit wide-legged & cup my nutsack
i sit wide-legged & estimate my nutsack weighs about five ounces
i sit wide-legged & hold my dick like a gun
i sit wide-legged & aim my dick at that chick over there
i sit wide-legged & pull the trigger
i sit wide-legged & murder these hoes
i sit wide-legged & smell my trigger finger
i sit wide-legged & slouch & side-eye whoever dares to watch

**the pornography store is closed so you will have to make
your own death**

turn off the news— unless, the news turns you on
all that flesh & blood blacking up the screen mute
button scream police ticker tape parade quiet
riot in these streets or, is it all a graveyard of boulevards
walking dead zombie apocalypse ain't got shit on us
turn off the news— unless, the news is your turn-up
niggerskin glistening & confettied like dismal disco balls
we the latest dance craze: the whip the playdead the chokehold
the taser cousin to electric boogaloo but less animated
this dying like lynching but less antiquated blood
the new black turn off the news— but fuck radio bleeding too
just more metaphor karma pharmaceutical the needle
you need a shot in the arm that dope shit

audition for the bed

touch don't touch *yellow elbow* florescent moon
new moon sleep sleepless *red eye* snore don't snore slob
don't slob hair no hair *brown pussycat* hairless
boxers no panties *black dildo* breath breathless
scratch don't scratch rough not rough *pink fingernail* hard
hardly *ashen foot* don't lick lick kiss don't kiss
don't tell tell hurry-up slow down *dark mouth*
there right there not now now *blue kneecap* don't dream
dream scream shhhh light no light *golden hair* goodnight
no night fight don't fight *purple lip* layover
no flight flight *green eye* cry don't cry wetness dry
don't wait wait flail don't flail *pale armpit* handcuffs
peach thigh dive don't dive drunk drink think don't—