

"Black and Black"

I must concede there are two sides
And despite common consensus,
They are not black and white
Nor is there a drop of grey.
There is only black and black.

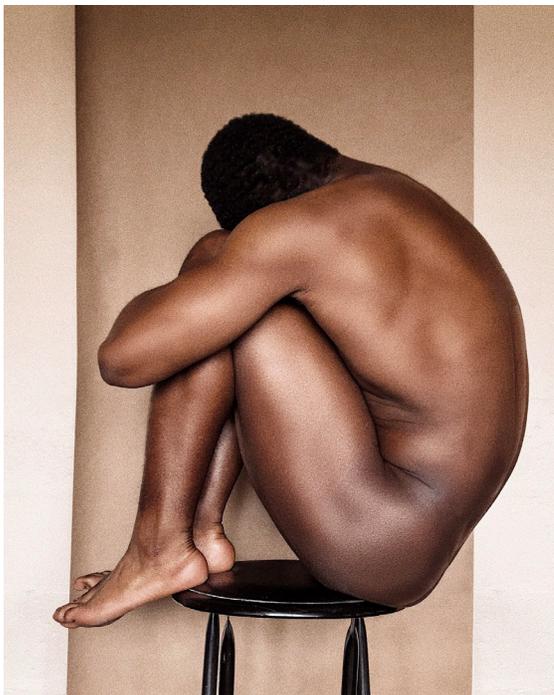
The first is dim and unnerving.
It is generations of bruised and scarred backs.
It is denigration written behind all fronts.
Relentless and cunning,
Misinformed and abused.
It was the beginning of the color;
The creation of our hue.

The second is beauty and life.
It is chocolate fists clenched to the sky.
It is dread locks flowing to the ground.
Both revival and creation,
Innovative and strong.
It is the embodiment of survival;
Our hope pursued.

And so we medicate daily
Relieving the strain of first black.
For the two are not yin and yang
Nor duality or yoke
Only sickness and remedy
And eternal paradox.

What is a vaccine
But admission of disease?

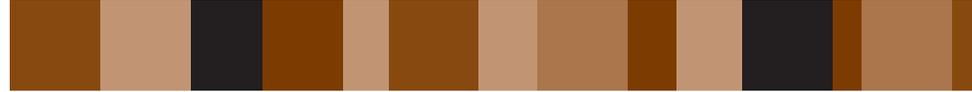
And yet I stay strapped to an IV
Black warring black
Chemo warring cancer
Choosing the struggle
Glistening in radiance of the second
Never to let the first swallow me whole.



Photograph by Isaiah Easter, 2019.

BLACK THOUGHTS IN BLACK SKIN

POETRY BY ISAIAH EASTER



"Quarrel of Heart and Mind (Young Love's Compromise)"

I lay here with my cheek rested against your soft thigh,
Gracing my hand across your brown skin,
Studying every inch and curve,
Curating a catalog of your design.
Your pulse and my hand dance together,
Where rose undertones outline the path of our engagement.
And every hair bows in reverence to the occasion.
Nirvana.

But my hand halts as my musing for you is displaced,
Superseded by a yearning for triumph and reason
My head raises;
What a stream of beauty at the foot of a mountain!
Has the stream become the summit?
Or has my longing for a mountain's peak become preoccupied with petty ambition?

My hands tremble, wedged in the valley between both sides.
In one rests my promise and in the other my promised.
I'm told holding onto my promised is how dreams die
But isn't death also division from the divine?

I lie back onto your limb without hesitation.
Not so out of frustration or duress,
But in knowledge of the streams' intention.
Its waters to foster my journey,
Its sustenance to breed new life,
And its beauty to remind me my desire's been realized, even when not.

For what does it mean to reach the peak,
When the body fails before relishing the feat?

A hand's dance resumes on your dark skin.
Gentle study, connection
Where ascent begins.