

**a poem for Yakini (because there's something about her aura)
and for beautiful black women everywhere**

and I think about how beautifully black you are so black you're bright beaming glaring glistening shimmering like Shug Avery's shimmy shining brighter than the brightest light and maybe if I touch the tip of your locks like touching the hem of His garment I will shine too. you don't see me standing staring at your beautiful black self wanting yearning to be in your beautiful black mind engrossing your black thoughts feeling your black skin holding your black hand hoping you'll lead me to the mountain top. and I watch you wondering wanting to be your daughter pretending I know you making you love me in my thoughts imagining who you are where you've been where you're going because I want to go there too.

and I think of you in church on Easter Sunday wearing a too pink pink dress revealing your scrawny black legs scarred by last year's chicken pox wounded by limbs of the oak tree that shades grandmother's front porch provides a place for drinking moonshine playing cards watching passerbys pass by shuttering scuttling and you're sitting in church staring at that white Jesus knowing that he's not your saviour marveling at big women wearing feathered hats crying Jesus' name questioning how grandmothers can be so jubilant about a god they've never seen who allowed their daughters to be raped their sons to be stripped of their manhood and why do you have to recite a speech regarding this faith you disregard as faithful?

and I see you growing through hopscotch and double dutch coconut milk and vegetable patties wearing beautiful black pigtails eating summer's red watermelon not caring if they call you pickaninny because you're beautifully black and that's all that matters. going to school where history's lessons are not your story daydreaming of Marcus Garvey and Booker T. Washington wanting to gather your bootstraps and march all the way to the Mother Land so you march in your thoughts and your daydream is your movement.

and I see your Afro wearing dashiki flaunting beautiful black self changing your name still knowing the pride in mother's offer but wanting black to resonate off the tongues of those who call your name and maybe the world will holy ghost when they hear how beautiful black sounds intone your name in hopes that you will save them from the lynchings imposed by Hoover lynch and Crow spiriting a revolution that negroes wouldn't be afraid of.

and I see you mothering daughters braiding beautiful brazen nappy black hair sewing dresses mending wounds singing to be young gifted and black playing Mississippi Goddamn knowing that freedom's void in integrated schools where blacks were better off being taught by their own people so they can learn about their people be proud of their people fight for their people be the beautiful black people that the true God made in His image teaching beautiful black babies how to be humane under inhumane conditions so that they can be freedom fighters riding in the name of heroes unsung but not forgotten.

and I see you becoming Big Mom with your big beautiful tall black self sitting with the heavens on the mountain top overseeing without being an overseer gray locks falling down the strength of your back lending wisdom feeding thousands holding the burdens of your people in each strand their salvation your strength humming liberations wading through waters baptizing the lost curing the ill pouring libations thanking the spirits of those before us.

and when I lay me down to sleep praying that the moon does not turn blood red and the stars don't fall to the ground making earth void of light I think of you reading In Search of Our Mother's Garden drinking your red wine cooking your tofu listening to Coltrane being in your sentimental mood thinking your black thoughts being your beautiful black self it is then I'm lulled to sleep wanting to wake up and be just like you.

**Kendra N. Bryant
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