

On Grace

For Tim Seibles, Ross Gay, Kevin Simmonds, & Pages Matam

You know how when Usain Bolt runs
& you want to cry it's so beautiful? That.

How could we not be a song? I hum
this man in my bed all night, my mouth a loose choir

& his body a gospel & I don't mean like a song
I mean gospel like a religion or like a testimony

etched in gold. How could we be *only* a song?
I lay men down for what some call me a faggot for

but I call it *worship*, I see his wood & bark
Amen Amen Amen. I call out God's good name

in the midst of the first miracle – the black body.
Look at him, at us. Were the mountains not named

after some dark brotha's shoulders? Didn't the wind learn
its ways from watching two boys run the spine of a field?

Bless the birch-colored body, always threatening to grow
or burn. Bless the body that strikes fear in pale police

& wets the mouths of church girls & choir boys with want.
Am I allowed to say I praised my pastor most without the robe?

I have found God in the saltiest parts of men: the space between
the leg & what biology calls a man, the bottoms of feet, life's slow milk.

I watch the Heat play the Warriors & I am overcome by a need
for tears & teeth. I stopped playing football because being tackled

feels too much like making love. I pause in the middle of the street
watching the steady pace of the men on corners selling green

& all things dangerous & white. I watch the hands exchange money
& escape, the balancing act of hips & denim. This awful dance of poverty,

but the dancers? Tatted & callous ballerinas, henna dipped stars.
Do you know what it means to be that beautiful & still hunted

& still alive? Who knows this story but the elephants & the trees?
Who says the grace of a black man in motion is not perfect

as a tusk in the sun or a single leaf taking its sweet time to the ground?