

LOADED

When the cop called him *black*, there was a confusion
thick as Everglade humidity, tongue hooded
in mouth, bulging suspiciously from behind gritting pearl,
as my heart gripped the sliding Adam's Apple of a shotgun.

When they call us *black*, I hear gun range silhouette,
I hear New Year's early morning sky, I hear behemoth
with skin of Kevlar, teeth- a row of hollow points-
gunshot smile with a ravenous id. I hear

28 bullets to teach the sum 'bitch a lesson;

51 or 1 to the head to put it down for good.

And my blood becomes a rabid courtroom
sucker-punched *Not Guilty*, a tainted evidence.

When the news says the word *black*, the way
they've been saying it lately, a thousand dead
fingers crack, combination-lock my stomach, all
searching for the impossible beast I was born of

to study, learn from, leash with my writing hand,
slide my knife into, drink of its untapped river, paint
my face with its violent pulse, & howl at everything
pale & virgin. I wish to be that *black* and then some

if it means the gun will remain choked one moment
longer, my eulogy lodged in its trachea, the officer
too awestruck to Heimlich with his forefinger-
to indulge this nickel-plated side-piece he nicknamed
Justice