

# ***FIGHT: A BAREKNUCKLE PLEDGE***

## ***ROUND 4 pt.1***

### **Contents**

<b>Joel Ephraims</b> <i>Sleep House</i>	pg. 2
<b>Rodney Wilder</b> <i>a pyre where we held all the names</i>	pg. 3
<b>Sahib J. Chandnani</b> <i>Pointers</i>	pg. 6
<b>Cat Cotsell</b> <i>NOTEBOOKS</i>	pg. 7
<b>Penny Blake</b> <i>NOT QUITE WHITE</i>	pg. 8
<b>Sara Crane</b> <i>of all the unsaid things</i>	pg. 11
<b>L. Ashby</b> <i>In the between</i>	pg. 12

*Sleep House*

It's daytime,  
put on your pyjamas.

Expect too much  
and you'll stop expecting.

Don't berate wet markets,  
they need food.

First berate dry emissions,  
we need power.

Go to Jupiter  
to get more steeper,  
think bad turned to good,  
seminal Vegeta.

Smaller Jupiter,  
all in tents.

My pyjamas are extraterrestrial  
cyclone camo,  
yours just plain  
striped chamomile  
cyclone eye.

In the big blue house  
Turbulent bears ate them.

Blacked-out houses,  
wallfuls of photo blinds.

Behind them (now!):  
Gas giant on single rail vs.  
Charons w/ organic jetpacks.

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*a pyre where we held all the names*

Holy Spirit, breath beyond breath,  
what is left for these lungs?

Every day, another name  
winepressed bitter while we watch,  
America, the incubus  
centuries in flattening us, deflating  
our harried inhalations by  
knee and by bullet. By  
noose of extrajudicial arms and by  
noose of contrived, jail-cell plastic.  
By lynch-mobs badged and by  
lynch-mobs persisting in the  
shield's grassroots precedent. This  
weight. This piecemeal extinguish.  
Names never given with the intent  
that they'd turn  
open-casket in mouth.  
Hashtags on birth certificates. Sap  
bled horrendous from our shared  
and irreparable xylem. Holy Spirit,  
this heritage of breastbones mid-  
sunder can hieroglyph *exhaustion*  
using nothing but slain Black faces.  
This heritage of  
inconsequential genocide  
retches itself empty of names only  
to find another spring blossoming  
the same strange fruit beneath new  
hagionymies.

David McAtee.  
Maurice Gordon.  
George Floyd.  
Breonna Taylor.  
Ahmaud Arbery.

Holy Spirit,  
what is left for these lungs to do to  
breathe, freed of this  
knee-shaped yoke betrothing Black  
imagehood to American pavement?  
Breath beyond breath, there  
is a temple scourged pure

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in the gut of your gospel that spells  
*peace* and *outrage* with the same  
devastation. We are dragoning these  
aggrieved and unbreathable lungfuls  
into a fire bent toward no more loss,  
no more trauma-soured family, no  
state-sanctioned racists and their  
burnished, burning-cross stand-ins.  
There is a whipcord twisting in this  
refusal to be pressed empty  
of even one more name. America,  
less defiled-temple than devil  
perched on our sternums, there are  
so many camera lenses fixed on this  
incubus's every move. On our  
upraised hands. On our offenseless  
knees and the way we lower despite  
the pyre breathed into us and what  
the pyre knows of the incubus  
and its toys.

We do not breathe.  
And still, Holy Spirit, it demands a  
flatter throne to yoke hopeless. War  
in hand to the question of a people  
who will no longer die beneath  
preyhood's legislated mantle. Proof  
that the beast's god is its teeth  
in how dispersal rounds  
snipe slicks from targeted faces and  
paint its feeding frenzies guiltless as  
it again demands that the  
necromancy of ours bleed further.  
A police force forgoing its tyranny;  
a flashbang planting itself seedly  
and hoping for Susans. Impossible,  
it barks our bodies breathless but,  
breath beyond breath, there is now  
too much of your bereft Pentecost  
dancing something stolen  
back into these adamant risings for  
breathless to ever again lord  
an enforceable law.

We breathe.

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And out come the names-made-fire.  
And out come the constellations  
kindling fracture toward better,  
kindling violence toward justice,  
outrage toward peace, upheaval  
toward breathing unyoked  
from the sole of Jim Crow, from this  
longstanding masque of Black death,  
this parade of Black bodies lynched  
American grist and sworn *criminal*.

We breathe,  
fists to the sun. A memorial of glass-  
glint, a writing on the wall no less  
indignant or of you for being graffiti.  
America, the incubus centuries in  
hailing itself your temple but then  
festooning it with lynched children.  
America, if a temple at all, a temple  
upended and smouldering now with  
no undue devastation. Because,  
even as city councils talk of  
disbandings and reallocations, there  
is still the matter of an empire never  
wholly sobered from the strange fruit  
kept to ferment on its family trees.

But the thieved,  
all of them, shining somewhere like  
only our living do. That summer  
forever removed from what  
we've yet to do. What we've yet to  
breathe yet newer names through.  
Holy, holy, and sour with entirely  
too much blood.

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*Pointers*

There are men who wield God-given five-digit weapons with unparalleled accuracy.  
Hip-fired hollow-points or full-metal iron-sight finger-fired points. The shots always  
land. They rain blame in place of bullets, phantom pains in armor-piercing guilt,  
Magazines in the wrists,       Foregrips in the elbows,  
Friends or foes,               we are all painted targets  
    until the stock creaks and the muzzle buckles  
    rust sets into the calcium mechanism.  
Men with God-given  
five-digit weapons  
never realize that  
a triple-barrel  
always pointed  
  
home.

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## *NOTEBOOKS*

I'm shy about my notebooks.  
I don't want you to read those newborn brainlings  
when they're shitty, mangled,  
a little too neonatal.  
I need time to arrange, neaten, comb those greasy matted coats,  
straighten many crooked limbs, maybe  
chop off the superfluous heads.  
The hand-written is too intimate,  
for all that it was written  
mostly in coffee shops, libraries, on buses,  
where anyone might look  
over my shoulder and  
catch a glimpse of my barenaked hippocampus,  
inarticulate like any first attempt  
at grown self-expression;  
the filter is applied very  
rarely on the physical page: that's  
for disgorging  
in a vacuous squirt  
to be later sifted through using  
the rubber-gloved hands of the keyboard.  
Please, when I'm dead,  
burn my notebooks.

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**NOT QUITE WHITE**

No Box for me  
My colour raped away

My story  
stolen twisted  
spat out warped

By Other mouths  
By hands  
Who hold  
And

the mighty Pen  
once in Ink  
Who I Am

is indelible.

Beneath that image,

I  
– Me  
– Myself

Vanishes

screaming silent pleas  
clawing at the misted glass  
Through the fogged up pane/ain

desperately invisible

as Indelible I

dances

in long floral multi-tiered skirts through golden grasses

Come-to-bed eyes painted Kohl

Henna hands wielding crystal ball.

No Box for me

Shall I try to fit your mould?

Ring me ears wiv gold

Cover me in bling

Make a show on yer big screen

Shake-me-shimmy-Essex-scene

Fake-tanned-big-fat-skinny-bitch-gyppo-white-trash-queen

Hide me degree,  
me post-grad,  
stolen  
Illegitimate  
hybrid lit-race-y?

Coz that's me



## Dangerous

An Educated Li'l Punk *Chavi*

No box for me

You talk about your proud Brit-soil

My Grandmothers' toil, sweat, blood and tears have fed

And on that tilled and fertile black-earth-bed they lay their heads and let

Our

(shared now)

Grandfathers

Steal their colour and their song

So where is my box?

I ask the receptionist, the council clerk, they shake their head – nothing wrong  
here

Nothing

wrong

“You look white enough to me, Love.”

She smiles, her hair plaited up all Kalderashi Style

“Just tick **Other.**”

He grins, sporting his defiant single gold hoop ring

No Box for me

I study the options carefully

On the doctors' forms

On the census

The opinion poll

Traveller?

But I don't Jal the Drom

Irish? No.

G\*\*\*y – a slave

to pick your fruit and grind under your boot?

I don't think so.

Other?

Other

than...

what?

White

Born of this Brit-Puv

White

But not quite

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If my skin tone so defines who I am  
then why am I not treated like the next white man  
woman child  
Instead  
for you  
reviled.  
Not  
a life that matters  
Burn down my frame  
and still demand my name sits  
beside a box ticked framing my reality  
In a way  
That makes  
you  
feel  
comfortable and unashamed?

No.  
Li'l Ink thief now I stand  
With lethal Pen in hand

This Othering of me  
I'll write and fight  
A living record of our shared story  
Standing beside you Outside the box  
Not quite  
coloured  
Not quite

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*Of all the unsaid things*

We drive along in my old hatchback passed the streets we knew  
as escape route playgrounds, fast food car park we pull into  
is as littered as our unsaid things, smell of deep fryer oil  
hangs thick like the words on our lips, waiting to not be said.  
Gets out of my car don't hear from him for three years  
like all the unsaid things, they come from somewhere but don't  
actually arrive they're never born into the air around us  
never hug us, not even goodbye.

Some girl's mothers were alone so long they knew they would be too  
some women have been alone so long they will never be mothers

I find him all these years later in the same pub  
eyes sweeping upwards from his NRL hat  
says we left a lot of things unsaid I tell him I think he said enough  
tells me if you pour water on honey it forms hexagon patterns  
like the hive it grew up in, that our DNA carries memory  
of our traumas even when we change

says he has changed.


We walk back to those old flats, rash glistening under  
his shirt, whites of his eyes mustard, have to stop half-way  
for me to walk alone and bring the old hatchback around  
I tell him I cannot be with him tonight even though I want to  
I do not give him any explanation why, some things are so  
unsaid they are said like when I saw the message he sent me online  
three years late and I just left it there with a read receipt.

Sometimes our silence is all we've got  
some women have got so good at being silent

we brush off bullies like crumbs, let shouts  
form white noise waiting for needles to drop  
days go by where we don't even speak to ourselves  
and we know how to get hit in silence.  
We've got so good at silent that when he says 'I love you'  
it sounds like the gaping emptiness of deep space  
emptiness between stars and planets that never aligned for you  
swallowed by the magnitude of its absence, too late  
of all the unsaid things

*I love you* remains unsaid back.

*In the between*

Now I can hear the screaming  
    between my ears in my ears just when I thought it was quiet  
        and I liked the quiet I thought I could hear the little sounds of all the bugs  
in the world scratching around inside of the driftwood lining the singular roaring of leaves  
scraping  
    between worlds where everyone's an introvert and how can that be a bad thing  
    but what do you know—  
turns out I can hear all the bugs in the world now shrieking right here right now  
    between my two ears and the raging opportunistic vandals  
        howl where quiet turns into clenched teeth  
bared, and let me out, let me out of this bullshit banana republic town where  
    between tweets you don't even know who you are  
        you are racist by proxy and via distance  
you don't value what's in front of you  
    between lies you'd pick it up and sell it if you could figure out how  
        you aren't capable of self-assessment or regard  
but let's look hard at that other country where racism is so terrible—yeah. Let's take a look  
    between violating our own heads and OUT THERE mate, mate, mate  
    Mate.  
Uh-huh  
    between Team Australia and mate mate mate it's a reptile's feast  
        where the celebratory 'there's no racism HERE mate'  
is upheld (and yer a blinkered insular...) and I white-quote: 'can't stand those   
    between me and getting a free ride mate can't have one rule  
        for some and another rule for others unless it's me mate  
cause I'm a victim mate but only when it suits me mate' and  
    between the motorized cacophony on yer big so-called empty dirty desert mate the  
screaming  
    is all I can hear now mate 'cause it feels like everyone else is listening mate  
    to  
IT'S THE ECONOMY MATE but  
    between living down here with the screaming bottom feeders we avoid and those  
WE KNOW  
    mate  
that when suicide occurs because the economy mate then so does murder (figure it out  
mate) but let's get it going again because  
    between one thing and another mate when that noise heats up outside my ears again  
mate  
    it'll be harder to pay attention to the screaming  
so listen to this: I won't forget why my teeth are clenched in this temporary burst of quiet  
    between my aching jaws  
    and ringing ears.  
MATE.

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