

AUNT CHLOE

A Journal of Artful Candor

ISSUE 2022

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Litany for Lieutenant Nyota Uhura

Jet black curl whipped past her ear
to the rounded angle of cheek
matched to meticulous batwing
eyeliner. The red line sleek against
thigh, calves interrupted by
black boots, but first, benediction.

In praise of communicator chirps,
in praise of the flashing monitors,
in praise of swirling chair that gave
of her sharp lashes and poised vista
of face, enough yet not enough.
Martin Luther King, another captain
of sorts, offered his gospel. She was
to be seen, rocketing toward future.

She is the vessel that carries and delivers
when she is navigator, guide, and seer.
She is the vessel that carries and delivers.
How often she is captain without title,
blamed as commander without privilege.

Question: Did the Vulcan ever ask her
about what it feels like to be different?
He removed his pointy ears & brows daily,
ruffled his hair to normalcy, released his
anesthetizing grip. She takes off the wig,
but still wears herself, irreversible skin.

She becomes vessel that carries and delivers.
She serves as navigator, guide, and seer.
She is the vessel that carries and delivers,
how often she is captain without title,
commander without privilege.

The conversation that never happened:
I waited for you and Sulu to cast glances
like unwritten spells, give each other
silent nods, forge some way to defect
if aliens became allies. If the captain

barked too many times and forgot,
you were not just polished umber
to fantasize about in a later episode.
When you recall your surname means
Freedom, and Sulu Sea touches Asia,
when slavery and internment camps
failed to turn your ancestors to dust,
Uhura, 4th in command, a helmsman
never called Lieutenant, could direct
a story, steer the Starship Enterprise.

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