

Frank X Walker

Mrs. Butterworth, Uncle Ben & Aunt Jemima

...walk into a bar in America.
Butterworth says, I'm being repackaged.
Ben says, I'm being rebranded.
Jemima says, I remember
when they branded my mama on her back.

The bartender says, I could stand in the middle
of Main Street and kill somebody
and I wouldn't lose any voters.
Butterworth says, then I'll take eight bullets
in my sleep. Ben says choke me to death
with your knee. Jemima says,
lock me in a holding cell and say
I decided to hang myself.

The bartender poured the drinks.
said he felt threatened
and was simply standing his ground.
He said he thought the thug
was reaching for a gun

The headlines said Well-Loved American
Foods Resisted Arrest, Failed
to Comply, and Were Delicious While Black.

Butterworth's daughter said here's to progress
we might finally get an anti-lynching bill.
Ben's son said I'd rather they abolish
qualified immunity. Jemima's kid said you know
they abolished slavery once,
then they hung my mama on that box.

Complicit, at Most

I am no more guilty
than the other officers' eyes
choosing to look the other way.

Technically, I'm not even touching
his neck. All I could feel
was the hot cotton insides
of officer Chauvin's uniform
against my own skin.

Almost nine minutes is a long time,
to kneel, on a neck, especially
if you are unaccustomed
to praying or begging.

But after putting all of me on *him*
he put this all on me
as if he was planning to propose,
but he got cold feet
and was too embarrassed to get up,
and just walk away from this altar
cation, marrying us both
to this moment, til death do us part.

Extraction

*On May 8, 1784, George Washington paid
6 pounds 2 shillings to Negros for 9 teeth.*

The creak of the old barn door.
The violence of metal on metal.
The crackling tongues of flame.
The screaming hiss of red hot iron
drowning in the blacksmith's bucket.
The quiet trickle of piss released in fear.
The snap of bone ripped from bone.
Agony rising out of a throat.
The choking sound of a mouth full of blood.