

Strange Juice  
(or the murder of Latasha Harlins)

1.

I remember my boyfriend, the dark behind the brown of his eyes and how he look in his leather. I was walking with that good feeling thinking about him, the next day of school—maybe I go, maybe I don't You know who gives a fuck. And nothing special, you know nothing is so special except now I'm dead. It's the day I died. And the sky was red-brown gauze. You could see patches of blue if you look up but I don't hardly ever look up. My eyes on my feet checking out my feet in orange Reeboks. What else I remember? Now that I look back it seems like the collard greens piled up on plywood boards at the door was huge green tears that tried to warn me. That day was the same but different. I didn't do nothin'. I slid open the glass door of the refrigerator that keeps all the beverages cool, it's so hot here. My eyes glance up at the camera pointed like a gun from the corner of the wall. Fuck it. I slip the cold bottle of orange juice in my backpack, go to the counter. I'll get some gum, if she say something I'll say, aw bitch I was gonna buy this juice, you think I'm stupid. Wonder what we gonna do in school tomorrow. I be so glad to get out the ninth grade, go to high school. If I'm late for homeroom one more time—

“Oh bitch please! I was gonna pay for—OOG FU WOO SHIT SUE! Speak English hoe! Take your damn juice. I wasn't stealing nothin' from you chink ass hoe!”

She grabbed me. Bitch! I hit that hoe upside her jaw. Who the fuck she think she is putting her hands on somebody. Fuck this hoe, I ain' gon' argue with this bitch. I turn my back. And walk away. I see the collard greens again only now they're growing like big trees then I see a red dirt road in the middle of the salad bar, no lie, like I'm high or something. Then everything is normal Korea town fruit stand again. Del Monte corn out a can poured in a stainless steel tub, iceberg, romaine, bran muffins and brownies wrapped in clear plastic. Fuck it I'm not thirsty no way.

I don't hear the blast till I'm dead  
I don't feel nothin' either  
as I split in half  
a dog yelps  
and every sound I ever heard  
flies out my mouth on green wings.  
Crimson waterfalls open in my skull  
and my bones come aloose,  
The dog is screaming  
like a siren now  
and in a distance a bucket of water  
spills over on a dusty red dirt road

and my heart quits  
falls face first in  
shattered glass on a concrete floor.  
The camera keeps

rolling.  
My left leg twitches.  
I don't cry.  
Fifteen.  
Green as greens  
passing from sight  
under broken bottles of light.

2.  
I don't remember what I did  
wrong.  
Somebody hit you, you hit 'em back.  
She didn't have to shoot me.  
I was born here  
and someone can shoot me and go home  
and eat turkey on Thanksgiving—  
what kinda shit is that?  
Videotape the bitch killing me,  
the hoe's own videotape  
recording  
the end of my days  
reeling obscenely  
for TV cameras—  
my blood  
sweet Jesus!  
Rolling 20s

Bounty Hunters  
PJs  
Imperial Courts  
NWA  
LAPD  
South Central  
Hollywood  
18<sup>th</sup> Street Diamond Riders  
Easy Riders  
it's a brown thing  
it's a black thing  
Crips  
Bloods, Mexicans together forever tonight.  
I don't remember...  
I jus' wanted some juice  
and now I'm dead.  
Killed by a model minority  
success story.  
Listen, is anybody gonna

say anything?  
I was gonna get a new orange leather jacket  
to match my Reeboks  
I was passing math *and*  
doing good in English.  
Fuck history, I'm tired of hearing  
bout George Washington  
and Columbus.  
I told that cracker, "Shit, mutherfucker  
what about us?"  
No, I *wasn't* pregnant,  
but I was gonna have a baby,

definitely, one day.  
I like Luther Vandross, Tone Loc,  
and Queen Latifah.  
Listen, is anybody gonna  
say anything?  
Community Service!  
A white bitch  
with a pink slit  
between her legs  
like mine,  
drips red.  
A white girl that probably got  
into law school on the  
affirmative action birthed  
by black people's struggle,  
sitting on a seat  
that was opened up  
for her by Rosa Parks and  
Fannie Lou Hamer,  
nig—no black people, African  
Americans, like me, marching  
under fire, hoses, broken glass  
gasolined bodies  
testicles sliced off,  
strange fruit, tossed to dogs.  
Swinging from trees.

This white judge woman  
hooded in mahogany-walled  
chambers decides my life  
is not worth nothing.

A fifteen-year-old black girl

equals zero in this white bitch's book.  
She sentences this yellow gunslinger  
to community service and probation.  
What are the terms of her probation,  
that she don't kill nobody white?  
Does anybody hear me?  
Without my tongue.  
Fifteen and out of time.  
Listen to the gasoline on the wind.  
Listen to my blood rhyme—  
drip drop on the sidewalk.  
Hear me children—  
and BURN.

- by Sapphire