

Dear Chadwick Boseman

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Dear Chadwick Boseman,
I never met you,
And it isn't really that I ever knew you—
Nor was it you were the first and only:
Denzel is the George of my cinematic esteem,
A founding father of Ebony and silver;
I rushed more for Morgan and Sam,
James and Jamie, too;
So many monumental moments—
Until you pounced on the screen in 2013:
Clad in the cleats of history,
Belting bold soulsong loud and proud;
Lending lawful leverage toward tipping the scales of justice to the oppressed, Yes—
As presidential as any pioneer,
Catalogued in the chronologue of Black meteors;
Earning your place in a streak of space
Sliding between bases and noble burdens,
A protector of legacy and lineage,
Reminding us our strides:
Where we've come from
And
Where we must keep going...
To get home.
An afrofuturism in the rhythm of clear skies and sunrise: We are the genetics of redemption,
The technology of unity,
The blueprint of audacity.
You bore something I cannot fathom: a Sacrifice in silence,
While you gave the world Everything—
1 of 3
And the future: Even more.
Why you—?
I wonder if you knew?
We missed each other, lapsing:
You moved through stages—alone,
While performing in ensembles
Shadowed by the brilliance you cast;
You owned the stage.
And now we grieve—together,
While reconciling insufferable emotions
Shocked because of the genius of your performance— This stage owns me—
I cannot
Move past
Denial.
Where do I force this fury?

Fierce and focused you fell to the fallacy of fairness:
 That hard work and a generous heart are the recipe to a long-lived life,
 That fearing God forces fickle fate to finagle fatality far from now into the future, That fighting for
 freedom means freedom from fighting—
 I could faint from the futility of it all.
 Fixed in the fissure of my faults and failures: What's the point?
 What's the calculus of good and evil?
 The cause of cosmic consequence?
 The hand seems heavier the darker the complexion. I'm not saying I'm bad,
 But I'm certainly less good:
 I think about the times I've failed to act—
 Through and upon—
 The nonsense I've centered:
 The piddling conflict I have with others,
 How much space I've consumed complaining about the pettiest things, How many charities I don't
 give to,
 Cents I don't round up,
 Children I don't mentor—
 All my abuses of self-indulgence...
 I don't know why it had to be you.
 2 of 3
 I could give you a roster;
 My name tops the list in any order— Alphabetical or immoral—
 Of who should
 Not
 Still be here
 To see you gone
 First.
 Just know this:
 Something follows from every colon, Even cancerous ones,
 It must.
 Know you leave nothing behind, Except for we who live on:
 In the space you gave us
 To stretch,
 To sing,
 To fight,
 To roar—
 Such that when my time comes,
 I will have offered more,
 Before the afterthought.

—To Chadwick Aaron Boseman

Chadwick Boseman was an American actor and producer, known for playing several historical figures as well as the superhero T'Challa (Black Panther). He died on August 28, 2020, after privately dealing with colon cancer for four years. We will miss him dearly.