

Black Girl's Survival Guide (for life in Copenhagen)—

Lesley-Ann Brown*

There ain't no place
To get your hair done
If you a Black girl in
Copenhagen.
There ain't no real place
to buy make up too...
'They ain't no hues as
Amber, chestnut or butterscotch.
(White girls don't need that shit).
There ain't no place
To buy collards,
Yams, breadfruit, Grits.
They ain't no Magazines
That celebrate us.
They ain't no news
To uplift us.
The only thing we got

* **Lesley-Ann Brown** is a Brooklyn-born writer, educator and activist who currently lives in Copenhagen, Denmark. Her parents hail from Trinidad and Tobago. She studied writing and literature at the New School for Social Research and worked as a freelance journalist in the 90s for *Vibe* and *The Source*. She worked for four years at Marie Brown Associates with Marie D. Brown, a publishing pioneer and one of the first African-American literary agents in New York City. Her activism began in high school when she became a member of the War Resister's League which has been instrumental in removing military recruitment from mostly poor and Black neighbourhoods. Brown created the critically-acclaimed blackgirlonmars blog and founded Bandit Queen press. She currently writes for NBCBLK and is the Vice President for Black Women in Europe Social Network, a not-for-profit committed to uplifting women of African descent in Europe.

is a broken Mirror,
Whose image We can not
Believe in.

All you really need tho'
Is a little shampoo,
Conditioner,
burnt brown powder
And carnelian colored lipstick.
(Oh, and don't forget the sign
That says,
"No,
I am not
A prostitute.")

If it glitters,
it gold, baby--

And if you think it's hard
to get your hair done,
Then try finding a brother!
But girl, for real tho'
all you really need,
In your refrigerator
Is a bag of weed,
A bottle of champagne,
That cooling eye thing
And some nail polish—
And you gotta
At least have
one friend
you can
Call Sister.

& while you're at it
try not to forget,
(although it will be hard)
that there are sisters
like Toni Morrison
Alice Walker
Maryse Conde
Nikki Giovanni
Jamaica Kincaid

& Erikah Badu.

And if it gets really hard
to remember who You are
amidst all the
Em-T-V hoochies,
Then turn
Off
your
Tv!

And if it really gets hard to remember
Who you are,
Put faces on the wall,
Pictures of
Angela Davis
(Raising her fist)
Harriet Tubman
Nella Larsen
(you taking
notes right?)
Nanny of the Maroons
Sojourner Truth

Phyllis Wheatley
Phoolan Devi.

Girl, remember
Not to
Forget yourself--
Look at yourself in the mirror
And say
That today,
I'mma be
Myself
Despite,
Despite.

And if you
Listen to your
Heart,
You know
What I mean.

And that's
How we survive
Through memory
& this is
the
Black girl's
Survival Guide
For
Tough living
In
Copenhagen.

2007, Copenhagen