Strange Fruit

You wonder what ‘strange fruit’ tastes like
as you swing ashy legs from the hips of your father’s
reclining chair. when you ask his face
contorts into a shadow, cheeks pressing air
from the edges of his jawbones,
eyes hollowing.
you are watching his hands curve
into fists—red blisters, stitches,
hard knuckles pressing into working skin…
and in the place beneath your tongue,
you are imagining the soft flesh of a mango
pulp of an orange
tart bursting body of a strawberry.
when you ask him again, he is silent
and pressing his fingers against the temples
of his head, imagining asphyxiationsuffocation…toes dangling and shadows
in woods.

you are not his daughter here.
here you are Emmet’s sister,
Evers’ daughter, little brown
church girl lifting her skirt
to use the bathroom…
the face of Jesus,
a hollow, jagged shadow.

he is swallowing and searching
for what strange fruit tastes
like in the back of his throat,
like maybe he can recall from his taste buds,
pull it out from the silence
between his lips,
like strange fruit has been caught
between his teeth
or is hiding, resting on his gums.

wherever it is, you decide
that he hasn’t swallowed it yet
and you imagine it sputtering onto the carpet
in a burst of ebony vomit.

years later, when it dries and you’ve grown…
you scrape it up with your nails and you watch
as the black turns to red,
then white,
then blue.