

A Student Journal

TAMARIND

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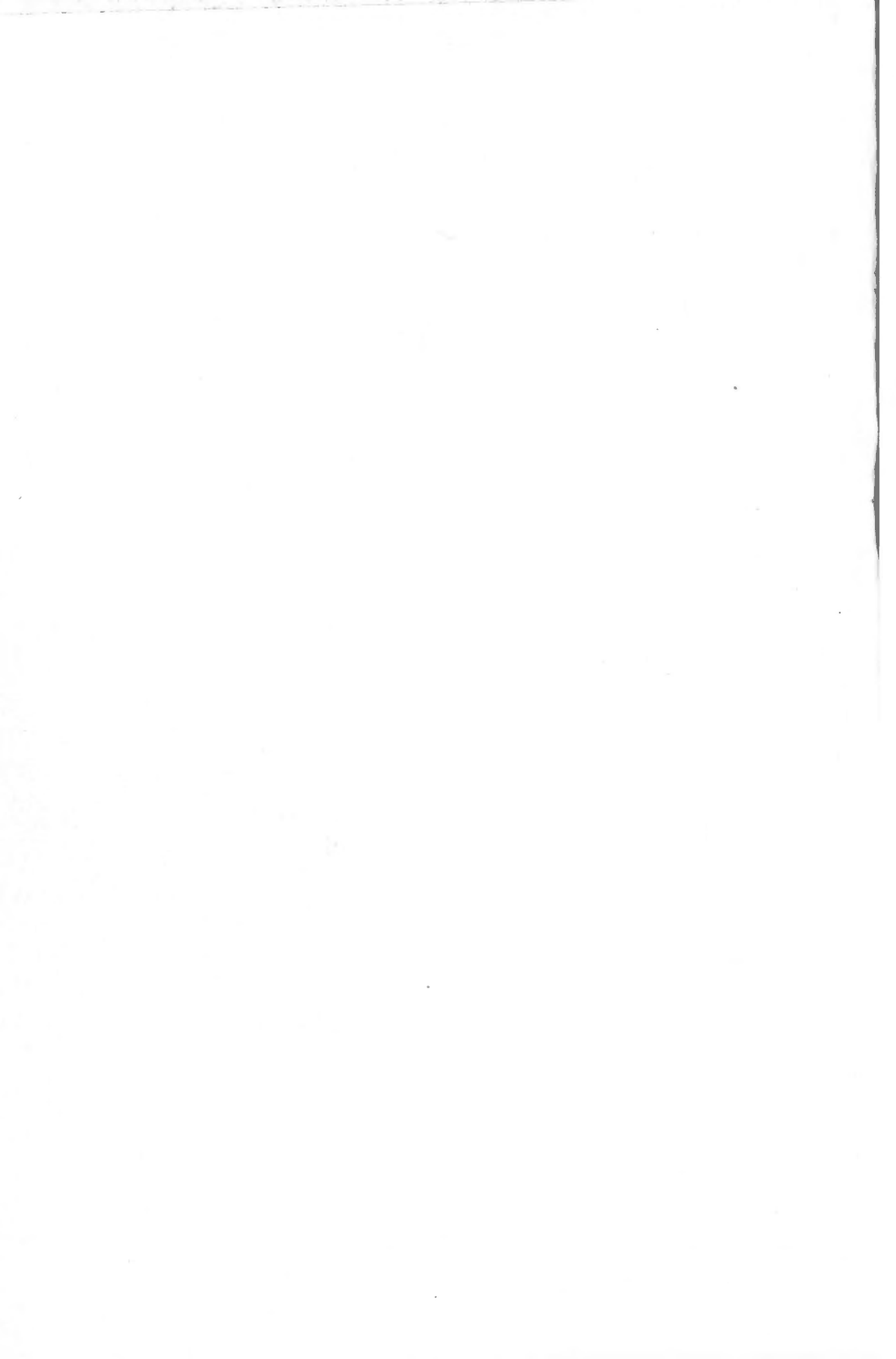


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The School of English Studies
The College of The Bahamas
Thompson Boulevard. Room A97
Telephone 302-4381
www.cob.edu.bs/schools/english_home.html



TAMARIND

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Typing and Formatting

Bridgette Stuart

Submissions

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“Drummer Boy” Matthew Wildgoose

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REFLECTIONS

The Bahamas For Bahamian?

Paul Taylor

This land is your land.
This land is my land,
From Grand Bahama
Down to the Berry Islands....
This land was made for you and me.

Catchy songs and slogans of such a nature have always been used to evoke national pride in all Bahamians, as we are constantly reminded that “we are blessed with such a beautiful country”. Furthermore, Bahamian pride is inextricably linked to the “beautiful aquamarine/crystal waters, the radiance of the sun, and the warm friendly smiles of the natives” that greet each visitor upon arrival to these sun-soaked shores. This is what The Bahamas has become known as: a paradise that welcomes all to bask in these sinfully beautiful isles. The dominance of tourism, the epicenter of our “service-based economy”, is the major factor in the incalculable equation of the Bahamian experience.

The achievement of majority rule and independence were times when Bahamian pride was not predicated on some economic benefit or marketing scheme, as it is now, as Bahamians are reminded that “tourism is everyone’s business”. Slogans that talked of pride in The Bahamas were once used to encourage the downtrodden and dispossessed masses of this country who were now being given once withheld opportunities. Therefore, advertisements that encouraged Bahamian pride were done to unite a country divided and disenfranchised. However, the passage of time, modernity and “proclaimed” prosperity have now changed the motivation and mission of such slogans. Bahamians are now being asked to “Keep The Bahamas Clean, Green, and Pristine”, but for whom? It is evident that many of the undertakings of the government, as a part of cultural development, are done to reinforce and propagate the stereotypical idyllic and paradisiacal image of The

Bahamas to attract more tourists to perpetuate tourism, “our bread and butter”.

Our culture is no longer an expression of our African heritage and a tribute to our ancestors, but a commodity to be marketed to the world in an elaborate money-making scheme. Therefore, Bay Street and Rawson Square have become heavily policed and barricaded during Junkanoo to prevent any violent outbursts. However, this is not done for the protection of Bahamian onlookers but to reassure tourists that they will be safe as they see this embodiment of Bahamian culture. Bay Street has become a virtual no standing zone as much of it is cordoned off for bleachers, but most Bahamians stand as bleacher tickets have become outrageously high. There is now a price to view our culture in action, which is another issue. However, Junkanoo has now been made “enjoyable” for tourists as the threats of violence have been reduced as there is little standing room for locals. **OUR** quintessential cultural event has now become an attraction for tourists, which places it as an expression of identity only secondarily.

Sadly, not only is our culture being marketed and our country being misrepresented (I may add, for decades), but the very same organization entrusted to represent the concerns and best interests of the masses is in grave dereliction of duty as we are being marginalized in crucial decision-making processes. It is apparent that our country has elected a de-facto government (and this is not the first) to represent us. The sound byte given by the government to defend any new development proposal is that “it will provide jobs for Bahamians”. This is not comforting at all; as a matter of fact, it is quite disheartening and insulting. This trite speech is usually made after a proposal has been signed off on and there is a small group of individuals voicing their displeasure to the government. In our own country we are not consulted when major developments are being made, and when we are they have already been executed, making the entire process moot.

Such behavior raises the question, Is The Bahamas for Bahamians? Our cultural expression is displayed for the enjoyment of visitors, the government makes crucial decisions without consulting us, and we are encouraged to preserve the environment, not for us but

for the propagation of an industry that so closely resembles the institution responsible for the destruction of the black race. The major developments (hotels) that are said to be constructed for Bahamians have, instead, constructed chain link fences along the beach, and we, the natives, are denied passage by the security guards. Have Bahamians become props or inconvenient nuisances who must be pacified and tolerated in their own country? This is apparently the case. Majority rule and independence promised that the dispossession and disenfranchisement of Bahamians would end as we would no longer be excluded in our own society. However, some thirty years later it appears that this dream has not been fully realized.

Sweetie it ain't fa you!

Chevette Black

Voluptuous and chunky, fabulous and thick
At anytime I'm quick to defend the "solid" girl clique
But lately, yawl been lettin' me down with the things
yawl say and do
'Cause sweetie I thought you 'spose to know,
everything just ain't for you!

I all for freedom of speech, free expression and being
on par with power
Lettin' men know who run things and takin' back
our hour
But how you ga educate ppl if you can't differentiate
between falsehood and truth
Bussin' off dese classy fashions that ain't created fa
you, my youth?

Den is hang out with friends who is lead ya down da
wrong path
Acting like jungles ya can't match and, oh lawd, I
wudn't even start
On da bleaching creams and stiletto heels and ya
weave wa blonde and blue
Knowin' quite well wen walking down the street, ppl
whispering bad 'bout you.

Well jeeppers creepers, look at the fashions on these
ppl who can't dress
Ya wearin' size 2 wen you know you is a 12, girl who
you tryna impress?
Den have the audacity to walk in church pullin' it
down when you passin' people pew
Evidently ya mirror ain' workin' and I don't thing it
cud stand to look at you.
Just embarrassing yaself outta this world whenever
you go out

Ya gotta hear ya mouth all da away down the road, I
right next to you, man, you ain' gotta shout
Then wen people wan give you advice, wan get mad
and have ya face screw
You rather a stranger over ya friends sayin' honey
that jus' ain' fa you?

I ain't sayin' you can't look good and at the same
time have some class
Cuz even tho you ain' slim and trim a guy should
smile wen you pass
If you're a true lady, they'll approach you right and
reiterate the saying is true
Not everything that looks good to ya baby
necessarily accentuates you.

So on a serious note, from woman to woman, take
some good advice
Keep yaself well, act civilized, go out with flair, dress
yaself up nice
Know ya size, be in ya place, follow your heart and to
you be true
Cuz in the end, brutal and honest, not everything in
life is adapted to suit you.

Spring Break: The Curse!

Shannon Bethel

It's here, the long overdue Spring Break! The time when millions of college students flock like migrant birds to our shores, plaguing our tranquil maritime climate with their foreign tongues and strange customs. It's a time when Benjamin Franklins, Ulysses Grants, and Andrew Jacksons exchange hands and fix smiles on the face of every business person with every hospitable encounter. It is no secret that tourism is our premier industry in this country, and spring time seems to be one of the most heavenly seasons on tourism's liturgical calendar. These spring fugitives escape their popsicle-wastelands of permafrost to celebrate weekends, pressure-free from term papers and finals. Although springtime pumps in money by the barrel, Spring Break has become a dreadful nightmare to the hotel and hospitality industry. The cause for this is that Spring Breakers are too irresponsible and disrespectful, and too promiscuous. Their behavior forces me to examine the issue: Spring Break, the curse!

During spring break season, many hotels dim the lights, close the curtains and lock them out. The illusion that no one's at home is owed to the fact that spring breakers are too irresponsible and disrespectful. They drink alcohol excessively, take drugs, and just as their name denotes, they break-up the hotels, and destroy everything in their paths like spring hurricanes. Many of these college students come with their party-caps on, ready to "get low" and have a fun filled time. Their desire for fun and excitement involves getting drunk, and, unlike the lenient laws of the U.S., those of The Bahamas do not restrict underage drinking. Therefore, spring breakers seize the opportunity to drink alcohol, and do so irresponsibly. I'll tell you the process. First, they drink to get a "buzz." A second cup gets them "toned in." Another cup makes them "tipsy," and a final cup gets them "toed-the-hell-up!" Their behavior typifies the lyrics

of Gino D's song: "Drunk again...all 'ca-ponkle-up' again!" Additionally, many of them sit at the bar and "shoot" rounds of vodka, whisky, gin or Bacardi (to name a few), until they lose consciousness. In this context, losing consciousness is synonymous with losing other important things – room keys, wallets with money and identification and, for some females, their virginity. Above all, they lose their minds. Fights erupt. There is absolutely no display of self control or anger management and there is no effort at conflict resolution. There is only blatant irresponsibility.

In addition, one would think that many hotels operate an "underground railroad," trafficking illegal drugs. This is because beyond all reasoning, spring breakers end up with dangerous drugs. They administer them to their peers, and act as though the hotels were pharmacies. These "pharmaceutical dispensers" are substance abusers. "Sinsemilla", "horse", "crack", "snow", "crystal", "mary jean", "speed ball", "the e-pill" are "daily-bread" for some of these spring breakers. The truth is, many of these eggheads are members of various prestigious sororities and fraternities and for entry into such clubs, there's no telling what these dare-devils might do. They might even consider smuggling illegal drugs. And consequently, they would run the risk of being caught, imprisoned or deported.

Moreover, adolescents have a tendency to smash things while under the influence of drugs. For some rental car agencies, this is a horror story. Spring breakers drive the SD's while intoxicated or under the influence of other illegal substances, and more often than not, end up in serious accidents, damaging the cars and hurting themselves. In many instances, insurance agencies must cover the cost of the damages, incurring great losses. This is why, in The Bahamas, a person must be at the minimum age of twenty-five in order to rent a vehicle. Moreover, statistics show that some young people are too irresponsible and too inattentive while they're driving. No wonder they do not earn the trust of transport companies!

Another reason that these young people are given the boot when they go to hotels is that they are disrespectful. They show their disrespect by ignoring hotel policies, vandalizing hotel property, and using profanity as if it were going out of style! Most resorts have policies that govern the behavior of guests, and ensure the safety, security and protection of visitors and employees. However, it would appear that an Olympiad is taking place when we see how quickly spring breakers break these rules. They disregard caution signs: "NO DIVING." "NO SMOKING." "DO NOT DISTURB." These are incomprehensible and pointless commands that do not appeal to their auditory or visual senses. What is more, they vandalize the hotel's property, often defacing furniture with graffiti, and fragmenting rooms pitilessly. The fact is, adolescents are predisposed to destroy when under the influence of drugs, including alcohol. This is heart wrenching for the hotel owners and managers. How dreadful it is when someone destroys your property! Furthermore, it is exceedingly frustrating having to replace furniture and refurbish the rooms for another herd of wild animals to stampede through again and again. But that's not all! While the rooms are being smashed to smithereens, these guys are screaming at the top of their lungs, being disruptive, disturbing other hotel guests, and above all, cursing! Now we know that in this country, cursing is a major taboo to the Christian ear. This kind of unruly behavior and disrespectful action should contribute to a zero tolerance policy for spring breakers

Perhaps the main reason that hotel owners send spring breakers packing is their promiscuity. Against hotel policy, some of them have illicit sex parties and orgies. In The Bahamas, fornication is heralded as forbidden and sinful. Therefore, sex among young people of this age is viewed as a major taboo to society. The problem is that these college students come from different backgrounds and cultures, and they believe they can act as they do in their own backyards. Many of them watch adult films and organize sex games such as Strip Poker,

Body Shots, and Truth or Dare, mimicking what they see on various adult programmes. What's more, a number of them are carriers of STDs and they are engaging in sex with locals. It's not unusual that in the wee hours of the morning, one sees a young Bahamian male picking up or being picked up by foreign young women. This is a huge problem! In a society like The Bahamas, Christian dogma discourages acts of promiscuity. But how vexing it is when, against the beliefs and practices of an entire society, these negative behaviours prevail! Imagine how sickening it is having to clean up rooms after them with used condoms scattered over the beds. This is enough to evoke the demons in the housekeeping staff. And, this is nerve-racking to our hotel managers and staff. No wonder Bahamian hotel owners fear spring breakers!

Despite the lucrative returns that are made during the spring break season, hotel resorts are of two minds. There are many who believe this season should be erased from the calendar. They believe that spring breakers are too irresponsible, disrespectful and too promiscuous. I strongly believe that Bahamians must put an end to this madness. Is it really worth it? Let's see. The spring breakers pay to dismantle the hotels, and the joy is replacing the things they damage? This is sheer irony and nonsensical! Next spring season, I suggest that a "NOT WANTED" sign be posted. No spring breakers means no broken hotel property. This would most definitely reduce the fears of hotel managers who dread their property being terrorized by wild teenagers. Businesses can run more smoothly with no reports of irresponsibility, disrespect or promiscuity. Maybe, in time, these immature students will learn to be responsible and act more respectfully. Until then, let us pray to stay free from the wrath of the cursed spring breakers.

Political

Crystal Alexander

Coded labels that enslave the people
Talk of times that exist no longer
Video images of slavery
And talk of the UBP
Is this the plan of the mastermind?
To trap me in a box that I personally did not experience?
Is my vote fixed?
Can it be predicted?
While I appreciate the struggle
I ignore the cry
A cry for change and purpose
A cry for truth and acceptance
A change to people and not “party”
So I as a youth understand
That slavery is not colour
It is my sold freedom

Paying Homage to a Great Form

Latasha Sherman-Young

Mr. Shakespeare, how'd you do all this stuff?
Mr. Petrarch, please tell me how it's done-
This Fourteen Line box is just far too tough,
And sticking to this Rhyme Scheme sure ain't fun.

So I've got the first four lines- whoops! "Quatrain",
Two more to go and a Rhyme Scheme sure ain't fun.
Whoever thought of this must be insane;
Iambic Pentameter's no one's friend.

The poem's so short, but the lines- so long.
Figurative Language is so hard to fit.
I'll stick some in so I won't be too wrong-
This poem's a hard race I just want to quit.

Well, it's over now and I'm feeling quite dense;
I've got the Sound, but does it make Sense?

Sonnet

Simone Sweeting

At 5 you learn the first demi-plié
By 7 you have mastered the tendu
Progressing slowly to a delicate fondu
Suspended in air during a grand jété
Makes you the envy of the day
No one except you make two feet one in a soutenu
They should give you the praise due to you
After all not only have you mastered up to 23 fouettés
And gained the coveted role of Sugar Plum Fairy
When you perform it is magical
Sadly jealousy starts to make you wary
Peers who are jealous of your Bodylines that are metrical
Under pressure the final performance makes the audience
teary
They must realize not everyone's body is made for the
classical

I fa teachin'

Hadassah Hall

Chil', dey tell me I crazy
gern inta dis teachin' ting
say da chirren dem aine ga' no respec'
and does jump fence 'for da bell ring.

Dey lookin' at all da hell
dese chirren does carry teachers t'rew
an' how da national average is 'D'
despite all teachers does do.

Dey t'row up in ma face
How music teacher ge' beat at C. I.
But I say, 'Dine ga deter me'
Da God I serve reign on high.

So fa all da nay sayers
I on a mission fa change
Even if I only ge' t'rew ta one student
My teachin' aine ga be in vain.

I fa teachin'!

The Night-life in Nassau

Nikera Cartwright

At about 10:30 p.m. on a recent Friday, some of my classmates and I were zooming on the Cable Beach strip in order to reach one of the most happening spots on the island to start the weekend off right. Although convenient parking near Dicky Mo's was hard to find due to its popularity amongst club goers, my classmates and I made it to the entrance of the club. I felt a bit anxious about the security guards allowing us to get behind the gate. Unfortunately, they reminded us about the age limit on club goers and did not allow one of us inside. We felt sorry for him, but all hope was not lost as he made his way to another hot spot called the Blue Note. We then escaped upstairs into the darkness, further into a whole new world, before the dance area got too full of people.

Once we were up there, the DJ played a variety of culture tunes and hip hop songs to get the eager dancers hyped. The loud speakers pulsed like they were one with my heartbeat and I sat to watch the sights. From the sidelines, I saw how the majority of persons were able to sing all the words of the songs or shout out jeers to the opposite gender simultaneously such as "loser" or "tired body gal". Gradually, as the club got full, some girls began to dance with their bodies winding to every beat no matter how fast or slow it was. I saw the guys admiring their movements. I watched my friends "willie bouncing" and "wacky dipping" and trying to get me to do the same. But there I was sipping on my drink and refusing to join in—until I heard my song come on and I could not help but get up to strut my stuff. As the night went on I laughed with my friends at the persons who could not get the rhythm right no matter how hard they tried. In the dimness of light I saw familiar faces and faces that I would love to get to know.

As we left and returned to the light, we were back in what I think of as the real world. In retrospect, I realize that even though clubbing might seem like a whole new world, it's an integral part of the Bahamian social scene and the major aspect of the night life. While some persons believe it is more appealing to the younger generation, a wide variety of persons get dressed in their best to go clubbing, whether they admit it or not, and they fall into several, main groups. You can always pinpoint the dancers, the romancers and the observers.

The first main group is the dancers. This group of persons come to the club to unwind and relieve the stresses of the work or school week. Dancing becomes a means of letting loose and forgetting all of life's little problems, and the liquor surely helps even more. This group portrays a huge part of what the club experience is about and that is enjoying the music and showing it through body language. They bounce and bob their heads as if drunk with music and claim their territory on the dance floor. For the club nights, these males and females become dancehall kings and queens and tend to carry on as loose as they choose. When they meet on the dance floor just about anything goes for the sake of a good time. While males are just seen as good dancers, females may be seen as vulgar women. They then go on to carry titles in our society such as "junglass". Even though there has become a wider acceptance for such activities, the eyes that the dancers didn't know were watching are followed by reporting lips.

The second group is the romancers. This group tends to be dominated by males who "hold up" the wall searching for eye candy that they can stalk. Many of them are quick to approach women and ask for just one dance. Many girls do give in to their advances. It is events like these that sometimes lead to one night stands, which, in turn, may develop into unwanted pregnancies or the all-

time famous love triangle. With the relaxing club environment and all of the music and people who are just looking to have a good time, persons choose to live within the moment and perform actions that most times they later regret, especially if they have left their partners home. Additionally, domestic issues and violence stir up in our communities due to unwise actions.

Last but not least, there are late bloomers like me who have only been inside a club once or twice. As observers, we pick up on all the little “wibes” that are going on inside the club environment such as Beres Hammond’s reminder of “What one dance can do”. We’re the ones who can’t stand the scent of Black & Mild but still sit there observing. The club experience is not fulfilling in any other way than getting out of the house to say that we have been to one of the famous hot spots. This is where some people develop the feeling that they need to fit into the atmosphere by either becoming a dancer or romancer. Persons may also feel the need to drink, get “nice up” and develop other bad habits in order to fit into the classification of other club goers. Therefore, certain social ills are allowed to develop and continue growing amongst young people. The club scene has a way of becoming a necessary break from reality that may lead to social drinking, casual sex and the destruction of reputations. This is mainly because what happens in the party doesn’t necessarily stay in the party. While I want to feel as though I am a part of the bigger social picture, the clubbing night life is not for me.

PORTRAITS



Lemaro Wright
"Mo'Chello"

True-True Bahamian

Regina-Beth Brennen

Ms. Saunders dreadlock a swingin'
to Lauryn an' Bob as she pull up in
school yahd
She tern off car 'nition an' crumple
McDonal' bag
Gats ta mek ma some duff ta nite
she tink while steppin' out an' settin'
car alahm
She start up a wynin' ta her class
holin' her book by her wais'
"Mornin' Leslie!" she call to a teacha
an' unlock her class door
sighin'
Ms. Saunders set down to her des'
waitin' fo her nex' class
an' start maginin' how her life ca be
if she was livin' in dis same lan'
bu' makin' mo money

I ca have:

GucciKipling
Ralphy "da-arling" ova Victoria 'n Fredrick's
FubuTommyNike wash in Gain
Johnnycakesouse wid NantuketPepsi
DanceHallParty crazy gal ro-oll
Calypso ban' singin' while
rasta man! Bob Marley croon
Lil rake 'n scrape? Yeah man.
Bounce rap lyric wid Junkanoo beat
Praise Jah! Dunhill, oooooo boy dat
Kalik taste sweeeeeeeet
Regatta time! Yes buoy!
eatin' conch salad watchin' Laker score

tree pointa – at da buzzer –
 Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa heeeeeeee!
 Harlequinn Desire wid R & B flowin'
 cruisin' swingin' to US actress singin'
 Dreamin' a ocean
 on Florida shores
 an' Dancin' wid dread man
 shakin' bounge ta Soca beat.
 Senin' chirren off ta CornellOxfordBarry
 Cuz dey bedda dan C. O. B.
 Well das jus till Selasie ship come in
 Africa boun' is we
 While cruisin' gats ta sip ma Earl Gray –
 'cause bush tea ain' dic-ty
 An' I gats ta carry plenty Charmin
 'cause Bahama bran' harsh-harsh an' cheap

Den:

Ms. Saunders' class bus' in de door
 kerpunkalin her reverie
 Dis National Pride Week
Gats ta teach dese chirren da country way
Well...
 She knew 'bout Bahamian culture
 an' she had plenty ta say
 plus she was proud a her Bahamian heritage
 so she learn dem good bout da ole way
 'Bout Bouki an' Rabbi an' Chicharney an' sperrit
 an' de giant wha' lay unda Andros
 'Bout aloe an' serasse an' lub wine an' orange leaf tea
 ju-ju, coco plum, 5 cent cup, Sunde lobsta' an crab
 an' gunep an' conch an' pea soup wid dough an' duff
 'Bout UBP an' Bay Street Boys an' whe' we couldin go
 'Bout Milo Butler an' Mista Pinlin befo he knighthood
 ge' tack on
 'Bout clapboard house an' shirt a flou'bag
 an' gern ta school wid Royal Reader an' lead
 'Bout walkin' ta church in group

an' shot gun weddin' an' stuff
An' how fambly does hol tagedda when tings does ge' tuff

“So be proud of who you are”, she tell 'em
“Be proud to be Bahamian. Stand at attention and
hold your head high.

Crow:

‘March on Bahamaland’ with pride!’
Den she dismiss her class an' zip up
Polo jacket
an' zoom home in her
Lexus ride.

Consider the Consumer

Sharano Walkine

Have you ever bought a pair of tight-ass jeans? You kick yourself for not trying them on first. You want to take them back to where you got them, but in the process of getting there, you realize you've lost or misplaced the receipt. Still, you know you can always take them back and get a different pair as long as the store is still there. Perhaps we've all had things we don't want and get rid of. But imagine if you tried to take the jeans back to where you got them and there was no store. It never existed and you never bought the jeans, you always had them on. They were always this uncomfortable but you just realized that they are. You try to take them off but it's too late. You feel it cutting into your waist, between the epidermis and dermis and nerves. It gets to the bone. It's angry because you've noticed how tight and uncomfortable it's been and it wants to kill you. If I can try on something as minuscule and insignificant as jeans, why can't I try on lives?

I don't like being gambled with, but I suppose God or Jah or whatever you want to call him has his good days and his bad. My life is uncomfortable. My skin feels loose on the inside and my hands feel like someone else's. My mind is the only part of 'me' that I think is real and this is only because it's telling me I'm not. I don't sleep at night, I exist. I don't go anywhere in my dreams, I just try to construct the ideal world I want and belong in, but it falls apart piece by piece. Every time I add a block, the one beneath it drops and lands on my feet. I don't scream because it's just a dream. In real life I try to build relationships and like in my dreams they fall on my feet, crushing the big and little toes. I can scream now because I'm awake and it hurts. I once built the world so high I could actually feel the sun. I didn't see the need to touch it (besides, I'm a gentleman). It's a good feeling, like I'm taking a warm bath. It doesn't scorch me or make me sweat like in real life, but then the last block falls and so

do I. I am so enamored by the sun nothing else exists and ergo, I blame it for my fall and I vow never to reach for it again.

I'm so tired of waiting for the bus. It's annoying to wait for things you shouldn't have to wait for. Look at those niggas over there. I wonder if they ever had to wait. Do they even know what waiting is? The bus is here and I'm still waiting. I'm on it and I'm still waiting. I sit down next to an attractive gir!. I can tell she's real and full of life. She is glowing from the inside. Like a glow stick. She must have been bent or broken though in order for that to happen because that's the only way to get glow sticks to glow. Her hands are unmarred and her nails are white. They look like old bones that were bleached by ambient sun. But I try not to relish its handiwork; we're not on speaking terms after all. She has a scar on her wrist; I wonder how she got that. It's shaped like an I. I wonder what word it was carved out from, bItch or wIt? Maybe she's an athlete. Maybe she could tell me how to keep my blocks together. Her eyes are so oval and brown and I'm staring intensely into them. It's the only part of her body that won't wrinkle. It won't change. It will remain solid. Her ears are gorgeous. I want to touch them with my cold hands just to see her jerk and smile. Her cheeks are chiseled well, but I think I could do a better job. I would slip my hands between the crevices of them and get lost. I would forget what I wanted to do and give credit where it was really due. Her lips are black and pink. The top one is dark and the bottom is pink and protrudes a little bit, like it wants to reach for me and touch me beneath my surface. I didn't really notice her hair. It probably wasn't hers anyhow.

"Hey. Why you staring at me like that? You see something you like aye?"

"Maybe I do."

"Well? What do you like?"

"We are talking about you right? Not a car dealership."

"Weelll. I see ya ma ain teach you no manners."

"Of course she did. She also taught me to speak

English.”

“You’s a hyshin aye?”

“No. I look like one?”

“No. Your head too damn big.”

I laugh at that little gem but I don’t smile.

R. Kelly is playing on the radio. “R. Kelly is my baby ya know.”

“Why gals like him so much?”

“He fine man. That’s all there is to it”.

“What if he couldn’t sing?”

“I still think he’d be sexy.”

“What’s your name?”

“Fabia and yours?”

“I don’t have one. But I do have a number”

“Okay. Give it to me”

We exchange numbers. I don’t want to go into my bag and tear a page out of the book; after all, this little exchange might not even be worth tearing one page out of a 200 page composition book. I think that translates into half a cent. My old lady indirectly showed me how to be a frugal and safe shopper. We talk for the rest of the ride and I get off. On the walk home through Mackey Street, I realize that I have two blocks up and none have fallen. She was chewing gum, maybe that’s when they stuck together. But chewing gum has a habit of cracking when it gets too cold. And for such a hot city, Nassau always gets nippy.

I’ve never asked a girl for a number so I didn’t know what to do. I decided to wait a day and then call her. I felt sick for the rest of the evening. When I called Fabia she wouldn’t speak. It was a very stupid experience. She had me all over the place exhausting my conversational faculties. This gal won’t even wait until we have sex to wear me out. I was waiting to talk to her but she refused. All she talked about was her ex-boyfriend Jason who plays basketball. He was cute and tall. He was her first and dmddnxcnbeyhuaowueue. I lost track of what she was saying. You know when you bend a glow stick; it glows brilliantly. But after a while it gets really dull and eventually phases out within 24 hours. I need to choose

better analogies. I was attending weekend classes and I wondered if she could meet me there sometime. After this I eventually stopped hearing from her. Actually, I never heard from her because she never called. I wondered what I did wrong. I spoke to her, made her laugh during the conversation and I got her number. One day I saw her again with friends. She was talking to this boy. I heard one of her friends say "And das the boy you was talking to?" She hid and reprimanded her friend for reminding her of that. I wasn't her mother. I didn't embarrass her at all. Jason did. He told everyone how bad she smelt after he had sex with her which was why they broke up in the first place. Maybe if the right soul were in this body, she would have called me. My skin becomes looser and looser but I can't take it off, I won't because I don't know it's someone else's yet.

Years passed and I was on the bus again, still waiting. This old man with gunk in the edges of his mouth kept looking at me.

"Crack one smile. Jesus loves you."

"What? You ask me to smile?"

"Yea."

"Why do you want to see me smile? Will it make you feel better if I do?"

"Yea."

"Ok. I won't cause I don't like man."

"Ya'll youths is something else. Yinna ain know how good ya'll got it."

Who says 'yinna' anymore; unless they are almost dead or have a PhD. Oh yea he's old.

"I have it good? You don't even know me. Let me ask you something, have you ever been happy? Not content but happy? How would you feel if your life was in constant renovation, never even having enough time to breathe between hours or days? Every time you have to adjust to a new world and you can never ever build your own. I came here from Inagua when I was three. My life was uprooted and I had no say in it so I consider myself a slave trying and dying to dry its wet feet in an ocean, fully knowing it's impossible so I have to force myself into

believing its possible; that it's real. I was born in Nassau, in PMH and it still doesn't feel like my home. I force myself to think that way though. I've been here so long I'm afraid to leave. Consistency is a fresh new hell for me, something I want and don't. When I came down here we lived in several places, South Beach, Stapleton, Ridgeland, Mackey Street, and Fox Hill and in the process I've had to make and break friends mend and break bones and seal spirits. Years of this made me afraid to get to know people and trust them. Why waste your time with a mirage; it's only there temporarily, so why chase it? Why cling to something you can't hold onto?"

He looks at me again and begins to wipe the gunk from the edges of his mouth with his index finger. One of his fingernails has a calcium deposit in it. I was scared that he thought I was crazy or suicidal and would call the women in pink for me. But he didn't. "All cried out" began to play on the radio.

"Well, can't you answer my question? I answered yours."

"Boy, I been through things in life too. You don't know pain. Waking up drunk and high lying in a pool of ya own shit, that's pain."

"That's not pain, that's consequence. You chose to turn to what you did and felt right at home while doing it. My biggest gripe is my lack of choice. You know, I wanted to buy a bottle of rum and drown myself in it, finally get my feet dry but I couldn't. My hand gave way and the bottle fell; it wouldn't even break for me. It would remain there taunting me in all its resolve. I began to cry, I was leaking and the bottle remained there dry. It was more whole than I was. It was then I knew I was weaker than glass and less cohesive than sand. I couldn't drink. I tried and tried but I couldn't. I had no choice. Someone made it for me and I cringe and cry more at the thought of who it was. As a result of all this and many others things I can't mention because of their tendency to make me hate the world, I've become bitter and reclusive. I don't know whether I've made myself full of holes or as hard as iron. At times, I've made myself full of holes because I want to be kind and friendly and let everything and everyone in

and everything I have to offer out. But when you're full of holes, people and things have a tendency to slip right through and drip down onto the sidewalk. They enter and leave, a revolving door of strangers that wear away the lining in my heart leaving it worn down, exposed and cold. Since happiness and its taste are so fleeting and mocking, at times I've made my outsides iron so that I can't open up and let anything out and so that no one can get in. But iron rusts and flakes away piece by piece."

"Boss, all you need is a woman in your life. Some nooky will take all that grief you build up away. You could stroke and stroke and feel the flesh tighten around yours and forget bout all that foolishness."

"I don't want to forget. I never forget anything. And for someone who just told me Jesus loves me, you sure dive into the gutter fast. All I want is to find a girl I can have things with; experiences that are ours so that 40 years down the road we can say we did that and I can feel like I have memories worth remembering. I want to know her so well that I can tell how fast her heart beats when she sees me after a week away or during the most perverted, glamorous and purest sex possible. I want her to carry my child so that it can know her in order to know me. I want her to hold my hand for no reason so that for the first time in my life, they would have served their true purpose. I want to be able to draw her with my eyes shut, blind to the world. I don't want make her feel like she's the only girl in the room; I want her to feel like she's not in a room at all but in me to stay. I want to use my tongue to taste her and talk to her. I want a girl who'll come home and cry all over me. I want to drown in her tears and I want her to hold onto me like she needs me to survive, to live. I want her to help me build our world. I realize now, how can you build a world without cement or some bonding agent to hold it together? She'll be my adhesive and make sure I never fall to bits again. I want to look at her and say I'll have the privilege of waking up to her next to me everyday and dying in her arms. I'll have the consistency I want and need. Her touch will make my skin tighten and make me feel at home in this

body. We'll grow young together and sing songs and sing about people who've done it before. I'll watch her age and put on weight but always see the girl who brought me solace and companionship decades ago. We'll know ourselves better than the world around us. So in other words sir, I want the impossible and the beautiful, true happiness. I'm a selfish animal and I couldn't be more proud of myself."

"What's your name boy?"

"I don't like the one I have."

"Well I can honestly say I never heard a bigger crock since I heard a hotel cesspit burst."

I find his comment so funny and it makes me relax a bit. I get to my stop and tell him goodbye but when I turn around there is no-one there. He is gone like the store and I'd taken my jeans off and tried on another pair. I knew I wanted this pair so I keep it and it fits me well. That night I dream for the first time. I am in old castle made up of a million stones, each with a million stories. They are soft, glowing stones, all the things I like, need and want. They share with me and I share with them. I never leave the castle because I never wake up and it never leaves me. I choose to sleep and stay. We just exist, letting our mouths do the living.

Sonrisa

Natasha Rufin

Sonrisa, a word in Spanish meaning smile, and it was her name. Her dad, Sonny Louis, and her mother, Marisa Sands Louis, had forged their names to form hers. And as she grew older her parents realized that she took on the main characteristics of her name and became in all senses a smile.

Sonrisa grew up in a sheltered grove that she called Katyé Kreýol, a place where love, laughter, fun and magic always hung in the air. She loved the shining silver tin roofs that played music for her to dance to whenever it rained, and also the board siding houses that were painted such a blue it rivaled that of the cerulean-hued sky. The summer was a time of magic as fireflies each evening lighted warmly and prettily across the evening sky. And what especially made her smile was the way that the tall and stately coconut trees swayed wondrously in the arms of the wind, sometimes in times of joy and at other times during fierce and vicious storms.

For Sonrisa as a child there were always tree houses to build within the arms of friendly dilly trees, tire swings to swing on and limestone rocks to run over barefoot, much to the disappointment of her mother. She was a princess in her own right, and with a toothy grin upon her face one could see that she knew it and loved it. That is until the day she met him.

Those who lived outside of Katyé Kreýol didn't have high expectations for those who came from the settlement, but Sonrisa was well on her way to proving that the best came from her home when he showed up. He was an *Anglé*, an enemy, the one who would take her heart for a ride. He should have seen her smile and her home and fought to protect its brilliance, but he didn't. He saw her smile and her home and saw a conquest, something that he had to claim.

She had been sitting in the grass with a few of the kids from the neighbourhood surrounding her, teaching

them all that she had learned of the bumblebees, butterflies, dragonflies and flowers. Then he walked in—actually drove in with a group of local politicians, one of whom had been his father. They had wanted to see what this hidden grove of homes was like.

They were shocked at the development. A quaint, yet beautiful Creole village nestled safely in the woods. The one road that led into Katyé Kreýol wound around in the shape of a heart, and the homes were situated on the left side with a grassy area in the middle. The homes were well-kept and had the amenities that were needed for the everyday and a few extra things. When Katyé Kreýol had popped up some fifty years ago they had all laughed at its shanty beginnings, but today looking at its present, they thought of how cheated they had been. If they had known that this community of Haitians could have produced this, they would have never allowed them use of what had been the worst parcel of land in New Providence. Yet what they had failed to realize was that these persons had come together to better themselves and their families. They had worked unending days and evenings to fix their homes; they had tilled the soil, planted gardens and taught their kids to do the same. They had wanted more.

“Bonjour, I am Brian Greene.” He said to her and her flock of summer “students” in the loud, slow, monotone the manner one talks to the hard of hearing or persons who are just learning English.

“Yeah, okay Mr. Greene,” she smiled up at him before continuing, “I’m Sonrisa Louis. These ladies here are Marlene, Erlande and Marianne.” She responded in perfect English, mimicking the way he had spoken to her. “What are you all doing here?” she went on to add, pointing at him and at his entourage standing afar, taking everything in with steely surreptitious glances.

“We wanted to see what was here,” he responded tersely, taking her response as a negative. He thought that she was mocking him when it was just her manner to lightly banter with everyone whom she met. To most persons who met her it was cute, different and friendly,

but he didn't view it that way.

"Well now that you have seen it, what are you going to do?" Sonrisa enquired of him smiling. She had recently come home from her second semester of her third year at college. She was studying to be a Marine Biologist with a minor in Ecology. She was also of the opinion that she knew the worth of government help better than her parents and elders was still so optimistic that she could not see the danger in it.

"Well Ms. Louis we want to find out from the residents of this community how we as the government can bring aid to them." Brian said, as he looked around at her surroundings, the children and then back at her.

"Well, umm, I think the kids could use a new slide and some extra reading material," Sonrisa began, only to be cut off by her father.

"We have all that we need," her dad interjected coming up behind her. "We can get the slide and books. We only want to be left alone." He trusted no one, especially not the Anglé, whom he had watched burn down the home that he had built-- on land that he had purchased-- numerous times. "We would like this place to remain as is, built and kept up by us."

"Well, I guess that I will have to relay to my father and his friends what you all want then." Brian sighed. He looked from Mr. Louis to Sonrisa. He noted the similarities, they were tall alike, had the same shaped face and eyes. Yet her father had a frown marring his brows and Sonrisa had a quiet smile on her face. As Brian looked at her he realized that she did not fit into his view of how Haitians looked. She was just too beautiful, clean and soft to be Creole.

Sonrisa was truly beautiful, on the inside and outside. With a honey hued caramel complexion and lovely almond shaped brown eyes set in a heart shaped face. She had soft winking dimples and an attractive average frame.

She deserves better than this, he thought to himself, not realizing that her Katyé Kreýol and her Haitian heritage were where her heart was and where it

would always be.

As he was taking her in, Sonrisa was also doing the same of him. She noted his tall frame; he towered over her at 6'3" which was truly tall for her 5'10". He had amber hued eyes that glinted dangerously as he observed her; his features were angular giving him a wolfish air, all against a warm coconut bark hued complexion.

"But if you ever do need anything, call me," he said handing them his business card. As Sonrisa and her dad took the business cards that he offered, they both just nodded their heads in assent. Mr. Louis planned on never having to use it, but Sonrisa thought that she knew the value of networking.

"Good day Mr. Greene," Sonrisa stated with a smile, shaking his outstretched hand.

"Good day," he responded smiling as he walked away.

She didn't see him again until she was at her summer job in the bank one day. From that day he was constantly in the bank making small talk with her. She began to like his quirky comments and looked forward to his visit each day. Some days he would meet her at five o' clock and drop her home. Her father did not like the development one bit, Sonrisa on the other hand, for the very first time in her life, was stubborn and refused to listen to her father's advice. He had dated and married a Bahamian, why couldn't she have one as a friend? she often thought to herself.

One day he came up to her as she was leaving for lunch and he walked with her, making small talk and even asking if he could take her for lunch. She accepted. By this time she had realized that she liked his company. Their lunch was going well until a talk show came on about the state of the country and a caller said something very prejudiced:

"Mr. Walker, I don't like Haitians! They need to all be sent back to their home. They smell bad, they always dirty, and they dumb. The only thing they good for it seems is having sex and making more of their kind."

Brian laughed at the comment, not truly stopping to

think on what the caller said and how it might have rubbed Sonrisa the wrong way.

“Why’d you laugh?” she enquired quietly with eyes that seemed to be measuring him. As he heard her question the grin left his face and his gaze turned to her, challenging her.

“It was funny,” he laughed, “and not to mention true,” he added boyishly. He felt that because she didn’t look or act Haitian. Her mother was Bahamian as well, and that meant that she wasn’t Haitian. In truth, she would be the first one to speak highly of her birthplace and that of her mother’s family. But she also had been admonished by her mother not to forget her father’s heritage or to try and hide it.

“How do you know that?” she asked firmly. “Yeah I agree that Haitians tend to have a lot of children but have you ever been on a labor ward in your last stages of labor and a nurse leaves you to your own devices?” she enquired softly. Her smile had vanished as she remembered the pain her aunt had gone through to have her last daughter.

“No, of course not, I’m a man,” Brian snarled at her.

“A rich Bahamian man at that.” She replied tersely, looking away.

“What do you mean by that?” he asked and she noted that he seemed to have become upset and defensive. It was then that her eyes were opened and she noted that he had wanted to own her-- but he had wanted her to forget her home and her heritage. He wanted to smother her optimism: she was always so bubbly, so perky, and so pleasant.

As she looked at him her mind drifted away to a moment in her past, her first day of primary school when the kids had surrounded her and pulled on her pigtailed and made fun of her name and Haitians in general. Then her mind flashed to a day in fifth grade when her teacher had made a snide remark in front of the entire class that Haitians were stupid and dumb and that Risa could not have told the truth to her classmates when she had told them that her dad spoke four languages fluently.

“Have you ever been told that Bahamians wanted to put you and your family on a boat and burn it?” she asked of him quietly and calmly.

Brian shook his head.

“No you haven’t. Yeah I am only part Haitian, but it is a part nonetheless. You’ll never know life until you can feel what others feel. You will never know life until you lose your prejudice. Good day Mr. Greene,” she stated calmly, and in such a way that when he looked in her eyes he saw that he had been weighed on scales and found wanting.

She had walked away with a heavy heart, feeling betrayed. She wanted nothing to do with Brian and was glad that her term at the bank would be over in just a few days. The days sped by with him trying to apologize, yet as she had looked into his eyes, she saw that he was still unwilling to give up his prejudices. He liked her and wanted to extricate her from one aspect of her heritage, yet to have her was to have Katyé Kreýol she told him on her final day at work.

That weekend she got a call from him begging her to relent and forgive him. She in turn told him that he would always be her friend but never anything else. It was then that he became mean and threatened to burn her precious Katyé Kreýol. She laughed and told him that her community was not what was keeping them apart, it was his heart. It was filled with hate, prejudice and ignorance. And it probably always would be that way.

Have you ever noted the way smoke seems to dance across the sky? Wispy and willowy as if tempting one to come away with it; blocking out the sun, the moon, and the stars from view. Many times taking with it hopes, dreams and wishes. This time the smoke did that, but this time the smoke had taken it all away from Sonrisa. It stole Sonrisa’s home, her magical rhythmic tin roofs, her swaying palm trees, her tree houses, tire swings, her butterflies, bumblebees, her heart, and her smile. Two days after Brian had called her she sat with her mother on a wall waiting on the fire engine to arrive, watching as her Katyé Kreýol went up in smoke.

Melissa

Patrick Deveaux

It seemed, the faster the wind combed through her hair, the more she was roused to push the limit of her car. For a second, she glanced down at the glowing dashboard of the black and silver Windom locked in turbo drive, then placed her eyes sternly back on the road as she zoomed around yet another darkly sharpened curve. Melissa Lyles let out a trill, a little intoxicated giggle to herself, clutching the wheel even tighter than before.

It was about three in the morning and she was speeding home on a long empty road from one of the biggest hen parties she'd ever attended in her life. She was certain there were about a million girls just partying in an open field of private property behind *someone's* house, *somewhere* in Freeport, but she was just too wired to recall. This type of thing was so illegal, just talking about it could get you arrested. What she couldn't understand was that they had all that booze, all that music, all that blow – it was the first time she'd ever blown – and still no one came out of the house or anything, which was half the reason she stayed so long, anyway. Why else would she take the effort of getting wasted at an all-girl block party if she didn't think someone with a shotgun would crash it at any second and that they'd all have to run from the police; fearing even spending an hour in jail or even worse risking the wrath of an over-protective Bahamian father, who didn't even know they had gone to this party in the first place.

About half way through the party, though, she actually heard that the owners of the house were on vacation. Some of the girls even broke in and robbed the place. She would have preferred getting drunk at a co-ed party, chancing a risqué night with some extremely cute, strange guy. She laughed again, tightly rounding a wide turn at close to a hundred and five miles per hour.

Oh those were her joys in life.

The car's radio clock read 3:14am, and played a

song with a horrible chorus that had a line she thought sounded like, "Kissing girls, kissing girls". Almost certain she had never heard the song before, Melissa pushed the speed button that automatically changed the stations. It sounded like a mix between punk, techno and country and the singer blended the voice talents of Cindy Lopper, Gwen Stephanie and A.J. McKlean of the Back Street Boys. Not good – at all. Worriment pinched her deep inside her stomach, not so much about the time of night, or day, she was heading home, but about having a Biology class at eight o'clock, which happened to be less than five hours away.

She hoped? Hoped when she woke up in the morning – if she ever went to sleep- she could remember that hangover remedy, Grace, had given her. Cold night sea breeze pushed against her smooth mahogany-colored face almost as hard as her foot pressed on the gas pedal. Hair slapped around in her red groggy eyes, which, besides the lack of street lighting, added to her difficulty seeing the road. Still, she sped with the same smile never once leaving her face. Pressing a little harder, she put the window down lower.

The cell phone rang in the passenger seat. Removing her fingers- nails polished black- from the steering wheel, she picked it up. *Daddy*. Her *Daddy* could care less about where she went. All he wanted was a trophy daughter he could show off at his business parties. That was her job ever since her mother left him. Why was that old fag calling her? Anyway, the faster she went home, the better. She wouldn't want him to get a heart attack or anything. Imagine what he would say, if he knew she had hit cocaine. Melissa threw down the phone and with both hands stretched in the air let out a boisterous laugh-out-loud *Woo!* Then all of a sudden, it was as if her vision was failing her. She came to a sharp left turn, which became a right, then a fork. Acting as fast as she could, on instinct, she glided at a hundred and twenty-five miles per hour around what then appeared to be a roundabout. Quickly shooting across the giveaway, she smashed into the side rail of the bridge having no

time to react.

Where did a bridge come from?

The car virtually smashed in two, right across the middle against the reinforced rails. Sounds of metal crushing, folding, and bending, screeched out into the pitch black of the night. The weight of gravity cracked her into the contours of her seat then sent her smashing through the windshield. It exploded outward on contact with her body. Shards beat onto her like droplets of acid rain, like a thousand alcohol-drenched straight pins piercing into her skin. She felt them individually, one by one, as they left their marks. Her nearly lifeless body sailed through the air. Feeling like she was flying only made her feel like she was already dead or at least made her anticipate that death was coming with there being nothing she could do about it. She still had enough life in her to see where she was heading. In the distance she could see a castle. Darkness challenged her sight, so she squinted to concentrate, drifting in and out of consciousness. The rapid falling motion lifted her dark shoulder length hair out of her face. Seeming boneless, arms and legs dangled as she continued to fall face first into the unknown black mass of night.

Water. I'm falling into water. Lake, pond, no – the canal!

A violent deafening splash flooded Melissa's ears when she plowed into the heavy murky liquid. Gradually her world turned black.

"Am I dead?" Melissa thought to herself finding it hard to open her eyes. "I should be dead. But I don't feel dead." A cold hard surface pressed against her cheek. She was almost sure she had fallen into water, though. But this surface was solid, smelt airy, like oxygen. It felt cold like a metal surface. She still couldn't open her eyes. Melissa struggled to stand, only being able to make it on all fours. Every movement she made, she heard a splash, so loud that her eardrums quaked and it was as if her mind would split in two. No amount of effort could make her stand all the way up. If she wasn't dead already, trying to stand would have surely killed her.

Silence ringed around her. Because her eyes wouldn't open, she had to rely on hearing, and so far all she heard was splashing that was apparently made when she moved, even though she was on some solid metal surface. Where was she? In the very instant of that thought, a ripple formed in the blood spots of her pasted eyelids. Just like water, it flowed out and out and out until...the black that blinded her combusted into red, bringing flaming heat, burning her lids until they opened. A short scream in pain was quickly followed by a desperate gasp from Melissa who was still kneeling on all fours, panting down at her reflection. The surface was like a mirror. She tucked her hair over to look at her face. There was not a scratch but it didn't add up. She had slammed face first through that windshield. There ought to be gashes, cuts, blood, something. Through her own eyes she looked down at her hands. They were totally clean of any wounds. Still that didn't explain where exactly she was. Finally she decided to stand up. Looking around, all that was visible was the stars in the black sky. There was nothing else. No trees, no roads, no buildings, just the mirror like surface she stood on and the endless darkness speckled with starlight.

Turning around and around all she could see was nothingness. Sticking her fingers in her hair roots at the edge of her forehead, she sighed. Then by chance she looked down and saw something that revealed where she was. A small fish was swimming below the surface under her feet. Now she knew. She was still at the canal standing on the water and somehow not sinking below the surface. Melissa was scared. Was she losing her mind? Maybe she really was dead. Walking at first then picking up speed, she began to run. Not knowing where she was going, she just ran. This canal didn't go on forever, she knew that. Eventually she'd end up somewhere.

She ran as far as she could as strands of hair got caught in her teeth. Her tired body haphazardly waddled from side to side. She ran, trying to get somewhere in the middle of nowhere, seemingly surrounded by everywhere.

Melissa tripped over her untied laces. She braced herself for the fall onto the cold solid surface of the water but instead of falling down, Melissa fell up into the sky.

Everything shifted so fast. She spun up rapidly in every direction. Left became up, and down became right. She actually fell down, and was falling upwards sideways. It was a surprise to her that she was able to even follow that. In an instant all the stars rushed by her in the opposite direction and the water followed behind her closely. Slowly the raging sea gained on her like deadly rapid rising tide. Then in one giant wave, made up of the entire body of water from the canal, she was serenely engulfed. Force from the current pushed her, pressing onto her, forcing her mouth open. Gulping water quickly, she tried to stop but she couldn't.

The water swooshed around in her lungs. Twisting and fighting made it worse. She was so deeply immersed that she lost all sense of direction. Which way was up? Which way was the surface? She just floated, treading to stay up with her mouth clamp down tight. Air was running out fast. Her vision was already becoming blurry. Pressure built up in her lungs. She jolted around frantically, fighting the feeling that her chest was going to break open any second. Kicking and murmuring; bubbles whisking around. Water sounded as movements tried to accelerate against its thick friction. Energy was being lost. Getting tired she tried to stop, but she knew if she stopped, she'd inhale. She kept moving. Her lips started cracking, forcing themselves to open. Shaking violently, she held out for just one more second before she opened wide and inhaled.

"Melissa." She heard a voice calling her. "Melissa." *I'm alive?* "Melissa. Get up!" A familiar voice called out to her.

This time, she could feel she was lying down on grass. She could even smell it. She slowly got to her feet, having to push beer cans and bottles out of her way in the process. Music boomed in the background. She could've barely seen the people dancing around her for a while, and then everything cleared up. Grace, gripped her by the

shoulders and spun her in the right direction. “Ey, you okay? You passed out.” Melissa shook her head, not being quite sure what was going on. “It’s almost three. You know you’re Daddy gonna be worried bout you. You better head home, plus you gat Bio in the morning. You gonna have one massive hangover. Here take this.” Grace shoved a piece of paper in the back pocket of Melissa’s jeans then patted on it twice. “That’s my recipe for the ultimate hangover cure. Take it in the morning and you’ll be set.” She smiled. “Now go!” shouted Grace, pushing Melissa off.

Without looking back or even saying goodbye, Melissa stumbled her way through the crowd of drunk and high teenage girls to finally make it to her car that was parked next to a tree.

“Get the hell out!” she yelled in a slur, getting in and starting up the car even before the couple that was making out in the back seat jumped out. She shifted the car hard into turbo drive and sped off. It only took a few seconds for her to get from the dirt track that led to the party grounds, onto the main road. This gave her the ability to go even faster now. She pushed the button on the door handle that brought the window down. For some weird reason, she was feeling kind of freaked out but she couldn’t remember why. But she was sure, once she got home and got into bed, she wouldn’t have to worry about anything. Her foot shifted to cover the entire gas pedal. It seemed, the faster the wind combed through her hair, the more she was roused to push the limit of how fast her car could go...

A Conversation With . . .

Sharano Walkine

Loneliness isn't feeling
A state of being
It's...it's a disease
A crippling entity
Designed to kill good people slowly
A byproduct of sapient idiocy

Society's at fault
For making you aware of this (You think)
Making you think you need someone
Someone else
Someone you didn't arrive with
And someone you can't leave with

It's rotund and corpulent
Feasting off of and preying on jaded people
Dying and living
Simply to be...with another
Willing to sacrifice personal solidarity
And sanity for another

My flesh is not willing
And my spirit is not strong
It eats away at me
Against my wishes
Leaving a huge void
I think I have to fill

I have to fill it with things
Things, like sex, alcohol, poetry
And especially the sad songs
Pathetic and trite accounts
Of people willing to move planetary bodies
For the reciprocation of a "feeling" from another bag of
flesh
Just like them

Why can't it leave me alone?
I should be able to fall out of love
With the idea of falling in to a red sticky mess
Where you get stuck at the ring fingers
Then the lips
Then at the crotch
Or is it the other or another way around?

The human body is too full of things
Things I don't like to be full of
Does that make me inhuman?
To not want to love
Or rather be afraid to?

Its influence is so profound
I had to write a poem on it
I want my mind all the time
Not 45-60 percent of it
I can't accomplish this with loneliness
As my bitter adversary

I wish I could tickle its huge belly
And fondle its large breasts
With my soft hands
So it could die of pleasure
Something its seems determined
At not wanting me to do

I can't speak
I won't listen to reason
Other emotions too
I've not forgotten
Commit cruel and constant acts
Of treason

How can I remain in one piece
If everything within is in sharp pieces
Threatening to rip at my outsides
My free will is in a state of arrested development

Eternal return, wherein it continues to die
It's fair, fragile body crushed by the l-word

Build me a grave
So that I can bury the hapless victims
And that which offends me
Beneath a tree
Where hopefully something will grow
Throw me into a place I 'care' to be

RELATIONSHIPS



Alfred Williams
"In and Out"

We Belong Together

Taeva Romain

Even through long distance, I still feel ya presence
I still know u closely, present is ya essence
Een no 2nd guessin', I'm grateful for dis blessin'

Just wake me up inside u'd tink dat we was evanescence

Taught me so many lessons, unique, a different language
If ever I was stressin, 2 u I'd express my anguish
All my thoughts and feelings, 1000 words u'd listen
Paint the pictures hold u tight u'd always see my visions

Middle of the night I'd wake up, text u a word or 2
Emotional expressions that I was obligated to
Share with u the laughs, be real about the pains
U knew about my losses, u knew about the gains

I was hidin' u, only my boys knew u existed
They had sum 1 like u 2, sum 1 to give well wishes
Listenin kept me focused on elevatin and raisin bars
Saw more internally didn't worry bout the brazen scars

She is so precious to me, my life took a different path
Invaluable truly is she, I couldn't ever do the math
I'm talking bout my pen and pad my thoughts and my visions
My writtens spittins recordins and musical decisions

Nights on the computer typin lyrics gettin ruder
Getting' sicker getting smoother gettin' str8 to the core
Getting raw 16 bars preparation for getting on
I ta da IB we was spawned hugged her with open arms
So precious is my vision, so precious are my thoughts
So precious is my team, no joke this is not a sport
Mission: better living, operation: get da green
We belong together so crucial is my regime

Mudda Sick Dread

Regina Brennen

I speak the way I should
I speak de way I spokin to
but yet...
is a problem
My tongue
My own tongue
My Bahamian tongue
My baby tongue
is not our own

*The Rain in Spain De rain in Spain
Thee Rain in Spain stay mainly in dee plain
de plain de plain...*

My tongue my tongue
my mudda tongue
my tongue is not my own...

*Harry wears a hat on his head
arry wears a at on is ed
Barry Larry Harry marry
arry did wear a at on is ed*

"The Language of the nation is English.
You must be proud of the language that you speak."
Enunciate
Articulate
Project it across the aqua sea.
*He is She is It is They are
Twinkle twinkle little star
They went She went
He goes I go
You are I be
I He They We
He dances I dance*

Language en-
tranced
trenched
trunched?

Oh mytongue mytongue my muddatongue mytongue is
not myown

I try I teach
I need to reach
myself my kids our souls
I proudly cry our Mother tongue in a
tongue that's not my
own.

Please read

Please write
articulate

No, not "It done shine", chile; "It has already shone."

mytongue mytongue my
mudda tongue
My tongue is not my own

I loss; I cry
I don' know why
dis knowledge I was
shown
I taught I did know muh
mudda tongue bu' her
tongue
ain' muh own

I learn

I tink

An' now wan' share
bu' I kyan'

say de people of ole

I speak - dey cringe

My min' - unhinge

"Den why dey tell me I does speak Creole?"

So...

I talks I teach
I conversates
and converse
in the rich language
of the tongues of old
and flap my tongue
my new cleft tongue
and bray in the manner
in which I've been told

I does speak a tongue
a mudda tongue
I tinks
it is
muh own...

Limerick: Romantic Levity

K. Mortimer

To you I offer a kiss
A kiss of heavenly bliss
Tis my one desire
Before I expire
Instead you gave me your fist

It's been over [A response]

Chevette Black

It's over; you're telling me it's over?
Baby boy it has been over,
Ever since that nite you failed to come home sober.
My house must be a sports bar,
Because you call "ya boys" from far and near,
Eating pretzels and drinking beer,
Then wan get on my case
When I try to stare...it has been over!
Ha, say "Over." Roses, when did I ever get any?
Those fake "fosse" I got ain't even cost a penny,
And you say it's the thought that counts,
You use to say, go outside in the garden
And I could get any amount.
And it's true I got every loving piece, because
Your father and mother never loved you
And you ain't gat no niece!
So honey, I hope you have a nice life cause
Since you came into mine,
you ain't bring nuttin but strife!

Cousin

Patrick Deveaux

Let us be honest; let us be straightforward,
No fancy lines of fourteen in a sonnet.
Let us be true; romantic poetry is for cowards
And the beautiful lines lay victims of forget.
No imagery, you're beautiful, of this I am sure,
No rhyming is needed, you play out like a song.
Aesthetics are wasted; it is obvious she is pure.
Riddling can puzzle you for a whole day long,
I'll remain true, telling things just like so.
I want you not to be confused by words,
Wondering how you will choose this to go.
Your mind will flutter at attempts as it ungirds,
So, simply in an attempt by I to woo,
I'll misuse no diction and simply say, "I like you."

The lies I have told

Daniel

The lies I have told, hunt me,
For the fear of someone else telling them
So I stay patiently waiting to hear yours, that I have
conceded to be lies.
These sweet haunting dreams, I can't escape.
The world I have created has closed
Am afraid it's engulfing you.
The lies I have told, hunt me.

Novels I have told,
Desperate situations brought about desperation
The facts never seem clear,
So I analyze your every word
Placing false injustice in its place,
My wrongs, you right, but I am inspired by wrong
It has motivated me
My yearning soul, my searing flesh,
Have blessed me with wrong,
Cursed me with the lies I have told

Watching the days, I haven't heard
Your whispers of innocence fall prey
Day by day, trying to escape,
Raped you of your purity,
Blamed you, accused you,
The lies I have told won't die,
But we will for all I hear is lies

PASSION AND PAIN

Face-out

V. McKenzie

I have no identity
Have no face
Was born into a world
That was not my place

Fooled into believing
That progressive time would change
Memories of darkness
Eternities of pain

Haitian or Bahamian
As I tried to blend
Torn between two worlds
Not knowing on which to depend

Born here, born there
Are we even home to anywhere?
Different shades, different colors
One world we must share.

And in my world
Which no one will accept
I try to keep control, taking life with each step

Some say I'm free
But I'm a free slave, to be trapped
In a cape of no escape
I'm not a man, but a rat

Pitch black
The view outside my window
Hoping for a beacon light
Awaiting a signal

Keep searching
Maybe soon I'll find
A place to be free
A world called mine

I Bin Dere...

Regina Brennen

Ya'll don' know. It's easy to judge her cause ya'll don' know. You ain' neve' been dere. But I know so I'll tell ya. And fo' those a you who don't get it, well....

I know what it like. I been dere. I know. I know what it like to have half a low fat blueberry bagel, an apple and a scoop a vanilla ice cream for breakfast. I know what it like fillin' up on water. I know what it like gettin' ya tea at the bank. I know what it's like to think of places to go so you can be ok – art exhibits, church functions – only you know you there for more then the culture and fellowship. You go to every party you're invited to, not cause you want to but because you must. If you're discreet you can take care of tomorrow. If you are clever you can cover the following following day.

I know what it like watchin' your ex drive by in his AC vehicle with his new girlfriend off to his central air house with the personal gym and the pedigree dogs while you smile and trudge on in the sweltering heat. I know what it's like to get up early so you can walk part of the way so you only have to catch one bus. It's tougher in the summer so you carry your Super Saver makeup in your Avon pouch and a piece a stolen soap and a Price Buster washcloth in a washed generic baggie so you can freshen' up in the bathroom when you reach. I know what it's like to try and save up ya money for a kaprang but never able to quite get enough cause tings so tight an erry cent you save gets spent on one ting or another.

I know what it's like to have to give up Kraft for Shur Fine; to start buying Puffed Rice and Honey O's. I know what it's like to walk past the Salvation Army and have only your pride stop you from going in to look at that nice dress in the corner; to get up early and scout patio sales – not because you want to – because you have to to get

halfway descent things; to know 95% of your wardrobe is hand me downs from loving friends, patio sales and "borrowed" items from family's closets; to know your very existence is based on the mercy and charity of others.

I know what it is like to hate the government for demanding that all children must have a preschool education and having the intelligence and foresight to only have a few preschool units and those units are only attached to certain government schools. I know what it's like to hang up the phone frustrated because you missed the MOE deadline and you can't afford to have your child miss a year of school because her daddy so damn cheap an selfish cause his folks ain' raise him right an he won' give you a dime toward the fees of the Catholic school that you busted your ass to get your child into and how you so wish that the seat fee for the first school you had them test for wasn't nonrefundable and the Lord knows you could use that money right now.

I know what it's like to call and visit people all day and feel your shoulders slump just a little more with every "No", "I'm sorry", "I don't know", "Call back... when?...Oh I can't say", "Where have you been?" With every, "I'm so sorry, that position has been filled" you feel the tears flow because you know they don't give a damn and they really aren't at all sorry and the frustration mounts and even though you know God is there you're upset cause you can't feel Him.

Then you start to hate your humanity: Did I have to go see that movie? I know haven't been in a while and I needed a break but... I know it was hot but did I really need that \$1 daiquiri? Perhaps I don't need to relax my hair; it's not too bad I can last another month. Maxi pads really are a luxury; they used rags back in the day... I don't really need perfume, do I? I know I need to repair this shoe heel but it'll cost \$13 to fix it and money to drop it off and pick it up both ways...

And then you look around at all the people you see and you tell yourself "Look at them, so happy, so free. They have no idea what I'm going through and even if they did they wouldn't care." You see them in their

BMW's, chatting about dog shows and stressing over whether they should have finger sandwiches or mini quiches for their next soirée. You overhear them complain about the new teacher at St. Andrews that only has a Bachelour degree and how it might be best to send their heartstring to that darling little boarding school their sister-in-law found in Canada. They have no idea what it's like. They were born in money, married money. They have had it good their whole life. And even though you know you shouldn't be comparing yourself to others you can't help but do so cause they all seem to be doing so much better. Sure W&S charges them more for that imported greenery but who gives a rat's tail when you really think about. Damn, it ain' like they can't afford the higher bill.

That's when you think of that old girlfriend that used to do it. You think of how she used to make two or three hundred dollars a night plus tips for an hour or two. So you dig though your phone book. You call her. And she tells you that the money is good; really good. If you get a gig with foreigners they usually tip really big, like 20, 50 and 100 dollars. And then you start to think about it; really think about it. And then you start calculating how many gigs it would take to pay those bills and get a little something for yourself. And then you turn and see your little one curled up in that \$6 patio sale nightie (that you talked the lady into giving it to you for \$4) on that third-hand mattress you got from a cousin who was movin' into her new place out Corral Harbour and felt a new move required new furniture and besides she know tings "lil tightish" wit you. So you stare at your baby. And then you stare up at the ceiling while the tears slip down your face; then you turn an' look at the phone...

H2O

Prue Nixon

The waterman comes around the corner,
when I try to hail him down he speeds ...
he don't want to give me water.

I am in the desert, my throat is thirsty and dry,
I cry, because again I see the waterman
passing me by.

I am in the jungle climbing a tree, beep beep,
toot toot, who can that be? I jump on the truck but
get hit by the tree's limb, I'm guessing the tree was
planted by him. I'm getting tired of the crap from the
waterman,
so I shoot him and steal the water from his van.

Fight for you Life

Nicollette Burrows

How do you expect progress
If your faith is smaller
Than the dreams of your brother?
How can you hope for change
If your life reflects not that of a fighter
But of something other?
The combination of vision and perspective
Equals the power to change the world;
Equals power to affect power.
Formulate a plan that can shift the 'throne of grace'
From 'them' to you,
To you.

Create an image of greatness
And make them take notice
Make them listen
Through your eyes that glisten
Create conflict that forces change;
Create conflict that seems strange
...To them at least;
To those who stubbornly and firmly stand
On their narrow-minded beliefs
Expose the truth and erase blindness
Exhibit what's really being masked:
Swollen bellies of little ones
War-torn nations under one sun.

They say reach for the stars,
But that would take too long.
Instead, reach for what's in front of you:
Your life.
You're in the race against not only time
But against the chime that sounds in your heart
When it's too late.
So step forth, youth
Fight for your life
Fight for what's right.

Pantoum

Kenneth Mortimer

Across the empty land,
Unmoving I sit and wait
Til the day turns stone to sand
And a figure comes through the gate

Unmoving I sit and wait
No more than a statued man,
And a figure comes through the gate,
The bronze goddess Alritan.

No more than a statued man
Awaiting the curse-lifting kiss.
The bronze goddess Alritan
Whose name means silent bliss

Awaiting the curse-lifting kiss
Turn statue into living man
Whose name means silent bliss
Sweet death, the goddess Alritan

Turn statue into living man
To live out life on cursed earth
Sweet death, the goddess Alritan
Let me travel this empty hearth

To live out life on cursed earth
'til the day turns stone to sand
Let me travel this empty hearth,
Across the empty land.

Chronicles of a Mother's dream

V. McKenzie

They think that they know it all
Believe that they got it all figured out
Fooled and filled with intuitive knowledge
But lack the experience of what life's about

Believe that they have arrived
That they're the masters of the game
Yet I'm trying to teach them how to survive
In a world that doesn't guarantee them a claim

Once I had a dream
Freedom ring
Sounds of the morning scene
Like lighting in the darkness

Rude awakening in shallow depths
Attempting to salvage broken wine bottles
Shattered glasses
Unfixable pieces

Satisfaction to our blood
Replenished precious metal
Renewed bits
Merged segments

Light restoration
Shadows death
Sun's birth
New light from old

Once I had a dream
Now a dream deferred
Melted into the sunset
Onto consumed canvas
Tortured by the fact

Morning scene cancelled itself
Never forbidding the sweets
So pleasurable
Fear of harm been preached
Yet no ear turned

Appetite for judgment stands aloof
Morning performers will taste
No gentle maid; suffering prepared.
Once I had a dream

I had a dream once
Light prospect for the cast
Unwrapping gifts
A dream of hope
Once I had a dream
Now a dream deferred

ALUMNUS

And So What If ...

Camille Smith

And so what if I cry too much?
You may see it as a weakness,
But I see it as my strength,
I rely on my freedom to shed my fears.

And so what if I laugh too loudly?
You may see it as a squawk,
But I treasure it as a human right,
I enjoy being enthusiastic when amused.

And so what if I annoy you with my boldness?
You may see it as brashness,
But I relish a zesty challenge,
I take pride in being confident.

And so what if I ask too many questions?
You may see it as nosiness,
But I gain knowledge by being inquisitive,
I hate to be encumbered by ignorance.

And so what if I am too provocative?
You may see it as a nuisance,
But I view it as engaging the world,
I strive to make myself and others speak openly.

And so what if I inflame you with my passion?
You may see it as dangerous,
But I thrive on stirring emotions,
I believe that we should all live more vividly.

And so what if you don't like this poem?
You may see it as nonsense,
But I declare it as my emancipation,
This is my attitude of health and wholeness.

The Door

Camille Smith

No being able to figure it out,
Nor being able to get through,
I developed my own door of sorts,
And shut it closed tight too,
So we both sit with our doors closed,
No one peeping through.

Can You Tell?

Camille Smith

Can you tell that I've been hurt, that I am badly bruised?
Can you tell that's why I run, that's why there's a cloak I
choose,
This cloak has replaced the old worn sweater, which used
to serve me well,
But now this pain I feel anew, needs stronger threads to
bear the swell.

Can you tell, can you tell the wonder's all but gone?
For familiar doubt has come again and now I am forlorn,
Can you tell, can you see me cower behind this wall?
And if you stay here long enough, you'll see me hiding
small.

Can you tell, oh can't you see the net I've thrown,
Far and wide across my heart to catch all lost and worn,
Can't you tell, don't you know, its fear you sense in me,
This fear is big and strong, oh much stronger even than
thee.

Can you tell, please oh, please take a look,
Read deep within this weathered story book,
For passion and pain and guts and gore,
Were all tightly concealed by that bright smile I bore.

Can you tell, oh indeed how can you ever be sure?
Of who I really am behind this bright shiny lure,
Can you see, or rather can you comfortably trust,
That all I am to you won't simply turn to dust?

Turmoil

Camille Smith

Turning wheels, spinning, avoiding, hiding,
Don't think about it, don't mull over it,
Don't even let it cross your mind.

Must keep busy, working, toiling, searching,
Must make this goal, must win that prize,
Must be 'more' than you can be.

Read this, sow that, suck this up, blow this out,
Do anything but face yourself,
Look anywhere but inside.

