

Just What I
Think
Right Now

Poems by Jakeel Harris

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As I reflect on where I am at in life, a lot of thoughts rush through my head. Some of these thoughts are hypocritical to some of my beliefs, some are products of my healing. At the end of the day, it's just what I think right now.

No table of contents necessary. Just the unraveling of
my thoughts.

the old me
used to be
afraid of change
and terrified of routine.

my fear was in hypocritical unison.
keeping me insecure about
how I'm supposed to move forward.

from "Unison"

you can make a compelling argument that Pablo
Picasso was one the greatest artists to have had ever
lived.

I wouldn't disagree if you said Van Gogh, Monet,
Frida Kahlo, or Da Vinci either.

but one of the most celebrated modern oppressionists
today,
hands down
or up
have to be the police.

those boys in blue paint the town red
graffitiing Black bodies on city property.
leaving behind blood-stained street signatures.
their artistic chalk outlines gain so much attention
they become popular hashtags.
their artwork can be seen everywhere.
on t-shirts, buildings, political platforms.
in classrooms, textbooks, magazines.
they've been caught on camera multiple times
displaying their craft and people are still in shock.
can't believe what they are witnessing.
an unreal disaster portrayed as a masterpiece.
every death-stroke calculated and methodical.
if you ever want to see these artists live
with your own eyes, know there is a museum of
hatred located in every precinct.
where all the best oppressionists are honored daily.

from "Artists"

wind is proof
that there is someone
talking to us daily.
someone using the Earth to whisper.
softly reminding us
she is alive.

from "Proof"

unwilling and incapable
are concepts of destruction.
used to represent behaviors of effort
but often misidentified for one another
when progress is halted.

one involves a reluctance
out of fear, pride, or stubbornness
while the other is about limitations.
limitations that can be created from boundaries.
boundaries established from trauma.
trauma from experiences that should've never
happened.

when using these words loosely,
hell, even when using these words specifically to
describe an interaction, relationship, or family
dynamic,
be careful.
the slight mischaracterization of someone's effort will
have unforeseen consequences out of your control.

from "Unforeseen"

I watched
the sunset today.
stared intensely,
as the sun
disappeared under the horizon,
leaving a splash of faded beauty marks
in the sky.
and I was quickly reminded
of how you left.
suddenly.
instantly.
without notice.
becoming a speechless spectacle
splattered in memories.
while I,
still looking into the unknown,
search for an explanation for the stains
that remain ever so visible.

from "Reminders"

do you know
how good
pregnant with my baby
would look on you

it would accentuate
the forever life
I'll be spending with you

from "Flirting with Wifey"

don't take this the wrong way,
but ever since the day you decided
to become an escaping memory
and give up on loving me
I've been searching for the reason why
in the moans of countless one-night stands.

I know they could never give me closure.
but it hasn't stopped me from trying.
maybe I'm just afraid to admit that I miss you.
I can't pretend that I know how to cope with being
alone.

I hope you've been satisfied with your departure.
I hope you haven't been looking
for someone to temporarily fill the void.
I hope you've been better than I have.

from "Voids"

the active pursuit for information
of instances of Black discrimination
against any population
is nothing more than
people trying to justify
reasons not to support Black movements.

as if
there aren't misguided individuals
breathing hatred in every demographic.
show me Black disposition
against your culture being reinforced
on a systemic level.
show me the mass amounts of history
telling Black children
it's okay to treat marginalized folk like cattle.
recite the language we have created
to actively describe and dehumanize
a population we view as lesser.
I'll wait.

because embedded in our culture is pride.
love.
and rhythmic joy.
the hate you see is the response to
the socialized condition of being American.
don't equate that
to the engrained resentment
your culture forces itself to hold
after it has been instructed to do so
by white colonizers.

from "The Thing Is"

we have made homes
out of things
that make us
uncomfortable

we sleep
knowing our regrets
are two doors down
and one minute away
from disturbing our peace

we must be willing to relocate
our focus
and move on to something
a little more cozy

from "Cozy"

it is enough
just to see you smile
even if
someone else
is now the reason for it

from "When you truly love someone"

in my family,
having a master's degree
is as rare as scheduled home visits.

the day I found out I got accepted into grad-school,
words similar to "holy shit" replayed in my mind
reminding me of my doubts.
like this wasn't supposed to happen.
I only applied because it was suggested
by educators who believed I was wasting my
potential.
and others who were probably just tired of seeing me
on campus.
on that day
I became responsible for deciding if I was going to be
attending college again.
because the previous 5 years of it wasn't enough.
and I don't do school.
at all.

sure, I was a precocious child placed in gifted classes.
borderline genius teenager pretending to be dull-
witted to stay-away from attention
while deep down inside fascinated by new knowledge
and random facts.
but committing to busy work,
classroom assignments
and non-relatable subjects never interested me.
not to mention the number of ego-driven faculty
trying to oppose authority
in courses they get paid for
whether I'm there or not.

when I told close circles, co-workers and bosses
that I was thinking about not going
I'm sure they saw the imposter's syndrome floating
around somewhere in my pupils.
if they could've seen the tug-o-war decisions my
thoughts were having with my ancestors
they'd understand I was not in any condition to
decide to willing jump into an environment where I
will be tokenized.
where I will be questioned.
where some ego driven faculty will ask me how I got
here.
but I did.
and I graduated.
learning nothing more than labels for theories that life
lessons already taught me.

from "Graduate"

ignoring someone
that you should be letting go of
doesn't stop them from hurting you.

until you completely cut them off,
denying them access,
they'll still be able to impact you in unpredictable
ways.

no matter how good you think you are
at avoiding the problems
they are the source of,
they'll still be able to get to you.

from "Cut It"

acceptance from the wrong people is deceptive.
sometimes it will overshadow
the ways in which you are still being excluded.
or use it as a test run
to see where it can place limits on you.

from "Barriers"

I used to do the most for a chance to see you.
I desperately wanted you to notice me.
had always hoped your smile would visit my eyes
more often.

from "Chances"

I was having a conversation
with a woman I believed
was out of my league
when laughter
overtook her senses
and instinctively caused the soft supple gifts
extending from her hands
to graze my shoulders.

I couldn't process that action fast enough.
brain was still deciding whether or not
a bit of coquetry was involved.
turns out it wasn't.
it was harmless.
genuine.

an intention-less show of connection.

from "No Flirting"

I'm tired of the theatrics.
circus tricks to entertain you.
bending over backwards to be flexible to meet your
standards.

am I just your acrobat?

someone to flip for your amusement.
committing to spectacular gymnastic feats
to be your entertainment for a little while longer.
I'm tired of performing.
I'm tired of acting.
I'm tired of pretending.

I refuse to continue to put on a show for your love.

from "Drama"

beauty does exist
as an earthbound perspective
adornment is found

from "Haiku about Beauty"

what is going with the flow?
it means to be agile.
to be fluid.
driven.
motivated to find out intentions
but unrestricted.
it is
the constant moving forward
and progression towards potential.
it is being okay with displaying vulnerability
and communicating with purpose.
it is a history of being so broken-hearted
you can't trust your hopes.
it is never getting them high enough to be
disappointed.
it is a movable boundary.
a slow-paced kind of sequence.
for some
it is the process of finding home.

from "Flow"

to put it frankly
I wish I could hate you
with every fiber in my bones.
I wish hearing your laugh
would spark a disgust so unpleasant
I'd develop an aversion to your voice.
I wish an onset of amnesia
would plan a vacation in my mind
so I could forget about your smile.
I wish I could forget about you.
but I can't.

from "Can't"

I should hate you for breaking my heart
but love doesn't allow me to.
love has me wishing the best for you
when I'd rather see you in just as much
pain as you put me through.

from "Spiteful"

people really be out here
attractive as hell.
kind-hearted to no fault.
intelligent with life goals
made up of making the people
around them feel valid.
but rarely give themselves
credit for it.

people really be out here
concerned about changing
the world for the better.

it's me.
I'm people.

from "Confidently Lost"

some days
we wake up to a struggling world.
in plain sight lies
unforgiving predicaments.
hidden in the crevices of our lives
we will find grief.
we will see doubt.
we will hear fear whisper poorly
and tell lies about what we are capable of.
sometimes we'll be convinced to believe them.
to be honest
on several occasions
it won't take much effort to persuade us into agreeing
with their viewpoint.
after all,
life has tried to discard some of us.
has placed tragedies on our families.
taking away hope in the form of people.
people we never thought we could live without.
hoping we never recover.
that we decide to live within our burdens.
want us to commit to giving up.
but life is afraid of our resilience.
jealous of how we can dedicate ourselves
to success while existing in our pain.
life doesn't understand
that our achievement isn't a solitary mission.
that we carry the memories of our loved ones with us.
they live vicariously through us
even when their soul departs.
that we still see their smile.
it carries us through each day.
we still hear their laughter.

it acts as encouragement
to help us continue to push through.
we still find purpose in our journey.
we know they are still watching.
and we will make them proud.
despite what life throws at us.
we will catch it
and make meaning out of the moment.
so on those days
where the world is still struggling
we remember who and what we're living for.
and persist through it.

from "Resist"

stop saying justified killing.
it was a Black girl who was shot.
a Black girl who was murdered.
a Black girl in need of help.
a Black girl with a whole life yet to live.
I don't care if she had a knife, katana,
lightsaber or 15 other weapons.
I'm fully aware
that she was engaged in a physical altercation
that could've very well ended in harm.
she should still be breathing.

people say she could've stabbed someone.
that cops had no choice but to fire excessively.
that it was the best-case scenario for the
circumstance.
that it would have been difficult to lessen violence
without that precious girl's life being taken from her.

I beg to differ.

from "No Reason to Kill"

I have seen ax-wielding white men
attacking police
get taken into custody free of bullet holes.
I have witnessed gun-toting confederates pointing
assault rifles in an officer's direction without any
being drawn on them in defense.
I have watched naked men on drugs trying to carve
their initials on law enforcement faces with
switchblades
get out of jail with a 1000-dollar bail fee.
I have been in the car with roommates of the whiter
variety threatening to fight authorities,
non-compliantly pushing and shoving a cop.
and nothing happened to them.
no ticket.
no pepper spray.
no fear.
I have heard about mass murders rotting in prison
instead of in the ground.
so don't tell me that it's impossible
to intervene potentially harmful situations without
causing death.
seems like the only time it poses a challenge is when
Black lives are at stake.

from "Tell Me Why"

anyone defending
the death of a Black teenage girl
by saying she had a weapon
is stating *troubled* kids don't deserve to live.
that they are okay with the casual murder of Black
women as long as it isn't someone they knew.

and if it is
I'm still unsure if they'd care enough
to say her name in memory.
or believe her innocence
when the unspecified details of her demise
splatter the news.
when they see the body cam footage from every angle
will they deny the fact that it doesn't matter whether
that Black girl was guilty or in the wrong
her untimely end should not have been
decided in that moment.

from "Speechless"

they say
this is a sign for the tides to shift in equality's favor.
that we are about to get Oprah styled
criminal charges on all officers
abusing their power.
which means
a lot of unkept promises
followed by the funding
of programs that do nothing to help the people truly
suffering.

they say they are going to get rid of bad cops.
as if the removal of police officers
without the removal of racist policing systems
guarantees anything.
but it does call for a replacement.
someone that upholds the same problems
with a different badge number.

from "Different Badge, Same Problems"

they want me to be happy
that an officer was finally convicted.
that this has been the ruling
our great grandparents fought and died for.
justice.
freedom.
accountability.
but I'm not jumping for joy.
I'm not happy that our justice system
finally got one right.
almost a year later.
it is still responsible for the millions of Black lives in
graves.
it still holds an unreasonable number of Black men
hostage.
still doesn't care about our women.
or our children.
I'm not going to reward them with my satisfaction.
they just need to stop killing Black people.
and then MAYBE they won't have my resentment.

from "Convicted"

if your first, second, or any response
to the murder of a Black child
or person
is coming up with ways to rationalize
their death
then it's safe to say that you
like our criminal justice system
aren't about protecting Black people

from "Liars"

de-escalation that ends in murder
instead of detainment
disguises eager violence
as protection

from "False Heroes"

my poems are my safe space.
the only place
I don't feel judged for being sensitive.
and of course,
they are criticized heavily
but they don't blame me
for being consistently imperfect.

I make honest mistakes regularly
because I'm human
but internalize the bad.
so it's difficult to not beat myself up sometimes.
I distance myself from people
since my narcissistic qualities tend to come out more
than I want them to.
I think I'm protecting people this way.

when I don't feel comfortable
in my own experience,
I'm quick to put pen to pad.
flushing out poems until I gain clarity.
or validation.

I've written 614 poems in the last 2 years.
I don't know if that means
I'm healing or panicking.
but it's definitely helping.

from "Safe Places"

I want to make you feel comfortable.
bomb playlist on a Sunday morning comfortable.
75 degrees with a cool breeze comfortable.
soft rain hitting the window comfortable.
binge-watching 15 seasons of criminal minds in bed
comfortable.
memory foam comfortable.
oversized t-shirt comfortable.
ripped underwear you should've thrown out years ago
comfortable.
birthday suit comfortable.
pooping with the door open comfortable.
no doubts comfortable.
getting reassurance comfortable.
honoring loyalty comfortable.
the I only want you comfortable.
the I prove it to you every day comfortable.

I guess what I'm saying is
I want my love to feel comfortable enough
for you to call home.

from "Comfortable"

the sentimentality
of somebody
simply providing genuine gestures
of unashamed kindness
is remarkably refreshing.

because these days we've forgotten
that one of the greatest joys of existing
is being able to feel.
internally and externally.
our emotions are an expressive gift
that too many people are afraid to open.

from "Sentimental"

don't mistake
the distance of our closeness
for the amount of care I have for you.

I will always care.
even if we've been too far
for you to notice.

form "Distance"

whoever is listening,
understand that remorseful actions against you
don't have to be forgiven.
you don't have to accept their apology.
you don't have to get over it because their plea for
forgiveness was sincere.

if someone crossed an unmendable boundary,
don't force yourself to brainstorm
a compromise to ease their guilt.
I'm not saying hold a grudge
but do whatever you need to do
so that patterns don't form
where you become okay with being the doormat
for people's mistakes to walk on.

whether they are honest
or deliberately manipulative,
don't let them find comfort in triggering you.

from "Pardon"

you are the poem
I've tried to write a thousand times
but never seem to gain any
progress on.

I'm always stuck
trying to find the right words to say.

from "Embody"

in your modesty
don't forget
that you are accomplishing
so many things
worthy of being proud of

from "Modest"

come to me whole.
flaws and imperfections intact.
no facades.
no hidden personalities.
no concealed intentions.
just everything that makes up you.

I want to embrace you.
the whole you.
and nothing but you
as long as it's genuinely you.

I can adjust to everything else
along the way.

from "Embrace"

I will not ask you
to come to me healed.
but will need you
to be aware of your wounds.
how they impact your behavior.
I need you to be aware of how they got there.
were they self-inflicted decisions
leaving you afraid and in pain.
or were they trauma-producing experiences caused by
the hands of someone else.

and if they're still open,
I will want to know
if you are choosing to bleed out
instead of addressing them.

from "Come to me"

pictures are sometimes
the only evidence
I need to believe I matter.

they remind me that
there is a saved moment
somewhere telling a story
about my existence.

that there is someone
who once cared enough about me
to take time out of their day
to acknowledge my presence with a snapshot.

from "Snapshot"

Nubian skin
routinely slow dances
with the sun

sharing glistening stares
while greeting the world
with radiance

from "Nubian"

immediately after the termination of a relationship,
that we believed was supposed to last forever,
we command our brains to discard any concept of
genuine love we believe in.
to protect ourselves.
we convince ourselves
that our emotions have betrayed the person
processing them.
beginning a lifelong struggle with establishing trust in
romance.
and I think that's really sad.

I hate that one person could destroy a lifetime of
hopes, wishes and desires.
I hate that one unsuccessful relationship can redefine
love in such terrible ways.
I hold so much animosity
toward the responses we are taught as people coping
with heartache.
like we aren't allowed to be eager to love anymore.
we are expected to be hesitant
but also certain about how much time we need to
wait for the perfect moment
to get back out there and love again.
love does not have to be so restrictive.

it's sad that we can't just trust love
and be patient with ourselves.

from "Sad Facts"

once upon
a short time ago

in a land
not as distant
as the fairytales
make it seem

a Black boy
wished for happiness

heard that his joy is beautiful
heard it is holy
heard it is an untouchable magic
that can redefine purpose
heard it is magnetic
heard it holds families together
heard it is impossible to destroy
once he finds it

from "Honest Fairytales"

I lie awake
at the wee hours of the day
thinking about all the things
I could've said to keep you here.
regretting the things I did to push you away.

and daydreaming of a future
where you're back next to me.

from "...And the cycle continues"

if memory serves me correctly,
I'm still not over you.
this fact is usually the thing
broadcasting this habitual restlessness
over my sleeping routine.
I wish I didn't remember so vividly.
that you're gone.

you didn't disappear.
you didn't move on to someone better.
you just left.
out of reach and
far away from me.

from "Far away"

I've been thinking a lot lately.
those thoughts have translated
into journaled therapy sessions.
those writings turned into poems.
poems that illustrate my current frustrations.
frustrations derived from having arguments with
misguided people who think the truth of my
experiences are up for debate.

and I typically don't engage in dead-end conversations
because I know that those
who align themselves with willful ignorance
are just looking for something to oppose,
no need for reason.
or truth.

these people associate themselves with silence for
convenience instead of when it's necessary.
trying to negotiate the aspects of my life
they are willing to accept without losing their
advantages.

but something about trying to convince someone
that the wrong they've endured
never happened
doesn't sit with me right.

asking someone to prove their trauma is real
and countering it with doubt,
or a falsified possibility of reality,
forces them to believe they are crazy.
that it is all in their heads.
that they are an isolated occurrence
not even on the world's radar.

they aren't crazy.
and they aren't alone.

people will continue to change
your narrative to fit their comfort levels.
that's their idea of being open-minded.

from "Open Minds"

I fear
that the better life
I've been promised
doesn't have you in it.

but I'm willing to cheat destiny
to guarantee your place
in my future.

from "Defying Fear"

a belief in someone's
word and capability
is a genuine display of trust.
it's a special kind of love.

from 'Belief'

more and more
Black men are murdered
unequivocally unprovoked
by law enforcers
whose justification is always
misinterpreted fear.

it's always one good cop making honest mistakes.
one absentminded mishap
that caused a barrage of bullets.
they have multiple tools for restraint,
expensive equipment for self-defense,
a whole squadron of support
and still choose to use the weapon
that has the highest body count.
leaving Black men dead on the streets
for hours.

it hits the news
and all of you so-called activists
are eager to profit off of Black death.
so-called allies enthusiastic to share Black pain
on your social media accounts.
I never see any posts about Black children
making a name for themselves.
no IG stories celebrating Black achievement.
the only time you want Black anything
on your page is to showcase your awareness.
show you know really what's happening in the world.
how unjust it is that Black bodies
are falling to the ground like grieving mothers burying
their sons.

you may be trying to help spread information
across your platforms to your followers.
family.
friends.
and you have every right to display
whatever you want to
on your timelines,
but if you think broadcasting Black suffering is
helping
while simultaneously neglecting Black appreciation in
your efforts,
ask yourself
who are you really helping?

from "Again"

I want to love you
in the same way
the world loves the moon.

everlasting appreciation
over mystic qualities.
a deep fascination for the unknown.
Passionate about having so much left to explore.

I want to be invested
in every phase you grow through.
and present
for every moment of your life cycle.

from "Moonlight"

if I could go back in time
and give the younger me
some advice
I'd say
stop trying to be likable for everybody
when don't even like yourself.

I'd rather you love you
than continue to request fake love
from everybody else.

from "Advice to the Younger Me"

sometimes people will try to return
to your life after abandoning
the connection y'all had
for the possibility of finding a stronger one.

sometimes they'll come back
with newfound audacity.
label you as the reason why they left.
for sympathy.
for an opportunity at being close again.
they'll explain how leaving you
wasn't an easy option.
say they withdrew from the situation
but their emotions never departed.
that you should've tried harder.
thinking they can lessen the distance
from growing apart through guilt trips
and constant check-ins.

they'll rely on resentment for attention.
hope that you will be angry
from the lack of answers
they neglected to give you
for closure.

they'll hold ambitious wishes
that you'd consider
an open-door life policy
for someone
who once made you happy.

in other words,
they'll want to know

if you kept them on retainer
as a pursuable option
just in case
things didn't go as expected.

to get you back,
they'll depend on your pain
instead of using their honesty.

from "Return of the Manipulator"

in community college,
I was assigned to read "Outliers",
the story of success by Malcolm Gladwell.
I knew nothing of this Canadian journalist,
other than the fact that
one of his literary creations
was going to be the deciding factor
in determining whether I receive
a passing grade
to a class I never went to.
each student was required to take a chapter,
apply it to their lives in some fashion
and present on the findings.

I skimmed through each page
trying to find something relevant
enough to bullshit on a PowerPoint presentation
and stumbled across his perspective
that it takes 10,000 hours of practice
to become an expert at something.
that's roughly 417 days.
1 year and some change.
I think I found a revelation in this lesson.

on days when I don't feel worthy of anything
this interesting statistic
acts as a reminder
that I need to dedicate more time to loving myself
until I become a master at it.

from "10,000 Hours"

if they cannot say your name properly,
syllables and all,
correct them.
every. single. time.

don't settle for nicknames for their comfort.
don't justify their mistakes because they aren't familiar
with phonetics.
tell them to SOUND THAT SHIT OUT!
force them to understand the relationship
between the silent letters and the vowels screaming
next to them.

because if you don't,
they will be quick to add accents like sound effects.
they will emphasize cultural stereotypes in the
pronunciation.
they will remind you
that they are still trying to colonize language.
that they are still trying to force assimilation by
making a mockery of who you are.
they want you to be embarrassed of your title.
your label.
your identifier.

don't let them steal that too.
correct them.
even if it's a subtle mistake,
don't let them walk away thinking
they can call you whatever they want to.

from "Mispronounced"

it is my greatest hope
that one day
you'll wake up and choose yourself.
and continue to do so
from that day forth.

I hope you'll see
the true intentions of
all the people who pretended
to want the best for you,
when all they really wanted
was for you to choose them
no matter if you had to lose yourself
to do it.

from "Hoping"

sporadic screaming vibrated through the aisles of
towered shelving
quickly overpowered the smooth sounds
that saxophone solos were providing me
and stole my attention like a well-choreographed bank
robbery.
my eyes shifted to the scene
observing two so-called adults arguing over line
placement.
both demanding apologies and requesting respect.
naturally as time passed, tension subsided.
but as coincidence jokingly has it,
we all ended up in the parking lot next to each other.
one stare and conflict came rushing back.
because when you feed a feud confrontation, you
keep it alive.
and before I could even say anything to diffuse the
altercation,
a woman
whose voice was as soft as harmony uttered "*it's not
worth it*"
while casually returning to mind her own business.

today, I witnessed composure in its purest form.
I think her name was Mary.

from "The Cart Attendant Girl at Costco"

if I happen to fall in love with you,
I hope to stick the landing
and end up right by your side.
next to you.
for as long as you allow me to be.
in whatever capacity you need me to be.

being in love with you
wouldn't just be a feeling.
it would also be a decision.
that I make willingly.
every morning.
every night.
every day.
with no regrets.

from "Feelings"

can you hold me in your eyes
before you end this with me?
If I'm going to lose you,
I'd like to at least stare into forever
one last time.

from "One Last Time"

don't be fooled.
Black people
experience love
without grief or betrayal too.

don't let them convince you
that we are unable to love honestly.

from "Black Love Exists"

American culture
is so obsessed with Blackness
that it's high-key creepy.
it built its trends
by stealing from Black people.
built this country by stealing Black people.
it religiously stalks our footsteps
to see where life takes us.
and with every opportunity it has
to cause us anguish
it makes sure to do it.
convinced everyone
that we are the aggressors.
they, the victims.
that we are to blame for racism.
that if we just stopped talking about it,
it would go away.
that we don't contribute to America anyway.
as if America
would be America
without Black influence.
Black creations.
Black brilliance.

so, the next time you want
engulf yourself in American anything,
remember Black fingertips
hold this place together.

from "Obsessed"

maybe I was the fool
for believing
we were meant to be together.
not soulmates.
not romantic partners pursuing forever.
just together.
experiencing life.

maybe these divine premonitions
weren't clear enough.
maybe they were too vague.
maybe together was meant to be momentary.
brief.
short-lived.

maybe this fleeting connection
is necessary.
for what,
I don't know.
but maybe
just maybe
this is how we're supposed to end.

from "Truths"

sometimes people will think
you must succumb to
their request of your attention
when they have problems.

solemnly believe you must
drop everything and anyone
to be their shoulder to cry on.
to be their listening ear.
to be the voice of support
with soft tones and solid life advice.

they expect you
to have it all figured out.
but where are they
when you are calling out for help.
how enthusiastic are they
when it comes to your problems.
your concerns.
your worries.

some people will make you feel
indebted to them
because they chose
to be your friend
instead of your latest problem.

sometimes
you owe these people
nothing but ABSENCE.

from "Fake Friends Again"

yesterday I was asked
by a former college associate
if enough time had passed for me to think about
rekindling my relationship with alcohol.

this acquaintance,
who only knows me as reckless,
says she misses how care-free
intoxication made me.
misses how fearless inebriation
made my confidence seem.
she says the old me was so fun to be around.
starts bringing up forgotten stories
involving projectile vomit on stairs,
slurred arguments with playboy wannabes,
and blacked out fist fights in Denny's parking lots.

in the midst of her
reliving her glory days of partying
beside the drunken mess she calls "me",
I contemplate on my sober inconsistencies.
reflect on the night's temptation got the best of me.
or days I just wanted to finish my tiresome nights
with a little bit of wine.
I think about how far I've come from
peer-pressured liquor shots
to controlled vices.

I don't ever get the urge to find my regrets
at the bottom of whiskey bottle anymore,
but maybe someday I'll decide to indulge again.

from "Old Friends"

at the age that I am,
learning about certain parts of me
is nothing short of terrifying.

but when I finally start to feel whole,
I'll know that experiencing all this fear
was worth it.

from "Aging"

I understand the need
for a defense system
specifically created to protect
its citizens.
a group of individuals
courageously or opportunistically
volunteering their service
in honor of their country.

understanding that there may be unimaginable trauma
hidden behind enemy lines.

but you see,
that hasn't worked out well
for my people.

decades of Black servicemen
fighting for white freedom.
dodging bullets in foreign battlefields
are just training exercises
to prepare them for the war at home.
they fought for this country
yet are still hiding in bunkers
from racist bombshells
fired by friendly combatants.

still,
Black folk join the armed forces.
being brave on forgotten land.
protect the same seas
where captured Black bodies were thrown in.
soar the unexplored skies in fighter jets
to become Tuskegee air-experiments.

forced to wear valor
way before deciding on enlisting.

so I guess,
that is where my lack of proclivity
towards the military comes from.

or maybe I just dislike the fact
that nearly 1 million Black vets
served in WWII.
and for those who fortunately
made it out alive
came home to serve another tour
battling discrimination.
or maybe I'm just annoyed by the amount of people
that assume
I'm not grateful to live in this country
because I vocalize my frustrations with racism.
my constant complaints of a country
where patriotism is an excuse for violence.

and I'm appreciative of our veterans.
I really am.
but American pride, anger and unlimited access to
bullets
have killed far more Black lives than enemies.
so excuse me for my missing patriotism,
as I find it hard to celebrate this country
when there's still a struggle
for Black independence.

from "The Black Patriot"

in 2011,
I once read on Tumblr that
“sometimes losing people makes you find yourself.”
and the part of my brain
that controls connectivity
aligned perfectly with this statement
causing an explorative me
to sulk in relatability.

these days,
finding myself is causing me to lose people.
sometimes losing people is uncontrollable.
but what remains within your power
is the decision to find yourself.

from “Relating”

at this point of my life,
I'm incapable of faking smiles.
I try and I just can't do it anymore.

alternatively, I have learned
how to be momentarily happy.
and sometimes,
that helps me grin when I need to.

I find that easier to maintain
than searching for the energy
to pretend I have a good enough
reason to smile.

from "Pretend"

just because you see
the sunny side of my smile
most of the time you gaze
upon my face,
doesn't mean that there
aren't storms brewing
waiting to destroy
the temporary happiness
I created to build it.

from "Sight-Seeing"

unfortunately,
so many people
are stuck trying to convince
themselves they are important
instead of simply believing it.

from "Stuck"

the more I write,
the more enjoyable
the human experience
becomes.
it's my way of exploring
what the world has to offer.

from "The Human Experience"

I better not leave this world
wishing I said more to you.

I will be so disappointed
if I died harboring unsaid feelings.

I don't want to spend my afterlife
regretting and contemplating,
on what could have been.

from "Left Unsaid"

if my past could talk,
it would probably be unreasonably loud.
probably sound bothered.
all the time.

I am certain it would refuse to bite its tongue.
would sling insults at everyone
it believed was judging its intelligence.
which means no-one would be spared.
it would regret nothing.
doubt everything.
and it would need to be convinced by some godly
force of nature
for it to care about the feelings of others.
it quite possibly would be
the most annoying voice in every room
it invited itself into.

if my past could talk,
it would speak in riddles.
it would confuse everyone
in every conversation
and would lie about anything
for attention.

If my past could talk,
it would be the soundbite bully
everyone should stay away from.

from "Past Conversations"

even with a stack of accomplishments,
I still find myself
feeling incapable of achieving something.

I know my life experiences
say otherwise.
still, I can't help but feel the exact opposite.
and it's not like I lack confidence
because I have more than enough of it.
It's just this overwhelming pressure of being better
sometimes gets the best of me.

I want to shake these doubts.
I really do.
but maybe they're the only thing motivating me
to be someone worth knowing.

from "Why"

before I say
what is probably going to be seen as
problematic,
insensitive,
and divisive
or the product of bad timing,
I'd like to condemn any act of racism
against any ethnic population.
I'd like to provide my empathy
as I know the unpleasant emotions that arise
from seeing, hearing and experiencing
the death of those who look like you,
who are murdered for looking like you.
I too know the pain that persists
from the political rhetoric making excuses for white
terrorists.
I too am familiar with the fear of stereotypes
encouraging radical white supremacists to wage war
against your culture.
the same people who mask their values in
conservatism.

I get it.
I see you.
your feelings are heard here.
your experiences are validated here.
you have my undying support with no strings
attached.
just love.
my voice will cast support in every space I'm in.
I will continue to do everything in my privilege and
power
to make the world as anti-racist as I can.

but with that being stated,
I do have concerns with what I have been seeing
from those displaying solidarity as of recent.
I applaud the active calls for justice
against the wrongfully and unjustly targeted.
I am amazed by the amount of so-called
social media friends finally finding a cause
to put their energy into.
I wonder why it took this long.

I am curious to understand
why hate crimes against Black people
fosters so much hesitancy in their allyship.
why their effort on speaking on injustice comes with
conditions when it pertains to individuals with Black
skin.
and Black folk aren't exempt from this.
no one is exempt from this.
what I'm saying is,
if I were made a victim of racist opportunity
will people come to my aid without questions?
will they inquire if I provoked my murderer?
will they agree or disagree on his plea of insanity?
will they keep my name alive through conversations
about my criminal record?
or will I become the spark in initiating
some random person's activism.

from "Call to Action"

for those who have had
to deal with the behavior
of my unprocessed trauma,
I wish I could structure an apology
worthy enough for your forgiveness
but I can't.

I can't reasonably ask for vindication
from all the random acts of projected uncertainty I
displayed
on a frequent basis,
without having guilt.

I am sorry anyways.
sorry I made promises
about handling burdens
I know I couldn't carry alone.
sorry my openness was deceptive.
sorry it took the end of our relationship
for me to realize I was hurting.
sorry if I made you feel like a pit stop
on my road to healing.
sorry your pain was necessary for my growth.
sorry for it all.

and if your curious to know,
I am better now.
but I have such a long way left to go.

from "Saying Sorry"

who do you turn into
when anger has befallen
upon your spirits?
when conflict strains your attitude.
putting tension on your voice.

do you remain
the embodiment of your values?
or do you lock them
behind closed doors
until the destruction of your outrage
is suppressed again.

from "Grounded"

Denial: I refuse to believe that
you were able to move on without me.

Anger: it's not fair that you've adapted to the
circumstance,
got over our situation
and are dealing with our break-up
better than I am.
I shouldn't be the only one
left in misery.

Bargaining: I'd sacrifice my sleep at night, just to
know if you were thinking about me more than you
should.

Depression: I can't live without you.

Acceptance: it'll be okay. I've woken up to a new day.
I don't know how I'll make it out alive, but I'll have to
learn how to.

from "5 Stages of Grief"

are you still shrinking yourself
to fit into someone's world?

are you still letting other people
define who you are?

I know it's a tough cycle to break
but break it no matter the difficulty.
no matter how long it takes.

you can't just live your life
hoping someone takes charge
of the decisions you make.

from "Shrinking"

I don't care what anyone says,
there's nothing more inspiring
than watching
Black boy joy
become Black man happiness.

especially when he's beaten the stereotypes.
stigmas.
sexualized thoughts of being labeled
a ravishing animal.
and not to mention
the stifling system murdering Black men
on the daily.

the world should be fortunate,
that it gets to witness
the formation of Black male smiles,
when it wants nothing more
than the removal of it.

from "Joyous"

encompassed in each passing day
is a reason why you are still alive.
no matter how small
or how obvious
something is keeping you here.
maintaining your will to fight against the impossible.
strengthening your character.
holding you down through depression.
blocking those suicidal ideations
from becoming motivated attempts.
stopping them from being once lived experiences.
and whatever it is
that is keeping you from following through,
I thank it.
because this world
means so much more to me
with you in it.

from "I'm Still Here"

even the right decision
can make you feel wrong.
sad.
guilty.
disgusted.
anxious.
understand that some things
are just not built to be in our favor.
and that's okay.
we just gotta learn
to bask in the certainty.

from "Decisions"

what did you expect?
I tried to tolerate
your constant dismissal of me.
you watched me stack
piles and piles of patience,
hoping that the sky wouldn't be the limit.
that it would be more like the stars,
boundless.
you knew that we were just
one more moment of blatant disrespect away
from it all coming tumbling down.
and it did.
in the worse way possible.

from "Crash"

in theory,
I am the personification of communication.
I'm clear, concise and consistent.
informative, constructive and realistic.
my intentions always vocalized.
opinions frequently stated.
patiently waiting to fend off any confusion.

but sometimes,
in practice,
I'm not as explicit with my emotions as I'd like to be.
sometimes,
there are barriers preventing the constant
flow of understanding.
other times, I simply suck at it.

and I swear,
on most days
my voice and body language
breaks down the incomprehensible
into digestible messages.
they often make easy work
out of difficult conversations
but for some reason
cower when confronted with small talk.

if there's one thing that I've been learning
while trying to become more aware
of my broadcasting of feelings,
it's that theory isn't always so easy
to apply in practice.

from "Theory to Practice"

not proud of how I ended
our last conversation.

I know I said some things
that I truly meant,
they just sounded a lot less harsher
in my head.

I had to get those emotions out though,
before you made them feel insignificant.

it might have been a bit petty
to scream your insecurities at you
like flying insults
but I don't regret a single sentence.

be mad all you want to.
I'm going to be guilt-free.

from "I said what I said"

y'all idolize celebrities that'll do just about anything
to stay relevant.
from cooking dead pets
to botched Brazilian butt lifts,
your so-called role models
are making millions off of publicity.
getting paid because you are so intrigued
by their lifestyles.

your favorite gangsta rapper just went platinum.
sold his morals for a record deal.
beat all of the top songs with a top hit.
smashing beat after beat
and couldn't keep his hands from beating his wife.
now he can't beat his case.
it was said the evidence against him
was going to manage his prison career
far better than his music one.
10 years later, and he's just as popular.

I'm just saying,
we need to pay more attention to the household
names standing on their God-given platforms
speaking about issues everyone should be aware of.
those in the limelight shining light
on the concerns of the people.

let's be more mindful of the people
we place on pedestals.

A place no person should ever exist.

from "Idols"

I get so nervous
when trying to mouth
the words "*I love you*"
with meaning.

in times where
I get afraid to explain
my feelings with words,
I hope to be able to express
my fondness with a stare.
I hope to convey my awe
in devoted sentiments.

if all fails,
I will rely on my kisses
to whisper the thousand reasons
I have fallen in love without fear.

from "Hard to Say"

you wanna know why I was always exhausted.
it's because pretending is a heavy burden.
carrying around fake attitudes
over long periods of time
will eventually
take its toll on the body.
that is the result of lugging around
"I'm okay" for decades.

but the reality
was not what I was presenting.
truth was,
I hadn't felt "okay",
in what seemed like,
ever.

from "Exhausted"

knowing you're loving someone
twice as hard as you loved me
is quite possibly
the biggest reason
I can't bring myself
to trusting love again

from "All Truths, No lies"

we can collectively agree,
that touching anyone intentionally
without permission
warrants justifiable repercussions.
that the response,
whether physically violent or verbal,
is dependent upon
the victim in question.
sometimes the circumstance
can be taken into consideration,
but this is on a case-by-case basis.

and I'm a bit extreme
when it comes to these situations.
I believe that for every unwanted tap,
hand stroke or pat,
assailants should have one hand removed.
for every unwarranted contact,
that ultimately made someone feel uncomfortable,
they should endure hours upon hours
of medieval-style torture.

I also understand that sometimes
the intention isn't dangerously malicious.
that the curiosity is genuine and harmless.
but it isn't an excuse to cross boundaries.

to the white women
who find it necessary
to use Black people
in close proximity
as research subjects for your cultural hypothesis,
your ignorance is showing.

the entitlement you feel
towards touching Black hair
at your curiosity's convenience
is rooted in your belief of white superiority
over Black people.
even if this idea isn't one you actively care for,
it still lives in the same home as your privilege.
reaping all the benefits.

when you view people as lesser,
you equate them to property.
another piece of ownership for your hands to hold.
no wonder why you're always trying to touch things
like they belong to you.
things that fascinate you.
or pique your interest.
colonization is a part of your heritage
and Black people aren't going to sit here
and let you honor it by trying to claim our bodies.
by attempting to possess our identities on your
mantles.

so, the next time you see beautiful locs,
a luscious Afro
or anything on top of Black heads
and your curiosity gets inquisitive,
you better use google to answer those questions.
because if you try to search for satisfaction in Black
roots, don't be surprised if you get a first-hand lesson
in Black resistance.

from "Don't Touch"

If we were in an
alternate universe
would our souls still
be destined to meet?

do you think this connection
would exist within
every conceivable dimension

or is it just something
unique to this moment?

from "Fated"

someday someone is going to give you
so much love,
you're going to be glad
your heart stayed courageous enough
to be hopeful.

it'll cause you to forget
the lonely days
where you never felt
the tenderness of it.

from "Glad"

most days,
I reminisce
about how happy I am
to have met you.

forever grateful
that I was born
in a time
where you exist.

appreciative
that we share air
in the same world together.
on the same day.
at different moments.

to think,
fate could've separated us by decades.
destiny could've put us on divided paths.
but they didn't.

and for that,
I relish in the honor
to be able to partake in life
with you in it.

from "The Honor is Mine"

you call yourself
a ride-or-die.
someone ready
to do anything for the person
they claim loyalty to.
even willing to face unmeasurable danger
to show how you sweat trustworthiness and bleed
dependability.
risking the stability of a pounding heartbeat.
voluntarily placing yourself at death's doorsteps,
for an individual to breathe unhindered
and live undoubtedly supported.

a ride-or-die.

a title you proudly wear
like a last name
signifying lifelong commitments.
but be cautious with the way
you are praised for this passion.

don't let loyalty
force you into accepting
disrespect or constant pain
from the person
you dedicated yourself to protecting.

from "Ride-or Die"

Responding to controversial statements poetically

Statement: “I don’t see color”

How freeing of guilt it must feel
to see the world in shades of grey.
to have the capability to ignore
the pools of red blood
that paint the stripes of the American flag.

How unfortunate it must be
to not recognize the beauty
that is left from colored hands.
to not understand that everything
the rainbow touches turn to gold.

How ironic that you can sit there
and listen to Black music,
indulge in Black culture,
appropriate Black styles
but turn a blind eye to Black existence.

How privileged of you
to claim to be color-blind,
when all you have to do
is open your eyes
to see the color of reality
staring you right in your face.

the way the sun kisses your skin
is a sublime kind of beauty.
a glowing radiance that brightens
up my life.
and watching your sunseting smile
is the perfect ending
to each of my days.

from "Sublime"

I was always waiting
for someone to give me the spotlight.

started feeling unworthy
when people decided to shine their attention
on someone else.

once I stopped looking for warmth
in the shade
I was able to become my own sun.

from "Sunspots"

I'm not a religious man,
but
sometimes
I see God in your eyes.
he calls
your soul,
home.
he uses your smile
as a backyard to raise the angels
that live comfortably in your laughter.
I swear
I hear him in your voice.
translating your sentences
into the holy language of faith.
when you speak,
I can't help but follow
and stay devoted to you.
I've never really trusted religion,
but somehow with you
it's different.

from "Church"

bodily organs.
last night's pasta dinner.
empathy.
a glimmer of hope
for us to be together.

- Things that are inside of me

from "Insides"

my heart has impulse control issues.
it tends to attach itself
to people who don't notice it.

I discovered its styptic properties
while it was trying to seal up
someone else's open love wounds.

my heart is still learning
how to resist being a medic
to a love it didn't experience.

from "Healer"

it's not a question of
whether someone likes
something or not.

it's a question of
if they want it or not.

not wanting someone
or something
doesn't automatically mean
“opposition.”

people mistake
preference for desire
and think rejection
is hostility.

sometimes,
rejection is just
controlled resistance.

from “Reject to Resist”

the problem isn't
that I'm not over you.
eventually, that feeling
will go away.

the problem is
that I would drop
anything
and anyone
to be with you again.

it's possible to be over a person
but not the relationship
you had with them.

and sometimes
that will be enough justification
to let that person,
who never deserved you,
back into your life.

from "Red Flags"

with the right person,
Heaven will be a feeling
not a place.
and you won't have to disappear
from Earth to experience it.

from "Heaven on Earth"

on Valentine's Day,
hearts align.
desires revealed.
and everything that looks like intimacy
explodes into the sky,
becoming the atmosphere for the night.

we occupy our time
searching for romantic opportunity.
hoping Cupid
will conjure up a love so real,
it would live up to the unrealistic expectations
of royal princes and princesses ready for their
everlasting life with one another.

I do wish that love finds every deserving person.
I do believe that every person is deserving of love.

I also know
that Cupid doesn't have a good track record.
that he often starts things he can't finish.
that he only shows up for this big day,
then vacations for the rest of the year.

what I'm saying is
Cupid's work ethic is poor at best.
so, if you find yourself struck by his arrows,
whether intentional
or by mistake,
make sure you put in the work
when Cupid eventually disappears.

from "Cupid's Day"

in a perfect world,
I wouldn't miss you
as much as I do.

but perfect doesn't exist,
and I miss you.
just as much
as I miss us.

from "Perfect World"

come close to me.
shut your eyes
and press your lips
against mine.

let's stop time.

and if you want,
we can stay in this moment
forever.

from "The Power of Kisses"

will you stay with me tonight?
I've been alone with my past
for the last few nights,
and they have been trying
to hold onto me.

I don't want them to get comfortable
being the reason
I can't move on
from anything.

from "Situations"

after one year
and 22 counseling sessions,
my therapist concluded
that my preoccupation with small details
may be impacting my life
more than I care to admit.

she says,
my unnecessary
and somewhat over the top
dedication to work productivity
may be hindering my relationships with women
and family.

this one time,
I got extremely defensive
when she suggested that my tendency
to hoard things for no apparent reason
may be due to my stubbornness.
but I justified it by expressing
I just like things to be a certain way.
I don't need these things I'm attached to
but don't want to live without them.

on October 9th, 2018
at approximately 2:45 p.m.
I was diagnosed with Obsessive-Compulsive
Personality Disorder.
OCPD, for short.

which may explain my habit
of color coordinating every article of clothing I own.

provides a little insight into my obsession with
specific methods of making my bed.
certainly helps me rationalize my strong opposition to
being asked questions about things I felt like I've
answered already.

it also means
I owe some ex-girlfriends an apology.
so many times
I've dismissed their concerns as exaggerations
because I was striving for perfection.
created expectations while being unaware of them.
hesitant about relinquishing control over my feelings
because I was afraid of what unknown sentiments
would bring.

It's been almost 3 years since that diagnosis
pushed clarity in the path of my tunnel vision.
almost 3 years since self-care took me by the hand
and walked me through intentional healing.
I can't say that I'm OCPD free though.
but I've definitely stopped letting it
consume the best parts of me.
and I've never felt more comfortable
letting go of things that serve me no purpose.
I've finally started taking the time to enjoy
the simple things.

from "OCPD"

and regrettably,
she's in my thoughts
but not my life.

I can't decide
if that's a good thing
or a terrible nuisance.

I just know that this
is my reality.

from "Annoyed"

depriving someone of your authentic self
out of fear of rejection or judgment
is a disservice to the personality
you've built from enduring trauma,
exploring interests and connecting to your cultural
lineage.

but I get it.
criticism can make certainty
feel wrong
and insincerity seem normal.
it's completely understandable
to hide behind a facade
when you're scared that you'll be berated
for being who you are
and want to be.

from "Deprivation"

some days I feel like an unstable rollercoaster that can
break down at any moment.

but somehow, it's still safe enough to ride,
works well,
and provides an exhilarating experience
despite the screams and panic.

most importantly,
it refuses to shut down on days where it seems to
want to stop running.

from "Rollercoaster".

don't leave.
everything you've been waiting for
is coming soon.
patience will pay off in the end.
and if that's not enough
to help you lean on blind faith,
let your purpose guide you.

from "Wait"

every Black person is unique.
while we have a combination
of innate shared experiences,
we also have various ways of expressing our
Blackness.

these subtle yet noticeable differences
can be seen through the rhythm hidden
beneath our melanated skin
or heard through our musical playlists.

some Black folk are beautifully syncopated
Bobby Shmurda hits on repeat.
5 MF Doom instrumentals deep into losing
themselves to havoc,
because they were shook one too many times from
vibrated soundtracks.

I'm bill withers withered in summertime magic.
standing mountain high looking at how frank oceans
live with tribes called quest all around them.

but mostly,
I'm r & b soft pretending to be hardcore rap in a
world that's trying to turn me into Tupac.

dead before I ever get the chance to enjoy those
gangsta parties.

from "Soundtracks"

even after all that,
you're still by my side.
clinging onto loyalty
like it's the only thing you own.

from "Loyal to the Bone"

when it comes from you,
silence feels a lot worse
than it sounds.

from "Late Night Thoughts"

with all due disrespect,
stay out of my thoughts
and decisions.

I should have never given
such a deceptive manipulator
access to tamper with my patience.

my forgiving nature
allowed you to prove
if you were worthy of second chances,
and you weren't.

the next time
you even think about ruining my day
with your presence
know that
it's on sight.

no words.

just action.

from "On Sight"

I'm finally beginning to deal with my imperfections
with grace.
because with you,
I debated if I was enough.
allowed you to negotiate
the terms of my self-worth,
to settle down in a life with you.

I found out,
that I never knew
how much of my flaws
I couldn't handle.
and they were significant reasons
why I suffered shifting my value
for someone who'd treated me
as if I were
worthless.

from "Graceful"

my insecurities
used to tell me
that it was okay
to lie for no reason.

they would convince me
into thinking
that a sharp tongue
could help me escape out of heavy situations
created by the piles of false stories
I would tell for attention.

when the repercussions
started to outweigh the benefits
I stopped listening.
and decided
to never let them have influence
over the person I want to be.

from "Influences"

lately,
I've been dealing with the aftermath
of the mistakes
I let turn into regrets.

they are teaching me
to pay better attention
to the lessons
I should have learned from them.

from "Aftermath"

social media continues to teach me,
that Black folk can't share their creativity
with the world openly
without someone trying to take it.
replicate it.
claim it as an original idea.
and benefit more off of it.

from "Black-owned Everything"

I indulge in isolation like a passionate hobby,
letting the four walls of my room
contain every piece of me.
comfort traps itself.
within the lining of my bed sheets
I experience peace.
in silence I reflect.
but love myself loud enough
for the world to hear.

I sit in the corner of my room
and have conversations with my poetry journal.
trying to convince the pages
to be patient with the words that spew themselves
carelessly over them.
I fall in love with the sound of nothing, carrying a
tune of yesterday's relaxation.
I wait patiently for an epiphany,
but not wasting the moments I have
on borrowed time.

I allow my problems to vocalize themselves.
uninterrupted.
and let them know
that I'll respond to their concerns later.
I remind myself
that the first step to healing is acknowledgement.
so, I recognize the progress I am making.
my trauma always comes knocking.
whether invited or not.
I don't let it invade the certainty solitude created.
I hold on to contentment.
while I sleep and dream of finding me.

I live.
and realize.
it's a new year.

from "Happy New Year"

laughter.
another way
to communicate.
love without words.

from "The Thing About Jokes"

a solitary lifestyle
tends to benefit me
more these days

because in my isolation
there is no longer
a need to dissect
the confusing layers of my identity
to help explain why I prefer silence
over conversation

although preference does not equal reality
I'm also enthusiastic about holding space for
communication
where dialogue and mutual understanding
can find comfort in existing

but I do love the idea of being left alone
you can't tell me
it isn't amazing
to have control over
the serenity in your safe havens

being reclusive
used to be so unappealing
and now
I see the sacredness in it
I see the progression I made within it
I see the perks of this accurate
representation of the person
I have grown into

from "Alone"

to love
and be given it
in reciprocation
is to be the light in someone's day
only to return home to receive embrace
from the sun

from "Reciprocate"

sometimes,
“I’m single” means I’m learning
how to love myself.

sometimes,
it means I haven’t adapted
to my independence yet.
or at least,
not enough to be in a relationship.
that I’m afraid of losing myself to a label.

sometimes,
“I’m single” is straying hope.
it's lost faith in love.

most of the time
“I’m single” means
I haven’t found someone
worth leaving comfort for.

from "Single"

look at how you've transitioned.
from agony to appreciation.
look at how you continue to live,
despite death's grip on your thoughts.
look at how you still manage to walk the earth.
resilient.

from "Fighting"

poetry is
vulnerable images of self-esteem.
existential crises described
in lines of interpreted language.

poetry is
openness.
clarity.
stability.
support.
consistent.
honest.
forgiving.

for longer than I needed to,
I refused to be in touch
with my emotions.

I was worried of being bashed
with emasculating language
challenging my idea of “sensitive”.

and now I'm brittle.
easily falling apart
to any analysis of my behavior.

so much so
that compliments and critique
are beginning to look identical.

these days,
I'm finding it difficult
to tell them apart.

from “Brittle”

resistance.

finding the energy
to push back
against the persistent.

when being still
is no longer an option,
you'll move with survival
instincts leading you
to safety.

from "Resisting"

that incremental growth
will be the missing element
needed to give you profound clarity.
don't dismiss it.

from "Slow and Steady"

slowly decreasing
the amount of fucks given
in situations that don't add positivity
to my life
plus placing more importance on the perception
I have of myself
rather than the thoughts others have of me
helps ensure the stability
of my mental health

from "The Equation for Peace"

in your modesty,
don't forget
that you are accomplishing
so many things
worthy of being proud of

from "Modest"

kindness is an ever so existing behavior quality
that will remain a salient aspect of my identity,
but that doesn't mean that I am nice.

I can be a bit brutally honest
in some of the weirdest situations.

I'm aware of the sensitivities people express
and will never cross boundaries intentionally,
but if the wrong people take advantage of my kind
moments consider me an ass hole
because I will act a whole ass.

in fact,
your first impression of me
would probably characterize my aura as rude.
I definitely have resting
“don't fuck with me” face.
you'll probably come to this decision due to the
bluntness in my attitude always showing up
in transparent fashion.

I'm a really welcoming individual
but don't mistake my openness
for a fear of conflict.
I am just as eager to deal with confrontation
as I am with showing compassion.
I react to my circumstances
but I am proactive about
putting more good in the world
than the negativity I exude in it.

from "Kind of an Ass"

my name is Jakeel Harris
and this is my narrative.
holding untold trauma, tragedies, successes and
massive amounts of life experiences.
my profanity usage is profusely apparent.
If anyone who has a sensitivity to explicit language
overhears me discuss topics, I am passionate about,
with sincerity
I apologize in advance.
but you have been warned.

my name is Jakeel Harris
and this is my narrative.
as a youngling, my personality
swung from jungle gyms of anxiety
until I became strong enough to
joke my way into a coping mechanism.
teenage me was a comedian.
putting on an act to entertain people.
he thought their laughter meant approval.
didn't care if it was with or at him
as long as he was the source of it.
he weaved lies into his character
to amuse everyone he came in contact with.
his crippling need for attention
is an embarrassing memory to recollect.
nonetheless, it's a part of my narrative.

adulthood has had its string of memories too.
from beating generational curses
plaguing mindsets on the daily.
to rediscovering a fascination in existing.
no more self-loathing.

or desired attempts to end it all.
maturity manipulated me into mattering.
childish simplicity still has me giggling
at carefree behavior.
fart jokes and all.
my adulthood is just childhood
with a better grasp of humanity.
and several sides of bills
I don't want to pay.

my story is still being written.
and I have finally got comfortable
reading through its content
without cringing or wishing
the backstory was different.

from "The Story Continues"

my empathy
is often misleading.
presenting fallacies
upon fallacies
telling stories about
feelings I'm supposed to have.

according to it,
I care too much.
do the absolute most
and always find myself
at the wrong end
of every situation where I put
my emotions before my thoughts.

although my intentions
are innocent responses
to being compassionate,
I'm still guilty of playing superhero
to any problem that isn't my own.

from "Empathy"

when February ended
and learning about Black history
no longer came with the glory of acknowledgment,
the world went back to normal.
stores removed sections
of Black excellence from their aisles.
Black authors were pushed to the back of shelves.
Black athletes reverted back to being nothing more
than entertainment.
society finally was able to take off its tolerance cloak.
said a whole month of Blackness turned the world
dark, so let there be light once more.
that to say
Black lives mattering was up for debate again.

when June ends and the sun's appearance
starts to turn rainbows into faded advertisements,
watch how support is pulled from windows.
notice who is changing colors.
look at how much money pride can get you.
those same companies promising allyship
just donated half of their revenue
to politicians hating on your identity.
see the bills they passed on your behalf.

come July you'll wonder why
everything is back to business as usual.
you'll understand that people are still bigots.
that one month of celebrating was more profitable
for the people who hate you rather than the ones who
actually support you.

from "Celebrate"

with me,
you will experience my compassion
before you see my anger
ruin our cherished moments.
I promise.
love will never take a backseat
to passing frustration.

from "Trust Me"

you are my northern star.
guiding me back home
where our love lives.

from "Guider"

happiness brings out the vulnerability in me.
euphoric clarity boosts my confidence
in confronting the complex.
but sometimes sadness hits.
and on these occasions
I've learned to withdraw my emotions
and retreat back to a boundary
protecting me from being blindsided
to the attacks my doubts coordinate.

from "WAR"

when your mind is a battlefield
covered in land mines of fear
and hope is the only soldier
willing to go to war,
make sure the thoughts imprisoned
behind enemy lines
are worth sacrificing your time for.

from "Mental Warfare"

daunting is the anticipation
that comes from hoping
someone loves you for who you are
and not just for what you do for them

from "Daunting"

I wonder where I would be
if I never decided
to turn my life into writing.

I'd probably be somewhere in between
confusion and insanity.

from "Wonder"

yes, the heartbreak you experienced
was fucking horrendous.

yes, you are reminded of your sadness
when nightfall darkens your day.

of course, you are tired of pretending
everything is okay.
these are just the facts.

like did you know it takes an average of three months
to get over an ex.

did you know pretending is considered an avoidance
technique?
used to escape whatever reality that is unworthy of
being content in.

did you know the sun has never taken a day off?
it wakes up every morning to shine.
and on days where the world is ungrateful,
it hides behind the clouds until it is ready to
relentlessly glisten.

did you know that eventually you will be alright?
these are just the facts.

from "Eventually"

Today, I chose to be better.
I ignored the frivolous drama occurring
outside the windows of my growth
and remained determined.
I neglected those routine calls of stagnancy
inviting me to stay comfortable where I'm at.
I decided that I only want to move forward,
no matter how small the step.
I'm choosing not to let my past
keep my attention more than it needs to.
I'm choosing progression
from this point on.

from "Choosing Me"

stop abandoning yourself
for hypotheticals
and start choosing yourself
for opportunities

from "Simply"

don't call me a hero.
I have trampled trust
and tried to throw the blame at someone else.
I'm still striving to stray away from my old bad habits.

from "I'm not a hero"

“I don’t want to.”

- a laconic response to being asked to do something I’m not comfortable with

from “Maneuvering”

how impertinently bold of you
to look at that greatness inside
your soul and not call it magnificent.

from "Disrespectful"

a nocturnal breeze
swiftly invited itself
into my late-night thoughts,
becoming the brief distraction
I needed to get out from
the rabbit hole of unnecessary
conclusions I came up with
for situations I had no control of.

from "Nocturnal Thoughts"

love outrageously often.
there's something about loving limitlessly
that is boundary provoking.
loving so carelessly it is plateau shattering.
love doesn't peak when it's continuous.

from "No plateaus"

Introspection (n) - to look inside your own head and realize your thoughts have no home training.

synonym: scattered, vulnerable

every once in a while,
we all need a reminder
that we are not immune
to bad days.
they will happen,
just as good ones will too.

from "Immune"

the ancient tombs of my love
have heartbreak and honesty
written in hieroglyphics
all over the walls
telling the story of how
I finally ended up falling for you.

from "Hieroglyphics"

I should've trusted
the bizarre feeling
that came with aspiring
to be yours.

I should've known
that you were bamboozling
easy targets into believing
you cared for them.

I should've seen you
for who you were
but you camouflaged
manipulation in plain sight.
I mistakenly thought it was love.

you were orchestrating
this heartbreak from the start
and I was just too foolish to notice.

from "Tricks"

getting over you would be so much easier
if you weren't so understanding.

I wish you treated me worse
so I could shrug the thoughts of you
off of me like it gave me bad memories.

I wish I could convince myself
that you were an inconsiderate partner.
someone who neglected my feelings,
failed to address my concerns
and constantly made me question the relationship we
were in.
I wish you weren't so good to me.

more desperately,
I wish time didn't have its way with us.
I wish time understood how happy we were together.
maybe it wouldn't have bullied us if it knew.
I wish it weren't the reason for our demise.
I wish we never ended.
I wish we could start over.
I wish I didn't have to get over us.
I wish the next person who has you isn't victim to
time too.
I wish you the best in all you do.

but honestly,
I wish you could've given me a reason to hate you.

from "Wishing on a hope"

although flowers flourish
in the full sight of sunshine,
they sprawl, spring and sprout
in total darkness.
while no one is watching.

from "Growth behind doors"

muffled by despondency
my weary confidence
attempts to have dialogue
with resilience.

it so desperately hopes
this conversation
doesn't turn into an argument
because my confidence
knows it's got anger problems.

and resilience doesn't know
my confidence has been harboring frustration.
said to be fed up with being taken for granted.

my confidence is no longer
stepping into battles
it feels uncomfortable to be in.

from "Fed up"

we must sometimes deduct
people out of our lives.

some of them are trying to balance
being themselves and putting on a massive front.

and we don't have time to second guess
if they are choosing to be themselves
in times where we hope they are.

from "Deduce"

commemorate these feelings.
honor those emotions.
let the experiences you've had
take you into every moment
begging for your best self.
and finally, you will begin to see
the silver lining shining upon you.

from "Silver Lining"

are you enthusiastic
about your exponential growth
no matter the amount
or time it took to see it?

you have to cherish baby steps too.

from "Baby Steps"

finding the difference
between solitude
and loneliness
is the key to maintaining
your sanity.

not understanding the distinct gaps between the two
could be the beginning of the process
commonly known as “spiraling out of control”.

from “Solitude”

your potential
has been pulverized
by your doubt
and it shows.

understand
that you are just one
instant away from
everything you're becoming.

from "Potential"

dear you,

I'll keep this brief

because you don't have time to be distracted by the
past.

I'm contacting you for closure.

I'm opening wounds to spill out these emotions one
last time.

I know you probably think I hate you

but I hold no resentment.

I truly do wish the best for you.

thank you for leaving.

from "Letter to Her"

some nights,
when you happen to cross my thoughts
I take your name hostage in my mind
to keep myself from forgetting about you.

and I'm not trying to hold onto something that is lost,
I just don't want to feel like meeting you was for
nothing.

from "Wasting Time"

I dress my love in sacrifice.
or at least that what I used to do.
always having to decide between the ultimatums
of loving someone else or loving myself.
for some reason, I could never do both
simultaneously.

from "Choices"

don't be surprised if people
find creative ways to discredit you
and all you are achieving.

some of them
will have nothing better to do with their time.

so, they will spend it occupying themselves with envy.
and dabble in negativity as a source of entertainment.

from "Reality Hurts"

in you,
I see something so
unexplainably gifted.

something capable
of surpassing expectations.
something exerting every ounce of greatness
hidden in your untapped potential.

from "Untapped"

I'm not satisfied with this new transition
but it's for damn sure
better than the mental rut
the old me was sulking in.

from "Moving Through Stuck"

I used to avoid mirrors
because I wasn't comfortable
staring at my flaws.

I was afraid of confronting
the possibility
that I wouldn't like the "me"
living on the other side of the glass.

it made it easier to pretend
that I was confident in myself.

these days,
I make sure to spend
a little extra time smiling at every reflection.
I need my flaws to understand
I accept and admire them.

from "Mirrors"

when someone cherishes the qualities
you hate about yourself
and embraces your flaws
tighter than you have been,
they have begun to welcome
unconditional love in their life.

this display
is an invitation to a show
where you can see
how they truly feel about you.

call this screening
"all about you".

from "The Show"

we don't talk like us anymore.
like we don't sound like you and me.
we're thousands of miles apart,
both physically and emotionally,
and I still find myself hoping karma
is good to you.
I can't be angry that we didn't have the aptitude
for staying connected.
I can't hate you for not seeing something for us,
when you couldn't even see it for yourself.
despite all the distance,
I'm realizing that a part of me
will always love you.

from "Disconnected"

I'm sorry.
my experiences with trust
makes it hard for me to believe you.

at some point
I'll have to realize
that "*Thank You's*"
aren't just robotic responses
to gracious actions.
some people
actual mean it.

from "Thanks"

before I started judging
who I was on a regular basis,
I had carefree thoughts.
no worries about conforming for likes.
just being myself without doubts.

that's where I want to be.
smack dab in the middle
of not giving a fuck
about what people think of me.

from "Carefree"

if you decide to have conversation
with reflection in serene silence,
listen close.
and trust me,
you'll hear
when it clicks.

from "Clicks pt.1"

it just clicked one day.
purpose just started to make sense.
clarity gained control over my impulses.
excitement took control over my feet.
it has me instinctively sprinting towards authenticity.
being myself just comes naturally.
I no longer get curious in how anger is doing.
I'm not occupied with blissful distractions.
I can say that I'm happy.
I don't know exactly how I got here,
but I'm here.

I swear.
it all just.
clicked.

from "Clicks pt.2"

call it destiny.
call it hard work paying off.
call it deserved.
call it glory.
call it fate.
call it divine intervention.
call it a reason.
call it proof.
call it belief.
call it God
call it YOU

even if you refuse to call it something,
it'll still exist.

from "Clicks pt.3"

if I had to call it something,
I'd call it LOVE.

from "Clicks pt.4"

you were 3 years of reflection
before you became a tasteless poem
complete with feelings I never wanted to
acknowledge.

from "Time-Lapse"

sometimes
I hear my parents
struggle in my words.
and I feel.

from "Yep"

don't let some toxic nobody
force you into believing
that fearful hesitation is necessary
to break through the walls of vulnerability
stopping you from experiencing
a love you deserve.

from "The walls I never talk about"

Inspired by Denis

turmoil is what happens when war
looks into the mirror
and mistakes itself for peace.

from "Turmoil"

Christianity is in my life still.
though playing the role of an ex-partner who keeps in
touch with no hard feelings.
we are definitely still friends.
may not have been able to make each other happy
but surely
made each other feel judged.
could not believe in each other
in the same ways we believed in ourselves.
could not trust each other without doubts.
we held a lot of love for one another
but never could fall in love with each other.
every now and then
we exchange stories about life.
we often reconnect
and spend just the right amount of time together
to not resent one another.

from "FWB"

sistas.
sistas respected everywhere.
and not a one
feeling powerless.

from "Utopia pt. 2"
after Utopia

you are a soft revolution
protesting against the doubts
questioning you.

from "Protests"

you are a special kind of precious.
the special that doesn't wither.
the special that is always replenished by grace.
the special that innocently dances with the morning
until nightfall sings its joy to sleep.
you are precious to no fault.
please spend time letting this soak into your
experiences.

from "Precious"

I'm in a different season of my life now.
one where lonely days don't scare me.

like I can actually have productive conversations with
my thoughts when I'm alone.

I'm no longer locking my voice away
when I fall into open rabbit holes
containing the traumas I thought disappeared.

even when I lose hope,
I still find myself trying to be better.

growth has become an instinct.

from "New Seasons"

she does not need to be told
to smile when she is feeling sad.
and if sadness dresses her lips
when she is alone
believe she will not let it wear her down.
she will learn to live in her emotions
until she can shower in happiness again.

from "Stronger Than Emotions"

her smile
tell stories
about the places
her resilience has left footprints in

from "Stories Never Told"

and there you go
laughing and smiling
in a world falling apart
slowly healing the universe
one giggle at a time

from "Healing Starts with You"

sometimes I look at you
and can't stop myself from smiling.
can't help but feel incredibly grateful
that time and coincidence
were kind enough
to introduce us to each other.

from "The Day You Saw Me"

I believe there is a spark in you
currently coursing its way
through the darkest parts of your past
igniting the light inside you
giving you the energy to shine

and when you smile
watch how you illuminate

from "Let the Light In"

patience is a new resident in my home on this planet.
it has become accustomed
to my temporary leases on life.
every morning,
it has been trying to encourage me
to stop finding the need to make a shelter
out of a fleeting moment.

from "Shelter"

some idiot
let his stupidity
and impatience
push you away.
I pray I never let myself
get so foolish.

from "Dummy"

don't promise me the world
if you threaten to take it
away from me.

don't give me things
you don't intend to for me to keep.

from "Unkept"

nostalgia
my old friend.
I remember
how you use to make me feel.
connected.
but lately
all you ever do
is manipulate your environments.
although the memories we have together are endless,
I don't look forward to running into you.
because now
you are being used to hurt me.

from "Nostalgia"

your gentle presence
reminds me of childhood innocence.
chasing laughter in the backyard.
playing knee-deep in the sands of time
not knowing
that forever turns into harsh realities
temporarily keeping us stuck in the mud.

your tenderness reminds me of peace.
forgotten troubles.
amnesia freeing me from concerns.

your softness reminds me of home.
it's no wonder why
being around you
feels so familiar.

from "Home, a place where comfort lives"

I held you higher than my own happiness.
I bet the air felt amazing up there.
gravity confidently holding you up on the pedestal I
placed you on.

from "Gravity Falls"

You are capable of being
so much more
than everything
you've already overcome.

from "Overcome"

when I'm wrong
I plant my opinions
in the truth
and hope to grow
a new perspective
out of the information

from "Wrong"

I met someone unexpectedly
driving connection toward me.
someone that takes me so seriously.
yet all we do is laugh together.
they show me
that giving someone access to my energy
should be considered a privilege.
they teach me that some people
won't abuse that gift.
they don't.
they hold onto it.
and unconditionally respond with effort.

every day I see them
they reassure me
that regardless of my experiences with trust,
they will remain reliable.

from "Rely"

maybe it's the way she rolls her eyes.
expressive.
carefree.
rotating eyeballs moving around the top of her heavy
eyelids.
she says she gets it from me.
I wonder what else she's unconsciously mimicked.

maybe it's the way she stands radiant.
like sunflowers.
constantly bringing good fortune to those around her.
she is a symbol of faithfulness.
carrying sunshine and vulnerability into every room
despite her roots being fragile.
but she carries this weight willingly.
she is a butterfly.
rebirthing dreams into freedom.
transforming growth into passion to soar through her
existence with meaning.

maybe it's the way she smiles.
her two lips stretching resilience
from ear to ear.
her genuine smile covers her struggles.
or it could be her laughter.
a sweet soft giggle capable of alleviating worries.
infectious and uncontrollable healing in her voice-box
projecting authentic care and love to any listening ear.

maybe it's how she lives.
intentionally.
compassionately.
naturally.

considerate.
for her loved ones.
for herself.

maybe.
just maybe.
it's because she's HER.

from "Sunflowers and Butterflies"

ever have a fascination so deep
that thinking about it
makes you feel like an obsessive freak?
for me it's words.
I love to listen to the way people talk.
I love hearing the pronunciation of syllables colliding
with sentences
in perfect harmony to make a point about something.
I love how they describe experiences.
I love how they defy reason.
I love how they shape-shift.

words can mold the purpose of a smile.
can transform a gesture into a life-long memory.
can console sadness.

words do not need to be read aloud
to make emotions tremble.
to know they can change the world upon impact is
the reason I fell in love with poetry.
and continue to do so
every single day.

from "Fascinated"

I haven't felt your presence in a while.
now I'm reaching for anyone close enough to hold.

I've been trying to replicate
the feeling I used to get from your hugs.
they are too uniquely you to copy.

your touch is the only evidence I have
of you ever loving me.

from "Missing You in Stages."

make sure you place yourself
around the people
who treat your sprouting ceremony
like a sacred coming out party.

with that being said,
choose your environments wisely
and blossom carefully.

From "Advice"

our grandparents hid their traumas
deep inside a storage box of emotions
located in the basement of the home
we carelessly played in as kids.

we learned that our parents buried their fear
in the foundation of the house we dreamed in.

we were told scary stories
about what monsters were lurking in the past,
not realizing they never left our parents' nightmares.

we were warned to never venture
down to the darkness of memories
they can't seem to block out.

we grew up unaware of the family secrets
locked behind every door.
partly the reason our family never opened up to us.

as adults,
we decide what family norms
we choose to enforce
and the ones we want our kids to inherit.

from "Family trauma"

I am the American dilemma.
the talent that binds this country's history.
the always forgotten originator of everything.
the voice that Justice has erased from memory.
the soulmate Freedom has been searching for.
in all the wrong places.

From "American Dilemma"
after the American Heartbreak

wasn't looking for a lover.
wasn't looking for a connection.
wasn't looking for late-night intimacy.
was just trying to avoid getting lost.
then one day
I found you and all of it started to make sense.

from "Coincidence"

if you were to tell me
that waiting until the end of eternity
was a requirement for my patience
to finally meet your love's embrace,
I'd tell you
that someday soon in the future,
I'll meet you and your love
somewhere on the other side of endless

from "Wait"

from now on,
I am rewarding disrespect with disappearance.
I am bestowing distance to any situation
attacking my existence.
I am enacting the “walk away” method
to refrain from reacting like the old me.
the me that was eager to swing first at confrontation.
the me that used to want to throw hands at any
opportunity that presented itself as an argument.
the me that believed anger was a reasonable response
to any perceived perspective of aggression.
I am choosing to back away from unnecessary
conflicts for everyone else’s safety.

instead of being paranoid about the interactions
that may make it easy for a triggered me to revert to
the toxic patterns I conducted when proving a point,
I’ll vanish.

from “For Your Safety”

once a day,
sometimes twice,
the moon and the sun
spend their time together
combating for custody
over the ocean.

the sun's argument:

without the love I shine
on our beloved sea,
how would we ever
have skies bluer than
morning glories blooming in Mexico.
you see,
I am the reason she rises.
she may be salty because of me,
but I have only been overbearing
so she could be a current beauty.

the moon's argument:

it is true that without you,
our beloved sea would not reflect sunshine so
effortlessly.
but you see,
I am the reason for her softness.
though I have been tough on her coastlines.
my gravitational love
generates the strength in her waves.

*and when the ocean gets dragged into the conversation,
it makes their statement:*

I am the ocean.
I move mountains.
I shake islands.
I contain most of life on this planet
and y'all want to take credit for how vast my reach is.
it stretches beyond the impact of rays.

whether you're watching me directly
or rotating the responsibility
of noticing me,
I am still here.
and unlike you,
I don't need to illuminate to get attention.

I am grateful for your lessons
that taught me to be deeper
when I was just a little body of water.
but I cannot be tamed.
nor do I belong to anyone.

from "Fighting for Custody"

I watched the moon and the sun
fight for acknowledgment from the sky.

the moon,
shining half-full
putting in full effort
standing out as the Earth's only natural satellite.
being the beacon of beauty
we know it to be.

the sun,
setting the mood
by blowing unremitting amber kisses
across the face of the sky.
wanting to leave a lasting impression
before it rests for another day.

but the sky only notices the ocean.
how she relentlessly caresses the land
with her presence.
how she peacefully minds her own business
staying within her own flow.
remaining a sight to be looked at.

from "Beaches"

while shopping,
I was approached by what seemed like
two Cinderellas looking
for Prince Charming conveniently
standing in line at the convenience store.
they asked if I was single.
apparently, the lack of hardware on my finger gave
off the impression that I was up for the cuffing.
I replied, “not really.”

because there is someone who puts my heart in
overdrive.
someone connection introduced me to.
someone dancing with my interest until my attention
can't help but notice.
someone worth focusing all my energy on.

I'm just waiting for time
to allow us to be together.

From “Getting Cuffed”

empowering is it not?
the feeling of shedding burdens off your shoulders.
burdens that you didn't even know were burdens.
clueless that they were keeping you shackled.
trapping you behind your hopes and wishes for
something everlasting.

how free do you feel,
now that they aren't weighing you down.
now that they aren't holding you back.
you can see how vibrant relief is making you.
it's already forcing you to lean into the familiar that
was lost long ago.

you're finding your freedom through leaving your
current confinement to something more open.
but freedom isn't always about escaping.
sometimes, freedom is just
the process of enjoying new beginnings.

from "New Beginnings"

*how I say I love you
without saying "I love you"*

you don't owe me anything.
of course you can borrow my effort,
I have enough for the both of us.
just promise me you'll give it back someday.
have you had a reason to smile today?
can I be a reason?
know that I'm listening.
know that I'm here.

she doesn't know
the amount of lives
she has saved
with her smile.

nor does she understand
the countless doubts she has
talked off of ledges with her glance.

she's been doing superhero
activities in real life
without even realizing it.

from "Heroes"

forever.

they say you are seemingly endless

but they don't talk about how thoughtless

you are with time.

how you are a fairytale dream latching onto

someone's idea of happiness.

how you turn joy into pain.

you call yourself an aspiration.

a desirable display of emotional exaggeration

but you are nothing more than a misleading concept

setting hopes ablaze.

when will you tell the world

that you too are afraid of being temporary.

from "Dear Forever"

dear infatuation,
make up your damn mind.
I'm so tired of placing my energy
into relationships
I only get to enjoy for a few moments.

with envy,

ambition

from "Dear Infatuation"

if I could spend the day in love with you,
I'd schedule a 10:00 a.m. walk around our fondest
memories.
occupying time strolling along all the trials and
tribulations that got us to today.
after some time, we'd find some poorly placed park
bench conveniently spacious enough for the two of
us to sit and admire the scenery.
I'd ask if you wanted to frolic obliviously
in awe of each other,
while the innocence in us both
run around chasing soulmates
without a care in the world.
we'd let fantasies exhaust us
until we fall in love all over again.

as we lay in exceeded expectations,
we'd hold hands and stare at the sky
hoping to see what our future holds
in the clouds.

if I could spend the day in love with you,
most of my time would be spent
trying to etch our names in forever.

From "Together in Love"

I pour my cereal before my milk but sometimes when I am feeling a little spontaneous, I'll do the exact opposite. I eat pasta more than I probably should; I just can't help but love the simplicity in it. I don't find any interest in consuming chocolate, ice-cream, or anything sweet that isn't a donut or skittles. Trust me, this fact will come in handy.

In my room, you'll find a ridiculous number of hats, 290 to be specific. Each making a statement on their own. Black art is also depicted on every corner of my so-called man-cave.

There is a tapestry of Black women hanging above my headboard; it's just nice to have Goddesses watching over me as I sleep. They make me think that if God truly does exist, she would look Nubian radiant with a voice that sounds like a Nina Simone-Etta James duet over a Beyonce single.

I smile, A LOT. I laugh even more. I don't know how to whisper but can keep a secret hidden like suppressed trauma. I do everything I can to avoid the information coming out. It's because I know how dangerous exposure can make one feel.

Most people would say I am extremely kind. I think I am an authentic asshole with a dash of sarcasm covered in intense compassion. On occasion, I am hilarious. This will probably distract you from noticing my insecurities.

Every night, I am convincing myself that tomorrow will be worth waking up to. Most mornings I believe it. On the days I don't, I spend breakfast, lunch, and what seems like forever, fighting back the urge to end this commitment with life. But I am too dedicated to the things I put my energy into.

I am elephant tusks. Strong. Visible. Digging, lifting, and gathering myself up to be seen as valuable. Hoping someone will see me as worth it.

from "Date me"
After Amy Kay

I have this tendency
to colonize my thoughts
with the fear of being forgotten

anxiety shooting through
each doubt
telling me
that the importance
I thought I had
in people's life
is fading

these worries
probably come from my history with
hearing constant threats of replacement
in my relationship with life

from "Athazagoraphobia"

most people would assume I was popular in high
school because frequent displays of my personality
was outgoing.
but I wasn't.

and sure, people knew who I was.
knew that my family spent decades
affiliated with this school.
knew that I was just as loud as I was quiet.
knew that I was awkward.
knew that I hated attention unless it was begged for.
knew that I was a class clown imposter.
trying to distract people from seeing my intelligence.
knew not to battle the jokester.
knew how quick quips and rebuttals flew out my
mouth, knew that I would throw even hands faster.

but by no means was I captain of any team.
valedictorian of any class.
not the school bully or problem student.
not the smartest or the dumbest.
did not hang out with any clique.
nor did I feel like I belonged to one.
or anywhere for that matter.

in high school, I was ranked 257 out of a graduating
class of over 600.
nothing special about this number
still proud of it though.
shows me that I managed to fly under the radar of
high school drama and still learn a lot from it.

from "High School Drama"

today I woke up at 2 p.m.,
brushed my teeth then ate pasta while watching
YouTube videos.
in hindsight,
I probably should've waited before consuming
anything.

at 3 p.m.,
I gulped three 24oz bottles of filtered Brita water.
all from the comfort of my queen size coffin.
I laid there,
and stared at the ceiling
trying to envision my success
like the girl on Netflix's Queen Gambit.
it didn't work.

at 4 p.m.,
I managed to construct a grappling hook
out of pillowcases and mattress sheets.
sort of just MacGyver-ed my way
into reaching for my poetry notebook and pencil.
sat there until a wind of motivation
filled my life with enough energy
to write something.

at 6 p.m.,
the stench of my laziness finally got to me.
so, I showered.

at 8 p.m.,
I ate again.
this time
double-cheese burgers on boca patties.

I retreated to my bed sarcophagus
and wrote haikus about the new year
while playing Durand Bernarr's album
on repeat.
this went on for hours.

at 12 a.m.,
I sat and reflected on my day
before I convinced my eyelids to come out of hiding.
and came to the conclusion,
that this has been the most productive day
I have had in weeks.

that to say,
moving forward
can be as simple as
gaining the courage to get up in the morning.

progress is progress.
no matter how insignificant.

from "Ask me about my day"

when I was a kid, youthful days seemed endless. adulthood felt like light years into the future and the only thing on my mind was watching Nickelodeon with a bowl full of cereal. remember those days. the days where landing on someone's property in monopoly was the only bill you ever had to worry about. when sleepovers were the only one-night stands you understood. where chasing a high was the feeling of the wind against your face as you jump off of swing sets at ridiculously extreme heights. only to feel the static-like numbness in your toes when you landed. remember the days when cooties were the only virus we quarantined from. when time was an irresponsible babysitter. never showing up to watch us grow. back then we never asked where they went and simply didn't care. and when they managed to greet our doorsteps, we try to cast them away with neglect until they left us alone. and now, most of us are begging to have time back.

from "Where Did the Time Go?"

this constant push for productivity
in a career or job
with disinterested feelings
for capitalistic benefit
is nothing more than
economic slavery
operating on the standard
of premeditated burnout

from "C.R.E.A.M.

when we met,
the world pulled us close together
so we can experience casual simplicity
that turned into familiarity.

discord and disputes
determined to drag disharmony
between us,
divided and decayed
every inch of closeness we had.

we went through
trials.
denial.
discomfort.
and doubt.

we sacrificed
time.
energy.
effort.
and ourselves.

for what?
just to become strangers again.

from "Strangers"

some people
don't have the mental capacity
to listen and support you
through your issues

some
also don't have the courage
to tell you so

from "Listen"

the truth can be healing like medicine
but it's often a bitter pill to swallow.
and some of y'all
have been hiding it under your tongues,
pretending to be honest with yourselves.

from "The Truth"

it is what it is
or any variant of that sentence,
is not a statement that shows evidence of someone
taking accountability for their actions.

it may in fact “be what it is”
but you still have to own up to your conduct.
it still has consequences.
and those impacted can still be upset.

understand that even if you believe the world revolves
around you,
you can only control the behavior
you exhibit within it.
and how someone else responds,
is not within your power.

from "It is what it is"

I think I fell in love with a soul.
no shallow standard of sexiness attracted me to her.

it's like I grafted onto her presence and have not been
able to focus on anyone else ever since.

I watched the essence of her higher self interact with
my being like an out of body experience.
they call it a soul tie.
a reason this person was curated into my life.

an intensely deep connection.
one that elicits strong feelings,
I didn't even know I had.
she feels so familiar.
almost like completing a part of me but it's not
completion.
but not being around her makes things feel out of
order.
or like something important is missing.
like her.
it's so inexplicably unique.

I'm constantly subconsciously dreaming about our
connection lasting through generations.
I hear our connection in the laughter of kids.
our future lasts forever because of this soul
connection.

from "Soul Connection"

a poem can keep
an emotion alive
for years.

from "Lasting"

“You’ve got a valuable way of interpreting whatcha see.”

- Itzayana F.

“You have this way of being and it’s just so heartwarming. It feels comfortable.”

- Brenda A.

Thank you for listening.