

Soul

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AN OBSERVATION

This is about the first time I came to America.
It was eight years before.
When I was in Africa,
I believed that there was no one in America who was poor.
Then I saw a man who was standing in front of the grocery
store.
He asked the people if they had money to pay for something
to eat.
So then I felt sad.

~Ibrah Samalar

WHAT A DAY!!

It was just his luck
He had to go back
To his Mack truck
For his pack.
When he got back
He heard a quack
Thought it was a duck,
But, he ran smack into a buck!
He dropped his sack
On the track
Took off his shoe
Stepped on a tack.
He screamed, "Ow!"
He got stuck.
He turned around and saw the duck.
Then he knew it would be
MORE BAD LUCK!!!

~Samuel Buckingham

IF I COULD ASK GOD ONE QUESTION

If I could ask God one question, it would be why did my brother have to die at a young age? He didn't get to see what life was about.

My brother was a nice young man. He was raised in a household with two ladies and one male – our grandfather, grandmother, and me, his sister. He lived with our grandparents until he was thirteen years old. Our grandparents passed away, so he had to move in with me. I was his older sister, and I was still a child myself. But I took him in and raised him to be a young man to the best of my knowledge.

But he tended to go his own way as he got older. So you know what that means. He started getting into trouble, which means going in and out of juvenile. One time he went to juvenile, he had to stay for awhile. They put him in this program where he could earn privileges to go on field trips. He had earned enough privileges to go on a camping trip with some of the other kids from the program. On this camping trip, some of the kids and my brother wanted to jump in the water without supervision to see who could swim the farthest. But as they were swimming back, something went wrong, and he didn't get to make it. He started to panic and drowned.

The juvenile program was for young, troubled teens who had drug problems. The program was like a C.C.A. program. They let the kids go home on the weekends if they earned enough points. He had earned enough points to go on this field trip, which was supposed to be supervised by the juvenile employees. I feel that they were not being watched properly if a young man died right in front of their eyes. They should have had all of their attention on the kids, letting them

know not to jump in the water. I feel that kids who go to juvenile shouldn't even be able to go on field trips. That's not what they are there for. This incident was on the news and in the newspaper.

Through this program we could see he was changing. He had a bright glow on his face. The day before they went on the trip, he was so happy and excited because he had never flown on a plane. He never even got to show me and his family how he had changed. He went on that trip and never returned. But after my brother passed away, they closed that program.

~LaQwanda Walker

CYCLONIC VIEW

As thoughts begin to unravel, they begin to spin.
Traveling through my mind and into my heart, hitting my
stomach like a whirlwind.

My heart races; it beats out of control.
Pain, joy and love overcome my soul.

It feels never ending...it's carrying me...why can't I just stop?
The cataclysmic feelings sweep over me,
and suddenly I feel as though I've been dropped.

It gets heavier and stronger with each breath I take.
The terror and fear behind the choices we make.

It stops for a moment; it breaks but won't mend.
It captures you forever; the ride will never end.

~Miko Tabler

I AM VISTA

i am artificial
i am disposable
i am programmable
i am binary
i am machine
i am obsolete

i am error
i am problematic
i am incompatible
i am vista
there is no light
on the faraway screen

i do not like this energy
i exist too nervously
the monitor is watching me
i am overdue for servicing

~Clay Young

HEARTACHE

One of life's lessons for me was trying to cope with the sudden death of my brother.

For many years I've known that he was an alcoholic. I could never understand why he continued to drink; he knew he was causing himself serious harm. Since our mother was residing in a nursing home with chronic health issues resulting from her years of abuse with alcohol, my thought was that her situation would deter him from drinking.

His drinking became so bad he lost several jobs. Over the span of a few years he was so sick physically that he couldn't eat and had developed high blood pressure, seizures, and bleeding ulcers. He often drank to help control the shaking. He only took medication when he had it. If he ran out, he would often refuse to go to the doctor for a new prescription. Often he just didn't have money to pay for it.

He made his way to a family friend's house and stated upon arrival that he didn't feel good but proceeded to the refrigerator for a beer. While trying to open it, he started having a seizure. Friends noticed and helped him back in the chair. He appeared to be somewhat coherent, but minutes later he collapsed on the floor again. After noticing he wasn't breathing, CPR was administered until the paramedics got there. But, he died shortly after he arrived at the hospital. The shock from his sudden death at age 39 was almost too much to deal with. He was too young, he had two young boys, he was a good person, and he would help anybody – but himself.

The Saturday before his death he told me that he knew he needed to quit drinking and that he wanted to, but he wasn't sure if it was possible. I hugged, kissed, and

reassured him that he could if he really wanted to. That would be the last time I would see him alive.

Having to tell our mother was the most heartbreaking thing I have ever had to do. Although she suffered from dementia and a few other health problems, she understood but quickly forgot until something would trigger in her mind. Mom became seriously ill the evening of his funeral and was hospitalized the next morning. The doctors say she went into shock. Against the doctor's odds, Mom came home three weeks later. When the subject of my brother would arise, I went along with whatever her mind set was. Some days she would remember he was gone, and the other days she would tell me that he called and was coming over to visit her.

Many attempts to help him were made, but he just wasn't ready at that time. I believe when he seriously wanted to quit, he just couldn't do it physically. I often still wonder about the "I could have," "I should have," and the "what ifs," but I know in my heart I did what I could. I do wish I had found some way, somehow, to make him understand that his lifestyle would lead to a premature, senseless death.

~Charlene Robinson

SOCIAL DOGS

Stealin', killin', shootin'-- are we for real men?
What about our children? They copy what they're seein'
These little human bein's act now with no reason.
Now we're weepin' because we're losin' our children,
and we are the reason.

Drive-by bullet in her brain,
now her daughter's life is not the same.
Her momma's gone insane, and her tears fall like rain.
So to take away the pain, she smokes on cocaine.
Now how can she explain how her son gets taken away?

We set in front of our TV's babysat so easy.
The generation's new breed is plugged into the main feed.
Gold teeth and freeze, why are they competing when the
hood's full of needy people dying cause they are so greedy?

So we kill ourselves just to make some ends.
Just to keep up with the latest trends.
As long as the money spends, the vicious cycle never ends.
Get the message that I send. Come on back from la-la land.

Why do you kill each other like flies?
We must realize we are our best allies!
We must stay focused on the prize.
It's all been sent to us in a good disguise.
Listen! All is not diamond and gold when it shines.
It's materialized to make you blind.

This ain't nothin' but the truth, friend of mine!

~Benjamin C. Clark

THE i BECOMES LOWERCASE

Dead silence turned to fear and flashing lights,
It was the storm spoken after the calm
Death in the air, and blood fell from the sky,
A single drop on my arm
I had not gone unscathed,
The wrinkle didn't happen, not this time,
Not here,
Not ever,
Hardship and pain is life,
Everyday nailed to the cross,
Every day beat,
Beat in the head
How dumb am I? how much of an imposter have I become?
I am the Mona Lisa who never smiles,
Life will pass like a leaf in the wind,
I am a butterfly that never became,
A child's book full of black lines,
No color is dirty enough for me,
A word search with a missing word,
Never complete,
Alone and forgotten,
Buried in stupidity,
Waiting to fossilize,
Never to be rebuilt,
Crushed like the fly in the window sill
With a broken wing,
i am done, powerless, used,
i can't be me again,
The i becomes lowercase,
i fell from my place like Humpty Dumpty,
i don't want to be rebuilt
Just collected and replaced.

~Brian C. Potts

THE PICTURE

Clouds made it dark; cold wind. Someone is getting hurt in memories, dismembering thoughts. Stagnation of movable thoughts and movement of stagnated feelings. A day in the evening that comes upon the night. Or an evening at night that comes upon the day, not allowing the hours to be left over.

Now, yes, it's dark.

She felt a shiver that made her sigh deeply and sickly for the second time. Unhappy night. She fixed herself in the opaque picture on the wall. Someone who looked at it would see the eyes in the picture, for it was unanimous. It attracted the attention of anyone ordinary. Stuck looking, sound of a dead look, sick sound. It came from that look a sound which actually came from...her? A sound of nothing, of silence. Dead...dead.

The look was fading away...more than it had been for a long time. She frowned and closed her eyes, tightly, very slowly, in slow motion, with disgust. It felt like her saliva glands were being infected. The taste was bad. It could be seen. She grimaced; it was a face of one who didn't like it, of bad taste, of disgust...disgust.

She turned her whole body to the other arm rest side. She wouldn't have herself looking at that drizzled picture. It was slightly horrifying, nostalgic and almost spooky to face it. It'd have been better if a lack of courage hadn't allowed her to go into the room. Once she left herself to be taken by insensibility to that old time, she wouldn't spend one single night alone. It kept company to her the heavy smell of old wool and the lively heat of people talking so closely, almost twisted. Talks about objections of an old and

concealed time, outshined by a white sun of a past scene, when the color she could see now was only the white, from the black and white, when white is all the colors that twist around, and it looks like one, stuck in time. The white, the colors; the black, the background.

She rested her head on the back of the couch and felt a cold wind coming upon her back and nape. She held herself with both arms. She held tightly, more likely to heat the legs. Nothing comfortable; stiff, they held the grief from the whole body and supported the pain – cold that felt like it was coming from inside. The joints ached following the cold. A cold pain. It was a cold pain.

Cold pictures came into her mind. The time was insistent upon invading reality, which, by the way, was already doubted. What was it? What was it? The sensations that controlled her. They fused everything, everything. Or maybe not. Maybe they weren't, and there was no clue of what could be made real by then. But it was a figurative life imprisonment. It couldn't be glimpsed – a chance of living in another dimension. As if going back to it made her go into the surreal.

Now, at that hour, someone could have had a deep impression that nowhere existed but there, or have created the ability of climbing the walls, or have calculated the hypotenuse of a triangle rectangle of one of its sides, or have had the idea of painting them with another color – black and white. The voices around could not be distinguished anymore. Familiar voices made themselves unknown. By the way, there were no more familiar voices. And she needed a fair stare to recognize them, the familiar faces that were no more familiar either. They turned into enigmas, shadows, ideas. What had been there of physical and concrete once, had now disappeared with the conviction that the world

focused and narrowed itself in a room, in a picture, in small pictures of the mind. It was all possible. It was very possible.

No time was there besides this in which the soul had already got lost. A lost soul. It was a lost soul. And what should be done to the past that contributed to the return of a sane time? Maybe it was the wait. The time dominated her, and no part of her could be moved. She didn't even own strength and didn't make herself react to go up any level beyond these appallingly movable disruptions of feelings, stagnated, apparently movable, and always stuck in the picture, frozen, in the black and white time.

It was no longer possible to count the sensations or try to measure them. There was no time. The hours took it and taught her not to allow time to be left over. It was in the picture. The time and the days, the night and she...were in the picture.

~Ellen C. Valvassori

