

Notes from the Road By Spirit Hearts Song

A zine from my traveling heart to yours!

Foreword

Why I wrote this zine:

This zine was initially conceptualized as a self-care guide for the Djesse Vol. 4 World Tour band members and crew.

True to divine co-creative adventures—of which I am well versed—this book took me on a journey I certainly didn't expect, but greatly needed to embark on.

This zine is both the beginning and end of *Hejira!* a ten-part special on my indie radio show, *Lover's Lane*, which I host on Spotify.

While this is the first part of the story the aforementioned Djesse crew will attain, it was written through the knowledge and freedom I gained by recording episodes 1-9 of the program, which feels very time-bendy, indeed.

Should you choose to read these pages and listen along to *Hejira's* heart-filled discussions, you will see how this creation came to be and you will know me better than anyone in the whole, wide world.

I so love spilling secrets.

How to use this zine:

I intend for this creation to help give people time away from the over-stimulation of screens. Even those reading electronically will benefit from the crossword puzzles and journal prompts, which can be printed out and hand-written on with ease.

The illustrations are meant to be colored in. Studies have shown that coloring, be it with markers, paint, colored pencils, and pens, relaxes the brain and allows us to enter meditative flow states.

Adult coloring books are on the rise, a remedy for modern times.

I hope this zine can sit in your medicine cabinet.

A dedication:

To Earth
 and all her beings!
It is time for us
 to rise
 to walk
 alongside each other
 and journey
 home
 together.

Please enjoy some notes from my journey on the road.

XO,
Spirit

P.S. When there is a date underneath a title, that is the date that post was written.

P.P.S There are two certainties in life: death and typos. Please pardon any that you may find.

Joni's Night Ride Home

March 7, 2024

It's approaching 4 o'clock in the morning and I've just sat down to begin my day.

Malcolm Jamal Warner tells us, "A compromised soul may let you sleep, but it will never let you rest."

I've never felt so rested with so little sleep.

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," Joni croons from my boom box/record player resting on the floor. It sits beside the desk on which I write.

It's much too early for false light, so I sit before a candle I cast from the wax of candles long since past.

Recycled matter is everything and everywhere; nothing on Earth is new.

Except for knowledge when tasted for the very first time and served fresh like summer fruit.

Let our brains be watermelon wet and able to rest, regardless of how much or how little sleep we get.

"A compromised soul may let you sleep, but it will never let you rest."

I believe an *uncompromised* soul wakes when it wants to and sleeps because it *must*—because an uncompromised soul *must* care for itself completely. That is the compromise it has undone—the compromise we are taught to make for money's sake; to work ourselves weary. Returning home

empty, save for flesh, blood, and bones makes us compromise our health for a false-sense-of-stablility's sake.

It's a choice 99% of humanity has been tasked to take as a rotten sliver makes us quake in the wake of their wrongdoings.

“Who you gonna get to do the dirty work when all the slaves are free?”

A great question from Joni and an answer from me:

When 99% of the world is free from servitude, there will be no dirty work because work will be a sacred calling, a soul's empowered choice.

*

I was watching our two garbagemen this past trash day. They walk behind the truck and launch missiles of engorged plastic into its death chamber while passing a vape between them.

They often work silently, needing no words to know when one requires help from the other. One just appears at the can and they lift it up with two sets of hands.

I'm thankful they do this job and I believe there are souls who would want to join this brotherhood: the sacred sect of garbagemen.

In Philadelphia, ten or so years ago, I saw my first garbagewoman. She was black and wearing a hijab. She clung to the back of the truck and stood majestically adroit.

In Istanbul they have flowers on their trash trucks, which gives the role more dignity.

Someone's got to take the trash, just like someone's got to grow the food, sew the clothes, and drive the buses to make sure this "Passion Play" goes on.

"When all of the slaves are free," there will still be garbage women and men and we will make them millionaires.

*

When I was in college I'd take the Bolt Bus from 30th Street Station in Philly to 42nd Street in NYC. This was the first leg of my journey home to the tiny town of Goshen, New York.

On one snowy evening, our bus driver—a black woman—was tasked with driving an eight-wheeler full of people two hours with limited visibility down unpaved highway roads. She must have driven at 30mph. I was never more thankful to be in a bus moving slow.

I prayed all the way there to feed hope into our fear-filled air.

When my feet touched New York concrete, I could have kissed the ground—and our driver.

"Thank you," I told her. "That must have been so scary."

She looked like she could finally breathe.

"Yeah," she told me. "It was."

“When all the slaves are free,” bus drivers will too be millionaires. And pilots and air hostesses, who wait on us hand and foot.

Nothing makes classism more unbearable than an international flight.

“When all the slaves are free,” planes will be public property and we will **all** be able to extend our legs in reclining seats.

Trains will run throughout our world and everyone will travel the globe for free.

Farmers will toss out their chemicals and fresh fruits and greens will be free for every one of us, subsidized greatly by our gracious governments.

*

I met a farmer in Utah named Michael. He had white hair and wild, blue eyes. His mother was Native American.

Michael owned land near the Airbnb I was inhabiting with my sister, Free, and Stephanie, Free’s best friend since childhood. It was summer of 2019 and I’d spent the months prior running away from home.

In January, on the coldest day of both the old and new year, I flew to San Francisco with the intention of getting a job.

I’d been living at home with my mother and younger sister, sequestered in the town that gave me the anxiety I’d been carrying since we moved there at age 11.

Now, in January of 2019, I was 25, seven months away from 26, and one year older from leaving NYU with an MFA in hand and my confidence in myself as a writer close to shattered.

I'd left the city that May, a few days after I graduated. I almost didn't attend my graduation, but I went to both the Tisch ceremony and the university-wide commencement.

There, I sat with my friend, Sean, who's Canadian. Sean's roommate, who was a year above us in the program, was also Canadian like Sean and a graduate of UPENN, like me.

Justin Trudeau was the commencement speaker, and Sean told me his roommate was boycotting it for that reason.

I think her name was Rachel.

She had brown hair to her bosom and wore a pair of bright patterned leggings, over which short-shorts reigned supreme in any and all weather.

Sean said she was incredibly frugal and incredibly smart. Her thesis musical was a masterpiece with an octopus as its lead.

For its staged reading, a black man with skin of a deepened hue waved his arms with so much grace, we really believed he was underwater.

His name was Ronald, and he read the role of Raven wondrously in my thesis reading the following year.

By the time the reading ended, however, I was in full blown tears for reasons less than wonderful. The piece had simply not come together. The director didn't understand the play

enough to bring its world to life and for most of the roles, the actors weren't quite right.

Earlier in the year, I'd witnessed the piece's power when our professor, Jonathan Bernstein, brought Broadway actors to read sections of our theses.

Karen Pittman read the lead role in my scene. I had tears in my eyes when it ended. I looked across the room at Sean. He mouthed, "Wow."

If Sean was impressed, I knew the piece had the power to reach my target audience: the open-hearted artist.

Sean listened to Joni Mitchell and one of our composer-classmates told a stranger this in a bar: "All the composers want to work with Sean because he's the best and if you get paired with him [for your thesis musical,] that means you're the best."

Sean got paired, not with that man, but with Jinhee, a composer from Korea.

"I feel like they all infantilize her," I told Sean once. "They" being our classmates.

Sean and Jinhee's musical was a masterpiece about a teenaged boy coming to terms with his homosexuality in the midst of the Christian camp his parents struggled to keep afloat.

The main character, Sebastian, speaks to God at one point and says, "You always know what I need," and he thanks his god mightily.

Today I thank my gods I don't have a nose ring anymore and I'm 30 instead of 24.

The nose ring never properly healed, probably because I never really wanted it. I'd gotten it because of all the times Freedom told me, "You'd look so cute with one!" It was at the time I worked hard to be considered cute.

Free has a gold nose ring now and it never gives them a blistered, unsightly bump like mine did.

It's good to be 30.

30 has been for me a year of breaking free; of bursting through boundaries I'd been born into and finally establishing some boundaries of my own.

I no longer work myself to the bone, even though the past six years I've been without a full-time job.

I'd spent many years pursuing content creation, reaching for the carrot of full monetization.

I was vlogging at the time we met Michael, who'd come with a message from our Airbnb host.

Me and Free were driving across the country, from Harlem to Berkeley, California, where Freedom was going to start business school.

This was before Covid; before we learned the Bay is one of our country's biggest shanty towns—it's the favela without the saving grace of Samba.

The slums outside of Paris can relate.

The first time I'd seen them, I did a double take. I was riding the RER A from Paris to Noisy-le-Grand, the *banlieu* where I was stationed as an English Teaching Assistant.

It was 2015 and I had just completed my undergraduate education.

It was at Penn I learned the French I used to make it for the month I lasted in the program.

That month turned out to be essential three years later, when I returned to France the May after I graduated with my MFA.

I already knew how to travel throughout Paris, and even found my way to the Eiffel Tower sans Google Maps.

I carried a disposable camera and took pictures of cigarettes at a French woman's feet, my Belgian fries at *le tour Eiffel*, and I took selfies by the Seine.

I stopped at the train station photo-booths twice, and my mom has one of those pictures framed in her entryway.

Paris Bercy, it says on the back. 2018.

That trip was life changing because it showed me there was still life in me yet to be lived, a world of wonder waiting to be explored.

I went to Paris, Marseille, London, Lille, and Orléans.

On the EasyJet from Marseille to London, there was a team of British boys sporting soccer uniforms. One of them had long cornrows and the biggest eyes I'd ever seen. The boys

were all so tiny and many of them looked to be mixed-race, which stood out to me.

Could it be change was happening more rapidly in the Mother Country?

*

I saw a meme in my Tumblr days of Prince Harry in the front row of a fashion show, eyes locked in on a black model.

The bold text said, “Prince Harry looks like he’s about to risk it all for a taste of that brown sugar.”

Little did we know...

Though, clearly: we knew.

*

Some say in the future, everyone will be mixed-race, as if we aren’t all mixed up and mashed up now.

I met a man—a cannabis farmer—who put all of his savings —construction big bucks—into starting his farm. He runs the business with his daughter and his wife; they met at a Grateful Dead concert.

“You’re really smart,” he told her early on in their relationship. “You should go to school.”

She’s a chemist now who develops the formula for their gummies and Joey, her husband and aforementioned

farmer, travels around New York to get his products stocked in dispensaries.

It was October of 2023 when we met. I'd recently gotten hired at a pop-up dispensary, incentivized by the New York government to help farmers sell the products they'd been prevented from selling as dispensaries struggled to open.

This pop-up was hoped to be a hit, as it was centrally located in U.S. Magazine's "Most Collegiest Town" of 2023.

College students are broke though, and one of the three colleges in that town is a state school, where I was working as an adjunct writing professor.

The pay was the pits, as foretold by my college professor, Bronwyn, who'd refused to write me a recommendation for grad school because she so disagreed with the adjunct-to-PhD pipeline. She was an adjunct PhD and felt taken advantage of by the University, whose president is paid millions annually.

I think about that whenever I receive mail from Penn asking me of all people for money.

It should be asking the president, if you ask me.

*

Anywho, one mild October day, I went to training for the job. The regional manager told me I could come in around 12, though the full-time workers would be in at 9.

I moseyed in at noon and I could feel the fear when I got there. They'd expected lines for legal weed, and there hadn't been anyone even poke their head in out of curiosity.

The growers, or their representatives, had come to set up shop, to meet the clientele, and establish brand loyalty.

“This isn’t good,” the manager said again and again.

By the end of the first day, the shop made a little over \$200, and the countertop they had to install in the space cost more than that, the manager told me.

As I walked to my car, I passed a silver Mercedes crossover, where Joey sat at the wheel.

“You wanna smoke?” He asked me.

I’d started talking to Joey in the shop as I was drawn to his tanned skin, against which silver and turquoise rings glistened.

He was microwaving coffee and I urged him against it. He said his daughter tells him the same thing. I learned that he was the owner of the display with the crystals of amethyst guarding the flowers green.

So when he called to me in the parking lot, I knew I’d be safe with him.

In the passenger’s seat sat a young blonde man, who’d sat on the window sill of the shop with a smile. He had a joint with concentrated hash rolled inside the cannabis flower and that was what we smoked.

There were more crystals in the back of Joey’s car, along with clothes and papers. The crystals were massive and I held one on my lap.

Joey told us he was Sicilian. Then he said he'd just taken an ancestry test and learned he was 4% black and Moorish.

Those Moors knew how to get down.

Those Sicilians, too.

In my high school Spanish class we learned of a Conquistador who was nicknamed *Matamoros*—Moor killer.

The way it was taught was as if that was good.

It's good the Moor in Joey's lineage survived, because now our world has Joey, a cannabis farmer with sparkling, multi-colored eyes.

Joey should be a millionaire, but the state made farmers wait to bring their products to the people and Joey's green is sun-grown, which most budtenders don't recommend as they think it's lower in efficiency.

"He needs better packaging," the manager said.

I disagree.

"When all the slaves are free," cannabis will be seen as a sacred entity and we will care for the hands that grow it.

We won't touch stuff grown in labs, because the sun is what gives all greens their power.

Men like Joey won't have to drive six hours just to get a corner of a shelf in a fledgling pop-up shop.

Why would they *not* have to?

They'd be millionaires, of course.

And marketing wouldn't matter, because by then we'll internalize that it really **is** what's inside that matters. We'll all see marketing as just another gold-plated lie.

*

Back in 2019 in that Utah Airbnb, Michael brought us a massive bag of cherries he had pitted himself, tomatoes he had grown, and wild arugula he picked for us on his way there.

They were the best tomatoes I've tasted to this day; and I never knew arugula is naturally spicy.

We gave half the bag of cherries back, as he'd said he was going to make a pie with them and we didn't dare rob him of that pleasure.

The cherries we kept were dark and sweet and wet—not one bitter fruit among them.

Michael came the morning we left, his denim button down glistening against the brown and red mountain range.

We took two instant photos with him, one of which he asked to keep and tapped into the pocket against his heart.

Michael should be a millionaire.

He told us his Native mother wanted to be a doctor, but the they—the system, the man—had stopped her from getting there.

Michael told us he rides around town on his horse and he's the one man bigots tremble at the sight of.

"When all the slaves are free," and this Passion Play really picks up, 100% of people will have all the money we need.

We will be generous, like Michael.

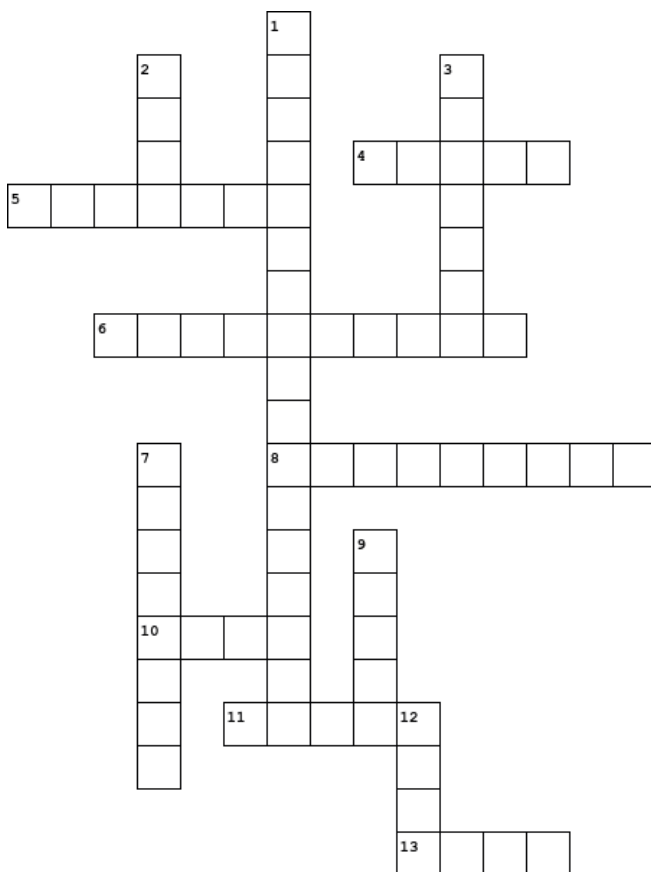
We will grow in the sun, not in spite of it, like Joey's tender greens.

We will risk it all for that which we love, though by that point love won't be a risk at all.

We will realize **we** are the creators of this Passion Play and we will collaborate with each other to unite our vision of a world where everyone is as abundant and rich as our wondrous Mother Planet.

When **we** realize we must choose our roles and, in doing so, choose our destinies with care-full, conscious intention, *that* is when all the slaves run free.

Crossword Puzzle 1



Across

4. "Staring at a maple leaf, leaning on the mother tree," Gavin DeGraw says to himself, "We all lost ____"
5. Finish the Joni line: "I'm traveling in some ____; I'm sitting in some café."
6. Finish the Joni line: "Once in a while, in a big blue moon, there comes a night like this. Like some ____ invented this Fourth of July night ride home."
8. According to The Fantasticks, ____ is the perfect time to be in love.
10. Shakespeare's Othello was, like Joey, a ____.
11. Walking through Paris at dawn, one can see the homeless shackled up in ____ in front of designer boutiques like Louis Vuitton.
13. Bonnie Raitt found love "Just in the ____ of time."

Down

1. This American actor played Othello in a 1995 film version of the play, as well as Morpheus in "The Matrix." No space
2. La persistència de la memòria is by this Spanish painter (last name)
3. This famous Parisian café, Café Des Deux ____ means 'the two windmill café' en anglais.
7. Finish the Kimbra line: "I have lived and I have died so many times, it's a wonder I ____."
9. Finish the Earth Wind and Fire line: "You will find peace of mind if you look way down in your ____ and soul."
12. "I wanna know: have you ever ____ the rain coming down on sunny day? - Creedence Clearwater Revival

Gavin Degraw's *Free* is the CD I pop in next.

I'm glad my bedroom rests above our neighbor's garage; it's 8:27 AM and the speakers are blaring.

"I'm a pond...I'm a ridge/ I'm a mountain, I'm a ditch/ I'm a dagger in the shield...I'm impatient/ I'm a yield..."

I'm melting more beeswax for tonight's candle and wondering where to take this zine next.

A mug of mint tea warms my right hand; a black pen guides my left.

I kept a blog in college and the five years that followed called "black stylo," Frenghish for "black pen."

This blog is the only reason I still have access to my writing from that time, as I burned all of my journals and photos from my early days of traveling in 2020.

The only reason my Parisian photo-booth pictures remain is because my mother rescued them from the trash.

That was during a time when I was ashamed of where I'd been and determined to destroy the evidence that I'd dared to be here at all.

Growing up black in a small, upper-middle class, predominately white town proved incredibly damaging for my self-esteem.

The dominant cultural narrative preaching my inferiority was mirrored in the teen magazines I subscribed to and the TV shows I devoured.

I was basically raised by the television.

That's what I told the woman giving us a vintage dining set for free off the Bay Area Craigslist.

She lived in the Oakland apartment of my dreams, but was moving because a neighborhood Peeping Tom made it hard to find roommates.

This was in 2020, at the height of the pandemic, when Free and I ran away from home in the pouring rain.

We drove from N.Y. to C.A. in a 20 year old Subaru Forrester we bought with the money from my stimulus check.

The woman with the Peeping Tom offered us her *massive* TV and was shocked when we declined.

“Did you not grow up with TV or something?”

Quite the contrary.

I've seen so much TV, I don't need to watch another show for the rest of my life, and I still have plenty of episodes to think about. I feel the same way with film, though I will watch one from time to time.

Usually, it's a movie I've already seen and intend to write about, like “Back to the Future,” or “Chocolat.”

Most often, I can't make it through a film in one sitting as I refuse to enter the states of comatose I so frequented as a youth.

I clicked on a satirical YouTube video earlier called, “iPad kid goes to a family function.” I wanted to learn what the

consensus is on this generation. The commenters said these kids lack social skills, have decimated attention spans, and interact with their world as though it, too, is an iPad.

If I were born into this generation, I'd be too broke to be an iPad kid; I'd be glued to the TV instead.

We really can't escape our destinies...



“Okinawa,” by Chris Potter is one of my Ultimate favorite songs. The version from his album “Lift,” live at The Village Vanguard, is the one I’m talking about.

It first appeared to me through Spotify, where it can no longer be found. The year was 2019. The place: San Francisco.

In search of work, I'd rented a basement shoebox for one month, graciously sponsored by my Chief Benefactor and father, Poppy, pronounced like the puppy dog.

Poppy pays for my rent now because he believes in me and my writing. He came to my thesis show and thought it was good.

I vehemently disagreed and greatly struggled with the weight of my own disbelief.

So instead of writing lyrics or libretto, as I'd trained to do with my degree, I walked the San Francisco streets and practiced poetry instead.

That was part of the problem my thesis year of grad school —I got tired of A.A.B.A and wanted to write sinuous poems without tight-knit rhyming schemes.

“It seems like you have a hard time making decisions,” our book writing teacher told me while we discussed my play.

In retrospect, I disagree. I had made my decision; I chose to write as if experiencing a dream, and that professor had been awake far too long. The dream state no longer made sense to her nor did it hold appeal.

I did nothing but dream in San Francisco. I smoked ganja everyday and listened to music every moment I was awake. I danced in front of the mirror and found solace in a Mount named “Davidson.” I made a pilgrimage to the water and found shelter in my shoebox during a stretch of downpour days.

I did not find a job; I didn't even score one interview that month.

So at the end of my sublease, I hightailed it to Los Angeles, where my socialite sister, Free, had a best friend with a couch to spare.

I insisted on paying Izra some of the money Poppy funneled to me. She'd refused to charge me for my keep, insisting I was family.

In Los Angeles, I went to Long Beach and saw a dolphin in the water. I lost my breath at the sight of the glistening waters of Manhattan Beach. I was glad to see that every driver who took me to the ocean parked and admired the view.

From Izzy's place, I packed up and put tickets to Paris on my charge card because I believed I could eventually pay it off.

I haven't missed a payment to this day.

While waiting at LAX for my flight to depart, Airbnb notified me that my host had cancelled my upcoming reservation.

I surprised myself by not feeling worried. Instead, I talked to the agent who offered up two selections of similar apartments.

The winning choice was obvious: "bright and sunny studio" with a pink accent wall and full kitchen. There were meditation cushions on the floor.

I stayed two days in that apartment, located in the 20th arrondissement of Paris, a neighborhood filled with Moors, Maghrébins, and other colorful folks like me.

Check-out was at 11 and I was there 'til about 11:03. A knock came on the door.

The owner, Danny, and his girlfriend, Linda, entered with big smiles that mirrored their big hearts.

I learned Danny was Colombian and had grown up in Miami. His mother was a terrible cook and made him and his brother drink smoothies that we dang near inedible.

Linda was an interior design student who spoke in French for Danny on the phone.

When I moved to a pre-war one bedroom in the 13th arrondissement, Danny and Linda invited me to hang out at their place, an invitation I was eager to accept.

My previous trip to France, a self declared writing retreat in May of 2018, was incredibly singular.

I existed only in my mind and on my pages. To meet people and truly connect—that had been my dream.

One of the biggest lessons I've come to Earth to learn is that:

dreams truly do
come true.

WELLLL Wishes Word Search

E M B O D I M E N T J X D N O W B D
N M G I L E B N N F N Z B W D B E G
T J L V L H R A M V I D G A P O G Q
A O A C N J O L E X Q Y D B N L L Z
J Y C O N S C I O U S N E S S D H V
M A T U R A T I O N C B W T R N N K
V C M A N I F E S T A T I O N E S M
I I K V O C B R Z P U U T S H S S O
N G C L I B E R T Y I X Y E B S E D
T A X Q T Z Y C O N N E C T I O N E
E M S N A P R E S E N C E T F M I E
G A N O E Y Y T Q H M U W D S U L R
R P O I R L P H G T D Y S Y S S E F
I H I T C A S E A N Y G V M E I V X
T P T A O S B C S E T H C L N C I E
Y M A R C Y D I K M I T P Q E V L L
T S S O Z U C T N R R U P E R B W E
B G N B C X Z S O E A R M K A I U V
F B E A U T Y U I W L T I W W C N A
H Y S L C G I J T O C W H Q A V E T
J I P L G N K W A P S L E U F N C I
C S K O Y L U R L M F J H G M U O O
R W V C X D V Q E E I U I S Z N F N

1. liberty
2. freedom
3. peace
4. clarity
5. justice
6. connection
7. liveliness
8. boldness
9. empowerment
10. integrity
11. joy
12. beauty
13. truth
14. music
15. magic
16. manifestation
17. collaboration
18. cocreation
19. elation
20. sensations
21. maturation
22. elevation
23. consciousness
24. presence
25. awareness
26. embodiment

Q: What are some wishes you wish to come true?

Forward Moving Action

When we're told

“You miss 100% of the shots
you don't take,”

we must know:

the reward is not from getting the ball
in the hoop—
the reward is: following
our momentum.

Nothing feels as good as
as moving

when and where
our souls yearn to take us.

The pain comes *not* from missing
the net,

but in slamming the breaks;

the moment we hesitate
and slump,

believe we are not good enough—

that is

true defeat,

nets and numbers be damned!

It was never about the game.

It is about taking the shot

because it feels good
to lift.

Q: What are some shots you desire to take?



*** A page just for your thoughts ***

Self Care Tips for Travelers

1. **Make a friend out of minutia;** turn the ordinary into a moment etched into your skin where it can sit forever. Take a photograph of a flag at half-mast; keep a journal and a slew of entries in the Notes app of your phone. Try to remember what a Tuesday morning felt like on this journey, because many Tuesdays from now, you will yearn to remember that feeling.
2. **Treat your body as the vessel on which your journey relies.** Food of the earth, not the factories, will have you feeling the best. Fruit and tubers will ground you; leafy greens will scrape any goo afflicting you right out. Just bring a match into the toilet with you if you're new to green eating ;)
3. **Take time to do nothing.** Gaze out the window, watch the sky roll by. Traveling is enough work as it is.
4. **Avoid media and entertainment vessels of “the scaries”** for a traveler's kryptonite is fear. It closes our hearts right up.
5. **If you have access to your router, turn it off at night and put all of your devices on Airplane mode.** You'll feel more grounded when you do. **Never sleep with your phone next to your head!!**
6. When you are traveling long distances, you are suspended in the in-between. You are literally and metaphysically between worlds. **Use this time to dream and to glean all of the ways in which you still desire**

freedom. You can find immense clarity in in-between times like these.

7. **Be honest with yourself about what it is you truly need in order to thrive while traveling.** Only when you are honest about what you need can you open up and fully receive it, both from yourself and from your companions.
8. **Be kind to yourself**—always, and *especially* when you're spending extended periods of time on the road. Traveling really *is* hard enough; allow your mind to be your inner sanctum.
9. **Have a distinct demarcation between inside clothes and outside clothes.** Don't wear clothes you've worn outside while sitting on your bed.
10. **Support your immune system daily by incorporating raw ginger and raw garlic into your meals.** Both of these super-foods can be finely chopped and added to smashed avocado with a pinch of salt. Call it guacamole, call it medicine; I call it delicious! You can also chew on a small slice of garlic if you feel your body starting to have an immune response or you feel you've been exposed to someone else's sickness. In this case, add **echinacea tea** into your regime. Please make sure your garlic, ginger, and echinacea have been organically grown.

Moments of Pleasure*

How many can you find
and engrain inside your mind?

- A car from Mississippi
- The clock at 7:50

- Seagulls soaring above the sea
- A hawk keeping watch in a tree

- A bright yellow Volkswagen Beetle
- A poster with Don Cheadle

- A family of deer
- The sky completely clear

- A gaggle of three geese
- An uncle and his niece

- A chair without a back
- Pointy heels that clack

- A mural of a flower
- A group of people in their power

- A laughing, smiling man
- A beaver in a dam

- A cat inside a house
- A scurrying street mouse

- A dog like Scoobie Doo
- A lost and lonesome shoe

- A pup walking its owner
- A contented-looking loner

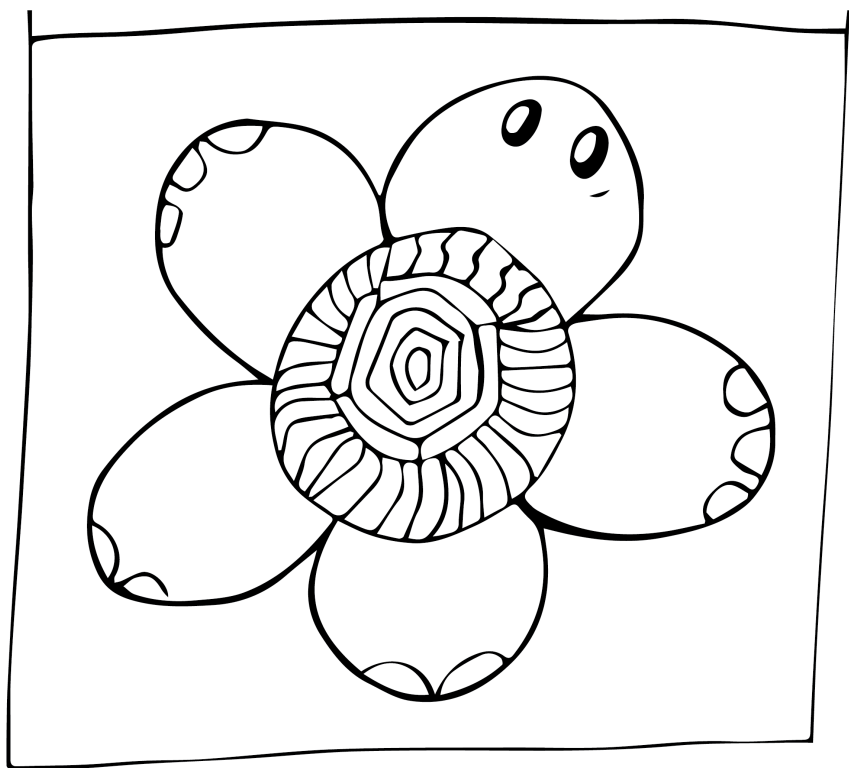
- A tent that's someone's home
- A column like those in Rome

- A statue of a deity
- A wrinkled, laughing lady

- A fortune teller's sign
- Something that makes you think, "Wow, we really *are* divine."

Q: What is that something?

**This activity is inspired by the Kate Bush song of the same name!*



Some say our world is carried on a turtle's back.

Q: Can you close your eyes and imagine that?

Now, close your eyes and count to three; write down the first thing(s) your third eye sees.

The Best Dating Advice

The best dating advice
comes from Disney's Aladdin:

“Seek thee out—
the Diamond
in the rough.”

Are you waiting
for the Diamond
or are you rescuing the rough?

Are you seeking out
the rough ones
cuz you're used to loving tough?
To pushing
and to pulling
and to love that goes away?

When you watch out
for the Diamond
you will never fall for
grey.

You'll become what you desire,
shaped to form out of your fire;
you will become both Queen and Sire:
the maker
of your destiny.

How does this come to be?

Let's look back to Aladdin.
Aladdin had to
earn his destiny

which was:
to learn honesty
is the best quality
in a king.

Genie gave him riches,
the most populous of wishes,
which were not even useful anyway.
For to win his Diamond,
 Jasmine,
Aladdin had to put his hand in
the True Fight:
to cast out darkness in the land.

He had to take a stand
 for freedom
 and to do so,
 he had to become *free!*

It's lies that really bind us.

We are caught in
 a web of lies
 a matrix
 beautifully in disguise.

Aladdin learned
 king-ness starts within
 and reverberates
 out.

It's got to.
It's the same with beauty.
It's the same with dating.
It's the same with love.

Cultivate it within

and it will
eventually
come spilling
out.

Seek the Diamond
in yourself
and you will
become the Diamond
in and out.

Then, a shiny magnet, you'll attract
the love
you are.

"I choose him!"
Jasmine sprang into
Aladdin's arms.

And that is how
an ordinary man
became a Diamond;
It is how a Diamond
became King.

Our world is rich in Diamonds
who have never found their ring while
their spirits cry and sing
out for attention.

Our souls need attention
and plenty of it.

A diamond *is* meant to be admired.

Same as a rose,

same as your toes

and all the bits of you you've ever tried
hide.

Drop your disguise,
dear one.

You are
the Diamond
in
the rough.

Blue Skin

In grad school, Sean and I would sneak away into a practice room and create songs from poems—Sean on piano, me on voice. We would improvise one take, just for the fun of it.

We could have done that everyday and gained enough knowledge to earn our MFAs *without* the weekly critiques.

One afternoon, we found the poem “Blue Skin” by Shel Silverstein.

It’s a poem about two souls with blue skin. They each keep theirs hidden behind large masks, however, and end up passing their **true** equal by and missing the opportunity to be witnessed in their totality and loved for who they truly are.

To quote Israel Houghton, “That would preach, wouldn’t it?”

Q: What bits of yourself do you find you shift or mask in the presence of others?

Q: Which people in your life, if any, have seen you completely unmasked?



*** A page just for your thoughts ***

The Trouble with Criticism

When we have trouble
 accepting criticism
it's because we were
 critically abused
when we were younger.

Tongue lashings,
image-bashings—
we felt we could
 never shape up
 to form
 the facade they wanted us
 to be.

We were always wrong
 and we longed
 to belong
 to hands that wouldn't turn
 their words on us;
it'd be less painful to feel
 sticks
 and stones.

But the groan of critique?
You'll know you were abused
 if just the thought of it
 kills you
 and stills you into a stupor
 you feel you can't control;
it takes hold of your heart
and steals you into the dark
 depths
where your ancestors,

who never held you
and made you feel like your *existence*
was a problem,
dwell.

It's ancestral hell
and may all of us
leave there
now.

So anyhow,
the trouble with criticism
is that too many of us
come from a world of abuse—
there is no use in breaking
us down further.

It's time we build each other up.

Borderline

2021, *standalone song*

We grew up
on the borderline—
teetering from ledge to edge
thinking we were fine.

Now grown up I'm
searching for myself...
but it seems that I've forgotten me
somewhere on the shelf.

So I'm
searching
and lurching
for something more
while trying to beat down
abandoned doors
and maybe I'll break free
of borders that bind me...

We grew up
on the borderline—
full of empty promises
thinking we had dined.

Now grown up we
try to compensate
and we fill our plates with things we hate
just to say we ate.

All the while...
searching
and lurching

for something more
while trying to beat down
abandoned doors
and maybe we'll break through
the borders that bind
me and you...

We grew up
on the borderline—
teetering from ledge to edge
thinking we were fine...

All the while...

The Inbetween

2020, *Songs for My Mother*

All this time
I thought I was a broken one.
And I told myself *I don't need anyone!*
 So I packed up my bags and said,
 I will run
 away.

I went looking for something
 outside of me;
I went looking for someone
 I couldn't see
These years
 in-between
 you
 and
 me.

London,
Paris,
Harlem,
Home.
LA,
San Francisco, too,
 and somehow...
 Home.

Hotels,
 hostels,
 time alone...

Berkeley
and the Oakland Hills
 and somehow...
 Home.

All this time
I thought I was a broken one.
And I told myself I wasn't anyone!
Lies I believed...

Now I sit on a couch
 here in Ithaca;
 I reflect on the things I have seen and done.

Myself I see
 thanks to the
 Inbetween.

Q: What worlds are you currently in between?



Q: To what areas of your life would you like to bring more openness?

Q: Which habits, thought-patterns, and/or relationships would you like to close yourself off to?

One of the last hostels I stayed in was in London in 2018.

I had just finished my second European sojourn that summer, traveling from Amsterdam to France and London with my dear friend, Morgan.

As with Sean, Morgan and I met in grad school. Morgan is a June Gemini, like Sean and black like me.

At the time I studied at NYU, I went by my given name, Maegan.

Once I saw there was another M-named black girl, my stomach dropped: I'd never had positive experiences with being seen as *myself* when I was one of few black girls...

Goshen, New York

December 2015

As I came into my teenage years in upstate, New York, blackness was a novelty. Whenever anyone said the word *black*, it was always in a hushed tone, as if a secret police was waiting to punish any and all politically incorrect conspirators. People seemed afraid of any form of blackness, attracted to it, repulsed by it, and eager to adopt it at the same time. Many times I heard classmates speak of rap music with the same mechanical disdain, then sing along to the 50 Cent song on the radio. Teachers made assumptions about those two students walking with sagging pants down the hallway, yet smiled kindly at me.

At home, the relationship I had with blackness was always brought to my attention, with neither my invitation nor my consent. Growing up, my mother always made sure to

distinguish the difference between *us* and *them*. We were Haitian, she spoke French, and our straightened hair and matching outfits would make us more appealing to the world at large. Oppositely, those *others* were *just* black--less culture, more melanin, and no future.

Hearing this for several years caused me to view blackness as a system with varying levels of merit. Because my parents came from Haiti, a country ravaged by colonialism, the merit within the system of blackness came from being the least amount of black. "Your grandfather had blonde hair and green eyes," my mother would often recount. Spending many summers hiding from the sun and running from the rain, it wasn't long before I grew to feel slightly insulted if someone called me black, *as if it were not obvious that I am Haitian.*

When I moved to a school where most of my peers were white, I was foolish enough to believe that they saw the differences that had been instilled within me; black was not just black.

But I didn't have to stay long at my new school before I learned that one black face was interchangeable with another. Suddenly, I was not just Maegan, but Chloe, Autumn, and if there were any other big black girls I'd be them too. Countless times people addressed me as Chloe, and eventually I grew tired of correcting them. I simply let myself morph into the blackness that Chloe, Autumn, and I all shared. I studied the way Chloe walked down the hall, head bent, eyes downcast, as if she were convincing herself that she was not really there. Soon I walked that way, too.

I couldn't shake the irking that still arose, however, when I was mistaken for Chloe. Chloe, who fell asleep in class, while I was alert. Chloe, who absorbed the taunting while I

fought back. Chloe, who was friends with the other black kids, while I found solace from the cafeteria between pages in the library. How could one believe we were the same when we were so inherently different?

I asked myself this question for my first year at that school. I was perplexed that I had to ask it for the two years that followed. I ask myself this still today, though Chloe and I have gone our separate ways.

We will forever be bonded by the shared experience of living in a time and place where only our blackness and fatness defined us.

Back to the hostel story—

I felt lucky to have only been called Morgan once, and the teacher explained with profusion that she had a pattern in her brain that caused her to mix up names.

Morgan and I became fast friends, and we ended up writing two theses: one with male composers and the second as an all-women trio with me, Morgan, and our ethereal Aussie composer Alayna, who speaks and sings in whispers.

It was halfway through thesis completion that Morgan and I decided to take that end-of-August trip, during which I would turn twenty-five.

We planned the first half of our sojourn in a coffee shop that sold five dollar lattes that I bought whenever I had five dollars.

Barbara, a seventy year old classmate lamented once in a seminar that *kids these days don't know how to save; they buy all these drinks in Starbucks when they could be putting that money away.*

She was right, of course.

Morgan and I agreed to meet in Amsterdam a day or two before my birthday.

As I was turning twenty-five, I wanted to finally get a proper taste of the life I had dared to claim for myself—a life where the world was an open door, a place where I, like our very world, could too become new.

Chaos Theory

May 2018 — on my solo writing retreat three months before the trip with Morgan

It's a beautiful day in the Ile de France, and I swear the air smells sweeter in Paris. Never did I imagine I would be a Paris convert, *mais voila*, it would appear that I am.

My final stop on this European sojourn is the town of Orléans, where I have an Airbnb that is promised to be *absolument charmant*.

Going back to New York feels like going to another world, and I guess, in a way, it is.

“The New World,” they called it, as Europeans left their homes in droves to discover what they could. But the world is always changing, the world is always new. Each day, we step into a brave, New World.

I look up at the woman sitting across from me. She looks like a singer named Rachael Price, and I'm convinced the world is full of doubles. Maybe one lives in the Old World, while the other lives in the New.

Which one am I?

A couple years ago, I was sent a photo of a woman the sender thought looked just like me. I thought I looked *much* better, so I didn't respond (*if you don't have anything nice to say and all that jazz...*)

“Did you get my message?” the sender asked a day or two later.

“Yeah, and I don’t look a thing like her.” I’m much prettier, I added to myself. But if we *did* look alike, I was certain that she looked like how I did in the past: wild and disheveled. I was no longer that; I was New.

Nouvelle Orléans, New England, New Jersey—the U.S. is filled with New. Maybe that’s why I like Europe so much—it feels old. Grounded—in itself and in its roots.

I am in constant search of my roots.

Déracinement is a phrase used to describe the feeling of uprootedness children of the African Diaspora are kin to. It is the feeling of being untethered while also grasping at the ground in search for what is no longer there. What has been uprooted.

I used to think there was French in me, but now I’m not so sure. I’m not sure there’s anything in anyone since we’re all just recycled matter. (*Ashes to ashes and all that jazz...*)

*

I had a dream that went something like this: in the beginning, there was chaos. Though everything seemed wild and frenetic, everything had a purpose. I saw the big and the bang, the explosion of light into matter, and it got me to wondering: what if life, in all its uncertainty, in all of its chaos, was exactly as it needed to be in each and every instant?

What if there were no mistakes, and there were no failures?
There was no right nor wrong? There was just--chaos.

Or what appeared to be.

Everything seemed wild and frenetic, but everything had its purpose.

What if we're all just balls of energy buzzing and moving,
attracting and repelling to bring the Next Big Bang?

What if we are the Next Big Bang? The New Big Bang—co-
creators of our very own existence?

I stop to sip some coffee.

Though it's much too strong, I'm afraid to put sugar in it
because I don't want to lose control because sugar in coffee
turns into a piece of chocolate with tea turns into where can
I buy a chocolate cake?

(If you give a girl a cookie and so on...)

Sometimes, when my surroundings seem uncertain, I try to
control myself—to plan and box myself into an ordered
restraint and I remember that my country was founded by
Puritans and ancestral coding is real. Our society loves
restraint. The well-tamed woman, the hardworking exec, the
public school system.

The question becomes: how can I deny myself in the name
of work, in the name of respectability, in the name of
'success?' How can I push myself past my own limits, so
that I am so mentally and energetically exhausted that I
don't have to face the ways in which I have denied my
impulses and desires, and have therefore denied myself?

Restraint.

I ate so much chocolate yesterday, I didn't know what to do with myself. As the finality of my trip approached, I felt the impending pressure to make sense of what others would surely deem 'chaotic.' To make sense of the plans I have yet to make sense of, so my father wouldn't worry or my old professors would be impressed. I tried to plan the next year, the next decade, the grand scheme of my life.

I said, I will do this. I will do that. I will *not* eat chocolate.

I sure showed me.

In trying to control the freneticism of uncertainty, the 'chaos' of my life, I only ended up rejecting that falsehood entirely by doing all that I said I would not do. Because to deny myself chocolate is akin to denying myself. To saying I am not all that I know I am.

I am a chocolate lover, I am living without a plan; I am chaotic.

But chaos is inherent to our existence; it's in everything we do. The absence of chaos is not peace, it's an illusion. Stillness is an illusion.

"In the beginning, everything was wild. Everything was free. Everything was chaos."

Bang!

Q: What is your relationship to chaos?

Q: What is your relationship to life?

Q: What is your relationship to death?

Morgan's nephew died of an asthma attack a month or two before we were set to depart for Europe. He was sixteen.

I met Morgan for a picnic in Washington Square park the afternoon she'd found out he was in a coma.

I carried a wicker picnic basket that a French woman inquired where I'd gotten it from on the train ride there.

They love their pique-niques in France.

Well into our trip, Morgan told me her mother said, "If you were going with anyone else, I'd ask you not to go." But she thought highly of me and I was honored.

Morgan and I smoked all over Amsterdam, my favorite moment being when we stumbled upon a coffeeshop on a residential street with no frills and a big, open window.

We tried a strain with mango in its name and sat and talked for hours, until the patrons at the window seat departed and we staked our bodies there, breathing in the autumnal air.

Amsterdam is cold in late August, or colder than I thought it'd be.

We were staying at a place called "Lucky Lake Hostel," which was a conglomeration of shared cabins and private boxcars.

Morgan and I shared a white-walled cabin with two white women.

It was at this hostel I turned twenty-five and, as the clock ticked close to midnight, I chose my current name.

I am used to feeling heavy, and for many years I took with me a constant bag of dread. But this was nothing compared to the weight that crushed my heart the night I turned twenty-five.

I didn't know why, but I felt like if I didn't do *something*, I might just die.

So I picked up my phone and called Free, who at the time, went by the name of Margerie.

I told them how I was feeling and they listened closely to me. They didn't offer me up solutions nor ask me vague questions to which I didn't know the answer. They let me speak, and in thinking out loud I said, "I want to change my name." Maegan had never seemed to fit me, and I'd never quite settled into having it.

There was a character on the T.V. show "One on One" named Spirit. She was quirky, often giddy, and she was black like me.

She was the first person I'd ever seen named Spirit, and it was her face I saw when thinking of a name.

"Spirit. I want to go by Spirit."

Up until that point, I'd struggled with choosing as I felt that having a name was as unnecessary as naming a chair. All these years later I see this as the right name for me as it encapsulates everything I am and everything I seek to be.

The moment I remember most from that trip with Morgan came while we were waiting for the tram in Lyon.

There was tension between us, as is natural when journeying together without cease. My instinct, impaled in me through childhood learned behavior, was to turn away at conflict and retreat within myself. It was to emotionally distance myself as far away from the person I physically stood a short distance away from.

This time, however, I hopped closer to my friend. I stood for a moment and then threw my arms around her. We stood shoulder to shoulder as she cried.

It is a big responsibility to be in the presence of grief.

About a month later, I was staying at an Irish woman's magical home in Glastonbury, England's most spiritually active town, by way of Airbnb.

Antoinette was a keeper of things, like my mother. Her garage was filled to the brim with objects, like my mother's.

Her house was under foreclosure, like my mother's, too.

Antoinette picked me up from the bus station and waited in the car while I bought groceries.

Her daughter, Hattie, was a few years younger than me and her boyfriend, coincidentally, sold weed.

I bought an eighth from him by way of Hattie, and smoked in Antoinette's zen garden that she had designed herself.

I walked up the Tor, the holy hill where the wind blows through your bones. I walked through fields where sacred cows grazed freely. At Antoinette's behest, I went to the

White Well, a sacred site where basins of primordial water wait for us to submerge our bodies in.

A middle aged man with pink and dimpled skin walked on a glistening ledge nude, chanting like a Gregorian monk. I couldn't help but join in his song.

I was comfortable enough in and with my body by then to get into the water as they say en français, *nue*. Nude. It was freezing cold and black as the abyss.

I felt frightened, and I realize now *that* was the water calling fear out of me, drawing it up so that I could push it out. Water is kind in that way.

I grew up raised by scary T.V.—*Law and Order* marathons and horror films on Halloween. It's no wonder fear was lodged into the very heart of me.

To make matters more specific, my family came from Haiti, a country birthed in blood.

From the Tainos who were slaughtered by Columbus to the Africans brought by the boatload in chains, our country carries great trauma.

Who knows how many Frenchmen were slain so that we could attain freedom?

Their blood is, too, on the land.

Through my mother's ancestry test I know our ancestors came from Benin and the Côte d'Ivoire. We also have ancestors in the South of France, my favorite part of the country. Corsica, to be concrete.

*

In 2019 I got a job as an au pair for a young, Parisian couple. After my interview, the dad wrote to tell me I hadn't been chosen, but as conciliation was their second choice.

I hadn't felt aligned energetically with the mother and wasn't completely surprised by the news.

This was during the Berkeley-bound road trip starring me and Freedom. We'd picked up Steph from her home in Denver, Colorado, and she came with us to Cali.

It was in our first Airbnb in Berkeley, a twin-bed-having *box*, that they wrote to offer me the position after their first choice fell through.

Panic flooded my form. I sat on the bed sobbing to Free and Steph, feeling that I shouldn't take the position but feeling foolish not to.

I accepted their offer, despite my spirit's reservations, for that was during a time I placed the authority of my mind above my connection to the divine.

My first night there, the departing au pair asked me how much they were paying. Four hundred euros a month, I believe it was, with free housing in their *chambre de bonne* – servants' quarters at the top of every Haussmannian Parisian facade.

The exiting au pair shook her head; she'd been making less than three hundred to watch their one-year-old son, who was now two.

She showed me around their two-bedroom apartment. It was smaller than it looked in the pictures.

Katie, the au pair I was replacing, opened the closet and pulled out a red tin box. Peeking in she said, “Vincent’s been smoking,” and showed me a small cluster of weed.

At that time, smoking green was akin to breathing for me and I was incredibly present and astute after smoking. A joint was like my morning coffee.

So when I saw that the father, Vincent, smoked, too I thought, “Great, I’m in good company. I’m safe.”

Little did I know...

At the end of the first week, Camille, the mother, sat me down and said my attitude needed changing. They expected a bright and cheery *nounou*, not the jet lagged, reserved me.

Their son, the little one, was sleeping and she lit a cigarette and blew the smoke out the window.

I promised her I’d show up better, and I meant it. After our talk, my demeanor *did*, indeed, improve, for by the time I was fired she said, “We were just starting to like you.”

Before that day came, I was tasked with walking the little one to the doctor’s office with his grandmother, Camille’s mom.

I didn’t know this at the time, but this Grande Dame was an aristocrat, a fact support by the way she pointed to the curb instead of using her words to communicate with the cab

driver, an Arab man who spoke perfect English and asked me for my number at the ride's end.

We walked to the office in near silence; she didn't speak much English and assumed I didn't speak much French. She did, however, point out some passing theaters, expressing that she preferred more high-brow work than the shows their signage advertised.

Camille's father was an important law-man under Sarkozy. He wrote a book Camille and Vincent displayed proudly on their bookshelf.

My reckoning came on the night they asked me to babysit and stay with the little one after *crèche*—from preschool's end until ten.

Remember how I said I was raised by T.V.? Well, often times on screen babysitters behave badly. And I thought I'd been pretty good. I was growing to love the little one and I felt he was growing to love me.

I was greatly worried, though, when he called me Camille and told me *that* was my name.

After bathing and putting the little one to bed, I opened the window and I smoked a spliff—that is, a joint mixed with tobacco.

I was so afraid of getting caught I could barely complete an inhale. By the joint's end, I wasn't even high.

But the Universe had it out for me—or so I'd thought. In retrospect I see now the divine forces were protecting me. A few short months after I returned home, the shelter-in-place

was mandated and I was able to quarantine in the New York countryside instead of the servants' quarters in France.

Back in Paris, a cloud of smoke sat in the apartment and refused to leave, even with an open window and fan blowing at full speed.

When Camille entered...I can still see the sneer on her face. I dang near bolted out of that place, but I tried to keep a cool composure, my heart beating at ten thousand beats per millisecond.

Less than an hour later, I heard the telephone ring: Vincent.

He asked if I had smoked weed in the apartment. I took a moment, breathed in, and told him, "Yes."

A similar instant happened to me in NYC's Riverside Park, where I sat with Morgan and our kinky haired composer-lyricist friend, Kyle. We were smoking as he read to us our astrological profiles in the newly published, "You Were Born for This," by Chani Nicholas.

Two police officers approached us long after the smoke had dissipated.

"Someone reported a group smoking; was that you?" The lady-cop seemed to ask me directly.

I took a deep breath in and replied, "Yes."

She and her partner both looked taken aback by my honesty. They let us off with a warning and I never looked at the Upper West Side the same.

Back in Paris, things were looking dire. I tearfully faced my employers, who told me they would take the week to think about whether they could forgive me.

Something went wrong every day that week. One day, I left my phone at the library where I took the little one after crèche. I had to enlist the help of Vincent and, luckily, an old Arab woman found the phone and her son gave it back to me.

We met in the 20th arrondissement, close to Danny's sunny + bright studio.

The woman's son, like the cab driver, also spoke perfect English and wished me well on my journey.

Another *catastrophe* of that week happened when I decided to treat the little one to hot chocolate.

I gave him a big mug and topped it with whipped cream to make it look fancy. Though he only had a few sips, he seemed pleased with it.

The little one was being potty trained and Camille asked that I take him to the bathroom before naps so he didn't wet the bed. Even though I'd been doing as she requested, I'd grown tired of cleaning his soiled sheets.

The words of their old au pair danced in my head, "I just tell her yes and then do whatever I wanna do."

That day, by the grace of intuition, I put pull ups on the little one before he went to bed for his afternoon nap.

When he awoke and came to me, diarrhea was oozing out of his diaper and into the cracks of his parents' vintage, wooden floors.

In retrospect, I would have plopped him in the bath, but the twenty-six year old me put him on the changing table.

One thing you need to know is that the little one had started locking the front door with the bolt, which was at his eye level and to which there was no key.

As I scrambled to contain the poo, a hand banged on the door. It was Camille, home early.

"One minute!" I shouted, knowing I couldn't leave a baby on a changing table, even *if* he was incredibly bright for his age.

Camille was waiting long enough to exclaim, "Can you let me into my house, please?!" Just as I'd finished up.

I had to explain I was changing Hugo's diaper and doubted she'd believed me if I told her it was the *one* day I'd put him in one. I told her nonetheless.

At the end of the week, Camille and Vincent called me to their living room and told me they were firing me.

"I understand," I said, tears streaming. That was my third week there. I asked if I could work one more week to finish out the month and, hopefully, find a new position.

They encouraged me to seek out a new family, as they'd heard from friends who saw me and their son on the street that I was a great au pair.

Camille even invited me to a going away brunch set for the morning of my departure. On my second-to-last day with her son, however, her energy had changed.

When she took over her parental duties and sat beside her little one in the bath, she told me to say goodbye to her son. I thought I would have more time to, what with the brunch and all.

The next day, Vincent's mother, whom I had previously met and who had complimented my French, showed up to relieve me—several hours before the end of my shift.

So that was how I was dismissed.

“Well,” she said en français, “Did you learn your lesson?”

A few weeks before this, I had a dream where I was walking down the street with the little one, and his grandmother came and took him away.

I learned then that dreams *do* come true.

The next day, there was no mention of brunch. Vincent came up to the servants' quarters to make sure I'd left the apartment in one piece. I'd left it even better than they'd lent it to me, leaving a blender and toaster oven I'd bought with my own money.

I had to ask Vincent on the sidewalk for my pay.

“Oh, yes,” he said, scrambling for his wallet.

He then said my communication skills needed work and that I had insulted them by being too informal, answering texts with words like, “Yeah.”

This would have been vital to know, I croaked, when it was imperative that we communicate.

His brow furrowed, but his critique went on to accuse me of playing hooky with his son and neglecting to take him to his baby yoga class.

Apparently, Camille had seen me with him while he was supposed to be fine-tuning his forward fold.

My eyes went wide and the tears fell down. “Why didn’t you call the yoga studio to find out? To ease your wife’s mind?”

I had never even been *late* to one of those classes. The little one had attended **every** one.

What I believe happened is that on the last week of work, I put my big tote bag in the little one’s stroller and pushed it like I had pushed their yogic baby.

I’m guessing Camille saw me and mistook the bag for her son.

It began to rain and I silenced Vincent by saying I needed to hail a cab. I hightailed it to a hostel in Gentilly, just outside of the city.

A few days later I got a text from Camille, wishing me well on my journey.

I sent a long message back urging her to call the studio to learn that, while people can make mistakes, they can still be trusted.

She gave a curt response and I never spoke to Vincent and Camille again.

*

I tell you this story because one of the things Camille said upon firing me was that they wanted an au pair who was more of a cultural fit—someone they could take to their vacation house in the south of France.

Corsica, to be exact.

The irony being Corsica is the home of my ancestral French family.

We had something in common, after all.

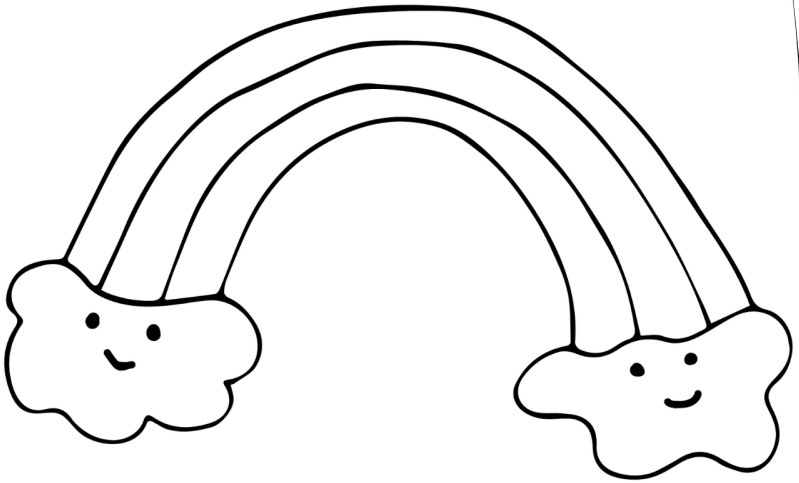
Why I'm Not A Secret Keeper

I like to spill
my proverbial guts
where'er I go!

My fellow secret-spillers
know
how good it feels
to let our twisted
innards show.

It's the fastest way
to grow.

To regret the rain is to regret the
rainbow!



shs

Q: What are some rainy days you are thank-full for?

Je Ne Regrette Rien

I'm thankful

for all the times I put my foot in my mouth—
it kept me from walking
in the wrong direction.

Heathen in Disguise

The first time I realized I wasn't like the other Christians was my Freshman year at Penn, though I'd carried my suspicions long before then.

I'd gone to a Christian club meeting, called *Cru*, to try and be the person I wasn't yet ready to realize I was not.

The topic of discussion that evening was the merits of mission work.

My stomach tied itself in knots and eventually my hand sprang into the air.

“Spirituality is so personal; why would you ever want to strip someone of theirs?”

Some people looked to the ground. As far as I can remember, the conversation continued as if I hadn't spoken at all.

Clearly, I'd missed the mark on mission work—
or did I nail it right in its heart?

Either way, that was the first and last time I ventured into Penn Cru.

Conscious Cannabis Consumption

Should you choose
to partake
in this
sacred flower,
know that
with great power
comes our responsibility
to remain in
conscious states.

To go outside;
sit in the sun;
crack a window.

To create,
to play with angels;
play with friends;
dream our future;
play pretend.

Let's run in circles,
dance around,
lift our feet
high off the ground.

To be truly present,
we must embody our unique presence.
We must own our sacred essence
presently.

We must get grounded and surround ourselves
with high vibrational forces.

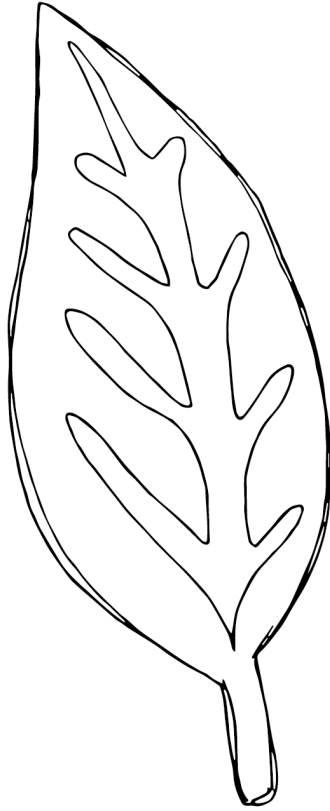
Angels
and deities—

whoever speaks to you:
ask them to protect you
and this
 they will do.

That you must keep asking
 is what is seldom taught,
 the result it's brought has been
 disastrous—
 it's the reason we have fought:
 each other
 the animals
 the planet
 its people—
 our protectors were
 banished
 by the shiny,
 glistening steeples.

Stay conscious to see
 past the shine.

The whole world awaits!



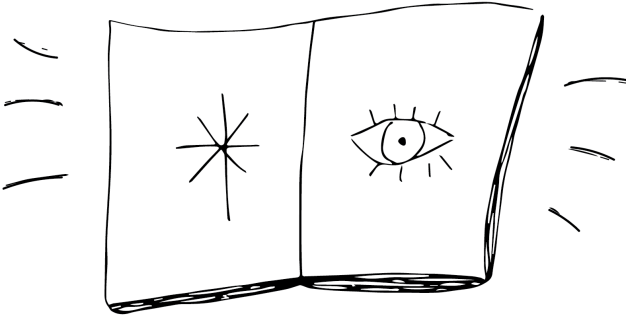
Mother Earth

*** A moment to stop and take a deep breath ***

I stop to pull a card from “Mother Earth,” an oracle deck I channeled in 2021, after me and Free drove back from California to our native New York.

I went to the state park in a nearby town and sat quietly enough to hear the whispers of the trees.

The message they now send for me is: {read}



Read

Read the signs around you, your spirit is writing on the walls. Remember you hold the answers, you know the way.

My spirit *has* been writing on the walls, and I’m just now remembering I know how to read the hieroglyphs.

The Dream of Heqet¹

February 20, 2024



We are at a temple and there's a rising of empowered energy. "Some men are liars," says our frog deity, who is glowing, wearing a crown, and holding a scepter.

The men in question scream, "No!" and beat the frog goddess to a bulbous and bloated death. They bring the frog archway covering the entry to the temple to a dusty collapse. In its place stands a Byzantine cathedral.

Damn. I shake my head. *Another one.*

I continue on my path home alone.



I did not write this dream down upon awakening. *Surely there's no frog deity,* I thought. Frogs were too small and inconsequential to be seen as divine, right?

I couldn't shake the niggling feeling I was wrong.

Later that day, I sat and looked up "frog deity" on my search engine. What I found astounded me: there *is* in fact a frog

¹ From my dream journal, the cover of which is the cover of this zine!

deity—Heqet. She is from our primordial motherland of Africa with deep ties to Ancient Egypt.

We have that in common.

And before Heqet called to me, her good friend, Hathor came my way.

Hathor, like Heqet, is a divine feminine goddess. They are both models of fertility, creativity, and abundance.

Hathor, in Ancient Times, ruled over musicians, mirth, and dance.

She is associated with cattle and when depicted in human form, has the ears of a cow.

I painted both Hathor and Heqet and mounted their paintings on the wall that faces my bed. Each morning I wake up and feel that, even though their temples lay in ruins, their energy still remains.

I love both Hathor and Heqet because they are generous with their healing energy, which can be boiled down to love.

Heqet is the voice of reason; she can counter any unreasonably negative thought and provide a positive alternative.

Hathor is my kind of mother—patient, kind, and encouraging. When I gaze at their portraits I feel that I *can* set out to do all I endeavor, because I, too, seek to heal the world with love.

As Kendrick Lamar says, “Even a small lighter can burn a bridge.”

Even one drop can move the ocean.

Even one woman can create positive change and, therefore, change our world.

If you feel resonance or curiosity about Hathor and Heqet, I encourage you to research them further.

In the meantime, please enjoy this gift from me: a double-sided print of my Hathor and Heqet paintings.

A word search for Ancient Egypt

O F H F J R N G Q O S I R I S F F U
 H H V J D Y E V E Z M B V X H K Q H
 H G S T Q N G I M B C J S E I Q A T
 H L T E V G F O N B V S B Z P Q I E
 D F H M O F Q Z U C V R Z C P C S T
 E H J H X M T P Y R A M I D S X I S
 I V K K L Z O O I R K R N O M Z S A
 Y R I E L S N C S C J P N G A C W B
 I U E S N T O S I X A O B A A I P S
 R Y D O R U I C Z P H X N U T Y D P
 A D Y N A S T I E S R F Q U V I D R
 T Y W T A M A H W D Y M J R B V O A
 R T H F V B C P M P G U R H H I H N
 E Q S B E Q I Y T I O H X A A I A P
 F P D Y D W F L T P L I I T T S H D
 E A T O L T I G E P O G Z H P I H A
 N P A T N K M O Q A R W U O N K O L
 T Y H A T J M R E H T A I R A U R J
 C R S O N Q U E H G S D N U T N U Q
 S U E B Q U M I M W A J P G O A S G
 Y S S R H J B H I N A E C U T E J H
 R T Y Y D G V I K B E T E T C I N M
 U V Q T U U T D S I M K Y T V C Q J

1. hathor
2. heqet
3. wadjet
4. ra
5. nut
6. geb
7. happi
8. nubia
9. nefertari
10. sekhmet
11. bastet
12. seshat
13. anubis
14. anukis
15. horus
16. ptah
17. isis
18. osiris
19. pyramids
20. dynasties
21. astrology
22. reincarnation
23. mummification
24. papyrus
25. hieroglyphics

Glastonbury

I stayed with Antoinette shortly after one of her two cats had died.

She was dating a man, a retired army general, who came over for brunch one Sunday.

I made a sweet potato egg frittata, my specialty at the time.

The man had said that while he was touring the Middle East, he'd found the people to be exceedingly welcoming.

“Although the people had nothing,” he said, “they offered us everything.”

My guess is because those British soldiers were carrying monarch-commissioned guns. *Who wouldn't* be accommodating to men dressed, quite literally, to kill?

After he left, Antoinette asked me what I'd thought of him. I didn't know how to say I was surprised she was with a man like that.

She seemed too wild, too free.

Antoinette told me later he was impatient with her for grieving the loss of her cat. He told her she was too sad and needed to get over it.

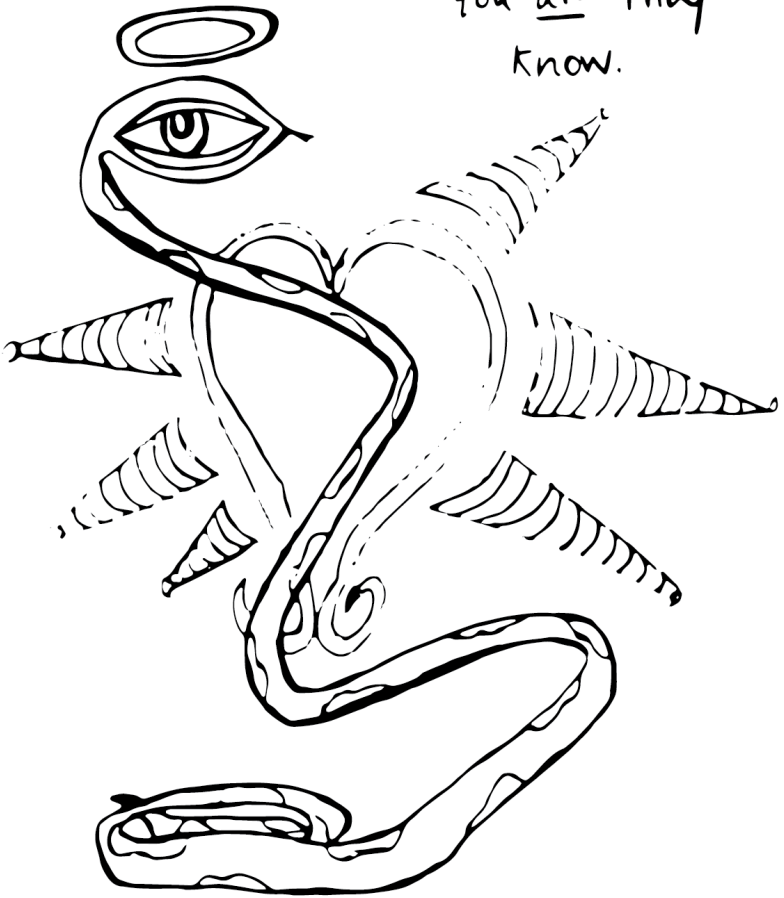
It is a big responsibility to be in the presence of grief.

REAL

The [^]threat
of snakes:

1. They remember
everything

2. They will tell
you all they
know.



Q: What do you think of when you think of snakes?

The Metaphor of St. Patrick

Saint Patrick is credited as having rid Ireland of snakes.
Interestingly enough,
according to Wikipedia,

“Post-glacial

Ireland

never had snakes.

At no time has there ever been any suggestion of
snakes in Ireland so [there was] nothing for St.
Patrick to banish.”

These words come from the keeper
of Irish history
at Ireland’s National Museum.

These words reveal a truth
inside a riddle.

What could snakes *really* stand for?

They are a metaphor
for the druids,
the keepers
of the true
luck o’ the Irish.

The magic of the Druids was not
medieval;

it was pure
and of the Earth.

Julius Caesar saw it
and sought it.

He said,

“With regard to their actual course of studies, the
main object of all education is, in their opinion, to

imbue their scholars with a **firm belief in the indestructibility of the human soul, which, according to their belief, merely passes at death from one tenement to another; for by such doctrine alone, they say, which robs death of all its terrors, can the highest form of human courage be developed.** Subsidiary to the teachings of this main principle, they hold various lectures and discussions on the stars and their movement, on the extent and geographical distribution of the earth, on the different branches of natural philosophy, and on many problems connected with religion.”

There are many problems
connected to religion
indeed.

This, all druids know.

With a firm belief in the
Indestructibility of the human soul,
there was only one way
a man as saintly as
Patrick
could convert the Irish
for Christian gain:
slaughter the Druids,
show the people their leaders
were slain,
teach them souls *are* damnable
and give them
ale
to ease their ancestral
pain.

For to lose your tribe leaders
and never mourn
your loss
pains deeper than
Great Famine.
Civil War becomes the cost
of a people eaten up inside
for the Irish soul
was divided
by the Church
and stripped of true Irish pride
once the Druids' names
were tarnished
in rewritten history—
seen as barbaric
and base,
wilder than the Celtic Sea.

I quote:

“Archaeological evidence from western Europe has been widely used to support the view that Iron Age Celts practiced human sacrifice. Mass graves found in a ritual context dating from this period have been unearthed in Gaul, at both Gournay-sur-Aronde and Ribemont-sur-Ancre in the region of the Belgae chiefdom. The excavator of these sites, Jean-Louis Brunaux, interpreted them as areas of human sacrifice in devotion to a war god, although this view was criticized by another archaeologist, Martin Brown, who believed that the corpses might be those of honoured warriors buried in the sanctuary rather than sacrifices. Some historians have questioned whether the Greco-Roman writers were accurate in their claims. J. Rives remarked that it was "ambiguous" whether druids ever performed such

sacrifices, **for the Romans and Greeks were known to project what they saw as barbarian traits onto foreign peoples including not only druids but Jews and Christians as well, thereby confirming their own "cultural superiority" in their own minds.** Nora Chadwick, an expert in medieval Welsh and Irish literature who believed the druids to be great philosophers, has also supported the idea that they had not been involved in human sacrifice, and that such accusations were imperialist Roman propaganda.”

Imperialist Romans
got a taste of their own
karma
with Constantine
who converted
Rome.

It seems that none of our homes
were safe
from the base,
barbaric,
imperialists,
one of whom
was Saint
Patrick.

If you remember
that smiling man
in Joey's passenger seat—
the one with
the hash
rolled in a thick cloud of flower—
He was Irish.
And a father,

smile proud as he told us
his toddler had
a soccer game the next day.

There we sat,
together:
a Haitian,
a Sicilian,
and an Irishman—
three generations
represented
by few.

His name was Ryan.

Interestingly enough, “According to John Ryan, Professor of Early and Medieval History at University College Dublin, ‘Rian, like Niall, seems to be so ancient that its meaning was lost before records began.’”

If there is one fault
of the kings who ruled the Druids,
it is that they forbid
the Druids to
transcribe their knowledge,
leaving their teachings
susceptible
to erasure.

“There is a danger in a single story,” Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie tells us.

The Celts prove this is true.

Some posit the name Ryan
comes from the Gaelic words
“righ” + “an”

which mean

“Little King”

—others express their doubts.

The name’s meaning

was just one of many things

lost

in the

Druid Holocaust.

Ireland is Full

I just watched a
Telegraph
short film called
“Ireland is Full.”

The people interviewed
say they are afraid
of the migrants
driven by the bus load
and deposited into
tiny Irish towns.

These Irish men and women feel
betrayed
by their government,
as if it ever truly cared for them anyway.

If you ask me,
the real protests
shouldn't be anti-people;
they need to be:
anti-guns that fuel the wars most of these migrants
are running from; anti-bomb; anti-war; anti-machismo
government showdowns.

Every country's got their migrants and its citizens who don't
want 'em.

Well, I don't want the **reason**
these people are displaced:
Poverty and war
are being sprayed like
Monsanto™

Let us remember:

we are the corn;

we are being torn

apart,

tearing at each other so we don't point

our fingers

at

the Top.



*** A space for you to do a five minute free write
on the nature of abundance; what does true
abundance look like to you? ***

The TRAIL of TEARS

One of the Great Atrocities
delivered by the hands
of our newly birthed
Democracy
was the Trail of Tears.

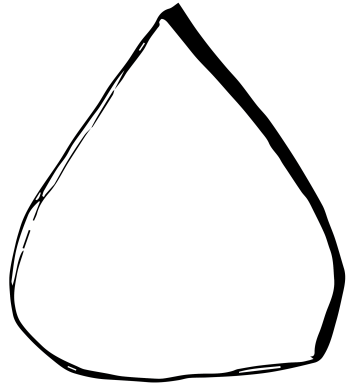
“Land of the free?
Somebody lied,”
our purple Prince
once cried.

Our land is full of tears
and trails
of blood
and bone—
It’s the story we’ve known
all along.

Most history books
are wrong;
they’ve ripped the chorus
from our song
but it keeps on repeating
anyway.

Everyday they slice up
Africa,
the Antilles,
and pump guns into Brazil—
cocaine
cracks Colombia
into smithereens.

David Banner gleans a scene
in which crack is thrown



in a Mississippi ditch;
I've seen it dance down Striver's Row:
the Harlem we used to know
is lost.

That was the cost
of Freedom,
of Liberty,
of drafts for All
Good Men
who fought to lose their lives
and leave their widowed wives
to fend
and make it out alive;
it's hard for any **one** person to
do the job of two.

It's no wonder
Modern Women
always have
too much
to do.

The Trail of Tears
we walk
yet
we walk
shoulder to shoulder:
it's much less colder
this way.

The Most Beautiful Woman in Miami

The Most Beautiful Woman in Miami
is named Virginia
and she's a security guard
made
to sweep the sidewalk.

That's how our paths crossed.

“You're so beautiful!”
I had no choice but to exclaim
once we locked eyes.

Virginia is Obigiwe,
“Oh-bee-gee-wah”
she repeated slowly
so I would remember.

She told me she raised wolves—real, wild wolves.

I believe her.

“I walked for you”
she said
and I believe her still.

It's those who
Walk
who are
Most Beautiful.



Q: What qualities does your definition of a beautiful soul possess?



AT THE PEAK
OF EV'RY
MOUNT
IS AN
ANGEL
KEEPING
Count.

shs

Roland² from the Bronx in Miami

I bought a Nikon
film camera
for thirty dollars
off EBay today.

Two years ago, I turned 28
in Miami.

We were in the parking lot
by the beach
at dusk.

I stopped to snap a photo
with the camera
Freedom bought for me
the last time we were in Philly
together.

“I’m a Nikon man myself.”
I turned towards the older black man
accosting me.

“Huh?”

“I see you have a Canon;
I’m a Nikon man myself.”

Ah!

The clarity of connection.

² Or was he Roman?

I leaned in—

“Are your eyes blue?”

“What? No!” He gave a gentle laugh.

I’d sworn I’d seen blue eyes
glistening
against his brown skin,
darkened by the
sleepy sun.

“Your eyes looked blue,”
I told him.

Steph was standing beside me.
She nodded;
she’d seen it, too.

“Do you have white in you?”
Sometimes I can’t wait
to be direct.

“What? No...”
He leaned in.
“Well, actually...”

Roland's great (great-great?) grandmother
bore his predecessors
from the master's
seed.

Ah. The clarity of connection.

It would be I’d seen
the sheen of
Ol’ Massa’s

big, blue eyes
come through.

The miracle being:
Steph had seen them
too.

Q: What was one real life miracle you experienced?

The Second Look

Poor white people
did not own
the enslaved.

Do you know how much
Africa's delicate children
were worth?

The one percent,
it was the one percent,
of this I am 100% sure.
They were not 100% human
for their actions were inhumane—
of *unhuman*
means.

If you know people
who are proud to be
legitimate descendants of slavers,
take a good look
and then look
again.

You might see their true colors
clearly
on the second look.

P.S.

Imagine all the money
 impoverished white people
 could have been paid
 to pick the cotton that fueled
 the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade;
those Robber Barons
 robbed
 us
 all.

Cuba Libre

On that Miami trip we visited my uncle,
 who was online dating at the time.
He came across
 a Cuban woman
 who told him,
“I don’t date black men.”

Now, while watching the documentary
 “Cuba Feliz,”
 I see
 un negrito
 in every scene.

Cuba is divided
 by the conquistadores’
 machete wielding hands.
It’s time we take a stand
 against
 Colonialism,
 colorism,
 el racismo,
 y otras fuerzas
 brutas.
They have brutalized us long enough.

The Darkest Skin I Ever Saw

The darkest skin
I'd ever seen
belonged to a man
of Southeast Asian means.

His skin was coal
and black pepper,
colors of the Earth.

I wonder if he knows
how much his beauty
is worth.



shs

Dark Skin Sin



“Dark Skin Sin” is a song I wrote about my struggle with internalized racism—the healing of which is one of my biggest triumphs yet. The video that accompanies it is just as much a part of the storytelling. In my mind the song and video exist as one; they exist to serve each other.

An Idea for Community Building While On the Road:

Collective stretches in both the morning and the evening. Get to know your comrades by having someone new curate the playlist each time.

Then have morning prayer, where everyone shares a hope, wish, or intention for the day. Everyone supports all the shared hopes, wishes, and intentions with a verbalized or silent affirmation. Even a smile will do. In affirming each other's intentions, we build a collective vision with more weight behind it to manifest.

Then retreat into morning pages, where everyone goes into separate corners and writes in whatever way feels best for them. The success-thinking behind this is that it will require people to go within themselves, if only for a minute, and to connect with their hearts and minds. One minute matters—each minute matters. The time we spend with each other matters greatly, as does the time we spend alone.

Though we're not ever truly alone, are we?

We are always together—
 one sacred world.

We stand
 and stretch
 shoulder to shoulder
 we're all warmer this way.

Allies in the Night

When I was twenty-five, I sought to write a poem for every person I'd ever met and share it with them through whichever social media site I could connect with them on.

My hope for this project was to show these people they'd been seen and hadn't been forgotten, no matter how long or curt our interactions had been. Every person I've ever met has impacted me greatly and I understand who I am in great thanks to them. This was my gift of gratitude.

Those of you who think like me will be *shocked* to find out it did not go as planned.

The few poems I shared first went either unseen or ignored; some were given just a silent 'like.' I decided to stop the project before my heart was completely broken.

I was happy, however, with this one soul I had reached. Her name was Kim; I believe she keeps that name still.

Kim was a blonde little dumpling in our middle school with a voice as soft as snowfall. It was as if angels breathed when she'd speak. One thing to note: our middle school was an Inferno even Dante wouldn't dare enter.

Angels were cast to the outskirts and shown clearly Light energy didn't belong.

I was paired with Kim in a Social Studies activity with two boys: Sal and Justin. They refused to touch the pair of dice after Kim cast them and used the edges of their sweatshirts as a makeshift barrier.

I scoffed at them as I grabbed the die, counting each second until the bell.

The year before this was my first year in the school—really my first semester, as my mom hightailed us out of our known-town to that strange town during Christmas break.

It was a cold and bitter New Year. Sal threw balls of paper at me in the library until I threw one back and yelled “Stop!” He and his goons—Andrew and Eric—sent the Fat Albert “Hey, hey, hey!” to my quivering back.

Oh, to be black and fat in a white town during the reign of *The O.C.*, *Laguna Beach*, and other Plastic Propaganda!

I felt everything but pretty.

We are taught as girls one of the most valuable things we can be is pretty.

I felt invaluable
I felt invisible
I also despised my hyper-visibility.

“I feel just like a speck—
you know which ones I mean?
The kind that make you wonder
if your glass is clean.”

I wrote those lines for my first critique-lab in grad school.

One composer from Australia came up to me after I’d sung my collaborator’s quiet setting of the lyrics. He expressed his feelings of white guilt in so few words, and I’d felt he’d missed the point.

I didn't want white listeners to feel wrong within themselves and guilty—I wasn't even thinking about them when I wrote the song.

But since white ears made up a majority of the room in grad school, I learned that very often a default reaction to my personal stories of pain, which become black pain as a gift of my blackness, is one of white guilt.

Black pain = white guilt

^That equation is unsolvable.

Unless you play a hand in the causing of said pain, your guilt is just an added burden for the black person to bear.

Of course, everything is a choice and we can choose not to pick up the pain and shame of others.

As a collective, however, it's clear we all need to heal.

I believe the fastest path to healing is by *hearing* each other, really. To witnessing stories of stumbling with the same wonder we consume tales of glory.

There is glory in stumbling; there is freedom in crumbling.

And the most healing gift one can receive is to hear: Hey, I saw that happen. What a road you've crossed.

To highlight this, I'll share a story from my New-York-City-dwelling days.

I had secured a part-time job tutoring wealthy teenagers on the Upper East Side.

Prior to procuring this employment, I generally avoided the East Side north of 34th Street. The last time I'd been in East Harlem there was a man spitting saliva—not bars—on the 6 train.

At a thrift store near East 72nd, an old white woman yelled at a Latina mother for speaking en español.

“Learn English!” She spat, shaking her head at the Maghreb man behind the counter.

I spoke up. “Actually, English is very hard to learn and—“

The woman rolled her eyes and put her hand up, a gesture I learned aristocrats love to do to both silence and summon you.

I didn't want to support that store because of that woman, but I believed the Maghreb man to be the owner, so I bought the pair of suspenders I had gone there in search of.

A few months later, I was traveling to a 92nd Street high rise on the bus. It was a crowded afternoon ride and a woman stood in front of an empty seat. She was white with curly hair, maybe a decade away from greying.

When a little girl joined me and this woman in the back of the bus alongside her caregiver, Dante's Inferno was unleashed.

“What are you doing? Give her the seat!” A middle aged white man in a business suit yelled from his.

A white woman with raven black hair and a NY accent joined in.

The woman standing began to rock back and forth and plug her ears with her fingers.

“I have every right to use this seat as I’d like,” she said, to which the mob went mental.

I gawked at the irony before me: these grown adults beating down their equal in defense of a child. What a terrible example they’d modeled for the youth.

I was too afraid to point this out, lest they turn their pitchforks on me.

Eventually, the pyre lost its light and no bodies could be further burned.

I readied myself to rise for my stop.

I walked over to the rocking woman and told her, “That wasn’t right.”

We looked at each other.

Her body stilled.

She said, “Thank you. That makes me feel a lot better.”

Sometimes, an affirmation of “that wasn’t right” is all we need to hear to feel better.

I believe the affirmation of an outcasted soul’s light serves the same balm.

In the short poem I sent Kim, I wrote of her angelic whispers, the heart of which conveyed: they weren’t right; I can clearly see your light.

She was the only one to thank me for her poem.

Sometimes, being an ally is as simple as seeing past enemy lies: it's allowing our vision to be unobstructed by the Plastic Propaganda.

Our revolution lies in seeing the good in those the cultural controllers deem lacking.

It's in saying:

They are wrong;
we are light!

And truly believing it.

Now, *that* is a revolution that can't be televised because in its fruition we will break through every box that's sold us lies.

They are wrong;
We *are* light!

May we extend our flames when we see our fellows' flickering; may we witness both the absence and presence of our own and each other's light.

May we be allies
in the night.

Closing Remarks

The moral of these stories
is that we all have the
power within ourselves
to heal and to clear
what's hurting us.

Another moral is:
we are more connected
than we are led
to believe.

My intention of sharing these stories is to help inspire true
healing in the world, which only comes when we face what
we fear in order to allow it to clear.

When we air out our dirty laundry
so it can finally dry—
that's when
we
all
fly!

Recommended Listening



Healing by Fire, a collection of songs that posits, “when we feel good, we heal.” Consider these songs you can heal (and step) to.

Hejira!

If you've enjoyed this zine, I assure you you'll enjoy my ten episode radio-podcast special called *Hejira!*

Inspired by the Joni Mitchell song of the same name, this a music-based offering of screen-free entertainment, designed for travelers and any soul going on a journey, be it physically or metaphysically.

It's a limited series on my radio-podcast "Lover's Lane," which I host on Spotify. If you have Spotify Premium, you can listen to the carefully selected songs in their entirety.

I began recording *Hejira* before creating this zine/novella (zovella?) and the courage to write my truth came first from speaking it.

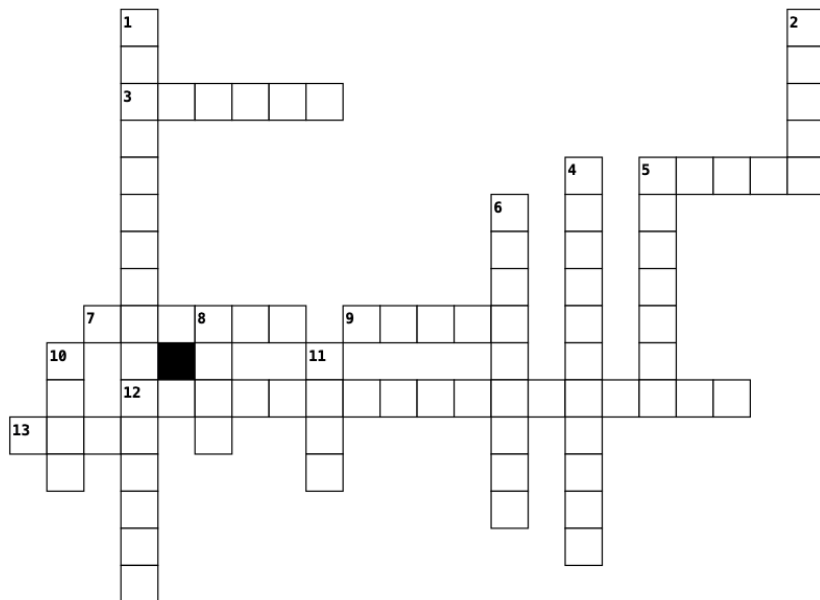


You can witness my fastest evolution yet, as it unfolds in real time, during the ten episodes of my very *special special*, *Hejira: A Musical Journey for Jacob and All the World!*

Hope to see you there!

XO,
Spirit

Crossword Puzzle 2



Across

3. This Egyptian goddess is associated with the writing down of knowledge and is depicted as bearing a cannabis leaf above her head.
5. Monsieur Eiffel, designer of his eponymous tower, also designed the Statue of Liberty, who shines her light over this island.
7. This Egyptian goddess is associated with fertility, femininity, music, writing, and dance.
9. Finish the Joni line: "Must be the Irish blood: ___ before you think!"
12. This bassist, pianist, and singer-songwriter (one of my all time favorite lyricists) teaches her fellow brown beings that we are "Black Gold."
13. The first card in the tarot presents himself often in Shakespeare's play as the wisest man in the room, albeit the least respected. He's the ____.

Down

1. It was in this part of this city Will Smith was born and raised; it was here I went to college.
2. He was the one Greek god who was faithful to his wife.
4. Our third chakra, the yellow ball of light, is the center and source of our self-confidence and empowerment (no space).
5. The Maghreb musician singing prayerfully in "Everlasting Motion" (last name, no space)
6. This French singer popularized the song, "Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien," which translates to "I regret nothing."
8. This Egyptian god is credited with bringing the Nile's annual flood, which helped keep Egypt fertile and abundant.
10. The first chakra that forms in utero, establishing or connection to ourselves, our bodies, and this earthly plane.
11. This red planet is associated with the Roman god of war and sacred masculinity.

Answer Key

Crossword Puzzle 01

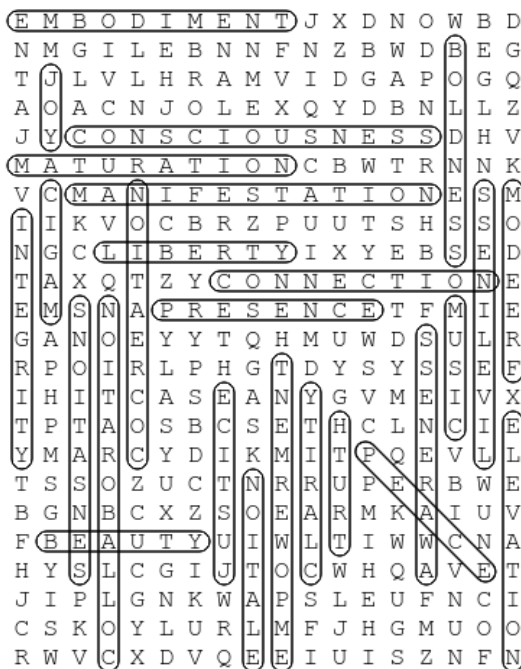
ACROSS

4. Touch
5. Vehicle
6. Surrealist
8. September
10. Moor
11. Tents
13. Nick

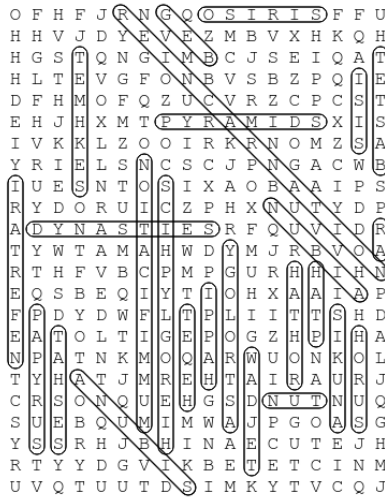
DOWN

1. LaurenceFishburne
2. Dali
3. Moulins
7. Remember
9. Heart
12. Seen

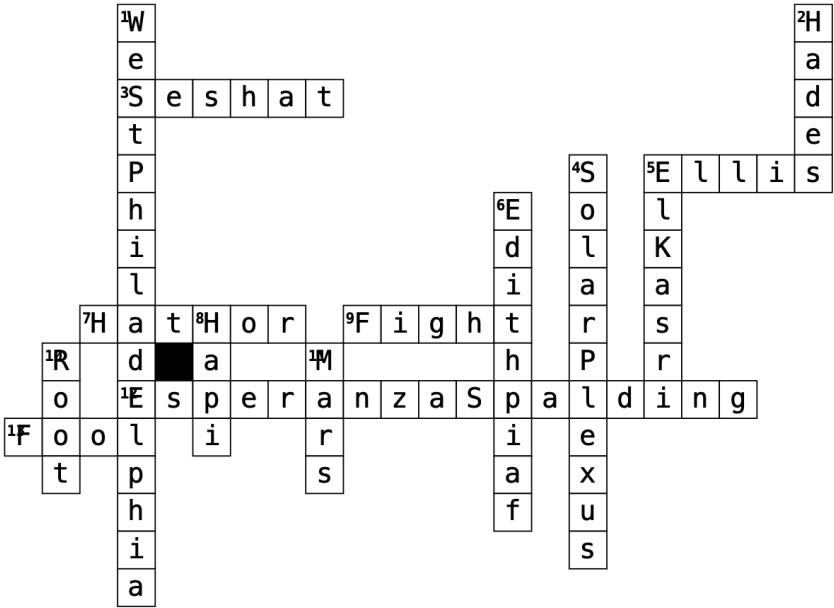
WELLL Wishes Word Search



A word search for Ancient Egypt



Crossword Puzzle 2



About Me

My name is Spirit Hearts Song and I am a multi-dimensional artist currently living in rural, upstate New York.

I am a playwright, a screenwriter, a singer-songwriter, and novelist. I love all things to do with love and empowerment.

I have a penchant for forbidden kisses and a love of happy endings. Happily, I write feel-GREAT stories for our awakening world.

I am a dog-mom to the best dog-ter in the world and am currently obsessed with painting everything I own.

I perform as Anthem Pop!, though one day I hope to say *with* Anthem Pop! once my musical tribe comes together.

My home base on the internet is my website, SpiritHS.com, where you are always free to contact me.

For more in-depth information about me metaphysically, check out my website's About Me page and click the corresponding link. You'll also find some fun facts and favorites there; I so love when authors share those kinds of things.

I love both spilling and drinking secrets.