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Asteroids

by Kalani Perry - Monday, August 02, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=140>

While you're living your life it seems like chaos and things are just being thrown at you like a spaceship in the asteroid belt. You know where you are. You know what you're trying to do. But everything just keeps coming at you in a random fashion. In hindsight, you can connect the dots of choices you made in that field. Some crashed you into rocks. Some were brilliant real-time choices that no one else could have pulled off. And there were mistakes everyone would have made, and ones only you did. If you keep repeating those, you'll never get out. And if you're smart and lucky you do. Either way, each choice is connected. And the asteroid belt isn't random, it just appears to be. It exists under the same physical principles that you do. Those laws are immutable (until you get really small, but we'll save quantum theory for another metaphor). They don't change, you do. One way or the other you do.

Both sides win

by Kalani Perry - Wednesday, May 19, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=108>

She's barefoot down the street in short, dirty-black chiffon; the dress a metaphor for the city, the city her only version of a meadow. The sidewalk sweats with ancient heat and recent rain. And the rough wetness cools the blisters on the patches of the balls of her feet, worn rough having so often similarly trod. The word reminds her of a line from a poem, "nor can foot feel being shod," and she smiles. Feet are supposed to touch the ground just like they're supposed to hurt.

Fake trees loom above and block the long-set sun. Fluorescent blinks and intermittent shadows alternate light and dark. Her light-aired, measured steps are deliberately taken, then not so, and betray a civil war between ennui and melancholy. Both sides win.

Constructed

by Kalani Perry - Wednesday, August 04, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=146>

Never tell a writer anything you want kept secret. Don't do things you'd hide in front of him. He will tell the world. He will nod his head while saying, "No, of course not." He will change your name from Jessica to Linda, but the story will kill you softly when you see that names are just another construct. That is on purpose.

Drawl

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, August 03, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=144>

Perhaps I was drawn in by you drawling about your irrepressible hedonistic nature. Supposedly nothing? You clearly melted my mind at times.

I don't belong where I was. This is the way of the world. That's where I met you, though. So now we have to pound through this. I'm not even going to stick my toe in the pond of yesterday to consider anything about retroactive motion. I want you to come, but most likely you'll stay. And that is where you belong. This no longer troubles me.

Flicka

by Kalani Perry - Thursday, August 05, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=148>

I was trying to go fast and flickered in and wondered how you could see me. Get in. Get out. Walk into the room, burn, and hear the approval. Turns out there will be no comfort. And I have been cursed, like most, with a long and lonely life. You don't get to ask any more about the prices I've paid. I will tell you that now, I'm broke. Forgive my sins or don't. Either way, it doesn't really matter.

I was never him

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, January 19, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=120>

The difference in what we accomplished? You put on your stockings and feel like you're doing right by the world. Your company is evil. I remembered everything because I remember everything, and Gerry liked that. But I hated that world. I did it after I knew I hated it for you and the kids. I never didn't hate it. And when you left it was a fucking nightmare. Everything went away. A lot remains away. I was never that person. I played that person because you're supposed to. I was never him.

I'm not ready

by Kalani Perry - Friday, April 16, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=128>

I remember how the bogeyman works. It was never really a man. Haunting, depending on your circumstance. Circumstance makes it seem like where you're standing is a coincidence when actually there are none. You stand in that particular spot because you walked there. Unless you're a baby cast aside from whoever was holding you, you are where you chose to be. And if even you are baby, you're still somehow to blame.

No one walks innocently, even the innocent. Fake laughter and smiles and people that might help you or hurt you are all fake. Their looks castigate anything different. And yours look back the same.

The existential questions. Who am I? Who are you, motherfucker? They are essentially the same. Put differently, the answer is always the same. On the stage of forever you are nothing. No one. In one hundred years, no matter how strong or weak, you are dust. Pleasure, or pain, mean nothing. Everything is transient. That might sound nihilistic, and perhaps it is. It might sound Buddhist. And perhaps they are the same.

You can still look at the moon. You can still feel the sun on your face. That's all you have. At least that's all you can be sure you have. I watched a movie the other day, and the woman in it dies. She walked happily onto a train and her nose started to bleed and hours later she was dead. But the part that tore my soul. She looked at her friend just before her heart stopped and she said, "I'm not ready."

That scares me more than life scares me. I'm not ready.

Ladybugs

by Kalani Perry - Monday, August 02, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=142>

This is going to be a lesson about perception. If you called a little girl a ladybug everyone would think it was cute. If you called her a mealworm, you'd be a dick. But in real life, mealworms are way nicer. They name little-girl soccer teams The Little Ladybugs, but what they don't tell you is that a ladybug is a soulless, relentless, remorseless killer. It is a carnivore that brings logarithmically more death than the Terminator. Those black spots are to let predators know that "I am poisonous so don't fuck with me." Too small an amount to affect people, but if you're a slightly larger insect or smaller, that's a biohazard sign. The cute shell is an offensive exoskeleton that shields it so like a Panzer it can wipe out legions of other animals blocking it from food. And since it is poisonous and cannibalistic, it knows to eat its young as eggs just after they come into existence, after it first exists. It's pretty, though. And just like pretty people, it can talk a lot of shit.

Laura Santa Monica

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, January 19, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=118>

I sat behind you at this concert. You were a dancer. You did ballet. It seemed far too refined for me. You bought me a hula dancer for my car. You thought about me outside of our interaction. I suppose that was good.

The hula dancer was horribly inappropriate, but I wanted to fuck you, so I didn't say anything.

Imagine flashbulbs going off. Life is that. What do you remember? A flash? Love at a moment? Love ends. And then what?

The way we deal with the way love folds our clothes. It puts things in their places.

Lost. It's hard to find the bathroom.

Love works separately from how you'd prefer it to work. It's a worm that squeezes to fit the empty spaces. Lost is lost. Love is not different. Love only hurts a little less because there was something. It's gone. There wouldn't be a question, if there was one. It's gone.

Let it be again

by Kalani Perry - Friday, April 16, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=130>

The number one song in the country at the moment of my birth, just finishing up a six-week run at the position, was Bridge Over Troubled Water. Sort of. That week, officially on the Saturday after I was born, the number one song became Let It Be. I find that two-song playlist oddly appropriate to my next 49 years.

I started listening to Simon and Garfunkel on Spotify and it reminded me of my life in the '80s and '90s. I can't count how many times I crisscrossed the country. 'Kathy, I'm lost,' I said, though I knew she was sleeping. I'm empty and aching and I don't know why.' But I did know why. And I do know why.

It's a cliché to repeat how songs invoke memories. I can't listen to Band of Horses without seeing her flit back and forth across the bathroom, momentarily visible in panties and my t-shirt, then disappearing from view. I can't hear the Hold Steady without remembering looking at the back of my hand staring drunkenly at the veins and how empty my hand seemed while struggling through my divorce. And I can't hear Simon and Garfunkel without also hearing the clacking of train tracks or the groaning of diesel-engined Greyhounds riding across the plains in the middle of the night, stopping in cities so small there was only a snack machine in the depot to get a bite, and crossroads with a flashing yellow light in lieu of one that changed from red to yellow to green.

I was on Trip Advisor the other day and I got bored of clicking when I had hit 500 cities, towns, and hamlets in America, Canada, and Mexico. Johnny Cash sang "I've been everywhere" and between two precise latitudes, it seems I have. "We've all gone to look for America." And so we have. What did we find? What did I find? You?

Rain

by Kalani Perry - Thursday, April 15, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=126>

Everyone loves to look at rain. It's romantic. Everyone likes to fuck in it or be in it for a second or two. Then the problems start. The worst thing about life is that it's cold and unpredictable, even when it's hot.

People tell you to do what you love. Which is, of course impossible. Love is a broken and divided concept, and it never means the same thing twice. You don't do what you love; you do what you do.

Rain is like love. It's pretty to look at. It's pretty to think about. And when it falls it has that moment of pleasure. Then it causes problems you didn't even know existed.

Scrapbook

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, August 07, 2022

https://allthefiction.com/?page_id=48

Seconds on a clock

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, January 19, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=106>

The moment is so small that it makes bigger things happen. The moment has to happen now so it has an advantage. It insists on being like a second on a clock. It says, “Whatever the fuck you want, I’m going to make this next minute.”

I love pace. I see why it matters. I love compulsion. I see why it matters.

I love the parts that are compelled to work. And I love the parts that wait.

Soft hands

by Kalani Perry - Monday, January 18, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=116>

My hands are soft. But it takes everything to write like this. This isn't a hobby. You have to give everything. More than you thought you knew you had. Then you have to give again. I'm dying no less than you are. I spend my days looking at the dying, looking at the dead. There's nothing wrong with me. I chose this a long time ago.

Sometimes we forget what we've got, who we are and who we are not

by Kalani Perry - Wednesday, July 07, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=136>

I spent July 3-4 with friends, most I hadn't seen in years. We hadn't all been to gather since my wedding (since divorced) 20 years ago this November. I almost didn't go. Addictions of any kind really are fueled by isolation. And if you isolate for long enough, like anything else, it becomes what feels comfortable. Even sober, that craving for dysfunction is stronger than any cravings I have ever felt for alcohol. But I booked the ticket. I'm so glad I did.

The first day I got there the kids were at the beach and the spouses (spousi?) were shopping. Three hours I had with 2/3 of my best friends in the world. We did the requisite *Glory Days* reliving of the late-80s to late-90s. Then the conversation turned. I forgot what it's like to have smart friends in person. I mean really smart, erudite friends. We could talk about 18th-century colonialism and the English Beat, eminent domain and marketing theory, the seemingly intractable problems of universal preschool, homelessness and drug addiction. And whether Black Sabbath really started heavy metal. Absolutely everything was on the table. Simply life-affirming.

Next day the same group, this time with families. And what wonderful families they are. Everyone, except me of course, seems to have picked the perfect partner, and all the kids (young adults really, from 15-20 years old) were polite, well-adjusted and grounded. It brought into focus that before the madness I had chosen, this was me. Remarkably, this was still us.

We were joined the next day by still another close, decades-long friend and her wonderful husband. Again the discussion turned to art and passion, and creating just for the existential satisfaction of turning nothing into something, no matter what that something was. All these friends were close enough that it wouldn't make sense to hide my recent struggles. It wouldn't feel right to try. So I didn't.

To a person, all I felt was love and compassion. And every conversation was a continual reminder: this is us, and perhaps more importantly, this is me.

The blues

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, September 21, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=150>

I can't explain the color blue without being self-referential, though I know it's located between violet and green on the optical spectrum. Or the power of the blues except with uninspired definitions of rhymed, simple narratives played flattened or gradually bent in relation to the pitch of the major scale. Both descriptions are sterilized to the point of meaninglessness. These two are as real as any "proven" entity, yet remain beyond the grasp of non-experiential understanding.

We bask in the glory of the senses but as a path to true knowing they are clearly quite limited and limiting.

The empty space of quiet

by Kalani Perry - Wednesday, July 14, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=138>

I think the only thing that works with you are affectations. I know how you feel and I know how I feel. But I also know that screams to no one are probably more effective. And perhaps my screaming isn't for anyone anyway. The night is sort of used to being deaf and dumb. I scream into my pillow and feel the spit gather and pool. I type in ALL CAPS, then time your metronomic response.

But now, when I can't help but think about you—his smile in that picture when I know he fucks you later that night; that second betrayal—the part of my torso, the call of my heart is exploding with whatever chemicals say, "Fuck that." I go to the next thought about why I hate you, or maybe I eat this surge in my chest this once. And I'm not quite sure what I would do if you were in actual arm's reach. Would I even reach for you?

That ferrous taste when there's blood in your mouth lets you know something rusted. That chewing on your cheek in angst wasn't all in vain; there were consequences. Part of me still loves you and that part wants you to know that smell.

You ask sometimes what I am thinking. The verb "to think" does not have the required nuance I need to explain to you my real-time interpretation of what I see and hear at any given moment. I think you say it to fill the empty space of quiet; I'm sure you are not particularly interested in the answer.

There is no such person as Jaron

by Kalani Perry - Friday, May 21, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=132>

You won't remember this. There was a place once called Jaron's. And as much as there might be such a thing as privilege, I had it here. These names are real. I was just off the plane from Texas with a black, felt Stetson and a shirt that said "Listen to Black Sabbath" and I meant them both. We had crab cakes and whatever was on tap. I was drunk on the plane. Now, it was just a slip. The bouncer knew me from '93, the bartender was my cousin and his wife ran the kitchen. I was, as much as any place, home.

The band that night was 'Ale'a, sweet voiced in Hawaiian, and they were. Kala'i was fresh off his falsetto win and they were confident and the notes were true. In the bar where I was born. And they dedicated *Hula O Makee* to me and I knew I was home. I wasn't yet married to Effie, but she knew about my stories and it was nice to have proof, right off the plane, that I was from where I said I was from.

This small-town encapsulation. This Kailua. Around the corner was No Name Bar where all the marines chose to brawl. Down Oneawa from Fast Eddies where Willie K played *Hi'ilawe* and *Hey, Joe*. But Jaron's was ours.

There will be an answer

by Kalani Perry - Monday, April 05, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=124>

The constant over-stimulation with music, with movies, with my quasi-Bohemian love-churning. And when I have been free, the deep appreciation for what I do and have loved in terms of what I've allowed in my ear, eye, and mouth holes. The ability to face deep-seated fears with calm and stillness, and the ability to regain control, somehow lost after briefly losing it. A reintroduction to a capacity for love manifest in an ability to forgive, and a need for artistic accomplishment with completed works of consequence is a distinct—perhaps ultimate—goal of the life I've been given. Finally, new found. Perhaps new finding is the more correct tense. The ability to turn things over in my life to the Universe. That unnamed creature-loving, for lack of a better word, energy that represents everything. That is just the way it is. Only good things happen when I let it be. Close your eyes, boy. There will be an answer.

Two schoolgirls

by Kalani Perry - Saturday, May 22, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=134>

I killed everything. I didn't mean to. I wasn't even trying to kill myself. But watch the funeral parade. See the black flags flying. Each one indicative of something I destroyed. Each relationship. Each chance. Each choice. A loss of grip on humanity and a slow slide down the rope into despair. Look left. Look right. There is no one else to blame.

The pull for the intensity of feeling necessary to create motivates predilections that most people are able to avoid. I don't expect you or anyone else not enjoying/suffering the same condition to understand.

You see brilliance and you see madness. And you can't wrap your mind around the fact that those are two schoolgirls holding hands.

Yeah!

by Kalani Perry - Thursday, May 20, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=111>

So, what are we going to do when I get out there? Besides the obvious I mean. Our concerns have been so legal, so cerebral, so theoretical that the idea of you as a woman, with a woman's body, and a woman's kisses and a woman's loving touch have, unfortunately, taken a back seat to those other concerns. I'm sure that will change the moment I melt into your arms, a sugar cube dissolving in your rain. And you as well will be sugar on my tongue dissolving.

In this desert of hatred, you have been an oasis of love and support; my tether to a world where the truth is believed, and friends are forever, and justice means fairness. Your beautiful words reach across these thousands of miles to talk me off the ledge of this bilious, nauseous, ferocious anger.

Three years apart and now three weeks. Do you still want me? I think you might. And I can hear your voice in response to that question a breathless treble of high-octave exhale, "Yeah!"

You are not enough

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, January 19, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=122>

Do you remember? I have a hard time forgetting. I'm not sure the words you said were legal. They were fun.

Tell me again I'll tell myself. I'll be good I promise.

Promises lie. Lies lie worse. You can't trust me. I can't trust me. Move on knowing that.

My hands aren't shaking and I can't feel the involuntary pull of my muscles. I can type. The bar is low.

Tell me again so I can tell myself. Nevermind.

You are not enough.

?

by Kalani Perry - Friday, May 21, 2021

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=113>

A circle is not the smooth line that you apparently see when you look at one. It is actually an infinitely-sided polygon. This is one of the reasons that the study of trigonometry seems to be solely about triangles, but in reality is a study of their relation to circles. This is the reason why pi never ends. This is a metaphor.

Kalani Perry v5.2

All the Fiction I Care to Remember

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