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## Minutiae

by Kalani - Wednesday, August 10, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=209>

All these mistakes I've made don't exist, except in my memory. It's past and just as fake as whatever I can imagine comes next. Only now exists. The rest is a mind-game-mind-fuck. I have tortured myself beyond any pedestrian waterboard (which, by the way, really doesn't sound that bad, especially if you've bodysurfed the Wedge or Sandy's). I'm tired of living in the shade. "Let there be light," is a metaphor. It didn't happen like the book says. It happens every second. Wait, this might be hard to wrap your head around, but seconds are too long. Every moment of comprehensible difference from the last. Nano-nanosecond. Every single one of these, whatever you want to call them, is a chance to let there be light. God exists, if she does, in minutiae. The smaller everything gets, the greater the change in our rules of understanding.

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## A siren song

by Kalani - Wednesday, August 10, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=207>

Weakness is easy. Weakness is strong. It is strong in me. And I confuse myself with its strength and wrongfully bestow the recognition on myself. There is in this way an almost Homeric quality to this tragedy that I've created of my life. She, like a Siren, unrelenting and me, ever yielding. Truth be told, her tenacity was never quite a requirement of this situation. My give to yield after a moment's glance or a breathy invitation to do such and such, never really mattering what either such might amount to. It was always the source that counted.

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## Nothing less

by Kalani - Wednesday, August 10, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=205>

The thing about faith is that it requires so much more. On a good day, I trust what I'm told by most. On a bad day, I don't believe myself. Good days are often bad and vice versa. Your eyes give you away, more than your I's which say even more. I close my eyes and trace the walk down from the apartment to the corner gas station, sweating in the near-summer heat of the Mississippi and holding the bleeding condensation of Busch in their plastic hearse as I wade back upstream to the patio where I'd wait for you. The first sips take away the heat of the late afternoon while you work, while your child naps, swims or bathes. The sweat congeals against my skin under one too many layers of clothing. The sips become slugs. The days pass. And I wonder if I have traded nothing less for nothing more.

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## Who made the magnet?

by Kalani - Friday, August 12, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=228>

I've been a super hot mess for three weeks now. I've just stopped sleeping with one of the prettiest women you've ever seen. Pretty girls are mostly messes too. How do we find each other? These messes always seem to come together. Who made the magnet? We attract. And then we turn over and repel.

I talk too much. That is one of my myriad problems. I like to sing. I like my voice in all the ways it manifests. It's the only thing I like about myself. So I overuse it. It's okay. We'll be done soon.

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## Heroin and heroines

by Kalani - Friday, August 12, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=226>

I was never quite humble. And I never could shut up. When I was seven and the line was around the block at the Cinerama for Star Wars there was a casting director behind us in line. It's how I got to be in commercials and on the Don Ho show. His granddaughter was my first girlfriend. We held sweaty palms in the darkened planetarium and kissed when they killed the lights. Women are obtuse and my heroin. And heroines. I grew up exclusively with females. This gave me the key. I can always get in. It's the getting out that gets messy. A lot of people bruise easily when you spit words like love. I'm one of them pussies.

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## alt.country

by Kalani - Friday, August 12, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=223>

The alt.country boys taught me a new way to look at things. I thought I could see. I didn't have a twang. The genius of a slightly different way of sounding. Tupelo, Wilco, Okkervil. They all have the same perfect simple. Then we go to Brooklyn and listen to the city. The National. The Hold Steady. And your heart breaks in a different way. You have to stare at it in New York. Fine. I like both ways. I don't like doggie style. I'm boring. I like looking at your face.

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# Sporadic

by Kalani - Friday, August 12, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=221>

The meaning of life comes to me sporadically. I wish I could hold it. I guess it's value comes in being unholdable. Who am I really? I don't really matter. I'm not being dramatic. I smashed an ant today. It wasn't on purpose. I like everything to live as long as it can. And then I saw that I am that ant. Fragile and lost. Walking among the many, but probably scared. And actually alone.

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## **This is not a dream**

by Kalani - Friday, August 12, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=219>

This is not a dream. Morning is coming though. Who knows what happens with the light. I prefer the darkness. I prefer hookers and strippers and drug addicts and drunks and punks. They fell off the train too. Our eyes meet instead of divert. I still judge, don't get me wrong. I judge the opposite. No politics right now. I find beauty in the sadness of the lost. I am lost too.

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## Less and less

by Kalani - Saturday, August 13, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=231>

You hear guns in the night and you hope they're not for you. Strange gets strange and stranger. Big gets bigger. Small has always been small. It's weird. The more I open, the more the universe opens. And closed defines everything as shut. I don't know anymore. That's the difference between me. The one that I was and the one that I am. I used to think I knew everything. Catch me in the right mood and I still might. I'm quite sure I have an opinion about what you say next. I'm not quite sure your rebuttal makes me wrong. I am sure that I'm not interested in the argument. You win. I used to be defined by my hatred to lose. By a pull to explication. I used to say, "I don't give a fuck," when, really, I gave such a fuck. Every day that passes, my words align more with what I feel. Or claimed to have. Less and less. But somehow more and more.

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# Clindamycin

by Kalani - Sunday, August 21, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=235>

The clindamycin seems ineffectual. Baking powder poured on like dry batter feels better. The walking. The rumination is more tiring. Waiting for nightfall. Three hours unconscious. Then praying for the sun. Read a book. Differential equations take a few minutes to solve. They drag thoughts away. Gone until you can picture the parabola. These problems have answers. Sometimes your proof is wrong. But it's easy to correct for  $f(x)$ . You know the constant and then plug in things. Math, hard math, is constant even when it's irrational or infinite. Life. Not really. They mostly use clindamycin for vaginal infections. I don't have a vagina.

Yesterday I woke up soaked. The fan still; mocking. My foot swollen, the skin peeling in pieces and burning with invisible flame. Arms shivering. I put my hands in her shirt and asleep her nipples hardened. For a reason, I'm not sure why this involuntary response comforts me. Sex is a respite from thoughts that linger and mangle. 96 hours to tear down 6384. The imbalance is obvious and hideous. It hurts my throat and cerebellum. The 96 proving less is more.

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# GPS

by Kalani - Monday, August 22, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=237>

Unlike latitude, which can be ascertained by looking at the sun or the stars, longitude has no counterpart in the physical environment. It is an artificial, arbitrary construct. And time, in turn, can determine your location. When you use the GPS in your phone or car, your device receives wireless signals from at least four of the twenty-four satellites in the global positioning system that are orbiting about 35,786 km overhead. Each satellite carries four atomic clocks that are synchronized to within a billionth of a second of one another. The various satellites visible to your receiver send it a continuous stream of signals, each of which is time-stamped to the nanosecond. That's where the atomic clocks come in. Their tremendous temporal precision gets converted into the tremendous spatial precision we've come to expect from GPS.

I was drunk, very drunk, when I wrote that. So the content of my ranting is not a reliable breathalyzer. For the record, I don't drink anymore.

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## Lunar obviousness

by Kalani - Tuesday, August 23, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=239>

It was so big and moved so fast and changed at the same speed of a menstrual cycle, but always looked the same. In a way that's how we came upon science. The Greeks, the Chinese, the Hawaiians, they all made this thing a god. We know orbits are not elliptical. For reasons I don't want to explain right now they don't go in a circle. If they did gravity would pull them closer and closer. It's why the moon isn't in Hawaii and we're not in the sun. But that moon mahina Luna. Closest it's about 226,000 miles, average 238,000. It goes to 251,000 at apogee and it eventually will keep going at about two inches per year until it breaks free of Earth's grasp. Then everything you know is fucked. The Earth will start wobbling with the lower gravitational influence. When the Earth wobbles, you wobbles. And when I say wobbles, I mean continents move on their plates. Friction is a thing. And this wobbling makes the air rub against the ground and itself. So, it gets hot. Not just Vegas hot. But bubbling ramen hot. The seas boil away. Maybe bacteria survive.

Look at the moon, not just because it's pretty. It is. But because it has your back. Full moon ahh! That's the air you breathe. How's that for manic?

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## Dante's stand-up comedy

by Kalani - Friday, September 02, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=249>

I have had some interesting theories about the afterlife. I grew up Catholic, so I pretty much had Dante's Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso in my mind until I began to self-actualize around the age of nine, fully rejecting the supernatural by 14. I've come to believe there is a place for ritual, and there is definitely good cause to placate the majority and free them from the freedom of free thinking. Most can't handle the nuances.

One of the signs of intelligence is being able to hold two opposing ideas in one's mind and contemplate them both objectively. Most people are stupid.

The abyss of forever is a terrible reminder if you sit at its edge for long. Nihilism is an easy path from there. Meaning is just a few years from meaningless, after all. I try not to stare directly into the emptiness. And I distract myself with stand-up comedians (who fearlessly, constantly stare) and loud music.

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## Ben Folds Five

by Kalani - Friday, September 02, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=247>

The band is actually a trio, but I guess you have to be a fan to get the joke. Reinhold Messner is hard for me to listen to, even though I love it. It's too close to home and too near the bone. I never tempt the past with Muse or the Weakerthans. I remember when we were a secret, when it was dangerous and beautiful. I remember the fire drill when we stood in the stairwell and I stole a hand squeeze, and we spoke innuendoes about sex and corporeal delight by quoting song lyrics. I sometimes feel like I've lost that ability to yearn.

When celebrities die, I subtract my age from theirs. The number keeps getting smaller.

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## Turbo Pascal

by Kalani - Friday, September 02, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=245>

The unintended benefit of Borland's masterpiece interpretation of Pascal was its text editor. Basically, it was a typewriter that put what you typed onto a screen rather than a piece of paper. Sure you could compile simple code using it, but it was also my first word processor. It didn't trouble your mind with beautiful distractions like fonts, type styles, or even page formatting. You had to press return to hard break a line: the computer version of sweeping the carriage back with a manual typewriter.

Though I was ostensibly in this environment to unlock its binary glories, it was here that I discovered the purity and power of words. Just words. More literally, a blinking white rectangle and early bit-mapped versions of the alphabet.

And in just three short undergraduate years I went from a computer science/math double major to graduating with degrees in creative writing (technically English) and Economics.

To this day I can see the common threads that weave together the tapestry of algorithms, poems, and macroeconomic theories. It's really quite predictable that I would love the processes and thought experiments that fuel all three. Quantum theory as religion would soon follow.

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## Again with the black holes

by Kalani - Friday, September 02, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=243>

It's funny but it's not really funny. There's a kind of recognition, but it's not warm. It's a cold and broken inevitable, not a what could be. I'm trying to morph my belief system from deterministic (relativist, binary, classic physics, et al.) to probabilistic (quantum, who the fuck knows, et al.) It seems more hopeful to admit that I don't know and probably never will than 1+1 will always equal 2. What are rules except patterns beyond control? Why does it take getting so small to change the rules? I want the rules to change at super-atomic.

Black holes will eventually all evaporate. None that exist are evaporating. None will even start for  $10^{68}$  years. But it's going to happen. And we know this only by thinking about it. Why is that easier to accept than my life?

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## Proactive

by Kalani - Friday, September 02, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=241>

It's strange to me, when people believe in an omnipotent God with an established plan, and still think they have a choice. If something created you, knowing exactly what you would do, explain to me where the choice is. You were created as part of a purpose. Any choice was known before you made it. You were created to make that choice. You might feel like you were choosing, but if everything was known, what choice did you really have? There may be a God. And I use the term to define the proactive force that is and of creation. Do I think it's a man? No. Do I think it cares about the individual soul? No. Why would God put you to the test when you live 70 years and spray paint that upon forever? God as it is explained by the people that anthropomorphize the existence of something larger confounds and frustrates me. If there is a God, why create a Lucifer knowing he'll fall? Why give me questions that have no answer? People move through this life like cattle. And the powers that be don't want the cattle stirring up shit before the hammer hits the brain and makes you fall. It's easier to control the crowd if it doesn't know what's coming. There is no God like you have chosen to believe in. No thing that holy could ever devolve into being so cruel.

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## Advocatus diaboli

by Kalani - Sunday, September 04, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=251>

My modus operandi is *advocatus diaboli*. In Latin, the devil's advocate. Not a detective. An observer of everything all at once. Then I parse. Like a centrifuge, I separate. I can argue both sides. I can feel what both sides feel. I can see what's going to happen as long as I'm not emotionally involved. That's how I know you hide. That's how I know you lie. I don't "know" how most people know. When the vibration is out of tune? I know.

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## Narratives

by Kalani - Wednesday, September 14, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=254>

I am an unreliable narrator.

I make no pretense to disinterest. Everything I use to fill the vacuum of this life is done by choice. Consciously or subconsciously I am neck deep in my interests and biases. So are we all. The difference is my memory. It is eidetic. I can often remember things exactly as they happened. The trick to being unreliable is the interpretation of these events to suit the argument I am making, which may or may not remain consistent. It really depends on the moment. It depends on the audience.

Now for the hard part. Sometimes I am the sole member of this audience. And the cognitive dissonance that occurs during the process of packaging a situation is far more dissonant, when the package is for self-consumption. It's not impossible, clearly. And by what I've witnessed I'm not the only person doing it. You see it in a color-by-numbers, kindergarten-simplicity when the law becomes involved. Statements are taken, snap judgements are made, then all evidence that fits a hypothesis is hoarded, while anything that subverts the accepted idea of "what happened" is summarily dismissed as coincidence or superfluous. In our personal lives we do this shit on a whole other level. Why? Because we are fighting for our perceived actualization and the definition of our capital-s Self. That is a constant battle waged from cradle to grave, and everything is sacrificed in its effort.

The few individuals that can subvert this compulsion, or rise above it, are pointed to as heroes and anomalies of selfless wonder. Again, I don't include myself, even remotely, among these beautiful freaks of human nature.

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## Aloha Ukraine

by Kalani - Thursday, September 15, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=261>

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## Give it to me

by Kalani - Thursday, September 15, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=258>

There are two kinds of hard rock fans. The first enjoy Brian Johnson's vocals, as do I. We all loved *Back in Black*. The second remember when Bon Scott came out with bagpipes and a kilt. That guy gave zero fucks. And Angus Young was thrashing half naked even as a boy dressed like a schoolboy because he was one. Then Kiss blew and merchandised everything that a logo fits on. And Ozzy was snorting ants in the parking lot on a dare because he said he would do anything, and he certainly did even more than that. I understand that impulse.

"You can't possibly swallow that whole thing."

"Give it to me. Right now. Give it to me."

"I don't think that's safe."

"Now you're the voice of reason? Give it to me."

Oh yeah, Motorhead opened and Lemmy never looked down from the microphone and made punks look like hippies, which in a way they are. I have the word punk tattooed across my neck. I get to judge.

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## Old Macdonald

by Kalani - Thursday, September 15, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=256>

"I didn't know if she was legal tender, but I spent her just the same." Now, AC/DC is known for crude puns and plays on words, but that one is hard to beat. I keep looking for ways to use it in real life. Can you imagine the reaction on the long table at Starbucks full of semi-strangers? "Yeah, I met this girl and we were totally into each other. I know she was most likely age inappropriate..." And then bust that line. It would be like Farrell's in the 70s when you finished the literal trough of ice cream and the whole cast came out to four-part harmonize *Old MacDonald Had a Farm* to let everyone know you were a pig.

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## Saddled

by Kalani - Monday, September 19, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=263>

I don't feel lucky, I feel saddled. I feel trapped within this bubble of "supposed to be." I played along. I really did my best. Best is never enough. There's always better. There are past mistakes for everyone. Eidetic and see them every time you close your eyes. Close your eyes, but your mind is 7-11; always open, taking anyone in. The power of pathology is difficult to explain to people that function as people. Get married, have 2.3 kids, buy a house, just be happy. There are those of us that look like you. Went to the same schools. Eat turkey at Thanksgiving. We look the same. But this cognitive dissonance between what I see and what I feel. This is punk rock.

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## The mortal enemy of lies

by Kalani - Tuesday, September 27, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=271>

Lies lead to follow-up questions. Follow-up questions beg for details. And details are the mortal enemy of lies.

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# Sheep

by Kalani - Tuesday, September 27, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=269>

It's easier to get people to act by appealing to the worst parts of themselves, instead of their best. We bring out our best at sometimes crucial moments. But, life is mostly wasting time. And megalomaniacal people, both good and bad, have figured out how to manipulate that feeling of existential meaninglessness by giving people a meaning. Good or bad. We're not so different from sheep; this is why advertising is so effective. The best, and the worst, rise above and below respectively.

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## Twenty-five

by Kalani - Tuesday, September 27, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=267>

I never thought there'd come a day when 25 would seem so irritatingly young. I remember being on the school bus when I was eight or nine and we'd go from lower campus at Kamehameha to pick up the kids in high school on upper campus. They seemed so old. Now I look at ninth-graders and they seem so tiny. The same transformation has happened with twentysomethings. When you are one? You rule the world. You know every answer. And your way is the right way.

It takes hindsight, I guess, to recalculate and add up all the stupid fucking decisions and the risky behavior that when bulletproof seemed like manifest destiny, but in reality, is mostly the luck of the draw. If I met the me from ages 25 – 35, I would tell him to quit being such a fucking asshole. Think of those that love you. And can you please try to step out of yourself for one second?

My new theory is that it's evolutionary. We need that bravado and sluttiness to propagate our genes. But at what cost? I'm not that old, really. But I see more clearly things in other people that I don't like. And what you hate the most in others? Is really what you hate about yourself.

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## Plumeria

by Kalani - Tuesday, September 27, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=265>

I walk to the store and I can smell the magnolias as the stench permeates the misty morning. I don't see the sun. The smell suggests the plumerias from home. Almost a stink sweet. But for some reason, the magnolias stink like death, like the slow burn of a Southern dying melancholy. Plumerias, so common, so complex, represent the opposite in my nose's eye. The sap bleeding from the picked flowers or broken branches that ooze white lifeblood. So common, so complex. Like the rebirth of long-awaited airport greetings, or high school graduates buried in flora. It is the surging force of beauty and occasion, of celebration and happy.

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## Nothing ever happens

by Kalani - Sunday, October 02, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=285>

Pace the floor. My steps echo like stomping through the whole house. And I'm small. Mid-sized on my best day. I've memorized the number of stairs so I can traverse them in the dark. Two, then eleven, then three. The wood still creaks and I make more noise than I want to. Halfway up the eleven I reassure myself with, "Fuck it. This is my house." But when you share a space, especially if that space at the end of your 2-11-3 finishes in bed, it's not your house.

So I'm stumbling through the numbers, trying to remember what I told her. I don't really think it matters. She'd be mad even if the honest answer was buying toys and giving them to orphans. It depends on how you define toys. It depends on how long you forgive someone for being an orphan. I tell myself it's a sin of omission.

My body itches and if I have to stand up to piss less than four times tonight, my bladder will have claimed a victory worthy of a general. I get up six times.

"What the fuck were you doing in the bathroom last night?"

"I had to pee."

"Pee. Right."

"Nothing happened."

"Nothing ever happens."

"Nothing happened."

"I don't care."

The worst part about everything is that she really didn't care. Even worse than that? I wasn't in trouble. She made coffee and silent went to work. I poured a cup, sat at the dining room table and tried to be defensive. I was still drunk. Drunk mad is the least justified drunk you will ever feel. And I was seething. I had no reason to be. I almost never did.

"How hard would that have been?"

"To what?"

"To wake up one day and be like everybody else."

"I can't answer that."

"Why do you always have to be the bad seed? The damaged goods?"

"I'm different?"

"You're not different. You're like everybody else."

"No."

"You're right. Not everyone is killing themselves. I just want to know how we got here."

"It just happens I guess."

"This shit just happens?"

"Well, this is where we are."

"This is where we are. I'm not happy."

"What can I do?"

“Change.”

“Nothing ever changes. Not really.”

“I know.”

“Then what are you asking for?”

“Out.”

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## My divorce

by Kalani - Sunday, October 02, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=281>

“Did you sign?”

“Yes. Did you?”

“Yes.”

“So, then.”

“So what?”

“I guess. So what?”

“What are you trying to say?”

“I still love you?”

“That’s not even close to funny.” But I’m not joking. And, of course, I don’t say it. Every syllable with her must be calculable. I have no calculus for this feeling. “You know you had everything?”

“I know.”

“You know you fucked it all away?”

“I know.”

“You know I still love you?”

“I know.” (Full disclosure: I didn’t.)

“So, what now?”

“This I don’t know.”

“So smart and so stupid.”



# Shhh

by Kalani - Sunday, October 02, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=279>

I read Junot Diaz and Dostoyevsky and think to myself, “I don’t speak like that.” My first language was Pidgin English. Truth to power, truth to shame, truth to reality. Truth is trouble. Truth hurts. Trust me on this one. Is truth good? Does it serve a purpose? Why does everyone lie if truth is the end all? Truth gets you in trouble. That’s why we like to read it. So far removed from what is.

Hard, heavy cathartic. Like everything it isn’t perfect. When you plane a board to make it smooth. Heavy music planes my jagged soul. My girlfriend can only hear noise. I hear angels trumpeting. Deflecting. Whispering. Ssshhh. They’re not shouting, “Do it.” They are under the breath saying, “shhh.”

It’s the call of the wolf. On nights when the moon is close, and I can’t resist its pull. That’s what “normal” people don’t understand. They don’t feel that crazy that washes over some of us like bath water.

It insinuates and fills every crevice, just like water. And then the impulses strike. And they sound like such good ideas in your mind. And then you blurt out something that makes so much sense when you’re thinking it.

Insanity can often appear lucid, and that is why it’s so hard to understand for people without mental illness. How would you react to hearing a voice when you were alone? Or a song that’s not playing? Or shadows that look like demons when you turn off the lights? Some parts of this shit are disconcerting at best, and frightening at worst.

I haven’t turned off my lights in six months. I haven’t slept well in 30 years. I am wholeheartedly aware that this is not normal. I am not choosing this. Somehow, it has chosen me, and those of us that are chosen have no promised land. And can’t see a welcome party at the light at the end of the tunnel. Most days I don’t even see a light.

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## Gypsy Tea Room

by Kalani - Sunday, October 02, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=277>

I stood with you, three feet away from Robert Cray at the Gypsy Tea Room in Deep Ellum. The blues. I've always had such an affinity for sadness. Some come to mind. I'm not sure if it was born or learned, but it certainly is. I watched the movie, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, because I thought it might be sexual (spoiler alert: not really, unless you're very patient). And then I tried to read the book because I liked the title. I bought the titular Fine Young Cannibals' first album for the same reason (and the *Screaming Blue Messiahs*). I still don't understand the former. I still listen to the latter.

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## Four a.m. cliché

by Kalani - Sunday, October 02, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=275>

I'm at my best early. And four a.m. is such a cliché. I remember our shared, casual sadness, bathed in hope that cried for the sun to rise. This human condition is weird. Defined by its humanity. Your body. Where the skin was so soft and where the bones were hard. Those determinations were not yours. And what they wrought were sometimes choice. I like to think of you as soft. But I'm not speaking about touch.

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# Spleen

by Kalani - Sunday, October 02, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=273>

Feel beneath your left rib. The soft spot. That's your spleen. Everyone cares about the approximate same place on the right side. That's your liver. You don't need a spleen. Twenty years ago you did. Trust me, you need your liver. The two organs in your body that regenerate are your liver and your skin. But when they're broken, they're broken. And their distress is yours. Dying of broken skin or a broken liver is not a way anyone would choose to die. Pancreas. Stomach. Those are bad too. They're all bad right? They all end the same way. Forever. But you can lose your spleen.

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## Nothing lasts forever

by Kalani - Saturday, October 08, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=288>

“I didn’t want anyone to get hurt.”

“Now everyone is hurt.”

“I know.”

“And that does what good?”

“Everyone is even?”

“You moved the line.”

“Yes.”

“And that’s supposed to make me feel better?”

“Yes. No. I don’t know.”

“Cover every base.”

“No. Every base is exposed.”

“I know.”

“What do we do?”

“We stop.”

“Stop what?”

“Everything.”

“Everything? You? Me?”

“Everything.”

“So, this is...”

“Goodbye.”

“Goodbye forever?”

“Nothing lasts forever, silly.”

# Guernica

by Kalani - Tuesday, October 18, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=296>

The third act of a story is defined by resolution. The arc of a story is usually quite predictable. Now, what I do when I'm telling a story is take what happens prior to where a third act is supposed to be and pull it down. Further and further until you cannot bare to look. It's beyond even the macabre interest in an accident scene. We dissolve into what we were, and I dissolve into the pain of these characters, but we rarely have an inkling of what we could become.

The second act creates the problem to solve. There is no third act in my story because I don't have any solutions. It keeps happening and happening. And no one is wrong. And there's no escape. There is no plan B. This is just how it is. Worse. This is who you are, this is who I am. Everyone taps out. Everyone begs with clasped fists. No one is spared. And everything burns. And every furtive clasp or grasp will be remembered but ignored.

I feel like my writing is more cubic Picasso or like Mondrian's evolution from landscapes to De Stijl rather than Renaissance detail. It's arrogant to say but I see the Guernica when I close my eyes after finishing a good paragraph. I know I can do it because I've seen it. And I've always been more interested in the reduction of forms than layers of perfect replication.

I'm writing about a fictional character, can't you tell?

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# Riptide

by Kalani - Wednesday, November 09, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=302>

The further the riptide pulls you from shore, the less you believe you're going to make it back. It's counterintuitive to do what you're supposed to do. Swimming toward the beach is futile. Water, like much of reality, is much stronger than you are without even trying. It has no motive but getting to even.

Remember that? It was never about revenge, but being more like water. Like temperature. Chaos is always replaced by order after the energy dissipates. That does not exclude the reality of volatility, and the inevitable result of its impassive being.

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## Conflict

by Kalani - Wednesday, November 09, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=300>

There is no story without a conflict. Who would read that? Conflict is as essential to comedy as it is to tragedy. As it is to transcendence. The very nature of life is pain. And there are beautiful moments. These fleet. Would a life absolutely free of pain have been lived? Smiles and cupcakes and birthdays and sex and sleeping in late every day. Dying before anyone you love does. Never hearing "Goodbye." On a rational level, I get it. But I have always been a little more emotional than rational, a little more impulsive than reflective. Maybe a lot more. And to be perfectly honest my life has been charmed by most standards. Noticing the bad things seems ungrateful. If you've never been cut before, and then you slice into a finger, I suppose it's okay to acknowledge that it hurts. But what about a cut that never heals? You can do some things to mitigate pain. Is numb better than hurt? I'm asking.

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## Hyperactive polaroids

by Kalani - Wednesday, November 09, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=298>

I enter the cavernous warehouse and quickly discover that it must be extremely well insulated. Just outside the door it was silent. Two steps in and I can feel the bass of the beat pulsing against my chest. It feels like an arrhythmia.

The room stutters. The strobe lights are flashing like hyperactive polaroids. A thousand people bounce along to the percussive chant of a repeated phrase that invokes visions of Jonestown and Waco more so than Studio 54 or the Limelight. Everyone smiles or laughs, leaving tracers with various glow-in-the-dark sticks and orbs, as they twist and crawl in place.

Scattered about the crowd, on pedestals of various heights, are near-naked women and men leading the dance and every so often getting a little closer to naked.

My first question is, “Who the fuck are these people?” And, of course, my second question is, “Who the fuck am I?”

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## Watermelons

by Kalani - Friday, November 11, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=304>

The specifics of this story are mine. Or they were made up by me. I guess that makes it all mine. My belief has always been, however, that if I tell you the truth, then it's your story too. Total transparency has always been fascinating to me. Even when you lie, if your lie is truly yours, you tell the truth.

I remember in a philosophy class a question that seemed, at the time, completely irrelevant. Why do you laugh? No one got it right until one woman got it exactly right. She said, "A laugh is a recognition of something you know to be true." I was floored by her insight and devastated by the lack of mine. I thought I was the smartest boy in the room, and I still do. And here she was mocking my thoughts of being the -est anything.

I didn't think like her back then. I'm not quite sure if she put me on the path to where I am now, but I remember that moment, in a freshman philosophy class, all these years later.

I remember her name. She wrote poems about casting watermelons over her head as a metaphor for freedom, while I tried to be e.e. cummings. I never slept with her, we never even kissed. Usually, one or the other is a catalyst for my burning. But here it was not a requirement for immolation.

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## Smolder

by Kalani - Monday, November 14, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=306>

When I was in my 20s, I dated someone for a minute, and she told me my defining characteristic was intensity. And she was right. Then life happened, and somewhere along the line, I lost my way. I made a few bad choices, and in my attempt to be humble, I instead became weak. Apologetic, constantly qualifying my feelings. Drinking to try to (temporarily) regain that bravado. Drunk swagger may look like intensity for a moment, but it's not the same. There's no fire actually burning. Now I don't drink anymore (there are hiccups, but thankfully brief and far between). And I need to restart the fire. First, I have to remember who I am and forget what I have become. Remembering is easy, forgetting is so, so hard. But here I am. Smoldering. Grateful. And anything but weak.

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## Six months prior

by Kalani - Tuesday, December 06, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=318>

I'd seen her exactly once in four years. And it was ugly. In six months prior I did not go six minutes without seeing her. Fine. The universe works sometimes to test one's mettle. This is killing me, and I don't mean softly.

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## Too many things

by Kalani - Tuesday, December 06, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=316>

How do you finish telling a story when you can only think fifteen seconds at a time? How do you create a narrative when three minutes of contemplation is exhausting? These are rhetorical questions when I'm lucky. Writers write, right? But what if writing, what if every thought, is embroiled? I have no third act, and I don't know if I ever will. I can't get past the conflict. The conflict defines how I live; it defines who I am right now, who I've been for a while. The conflict or nothing is how I feel.

I saw an old friend last night and he was in chains over how he felt about a relationship he was in. I felt like I was in a zoo, watching something that had no personal resonance. I told him I was the same way for a while, after the last time, but after what happened, I decided to turn it off, and so I did. With me, it's always been all or nothing. And for six years now, I have chosen nothing. I have broken the alternative so many times that it might not be an option to go back. I can tell the story, but I can't live it anymore. Too many things get broken.

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## Lick the bottom

by Kalani - Tuesday, December 06, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=314>

You have to lick the bottom, so you know what it tastes like. You have to lose a lot, maybe everything, to know what you had meant anything at all. This existential struggle? Everyone goes through this, some just can't articulate. Who with a contemplative mind has not contemplated forever? Who hasn't feared the idea? How many ants or roaches did you kill this year? What do you think their afterlife fate is? What do you think yours is?

I used to go to parties and realize what hour it was, and realize there were only so many hours left to try to have fun. That's how I've been looking at life lately. If I'm lucky, I have 30 years left, and that's far less than I've already been here. Are you ready? I'm not.

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## A tsunami, sort of

by Kalani - Wednesday, December 07, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=320>

I didn't think I could do what I did. Certain self-assessments will have to be revised. I want to say I was acting in the moment, that you can't turn the effect into the cause. Given the circumstance, my reaction wasn't just reasonable, but universally predictable. I didn't have to say I would do shit. You should have known. We, both of us, know, and should have known. You can't hurt me without expecting a complete, perhaps overreactive, total response.

Have you ever seen the footage of a tidal wave? The knuckleheads here grab their boards when they hear one might be coming because they're going to surf it. It's not that kind of wave. I'm not that kind of wave. I don't break cleanly, clear as glass. I just keep coming and coming. I pick up everything along the way and drag it with me. Tomorrow you can see the debris and the bodies. Right now all you can do is run, or hold on tight to whatever you can grab. Full disclosure? You won't be able to hold on.

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# Apophenia

by Kalani - Friday, December 09, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=322>

That is the human tendency toward connection of unrelated phenomena where none exists. Toward creating patterns, even when none really exists. Trying to bring order to chaos perhaps is what separates us from being an animal. I suppose there are other things, but other primates don't seem much concerned with the correlation versus causation debate. Bonobos will go down on each other, and chimpanzees will rip your face off, but neither group seems too concerned with voting districts or feminism.

The rate of divorce in Maine correlates almost perfectly with the rate of consumption of margarine in the rest of the country. And that's not even the strangest example of almost perfect correlation. The number of letters in the winning word of the national spelling bee and people killed by venomous spiders. Almost perfectly the same. The point of talking about this? Many people find a cause and effect here. Don't eat margarine or your cousin in Maine gets a divorce? Her marriage is doomed. Don't spell long words, or you might kill someone with a spider bite.

These examples are ridiculous. Life is ridiculous. And the same impetus that suggests to a certain element that mass killings or 9/11 or Kennedy assassinations happened for a larger purpose, will also suggest this ridiculousness. It's part of the human condition. These patterns that exist or don't, that are recognized or not, that are true or false. To anyone that believes them, they are as real as God, or as oxygen in the air, or as subatomic truth or infrared light. The argument, of course, is just because it cannot be sensed, doesn't mean it doesn't exist. A negative proof shifts the burden, right or wrong, to the skeptic. And a lack of evidence becomes a virtue, not a deficit.

I think we all know better. I do.

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## Fake it till you make it

by Kalani - Sunday, December 11, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=326>

In the past you've told people you thought that I was faking it. Whatever it is. Perhaps now you see how wrong you were. There are many things you can say about me, many of them derogatory, and most of them are probably true, but fake isn't one of them. If I lie, it's with intent.

And so the terrible lurch downward appears from certain vantage points to have lurched downward again, this time in your universe. And from on high it is easy, I suppose, to look down to the place where I've chosen to stand. I would think it might be hard to make a judgement about that choice considering you have most likely never stood here yourself. If you're thinking (and I'm pretty sure you are), "that's your choice," this time you'd be correct. Everything everyone ever does, consciously for sure, but unconsciously even more so, is done by choice. Every situation, every action, every failure to act, every consequence, are all an amalgamated product of the infinite set of choices made incrementally from one nanosecond to the next in the history of time that was, and that will ever be.

We share the same nature, if not nurture; even our mannerisms are quite similar. But our constitutions could not be any more different if they were purposefully made to be so. Even our drugs of choice, and I'm speaking metaphorically, are diametrically opposed. Judgement, then, from either side seems to me to be at least hypocritical and most likely disingenuous. The fire that burns in me, that often burns me, seems only to simmer in you in a place where control is never not an option. The corollary, of course, is that you never get burned if you're never on fire.

It's too much, I understand, often it feels too much for me as well. Oh, but there are moments when too much feels like it could never possibly be enough. Please don't use the threat of my alleged influence as explication. There are many examples of bad choices being made, hidden and not so much, that occurred, are occurring, and will most likely continue to occur. It's pretty clear to me how easily mine might serve as a deflection from these. But, in fact, beliefs to the contrary, until the levee broke, the raging waters of my predilections were hidden from those to whom they should have been. And even then the Earth didn't flood.

My reputation, though inaccurate, was occasionally deserved, and enough of the myth was true to make for a cohesive narrative. I should have been more attuned to the power of perception, especially considering I have dedicated my professional and creative life to altering perceptions. I was careless. But the contrarian in me, as it so often does, bristled at interpretations of my actions as weakness, or in need of outside control. Contrary becomes self-righteous sometimes. And self-righteous easily morphs into reckless, which often continues down the path to self-destructive. Ladies and gentleman of the jury, I give you exhibits A through Z.

But, as is often true in trial, things are never really as they seem. Almost nothing is black or white, not even black and white. It is too often incorrectly repeated that there are two sides to every story. I would suggest that there are actually, potentially, an infinite number of sides, depending on how many people are looking. I know the answer to the age-old philosophical quandary as to whether truth is relative. Of course it is. Reality is relative.

As you probably already know from my ramblings, I am a firm believer in the philosophical implications of quantum theory, and I can see clearly, more so than in most situations even, how it applies here. Nothing happens by accident, nothing happens without being observed, nothing cannot be predicted, and nothing can be changed. And I assure you, that your reality is far different from mine. But that doesn't make it any less true.

I love you.

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## Inclement weather and baseball

by Kalani - Sunday, December 11, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=324>

My memory of here is that the place was hot and humid, and it is. Perhaps my ten-year-old sense of reality had not experienced enough data points to make a sound declaration. Ewa Beach was hot. Kailua was not.

It's calm outside and the state of mind I find myself in is more tolerant of the heat; Hawaii is never really hot. Texas is much hotter. And unlike Phoenix or Las Vegas, it's not a dry heat. And no year gives respite. There is no such thing as "the year without a summer" as there was in New England. Every summer in Texas is hot. Every Spring you have by then forgotten just how hot 21 days over 100 degrees is. And then you get weird anomalies, like pins pushing through the cardboard protection of seasons. I've sweat my days through three digits in January, and one digit in April. I watched incredulously as the National Weather Service in Fort Worth issued a winter storm warning when it was 86 degrees outside, then watched it drop to below twenty before the sun was fully gone.

I love watching the weather. I prefer inclement weather. Weather is a convenient and easy metaphor. But that's not why I like it. Here's a stretch. I love the weather for the same reason I love baseball. Everything can be measured, everything is measured, and every measurement is subject to immediate recall with the correct resources and even measurement, in the correct, matters.

I can tell you records in both, and you won't care, but they exist independently of you or me. Esoteric and beautiful, they act as a beautiful gateway to codifying understanding.

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## Smaller things

by Kalani - Monday, December 12, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=328>

Small things ruin your credibility. It's not much effort to avoid that. Five minutes late in a first meeting makes you a flake. One word spoken when inappropriate defines you. But it works the other way. Just not as fast or as obvious. Do what you say you're going to do. Always. Someone will notice the fifth time. But then that's you. Stop lying. We all do. So stop saying I don't. Be aware of everything that might be some kind of subterfuge. Then stop it. It will make you shine like a diamond with a spotlight because most cannot help themselves. It's hard not to lie. But five years ago I made it an important part of my identity. Like a defining characteristic. And I still fail.

All you have is you. Whatever you want, need, or hope for? The lowest common denominator, unfortunately, is you. You have the power to cure cancer, and you have the weakness to be a junkie. All wrapped up inside the eternal everythingness of the human spirit.

Every second. Every nanosecond. Each is a chance to make a decision. We're all binary. Yes? No? 1? 0? It all means the same thing.

Choose wisely every time. Make the right small one-million-in-a-row decisions. And when you look back, I promise you, it's going to feel like one decision. You can be infallible in your understanding. You have to break everything down. Smaller and smaller, is the only intelligent way to larger and bigger and most. Trust me. I've thought about this for a while now.

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## Dancing with the stars

by Kalani - Tuesday, December 13, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=330>

"Consider the implications of time, especially as a dimension. Is space subject to speed or is it just 'is'? And without time to compare the points of an object at intervals, can there even be 'speed' or distance since everything would be happening simultaneously in the same place, i.e., the universe before the big bang? Before the big bang therefore would be everything, yet nothing which leads to these two conclusions: 1) the universe had some sort of beginning, in which case we're left with the question as to what its cause was; and 2) the universe has been around forever, in which case there's literally an infinite amount of history, both before and after us. Both of these again suggest some 'higher' power beyond not just our current understanding but in all likelihood, what we will ever be capable of understanding at a scientific level. And so again, even in our most agnostic explanations of what may or may not have occurred, we must return to faith."

"Sorry, I wasn't listening."

"What are you watching?"

"When you started it was Project Runway, but now I'm watching Dancing with the Stars."

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## Sentient gorillas

by Kalani - Wednesday, December 14, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=333>

This life isnt easy. Gazelles don't have it easy. Eventually 80% will get eaten by lions or hyenas. Honest to Buddha, I just watched a documentary on it. We are sentient gorillas. Look at a gorilla and try not to say fuck he looks remarkably like me. If you try to kill him he won't like it. Probably put up a fight. They're really strong so in this scenario he probably kills you. But after you're dead do you think about tomorrow? Or death? Or why his gorilla girlfriend fucked another gorilla? This is hard to understand, but the Buddha teaches us it only hurts because you want it. That doesn't mean don't care. Everything is transient. In this life you will lose everything and then will lose your life. Wanting more will bring you to your knees. I promise you. It all goes away. The sun will go away after it eats the earth. It's sad to think about because you're attached to your life. No matter how it ends? It will end. Friends will lie. Your children will disappoint you. Your lovers will leave. That is how it is. If you live 2 years or 200 really? In the span of forever what's the difference? That's not a call to nihilism. What's the point? You have five minutes on this dumb rotting globe. Why hurt other sentient gorillas if you can help it? Why hurt yourself? Dumb question. Everyone is killing themselves. What you eat, what you breathe, who you fuck. You're not getting of out here alive. This sounds shitty. But my point is, and this was a long winded way to say it, be nice.

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## Near-missed flight from Austin

by Kalani - Tuesday, December 20, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=336>

I didn't start to panic until the sun had risen above the line of the horizon, high enough to illuminate the plastic-coated bus schedule adhered to the bus stop pole. The earlier darkness had given me a sort of bliss, aphoristically granted by my ignorance. But in the soft light of the Austin sunrise, it was now clear to me that my best-case scenario was an arrival at the airport at 7:32 am. Worst-case? 8:02 am. My flight time? 8:10 am. On my boarding pass, the words BOARDING: 7:30 AM. I think this is when the hyperventilation began.

"What time is it," I ask a passerby.

"6:41."

Fuck. I'm starting to see spots. I'm at least 20 minutes from where I got on the wrong bus. (Whichever route planner decided that north- and south-bound 350 should stop at the same stop, delineated only by a lower-case n or s following the yellow 350 AIRPORT BLVD scrolling on the front and side of the bus, has risen to the head of my faceless, shit list.) And I've been waiting for 25 minutes. So I've pissed away at least 65 minutes. An hour and a half early has become "I might not make it."

The fifth bus to pass is, thankfully, mine and after some complicated bus route calculus, I determine that I'm on the bus scheduled to arrive at the airport at 7:32. I allow myself a breath. If we leave the transfer point on time (7:15), I'll have 38 minutes to make it to the gate. Austin's airport is not large, so I've got that in my favor, but I'm not carrying a picture ID (long story), and that is always a wild-card when traveling in a post-9/11 world. I've done it several times already, but when you get a TSA vigilante, it can sometimes make for delays that on this current trip I don't have time for.

At 7:12 I look out the bus window and see the driver not half way through the biggest fucking sandwich I have ever seen. There is no way he is finishing that brontosaurus burger in three minutes. 7:13. He's talking and laughing with a passenger that has stepped outside to smoke. I can feel my heartbeat in my ears. 7:14. He takes another bite and slowly chews. I try to telepathically send him the message, "I've got a plane to catch, get your ass back in here."

Another passenger addresses my concerned look. "What's a matter?"

"I've got a plane to catch."

"He's still got a minute."

"He's not going to eat that whole sandwich in one minute. Jesus, does he have to wait until exactly 7:15?"

"Well, maybe if he's a minute early, someone else misses their flight."

Thanks for the lesson in the butterfly effect, I think to myself. Frankly, I don't care if everyone else for the rest of the day misses their flight, I need to make mine. Something that I refuse to be without is waiting for me at the end of the next 13 hours in the air. 7:15. I am seconds away from going Sandra

Bullock and taking this fucking bus to the airport, never going below 50 mph. 7:16. The driver meanders back to the bus. 7:17. I am ready to spit on him. 7:18. Painfully, slowly, we begin to move. And of course, we catch every light on the way to Highway 183, aka Airport Blvd. 7:22. I'm looking around, hoping there's a defibrillator on board. 7:26. The driver finally seems to realize there is a clock above him, and that there is some relationship between its data output and his current location. A look of realization seems to come over his expression. 7:28. He pulls on to 183. We're still miles away, but I'm the only person on the bus. I'm carrying luggage and pacing so my destination should be obvious and my mannerisms telling. He floors it. And I'll be damned if he doesn't pull up to the stop at ticketing/check-in at 7:33. I can deal with being one minute late.

I walk off the bus and the driver smiles and says, "Have a nice flight." All I can do is smile back. Then make like OJ through Austin-Bergstrom.

Full disclosure, I'm writing this on the plane, so, yes, I made it. Hawai'i calls.

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## Consider

by Kalani - Thursday, December 22, 2022

<https://allthefiction.com/?p=341>

Consider this. You have two eyes each containing 130,000,000 (130 million) photoreceptor cells. In each of these cells are more than 100,000,000,000,000 (100 trillion) atoms. That is more than the number of stars in the Milky Way galaxy.

Each atom in each cell formed in the core of a star, billions of years ago, being utilized by you to capture the energy from that very same process when you observe the stars in the sky. All to expand the consciousness that is uniquely "you."

You are the universe experiencing itself. All you are is a thought in the one mind.

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## **Kalani Perry v5.2**

### **All the Fiction I Care to Remember**

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