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Poka'i

by Kalani Perry - Saturday, January 04, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/pokai/>

I'm at Poka'i Bay for New Year's Eve. Aerials are illegal, but if you sit near the heiau on the peninsula, you can turn 180 degrees and watch them from Nanakuli to Makaha as soon as its dark. Anyway I'm sitting there and this kid (and by kid I mean 25) points a flashlight right in my eyes. This is the conversation:

"What are you doing?"

"You get pipe?"

"I don't smoke that shit." (He's clearly high, chewing his jaw.)

He says, "Stand up."

"No."

"Stand up, old man"

"I said no."

"Take off your shirt."

"What?"

"Get naked." (At this point I'm confused and fight or flight is kicking in.)

"What the fuck are you talking about?"

"I run these streets."

"We're at the beach. The streets are half a mile away. Do you mean you run the parking lot?"

"I no joke."

The only weapon I have is a Walmart bag with two cans of Progresso (Manhattan and New England clam chowder). So my inner debate starts. Do I use the bag to Full Metal Jacket him? What if he has a knife or gun? Anyone that knows me knows I'm a pussy and can't fight. So, instead I get possessed and channel Clint Eastwood.

I say, "Listen punk. You're an infant, and the only thing you run is your mouth. If you're going to make a move do it. But you better kill me. I suggest you walk away."

He stares for 15 seconds, I grab the bag. He walks away. Swearing the whole time. I almost shit myself.

Carnival

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, February 02, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/carnival/>

This reality is a carnival of lies and ridiculous. There are no rides, but I watch you spin and spin.

It's weird. You learn words by pushing air through your larynx and steer it with your lips and tongue. These utterances are the same whether they sound like English, Pidgin, or Romanian. Your process makes the same sound; it's our minds where we separate.

I don't understand how a person waltzes though life without notice anything external. I know you can hear words. You know when the water is cold and if the tea is hot. Look up and you notice the sky is blue. Why is it blue though? Or the sun yellow? Why are there clouds? If I asked this you would be mad. How come you don't ask yourself? Why don't you want to know why Mars is Red or Venus is hotter than Mercury even though it's 30 million miles closer to the sun? On the beach you love so much why is there so much sand? What causes waves? Why do whales have feet (in their fins they have metacarpal bones, and vestigial metatarsals near the tail)?

You don't care and I find that fascinating.

Nobody loves me and Mazzy Star

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, February 02, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/nobody-loves-me-and-mazzy-star/>

I felt this way in 1992. This feeling is hardly new, though my reaction to it might be. My *modus operandi* is to get everything I think I want, then lose my shit. Don't get me wrong, I don't have as much anymore, but I still lose my shit. But now you can't tell from the outside. My stomach is in a vice grip and my smile is most likely feigned. My talk is all small and my glances are all sideways. Trying to look strong exaggerates weakness. I want to get to you and beg, but knowing only a lack of efficacy and dignity. I've never really been known for pride. Obstinace, maybe, but not pride.

Songs from that era are weirdly evocative.

Spleen

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, February 02, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/fiction/spleen/>

I think my spleen hurts. I'm not quite sure where my spleen is, left I think, that's why I'm not a 100% sure. I fell when I was drunk, so I hope it's just a non-colored hematoma. It's not like my pee is orange or has blood in it.

I used to tell people that my family dies of things they put in their mouth, mostly cigarettes, but sometimes too much food or alcohol (once it was an ice pick through the mouth into the carotid, but I don't think that counts in the spirit I intended). I don't smoke. And nowadays I rarely drink. Mine would be the first spleen casualty, though I'm pretty sure you can live without your spleen if it's removed before its rupture causes peritonitis or, more likely, exsanguination. I'm sure there have been times when my liver could have been happier with me. I cross the street carefully.

People want to die fast. While sleeping if possible. There will never be a DNR order on my charts. I want to live forever by any means necessary. *Dulce et decorum es pro dignitas morti*. Bullshit. I see no nobility in giving up. A personal black eternity happened for at least 13.6 billion years before me, and I'm not looking forward to going back.

On the other hand even if you believe in all that rah! rah! Christian stuff, living forever seems like it might get boring. I get tired after an hour of sex or seven hours at Disneyland and I love both of those.

Light as needed

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, February 02, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/light-as-needed/>

I needed the light. I can usually write in the dark. When I was seven, my bedtime was seven, when I was eight it was eight, and so on. I was still Catholic then, so it took a long time to say prayers, and ask God to bless everyone and for eternity. I would squint under the blanket and write shitty poems about gothic, Catholic monsters outside my blanket that protected me. The real monsters didn't have horns or wings or pointy tales. They had nice dispositions most of the time and their fists didn't always hurt. Just at first.

Zânâ

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, February 02, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/zana/>

What magic did you think would happen? What zânâ was going to appear and lift this cloud? Maybe you're the fairy this difficulty manifested seven years before I even met you? And probably started with sentience before I was two. I'm 49. That's a long downward sloping hill. You can help me up and I appreciate your effort. But that means you're down here, too, for whatever reason. And it's a long way up. I want to be holding your hand when we are at the top.

Memoirs

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, February 11, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/memoirs/>

Memoirs are an interesting interpretation of the phrase, “non-fiction.” As if not being classic non-fiction, what is written is somehow not the truth. Recollection may fill in the details of the myth of a life, but for most, at best, it’s an imperfect Xerox, an amalgam of memory, ego, denial, and self-preservation.

This is my version of the story. I have the kind of memory that lets me close my eyes and see things exactly as they happened, especially in moments of absolute lucidity. The haze that might occur otherwise happens far less often than is imagined by those, especially those that think they know me. I barely know myself. I live almost absolutely alone, so I think I have the clearest vantage point.

In fact, I’ve lived alone, with a few months here or there, for the last seven years. This has been a self-imposed exile of consequence if not choice, less resembling a life than a theater of the absurd.

Schrödinger revisited

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, February 23, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/schrodinger-revisited/>

The past seems set in stone, and the future merely a possibility, but Schrödinger helped me understand that the actual future is as inevitable as the actual past. And if it were possible to somehow “know” the infinite factors that manifest in our consciousness as the present (ever fleeting), then we would know with as much precision what will happen and what has happened simultaneously and infinitely in either direction. Lacking these infinite factors is my defense to every bad decision I have ever made, am currently making, or will ever make.

The original wreckage of our hope

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, February 23, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/the-original-wreckage-of-our-hope/>

I'm hoping that perhaps, this time, that the past can stay the past. I used to joke that I would never come back here, "What do you think? I'm stupid? Do you think I would ever let her do that to me again?"

And so it is. And here I am. Back again. You caught me looking for the same thing. What it is I can't even say for sure. I can hardly recognize it, let alone describe it. Like the Supreme Court definition of obscenity, I can't tell you what it is, but I'll know it when I see it. It certainly feels real. And I certainly do seem to want it. So do you. Why else would we keep crossing paths? Two intersecting lines only meet once and then go on forever in opposite directions. Clearly you and I are not lines. To carry the ridiculous mathematic metaphor to its extreme we are more like a wave meeting repeatedly at some random axis. Perhaps we never will—or at least were never meant to—overlap. But when our points meet, the equation of my life seems correct.

It all makes sense to me.

The alchemist

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, February 23, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/the-chemist/>

An alcoholic is a hit-or-miss alchemist. And that is, basically, the problem. There is a fine line, in constant unpredictable motion, between the person everyone loves to be around and that guy we all hate. The delicate balance between creating either character generally falls into the hands of the person with the vested, pointedly different agenda than the passers-by. It's as simple as that really. Occam's Razor is true as it ever was: the simplest explanation is generally the best. Which is, of course, a gross oversimplification, but true within the spirit of the postulate. It's sad, but there are really only milliseconds to separate the casual warm-felt smile, and a fist through the mirror. A casual, ill-interpreted glance generally being all that is necessary.

Crystals as life

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, February 23, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/crystals-as-life/>

I wrote this when I was 25. Half my life ago. I just found it on an old hard drive.

Like crystal formation, I think of life, or the evolution of conscious existence (i.e., humanity) as a happy accident of a universe based in chaos. This chaos, though random, is a creative force and if I believe in any sort of God it is this: the unnamed, beautiful, random chaos out of which has come everything that we know. There are examples of this random beauty everywhere (ice cream, punk rock, shore break, etc.), though for the purposes of this discussion our crystal creation is the most appropriate. The formation of crystals can be very beautiful. Though a catalyst is required (in this example I am the catalyst when I choose to mix the two solutions together), the end result is neither controllable nor foreseeable. Because there are elements that are fixed (the laws of physics, etc.) the result is somewhat predictable (we know the crystals will be formed) but their shape, size, coloring, and condition are left to chance. So too, I believe is our existence: a beautiful, colorful, somewhat predictable accident bound by the laws of the universe that we exist in.

Taking the metaphor one step further, imagine our crystals as a physical representation of the nature of our existence. Show me the crystal (life) and it looks like a flower I saw once on vacation in Saskatchewan. Show it to you and it looks like the Northern Lights. To a third person, it's a spiral staircase. To another, it's the face of a monster. Who's right? Everyone. The crystal is explainable only by the terms we know to explain it. Therefore, everyone will have a different interpretation of this abstract beauty/monstrosity based on his or her life experiences. In this way, I believe, mankind has tried to explain the nature of existence. The Abrahamic religions see life (the crystal) one way, from one angle at one point in time and make up a set of rules to explain its existence in terms that they can understand. The Buddhists, Taoists, and Confucians see the same beautiful existence (crystal) from a different angle, from a different point in history, from a different part of the world, and (again very predictably) choose to explain this unexplainable chaos in the terms that someone from their culture, time and geographic location would understand. To the Native Americans another way, to Polynesians another, and so on throughout the world and over the millennia. They all agree on certain things (in life, the Golden Rule is practically universal, in our crystal example everyone would call it blue and angular), but they'll kill and die arguing over the specific interpretations (ok, no one kills over crystals, but I'm sure you get the point.) We're all creating myths to explain what we don't understand in terms that we do. Moses' burning bush makes no sense to someone that has never seen a fire. A dolphin could never tell the burning bush story (even if it were inarguably true!) because it makes no sense underwater. If I'm talking to someone that has never seen a fire that story is about a wave that doesn't break or an ice cube that doesn't melt. Different specific, same point. One of my problems with organized religions is that believers tend to be so attached to the specifics of their myth that they forget the more important message the myth is trying to convey. The story of Noah is about the power of forgiveness and redemption; is it really necessary to believe that Noah collected pairs of millions of species then redistributed them correctly throughout the world after the flood receded (kangaroos in Australia, zebras in Africa, etc.)?

How do we explain the catalyst? Is this God? Are the Christians/Jews/Muslims correct and is the crystal (life) a test from an unseen, capricious, mostly benevolent being that will decide our fate as eternal suffering or bliss? Or is that just how the crystal looked to them? I don't doubt we're all looking at the same thing. And I don't doubt that most of us are well-intentioned. I don't even doubt that there was a catalyst behind the creation. My doubt applies to the rigid interpretations of what appears to be chaotic and unknowable in nature.

What works

by Kalani Perry - Wednesday, February 26, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/what-works/>

Rehab doesn't work. Generalizations are not a good idea. This one is. This is not a qualitative deconstruction. There is no agenda. Look at the numbers. Crowdsource the answer. You can lie, but 1 billion nods have something in common. Listen to anecdotes. Ask anyone even tangential to the process. Yes and no questions are rare, but here, the answer, like $1+1$ is always 2, the answer is no. I can point to 200 that died today. In memoriam. Black and white. Slow-motion. That's heroin and alcohol. Those are easy. It doesn't matter. Choose something slightly less toxic, at least slower. Tobacco? Sugar? Ask someone to stop. Put a black lung on Instagram, then reply with a cirrhotic liver. Give someone a new lung. A new liver. Say, "Don't smoke." "Don't drink." Metastasis is far more clever than you. It's far better than me. Just quit. You know better. Try harder. Yes. 12 steps that anyone can choose at any time and it's all in this big blue book. Now choose it. Choose. You're not trying. It's your original sin that makes you choose otherwise. It's a choice. You choose no. You choose to lie where you are. You are choosing. To lie. Lie where you are. Don't choose. Don't choose. You. Rehab doesn't work.

When the bough breaks

by Kalani Perry - Wednesday, February 26, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/when-the-bough-breaks/>

You were cradled like a baby. The world was different for you. You were held close and warm. I was days alone.

Then things happened. I was there when it happened. I heard the shouts. I saw the blood. I saw the gun. The ambulance. I looked in her eyes. She said to me, "Intensity is your defining characteristic."

I promise you, I didn't choose it.

Salt

by Kalani Perry - Thursday, February 27, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/salt/>

This is how you fall when it's inevitable. Falling when you stumble is laughable. The shoestring. The inevitable. Fall when you know you're falling. Brush off the arms pulling you to perpendicular with the ground. Brush off has more intent than what happened. Shrug off is better. Ignore the whispers. Ignore the screams. Ignore the blood. Not real blood. Real blood coagulated. It makes an effort to stop. This is not that. This is I don't know.

Wake up to a dog licking your knee because it's bleeding. He likes the salt. I type that and I suddenly find that funny. He likes the salt. Salt. Sodium chloride. We iodize it because salt is not enough.

Tell all the truth, but tell it slant

by Kalani Perry - Friday, April 24, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/tell-all-the-truth-but-tell-it-slant/>

I have a friend who really has a difficult time with understanding that a willful sin of omission is as much of a lie as one of commission. When you leave something out because you know including it would substantively change the narrative and understanding of a situation then that is a lie. When I told her she was one of the biggest-maybe the biggest-liar I know,-she truthfully told me she hardly ever tells a lie. She hardly ever lies outright. But omissions erode trust in the same way that commissions do. And they do at least as much damage.

Lessons from the drive-in

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, April 28, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/lessons-from-the-drive-in/>

I'm watching this 4-part, 4-hour series on Epix called "Punk." There's a scene in part 3 that interviews Penelope Spheeris, director of the seminal punk documentary "The Decline of Western Civilization," where she says "All of a sudden you had punk. Simple. And you either got it or you didn't. You were it or you weren't." It's a perfect way to describe what is indescribable.

I discovered the band At the Drive-In relatively late with their third album, Relationship of Command. One song in particular, "Arcarsenal," I played on repeat for days. To this day I can get caught its vortex and hit repeat 4 or 5 times before I let it go. I played it for my ex-wife, and girlfriends since, and they all had roughly the same look on their faces as they listened to Cedric Bixler-Zavala scream (very intelligent, insightful, and almost indecipherable) lyrics and end the song with a flurry of primal screams. My mother also had this look when she said, "Kalani, this is unlistenable."

You either get it or you don't.

Civil war

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, May 19, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/civil-war/>

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 of 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-setting 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. Both side lose.

Jim Fixx

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, May 24, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/jim-fixx/>

Those of a certain age, and with each day I am more certain that means me, will remember the 80's icon that famously changed his life and health when he took up jogging. He became a jogging evangelist and wrote many best-sellers on the subject as it relates to overall health and fitness. In a cruel irony, he died while jogging in 1984 at the age of 52. I don't know why I'm thinking of that as I do my daily walk up a steep hill in Makakilo, but I am.

I don't have a predisposition for heart disease and have never smoked, but at one time in my life (when I was 20) I was 263 pounds and mostly sedentary. (I'm 170 now). I also struggled with alcohol-use disorder (the current term used by the AMA, having retired the more judgmental terms alcoholic, and alcohol abuse) for the better part of a decade (I'm sober now). Having recently turned 50, I suppose my current preoccupation with mortality is somewhat "normal," whatever that means. Sudden cardiac death might be horrible in the moment, but to me is still preferable to a chronic terminal illness. Again, I don't know why these thoughts come to me while doing an activity hopefully to stem that event, but they do.

The last time I was this aware of my--of everyone's--impending non-existence was after my daughter was born. I started taking vitamins, went to the dentist for the first time in 18 years (no cavities, but oh! the plaque buildup), picked a PCP AND visited her regularly, and treated intersections with much more caution. Overnight, I was more scared of being dead forever.

Growing up Catholic I think predisposed me to a lifelong fascination with death. I can remember when I was eight, and still being forced to attend Sunday mass (why could Dad stay at home and watch football?) This, of course, was, long before VHS became common, let alone DVRs. But at night I would say prayers and it would take forever because I felt like I had to ask god to bless every person I knew, individually by name (an early sign of OCD). I would save for the end a plea to let my mother and me live forever in some endless Disneyland of childhood hopes. Bless everyone else, *but I don't want to die*. Three disparate awarenesses over the arc of 5 decades seem to be eerily similar, though understood in different contexts. The thread of that fear goes through me like a needle. Everything I do is stitched with its color (apologies to W.S. Merwin).

One of those days

by Kalani Perry - Monday, June 08, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/one-of-those-days/>

So it happened on one of those days when we weren't really together. Nowadays, that was almost every day. And the calculus of our expected fidelity was never quite calculated anyway. But there was a new glint of something in the reflection of the sun on one of those days. That's the point, I mean. It only happened because it was one of those days.

I had drinks with an OkCupid named Jolene and the first thing I thought to myself was that she was nothing like the song. Nonetheless, when she spoke, I found myself enjoying listening to her. Maybe the Ray LaMontagne version. That might actually be the perfect allusion, though I always hate when writers I like make allusions to songs I've never heard. Though it is, in fact, how I learned about Nina Simone when I was 15, so there's that.

The ledge

by Kalani Perry - Monday, June 08, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/the-ledge/>

The ledge. I remember talking you down from there once or twice. That might be the difference between you and me. You came down.

I'm not quite sure if I enjoy the sweaty-palm excitement of maybe almost falling. More likely the culprit is complacency. A person can get used to almost anything. And after this much time, one might wonder if I didn't prefer the heights.

It sure does seem a long way down though.

Speaking anger to truth

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, June 16, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/speaking-to-truth/>

I've asked myself what it is, and I guess it's more a kind of darkness. There was enough distraction when I was younger and preoccupied in the establishment of a life, that I was able to ignore it, with situational exceptions. Other proclivities like sex and alcohol sometimes made it feel like there wasn't even anything to worry about. What I've come to learn is that unhealthy sexual shenanigans (if they even exist; I vacillate), or alcohol, or sometimes drugs, were not in and of themselves the disease, but were, in fact, the telling symptoms of something far more dangerous that was just waiting for me with its gangrenous soul, and sad, sad heart. But, oh so pretty to look at.

I guess my misguided attempts to always live in full color at high speed with no filter, and in possession of a ferocious, single-minded intensity I sometimes used as a means to those ends, my life became double-edged, semi-charmed, and, more and more, self-destructive. But I can also say that I've been to more cities than I can count on Trip Advisor (500+), know more about the subtle nuances of the human condition than I had previously thought was possible, felt deeper feelings (good and bad) than anyone I know not suffering with a serious mental illness, and been in situations that I know most people will never see, want to visit, or even believe exist. (I can't tell you how many times I've found myself in a random house or hotel room at three in the morning with some random Mary Magdalene's, contemplating what to do next and thinking to myself, "How in the fuck did I end up at this moment, in this place, watching what I'm watching? What's my play here?") But everything bad that happened was happening too often to be a coincidence. Is still happening in some respects.

When the darkness finally rose above, it came swifter and stayed longer than I thought was possible, and consequently damaged and collaterally damaged much more than I could pretend not to care about; everything in its reach got and gets caught in its velvet web.

The argument can be made that my experiences have helped make me the person that I am. And for the most part that's a good thing. I love madly, forgive quickly, feel empathy deeply, laugh hard when I'm happy or sad, make others laugh and smile, and easily make real connections with people. But there's an opposite side to that same coin that doesn't sound like charisma, though it has as its source the same dark energy. I catch myself crying spontaneously at almost nothing, hurt intensely with an emotional paralysis, wander the streets lost and lonely, and strike back hard with words when I feel that I've been damaged intentionally. Yet I know that I don't do evil things because I'm not inherently evil. I take action that looks evil not with premeditation, but by following the paths of least resistance and instant gratification, without regard for any consequences, good or bad, until they happen.

Someone I love dearly spoke of me once to another person I love dearly (when I wasn't there) saying to her, "He's super smart, kind and engaging when he's in the mood, and seductive as he wants to be. But there is a dark side." At the time I was mad at that spilled, heretical revelation. But it's difficult,

disingenuous, and ultimately pointless to speak anger to truth.

Not that day

by Kalani Perry - Thursday, June 18, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/not-that-day/>

Her name echoes like a specter making noises down the empty halls of my memory. I repeat it sometimes like a mantra when I'm alone. I used to say it sometimes as if it were possible to conjure love. And even now, I can close my eyes and picture every detail of her face. Her hazel eyes and toothy grin a delight to me even from this far in the distance and, more importantly, in time. Not that time can change anything, it's already tried.

The definition of insanity is (repeated *ad nauseum* in AA), and I'm paraphrasing, the choice to repeat a certain behavior and expect a different outcome even though it never quite materializes. That hope in almost any other incarnation is something to be praised and sanctified, yet here is reviled. That hope is crazy, in its most insidious manifestation because it feels like the opposite of what it really is.

She has come to represent hope and futility, pleasure and pain, silence and screaming. To say she is a dichotomy is to correctly use the dictionary definition of the word. And yet in many ways she does not exist. In many ways she is that specter of my creation, and ultimately of my own destruction.

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.

And now I look into the abyss. Perhaps abyss is dramatic, but it serves the purpose of this missive to no/everyone. The thread that threads back to whatever I have lived as normal stops first at her. Not quite what you might think. And she just as quickly might sever the line as pull me up to somewhat solid ground. It is the nature of the relationship. It is the definition of my obsession.

Perhaps one day I'll love myself enough to keep walking and not turn my head to look back at what I was leaving behind. Perhaps one day that name will weigh no heavier on my tongue or heart than the articles in this sentence ("the!"). Perhaps one day I'll just answer the phone and my heart won't leap when it's just another call from just another person who dialed the correct order of numbers to make my phone leap to action. Just another call.

Today is not that day.

Who's fourth?

by Kalani Perry - Sunday, July 05, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/editorial/whos-fourth/>

My housemate is from Taiwan. I've known him for about eight weeks. We have a friendly, cordial but distant relationship, finding ourselves in our current situation more as a default reaction to COVID-19 than choice. None of this really matters to what I'm about to say, except for one sentence he said to me yesterday.

On the fourth of July, the day America celebrates its independence from Great Britain (the actual day was 2 July, 1776, but, for whatever reason, that fact is lost to history), I spent the day watching Hamilton on Disney+ and C spent the day at his job as a flight instructor. When he came home, we heard some early-bird fireworks and he commented on them. I said, "That's nothing, wait until New Year's. Aerial fireworks are officially illegal but our view will be constant bombardment from dusk until after midnight." He nodded, "That's what I heard from people: 'This is not our holiday.'"

And he was right. He's been in Hawaii for just over eight weeks and already this was understood. The huge military presence here always puts on a show and Kailua's parade is popular even during a pandemic. But the revelry has never felt homegrown. I marched in the 1976 Bicentennial parade dressed as George Washington. But that was the beginning of the end of local-born American populism in Hawaii. H?k?le?a would arrive in Pape?ete in just a few weeks, KCCN (am!) was playing "Ku?u Home o Kahalu?u," and Gabby was in Rolling Stone. Attending Kamehameha at the time, I was always aware of Hawaiiana, but it was going mainstream and fast.

Little by little the day meant less and less. Kuhio and Kamehameha Day meant more than Columbus Day, even before they changed it to Discoverer?s Day here. I lived on the mainland for almost twenty years and the experience was completely different. By far the largest secular American holiday, and the largest that doesn't directly involve giving gifts, candy, or eating.

In 2020 it seems almost obvious that the day would take on a different focus than in the past. Trump, of course, showing his total inability to read the zeitgeist, out on a kitsch show of white America at Mount Rushmore, knee-deep in the sins of our genocidal past, and doubled-down on his doomed re-election chances by once again choosing to divide rather than using his unique platform constructively. It really is Biden's race to lose, and he has no one to thank but Trump himself.

Back to my point. I never really trusted holidays that made as their point a celebration of nationalism, or "patriotic" death. *Dulce et decorum est pro patria morti*. Indeed. Those aren't my holidays.

On pornography

by Kalani Perry - Wednesday, July 15, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/on-pornography/>

"I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description, and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that." – United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart in *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 1964.

In the same way that the exclamation point in the name Panic! at the Disco precludes any further disparagement of the band, the adjectives porn and punk free their correct usage from any further explication. As Justice Stewart (literally) observed, there often exists an archetypal shorthand for concepts that at first seem too subjective to define.

The ethos themselves are anything but capricious. And they are uniquely valid descriptions of many things beyond the sub-genre of two aesthetics first described as hardcore in the 1970s, then proactively, and retroactively, applied to their influences and influence. Anyone that truly knows their meaning, however, will inherently know that Hank Williams is punk, with no further explanation, in a way that Green Day is not. Sonically, this doesn't seem to make sense. It just is.

For the same inexplicable reason, *The Evil Dead Part II* is both porn and punk. I didn't invent the rule. I just know it when I see it.

In context

by Kalani Perry - Wednesday, July 15, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/history/in-context/>

I thought I was looking at a vision, but without my glasses, it was a little blurry. I saw a sad Jesus in the middle with light bulb arms of tragedy and comedy. In the center of the vision was the Buddha, swallowing everything in light, and yet still remaining surrounded by everything. But something even larger circled everything else and it was moving too fast to really see. That's what my ceiling fan looks like in the morning as I wake. Which should give you a good view of the context in which I see the world.

Turning the dial

by Kalani Perry - Wednesday, July 15, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/turning-the-dial/>

I do remember that night. We were on the patio, so you existed in the half-light. Coffee. South Congress. Late-night Austin. So beautiful and sad you were. You knew what your part was. I asked who you stayed with when you went home to Beaumont. "I don't want to talk about that." The internet churns. I already knew. I saw the picture. I swallowed my tongue and we laughed at Greg Giraldo. Most of the time? Sex usually doesn't mean anything except how it feels. But it always turns the dial.

2am. 3am. 5.

by Kalani Perry - Saturday, July 18, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/fiction/2am-3am-5/>

All I could think about in the hospital was getting out. And they wouldn't let me. I'm sure I could have just walked out; there was a lot of blood and confusion. I needed to get to you. 2am. 3am. 5. They let me out at dawn with a signature. Before noon I was at your dad's house, gaping and covered in blood. I didn't steal your underwear, but I did open a Corona with my teeth and chipped a tooth that I haven't yet fixed. You are more than a story and more than half a tooth. It sounds like bullshit, but it happened. It happened.

You were the light of the world. Before we were together and I was still alone, I'd go to bed in awe and wonder of your imminent rise. Sleeping six inches from you, so close, I could hardly hallelujah all the glory that felt necessary. Wonder and love and lust and gratitude. I'm almost positive I made that go away. But you have burned in me, if not a fire then a joy that cannot be removed. And I have yet to replace.

Graham Storm

by Kalani Perry - Monday, July 27, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/fiction/graham-storm/>

My name is Graham Storm. People like me naturally. I have the word charisma rolling off the tongue of my mind. There never was any woman I wanted that I didn't eventually have. But I lost all of them. And it was my fault.

There was self hatred. I watched my father beat my mother. I swore never to raise my fist. So the word irony was invented for the fact that I was arrested for assault. She lied. She wasn't a liar normally. The drugs made her different. The drugs made her sexual. The drugs helped her talk. And more than anything I like talking. I sort of like fucking too.

I'm a writer because it's all I know how to do well. Actually, that's not true. But people think a lot of the time before they have the chance to reflect.

My credit is terrible and most of the time I smell bad. I scare my mother. I've never broken a bone and I didn't get stitches until I was 41. Long story. Okay I'll tell you. It was 3 a.m. and 19 degrees which is unheard of in Austin. I was drunk. This is not uncommon. I couldn't get my key to work. I wrapped my jacket around my hand and forgot to be careful about pulling back. The blood was incredible. An hour later I was passed out on the floor and there was a violent knocking at my door.

"I didn't do anything."

"Your neighbors called. They saw the blood. An ambulance is on the way."

They stapled my arm shut. The guy with the staple gun said "This is going to hurt." I didn't feel a thing. I spent the next two days strapped to a hospital bed and hallucinating. I saw my mom and her twin sister at the foot of my bed. I saw my kids. I saw my ex-wife, but I never saw her.

Problems are difficult to solve or they wouldn't be problematic.

And it all goes to her. I didn't deserve her. Even more than I didn't deserve any of the rest. It's a numbers game. If you ask 100, one is going to say yes. God made me pretty, but I ruined that with things you can ingest, And perhaps falling after I ingested them. I have scars you wouldn't believe I survived.

I'm the most suicidal non-suicide you know about now. I don't want to be dead. I want to live forever. I used to pray when I believed in God. It was inflicted in me like it is in most people. I used to pray every night. It was an obsession and it took forever. Two hours I asked the nothing to do for me what no one can. Eventually my heart will stop and my brain soon after. I don't want it to happen, but it's going to.

Back to the story. You'd like to know her. Beautiful, younger and, smart. Who gives a fuck about the oxford comma? She did. She was the only person I let edit me. She taught me about where to put a period when you use a paragraph. She had a great ass that she didn't like. I guess no girl likes their body.

My vocabulary is simple and short. I wish I had the eloquence for something deeper. I'm base and that can't change. I can't tell you about the immensity. A mountain? The universe? I guess you can recognize those as big. We entered into it quickly. And let me say right now I wish I could write like F. Scott Fitzgerald but I still think this story should be told.

I've written this story in my head a million times. I've retracted my belief systems a million more. The moment is only now. The last is forgotten and the next one is a guess. How does a stereotype become a stereotype. Truth.

We were married six weeks after we met. Seka was 32 with a boyfriend. An interesting fact is everyone who has ever loved me had a boyfriend when they met me. Most had a boyfriend before they were gone.

Life is a miracle. Beautiful and short. We all get hurt. We all somehow feel a semblance of love. I watch an animal shows on TV. He picked her. They fuck. Sentient beings are different. It is natural to fuck her. We fuck. And then it changes. We have to fuck or we die. Fucking makes the word no turn into yes. She has a different relationship with her vagina. My penis urinates in a urinal every day. We go inside her. And I was wrong to think about it differently.

I speak in public and people look bothered sometimes, but the driver let me on the bus for free. Life is incredible and different from itself. I just got a free newspaper. That's the way life is.

I had an idea. I lost it. I lose lots of things. I lose them lots of times. I lost the one that matters.

The idea of a thing. If anyone cares. If anyone matters. If anyone can put three words together and think about them. Rare. But it happens. You love how many times? How many that matter? what was his name? What was hers? Will you die knowing that name. I will die thinking of her.

It's the difference between yes and no. The terrible emptiness. The nothing.

The Hideaway opens at 6 a.m.

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, July 28, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/fiction/2975/>

There are a few drinkers here. It's early. I'm not the only one with a problem.

Seka had a temper. She was physically small but very fast. And she never yelled. Not with her voice. Her pussy made the rules. Her tongue. Her temperament.

My ear hurts. I don't remember why. My sternum hurts the same way. How do you fall on your ear and your chest? Of course, I'm drunk. I'm in a bar. Adele is playing. It absolutely does not help the way I feel. Distracted. Discarded. And you know who you are. I'm praying my way on.

Blast the music

by Kalani Perry - Thursday, July 30, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/blast-the-music/>

This might seem like hyperbole. I think about you a lot. I found you in the unit you were in, but you couldn't have visitors, and I was unsure of protocol. I kept a constant eye on you from a distance. I still do. 3800 miles give or take.

There are things I'm pretty sure of. I don't have to let you know you're intuitive. By definition you intuited it. Some things I like to put out there even though. As a part of me, they are also a part of the universe. Still, I like to hear things echo in eternity.

Things like I knew you weren't gone forever. You were frustrated and scared and maybe you still are, but I can understand the impulse to hit the breaks, kill the engine, and blast the music.

Soft-boiled egg

by Kalani Perry - Thursday, August 06, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/soft-boiled-egg/>

She was slightly taller than me, 76 times better looking and super age-inappropriate.

"Why do you like me?"

"I like smart."

And so this weird thing began. She was smart. More street smart than me. Unfortunately, she earned that. She was a soft boiled egg. Hard outside and soft in the middle.

TSOL

by **Kalani Perry - Thursday, August 06, 2020**

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/tsol/>

If this place was mine? It would be country and punk and Rage Against the Machine. Everything smart. Everything loud. Everything angry or sad. The blues and Tool. And Black Flag. K? Ho?alu and The Hold Steady. Drive-By Truckers and Operation Ivy. The Specials and Desmond Dekker and Bob Marley. The Weary Boys and The Rapture and The Pogues. The soundtrack of our lives made manifest.

96 hours and 96? in the shade

by Kalani Perry - Friday, August 21, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/history/96-hours-and-96%cb%9a-in-the-shade/>

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 comforted me. Sex is a respite from thoughts that linger and mangle. 96 hours to tear down 6,384. The imbalance is obvious and hideous. It hurts my throat and cerebellum. The 96 proving less is more.

GPS

by Kalani Perry - Saturday, August 22, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/editorial/gps/>

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 kilometers 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.

See, I was drunk, very drunk, when I wrote that. So the content of my ranting is not a reliable breathalyzer.

Confused

by Kalani Perry - Friday, October 02, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/confused/>

“Were you happy?”

“Did I look happy?”

“You smiled.”

“I can smile now.”

“You laughed.”

“I think you’re confusing happiness with resignation and patience.”

Junot Diaz

by Kalani Perry - Friday, October 02, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/junot-diaz/>

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.

Out

by Kalani Perry - Friday, October 02, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/?p=3010>

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.”

The lizard

by Kalani Perry - Tuesday, October 06, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/the-lizard/>

How do we start this? How do I tell a story about everything by telling a story about me? Why would you care about me? I certainly don't. Why should you? I'll give you a reason. This isn't a story about me. It isn't about what happened to me, though I'm going to tell you that. Every word that follows is about you. I only know what I've seen and read, so I can only write that. But none of it is that specific. I'm not that good.

This is my story so it's everyone's story. It's my voice but it's your voice too. My friend told me I was self absorbed. I've been wrapped up in the vision in my mind since I knew I had a mind. Her calling me out is just saying the obvious.

We were talking about lovers. She's happy with hers. I've been juggling. I was telling her that as I get older it has become very easy to talk people into doing what you want them to do, especially sexually. We have this whole pretense, mostly women, about how sex is this fortress that needs to be climbed or conquered. It's not. It wants to surrender. It wants to be given up. It just needs a reason. If not for the world, for itself. Legs want to know why they spread. I didn't know that when I was a boy. I was always looking for superfluous cause. Everything is so simple if you don't make it difficult.

It's why drunks succeed before they get too drunk. Alcohol removes pretense. It removes that chameleon dance where you jump and jump and try to fit this skin or that color. And just be the fucking lizard that you are.

The one of several embarrassing truths

by Kalani Perry - Thursday, October 08, 2020

<http://kalaniperry.com/rants/the-one-of-several-embarrassing-truths/>

We all know our obvious flaws. It takes eons of time and wisdom to more fully understand our more nuanced scarcities, but the others are obvious. You don't need to tell a fat person they're fat. In the middle of that spectrum of our obvious proclivities that are really capable negotiators of denial. A drunk know he's a drunk too. But there are a million good reasons why. When you're fat (like I've been) it's self-disgust and shame. When you're drunk (like I've been) it's because she did that, or he said that, or I lost my job, or she left me.

Here is the part that's embarrassing. If you are half a human being these are obvious, inexorable truths. Did I say obvious? Everyone can see them. Everyone knows they're true. And I guess this evolutionary survival mechanism helps you explain why it's not true. And this earned weird evolutionary instinct helps the closest to you in your tribe make you feel better; they describe infections as a phase. As an anomaly. They look for reasons to share blame.

I'm telling you now, a human living in the midst of proclivity. There's probably no one to blame except the universe. And that's not really blame; the universe is by definition everything. Your proclivities, faults, and failures are by definition part of everything. It was inevitable, but that doesn't let you off the hook. If your sadness, and falling down were inevitable, in an infinite reality, so was your happiness and standing up.

We are such fragile creatures. Every choice we make feels like free will. Ok. I choose to be a drug addict sleeping at a bus stop. Does that make sense? Ok. I choose to finish my degree and buy a house and have a beautiful wife and two kids and a garage. Those sound like opposites. I am the same person, and I HAVE chosen both. And they both seemed like the exact correct decision when I made them. EXACTLY. THE. SAME. Confidence at DEFCON 1 when I pressed the button.

What I've realized is even the best minds of our generations risk being destroyed by madness. I've been mad. Mostly I love, but I've been mad (crazy) and mad, and when I was (second) mad, there was no reason to be mad. I've come to see, and it's taken far too long, that madness is actually sadness. It's like a white blood cell response to a threat to your body. You see a threat, and you grab a can of RAID and spray everything in sight. The people that love you and reach out a hand. Fear is a cunt. You spray their hands and mouth because you're so afraid of whatever is making you feel is making you feel so much. You spray their hands than go hide. And hide and hide and hide, until showing your face becomes a threat.

Kalani Perry v5.0

Honest to the point of recklessness

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