kaleidoscope

by leslie bull
stacey bull
a.k.a. derrik
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a.k.a. pony boy
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magnus
and tmac

dedicated to:

derrik
the wiley one

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rape

when i sing you you die
a little at a time
i come to own you, and i lay you down
in the still waters
of my remembering.

when i sing you you die
and my song is a story
telling you with beauty and grace
you become less
compelling
me to sing

is your death.

l. bull 10/02

y'all ain't nuthin' but bitches and hos

y'all ain't nuthin' but bitches and hos
this is my virtue
like the heroines of the pot boilers my mom raised me on
i would save my virtue
i would be hard working
poor, yet beautiful
willing to sacrifice
at the drop of a dime
but only my life, my sanity,
my happiness,
never my virtue.
and it was all a matter of degrees,
once i fell.
it was okay to turn tricks for dope
but doing it for a living
doing it straight
ate me.
i still did it.
but only when i was pushed deep in a corner
homeless with my kid in reno
or need to go kidnap my kid back from his
daddy down in california
hey, i left my kids too
despicable to contaminate
my own
my grandfather raped my cousins
did somebody rape me?
am i really two people
or maybe three?
was i walking along when my life
slipped and fell into a gutter?
i was good
sexy, and had game
i could use that
white middle class
facade
open doors
lying on floors
i felt justified in taking from you
because of what you said
you were taking from me—
my virtue.

and that led to a lot more trouble than it woulda been to
respect me a little and
quit killin' me in the street,
takin' my kids and sending me to jail
why couldn't you see that i was good at my job?
you coulda praised me
or just let me be
let me be sexy
and who cares if it's all an act
i'm good
and you need me.

leslie bull 9/02

diary of a crack ho: mommie's five day binge pattern

day one: paranoid stuck whitegirl, can't talk, and filled with an insatiable need for cocaine. more than any other day i am liable to get ganked on day one. up freakin' and tweekin' for a hit, bangin' powder, sore jaws, pussy rubbed raw, i wait in exquisite agony for the next hit.

welcome to day one where the trick's tweek rules.

stuck on the peephole, the carpet, or the po pos
shh! quiet, can ya hear them radios?
maybe he's got the pick apart his face tweek, or the somebody's trying to rip him off tweek,
or worst of all the stuck on getting a nut tweek, the
come on baby i know i can get hard if you just stop messin' around and suck that thing
tweek,

the kinda tweek that might drive me to violence if my eyes weren't glued so helplessly to the outfit, the spoon, and the fascinating blue square of pocket the balloon just disappeared into.

flash of white holds my attention like a life saving serum held just out of dying reach.

everybody wants to kill me
is mommie's constant refrain, and the fucked up part is that it is so fucking true, or at least true enough times to make mommie feel crazy.

day two: less paranoid, less stuck, gaining power but still weak. still afraid. still wasteful. still not able to ask for what i'm worth. maybe i'm still stuck with some asshole from day one in a nightmarish extended freak session for next to nothing. or maybe i'm down on capp dodgin' vice slangin' cheap ass.

one thing's for sure, i'm done bangin'.

my veins don't last long and day two is the day i am most likely to become disgusted with myself and give up jabbing my arms, hands, and feet, again and again, and missing. bruises spreading 'round little pillows of dope laced toilet water forced under my skin when needles blow up intended pathways.

slamming instead of smoking dope on day one and two makes no sense, because then i am the most high when i am the most stuck. but like everything else in my life, i can never wait. when i was a kid i would wolf down all my halloween candy in no time, and i always chewed, never

licked, my tootsie pops.

day three: i am sociopathic. gathering strength and power, i reside outside myself, become ruthlessly sexy, hardening my nerves, and sharpening my instincts like an old point on a matchbook.

i cop a room and take a shower in a little stall down the hall, rinsing the dried blood from my limbs, and washing my greasy blonde hair.

stopping to hit my pipe in darkened doorways along the way i stroll down mission scouring street vendor wares for something sexy, and find a once expensive, knee length, thin lavender wool, form fitting, off the shoulder dress, with three quarter sleeves that hide my tracks, and a v shaped back that shows off my ass crack.

black spike heels only half a size too large, and a sage colored scarf complete my ensemble, and i get the whole outfit for a ten piece i paid eight for.

eyes ablaze, dressed to kill, this is the time to score a rich tweek trick and start the process of making him break himself at my feet.

day four: this is the pinnacle. smokin' like a machine. like a man. in fact i can smoke big ol' men, experienced smokers, under the table. my lungs are huge, my appetite ravenous, and my conscience gone m.i.a.

mad with power i become dangerous or benevolent queen. take your pick.

i enjoy messing with a trick's tweek on day four. no longer even remotely stuck, i feel invincible, know i am beautiful, feel i can hold the world in my arms, and bite the thick, glistening air.

my sexual power peaks on day four and therefore it is a day when i rarely have sex. no need to. just the promise of sex is enough to get me everything i need.

before we can even talk about the sex i need more dope and a better room. i can't relax here. let's take a hit and then decide what to do. my pussy is all wet and i'm getting frustrated. i thought you said you would make sure i had a nice safe room and all the dope i could smoke. you said that baby.

and mommie delivers the next hit of way stronger than usual for a white guy from the suburbs crack cocaine and the trick is sprung, geeked outta his mind, and totally dependent on mommie, who guides him from room to room, constantly scoring more dope, and needing more things from the store, and, of course, getting paid for her time.

i need more money for my time.
but we haven't done anything yet.
haven't done anything? you're kidding right? what about those guys downstairs, i stopped them from ganking you didn't i? and i'm using my time running around here copping rocks for you to smoke. i have to be paid for all my time, not just for sex. sex is extra. you know that.

to emphasize her point mommie walks over and casually opens the curtain, letting in a pale beam of afternoon sun. the trick cringes, and mommie can almost see the smoke rising from his skin.
super paranoid,
shut the drape! shut the drape before someone sees us.
i don't think so sweetie. i think it's time for me to go.
no, no, please, don't go. i'm sorry. i'll give you money. how much do you need?
another hundred.
okay, okay, lets go back to the bank.
now you're talkin', we can score a little somethin' on the way.

and so it goes until the trick crashes and burns usually late on the night of day four or in the morning of day five, without getting so much as a whiff of mommie's sweet pie.

day five: after four days without food or rest mommie attains a certain clarity. a lightness and a knowledge that death is close to crashing and burning but not until she spends the rest of her money on dope and smokes it all, usually not even saving enough for a room, and having to turn a trick for a place to sleep.

four pm on day five and i am suddenly starving, tummy beating like an empty drum, i start to cry from hunger. it feels good to walk down the street crying. i am completely drained and exhausted. empty. there is no more dopamine left for the drugs to trigger and i still need a room.

the truth is no matter how often i experience the desolation of day five, no matter how much money passes through my hands during the previous four days, i rarely make any preparation for this moment.

like my halloween candy i consume everything voraciously and end up here, tired, dirty, broke, and alone, honestly believing that turning tricks for anything but dope makes me even dirtier.

with dope, i say to myself, i have no choice.

i reach deep inside and find that the tremendous effort to keep going becomes a release. i become altruistic and big on day five. it becomes a day when resistance has been dissolved until i am so far out of my body i

have come full circle and reentered it from behind.

i can meet a trick's needs with no seeming deficit on day five because there is nothing more to withdraw. it is a peaceful state and mommie has regulars she looks for on this day. mostly working class joes, the ones that pay the room up for two days, buy her some food, and tuck in the covers. the ones mommie is sweet to.

on day five i can smoke and smoke and it don't have hardly no effect, hell, i'll fall asleep trying to take a hit and wake up twenty-two hours later staring at a rock on my pillow. i'll sleep around the clock. sleep like the dead and nothing can't raise me.

that's why i like to get my own room paid up for two days, i'm afraid to go to sleep around people. afraid they'll fuck me in my sleep and i won't wake up.

like that time i was too strung out and tired to get a room. sleepin' on the floor of the bus terminal with other homeless folk, i woke to a tongue probing my pussy through a hole in my jeans. sickened and angry, yet too exhausted to resist, i fell back into a deep sleep. when i woke again the hole was nibbled open and soggy.

it was day one. time to start all over again.

Mother Mary's Secret

After his psychotically abusive mother refused to sign adoption papers, the state of New Jersey, in their infinite wisdom, decided thirteen year old Boosey was "too attached" to the Stamegnas, his beloved foster family of two years and she was abruptly removed.

Boosey says...

"My new foster home was a total letdown. I could've handled the other stuff, the neighborhood, being poor, that was regular. The worst part for me was that I went from two years of living with a family who loved me to suddenly living with a family that didn't give a shit about me. From Kenilworth, New Jersey to Hillside, New Jersey, but don't let the name fool ya. There ain't no hills in Hillside, and if there are they're covered in gray shit. No green anywhere. I guess you'd call both neighborhoods working class, but in Kenilworth our house was surrounded by five or six streets in any direction where it was all homes with grass yards to play in and family owned businesses, in Hillside it was all industrial, schools on the biggest, busiest streets, and neighborhoods cut up by huge gray asphalt shit buildings.

"If Kenilworth was working class, Hillside was working class poor. My house was on a real short street between a major busy road and a highway. Our street ended at route 22, four lanes either way of pure evil, at least one accident a day, I swear like five people a week dead on that highway. Back East isn't like here where you have walls to block the highway from the neighborhood, at the end of our street you could just turn right onto this eight lane monster. My new playground. We crossed it all the time to go to McDonalds for shakes.

"I don't know of any cities on the West Coast that are like Hillside so I could tell ya what it's like. Back home I'd say it's like Iselin or Port Reading, and you'd know what I mean. Behind my house was a huge pharmaceutical complex. On my walk to school I had to cross the complex, two neighborhoods, and three gangs, everybody smashing shit on the street all the time, it was concrete neighborhoods. Instead of grass we had glass. You'd always hear about some girl getting raped going through there. At least once or twice a month some girl would get raped. After living there two weeks I got a paper route in the two neighborhoods. I got to see a lot. I wasn't afraida that kinda shit. I wasn't afraid of being raped or beat up, fuck, that's already been done to me.

"During my first few days at the new school there was quite a bit of shoving and taunting. I shoved back and on the third day a buncha kids came chasin' me outta the school. At first I ran but then I saw a longneck beer bottle lying outside a bar across from the school, I picked

it up and hit it against the building. It was amazing how easy it broke and the power I felt. I turned and shoved the glass in their faces yelling "aagghhh!!" and lookin' all crazy-like and the kids backed off and went and spread the rumor I was crazy. And I was. I was gonna slice somebody up if they tried to put hands on me. I made a reputation for myself.

"Those were the days I started my career entering people's houses. Not breaking and entering, just entering. That's where I found my first gun. It was on top of the refrigerator in this house and I took it. I came in through the back door. I'd cut through yards all the time on my route and I saw this open door and dared myself to go in the back and come out the front. Back in my old neighborhood it was a game I played with my friends David, Rocco, and Anthony, we did it at each other's houses for fun, it was a good time. In my new neighborhood I started doing it alone, to get stuff or just for dare, it didn't matter, I did all kinds of crazy stuff back then.

"The people I lived with, the Restraino's, they were a real piece of work. The parents were these crazy Catholics, and me a Jewish kid. They forced me to go to church with them and tried to make me take catechism lessons, but when I told the nun I was Jewish and didn't want to be Catholic she said I didn't have to.

"I remember when I first got there. I got out of the car and I saw the house, and I was like fuck. Everything fucked up and falling apart. I mean I'd lived in worse houses, it wasn't that. First thing I noticed there wasn't no kids, nobody playing on the street, nothing, even with a school close by there was nobody out, it was spooky, and the front yard of the house was made up of broken rocks and religious monuments. Like broken chunks of cement mixed with red rocks and Mother Mary, you know the one where she is inside a cement dome looking like she knows a secret. Mary was about four feet high but Jesus was even bigger, lashed to a five foot tall cross, hands curled up in pain to the sky with the most sick and twisted eyes you ever wanna look at, crown of thorns, blood coming out of every pore, and all painted in the most vivid colors. I remember thinking, 'Oh great, here we go.'

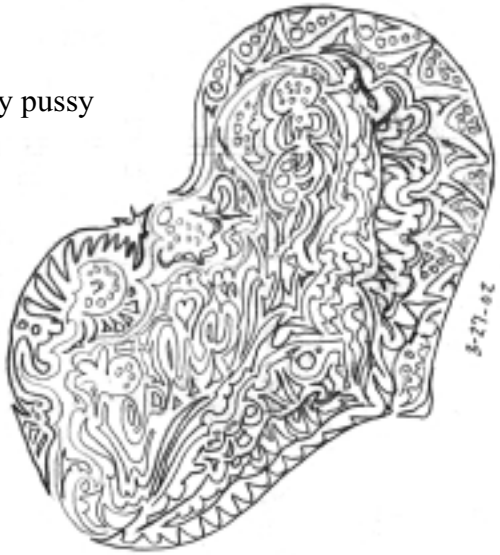
"Believe it or not, their backyard was even worse. To sum up the Restraino's you could just look in their backyard. Pitted all-dirt ground with a tree in the middle to which they tied the mangiest dog ever. They lived in Jersey and that dog was tied up outside all year round, fed only table scraps. It was filthy, hungry, and sick, yet no one ever went back there to touch it or acknowledge it in any way.

"I don't know why they had that dog."

Boosey, as told to Mommie,
6/02

to my love

to my love,
my pony boy
you can buck me anytime baby
mane flyin' butt grubbin' bronc me all up inside
rodeo of love
or be my italian stallion sweet talk me
'til my pussy juice
slicks up my legs all damp
down to my knees
i'll kneel before ya baby
stick my ass in the air
and beg for your love
freaky deke dunk your face in my pussy
miss pretty
bend you over
make you mine
valentine



forgiveness

in her life there have always been big scares and silences, and usually physical abuse. and now, afterwards, she waits for boosey to rape her. he always rapes her as a little girl and mommie loves it.

her father's voice,
"lula, get your clothes off the dryer."
"just a minute dad."
and before she knows it her father is lunging at her, smacking her hard on the back, knocking the wind out of her, and slamming her to her knees.
"don't ever say that to me again,"
he snarls in a low, threatening voice, teeth bared.
and mommie hot with shame because her best friend vicky's watching.

boosey invites mommie into the bedroom and she is hot with shame and desire. still hurt inside from the night before when they ate the shrooms.

it was a night of big scares and silences. a night of coldness and pain.

mommie wants boosey to fuck her. fuck and spank and hurt so good. but not last night. why does she keep forgiving boosey?

he doesn't hit her, instead using withdrawal, an in the body removal of some crucial part of himself that leaves mommie desolate in his presence.

yet she loves boosey with all her heart. doesn't love always hurt?

what about the good times.
"how's daddy's good, good girl. how's my beautiful, beautiful girl?"
dancing, kissing, giggling, and laughing,
telling their stories over and over again
until it is hard to say where boosey's story ends and mommie's starts up.

standing true for voodoo, mizzle, dmac, tmac, and gin.
following mizzle around when he was drunk and wanted to kill himself, telling him,
"make me a deal. i won't stop you but you have to do it in front of me,"
and whispering to mommie,
"do you know how hard it is to kill yourself in front of someone?"

and all of us making it through that horrible night,
or more accurately, early morning.

five a.m and me and boosey waking to a loud banging sound that is shaking our room all the way upstairs.
startled, mommie says,
“what the fuck is that?”
nightmares of bettering rams dancing in her head she urges,
“hurry boosey!”
and he scrambles into his clothes and rushes downstairs to find gin and mizzle drunk and in a terrible fight. gin has locked mizzle out and he is banging on the window, trying to break it.
“fucking bitch, let me in!”
gin is sobbing. and when boosey lets him in mizzle has a fat lip and is stinkin’ drunk.
slurring his words and making little sense he berates gin,
“how can you do this now? how can you wait until i leave and then do this? you can’t leave me. no baby, no.”
and gin just cries and sobs,
“leave me alone.”
and by that time mommie is there and she says,
“leave her alone now mizzle.”
and mizzle moans,
“noooooooo!”
blocking gins path as she tries to run into the bedroom.
mommie gets in between and gin runs out the side and into the bedroom with michael in hot pursuit, mommie says,
“boosey?”
beckoning toward the door, and boosey nods and goes to the bedroom and mizzle holds the door shut, and 300 hundred pound boosey easily pushes it partway open against mizzle’s 160 pound frame
“alright now mizzle, there’s no need for all this, let me in now.”
“me and gin are talking.”
“i don’t feel comfortable with that mizzle, open the door.”
boosey is using her psychiatric nurse medicine. voice soothing, neutral, yet in charge. competent and friendly she is hard to resist, and mizzle relents and allows her to open the door. gin runs out into the living room and flings herself on the couch, tears flowing she tries to talk and the words come out as little gasps, she is breathing very fast,
“it was so awful,”
gin sobs between gasps, and mommie pats her back and they huddle together on the couch while boosey tries to calm mizzle down.
“fuck her, fuck that bitch, she’s probably been sleeping with my friends,” mizzle rants as he slams out the kitchen door,
and gin runs to the phone and calls her best friend gigi to come get her.
“where’s mizzle?”
mommie asks boosey.

“he’s still outside.”
“you better go check on him,”
mommie says, once again patting gins back.
and boosey goes outside and discovers mizzle trying to hang himself from the rafters of the carport.
he is using a metal work light cord and it snaps away from the lamp, freeing mizzle, and boosey gets him inside.
we start a forty-eight hour watch.
i was supposed to visit tmac up at the prison that day, but glancing at the clock i know i won’t be going, it is six-fifteen a.m. and i should be leaving in fifteen minutes.
mommie decides she will go on tuesday and bring mizzle with her if necessary.
boosey stays with mizzle in the bedroom while mommie comforts gin, patting her back mechanically and watching for gigi to arrive.
suddenly gin jumps up, announcing,
“i’m going to get my stuff.”
and micheal blocks her in the doorway.
“let me in here to get my stuff,”
she demands.
and mizzle sneers,
“fuck you bitch.”
“just fucking let me by,”
gin growls.
and mizzle bullies her with his chest,
“why don’t you get the fuck outta here bitch?”
“why don’t you fucking make me?”
and she pushes mizzle hard with two hands,
and he shoves even harder in return, knocking gin down, her head banging into the wall
“hey now!”
boosey and mommie rush forward
and break it up,
gin and mommie fleeing back to the living room and boosey telling mizzle,
“that’s not the kinda man you wanna be, that’s not the kinda of person you wanna be.”
and mizzle wailing,
“fuck that! do you see my lip? she socked me in the mouth on our way home and somebody called the cops on us.”
mommmie is instantly sick with fear when she overhears this information but mizzle continues,
“luckily they let us go cause we wouldn’t say anything was wrong.”
and mommie breathes a sigh of relief.

mizzle comes out to the living room and throws himself at gin's tiny, boot clad feet,
"i love you baby, i'm so sorry, i'm so sorry baby."
and a louder sob escapes gin's lips,
"please baby, please, i'm sorry, sorry for everything, don't leave me baby, don't go,"
mizzle begs hopelessly clinging to gin's legs as she cringes away, still crying.
"let gin get her stuff now mizzle,"
mommie says,
and gin goes to the bedroom and packs some clothes, and mommie goes after her while mizzle moans,
"i'm gonna kill myself."
and boosey saying,
"that's fine mizzle, as long as you do it in front of me, that's our deal."
and mommie leaves gin in the bedroom and returns to the living room in time to see mizzle with the drape cord wrapped around his neck , squeezing it tight,
and boosey saying,
"it won't work mizzle, you're just gonna give yourself a sore throat and a helluva headache. trust me, i've been there, done it."
and mommie pleading,
"stop it mizzle, you're scaring me!"
and mizzle lets go of the cord and collapses on the floor, purple-faced and gagging.
boosey helps him up and he runs back to the bedroom, with mommie and boosey following close.
"i'm sorry baby, i love you."
"leave me alone mizzle."
"you fucking whore, a fucking ungrateful bitch, that's all you are."
"fuck you mizzle."
mommie goes out and sits on the blue striped couch in the living room, tummy clenched, exuding forced calmness.
thankfully, gigi knocks at the door and mommie opens it,
"go wait in the car with the engine running,"
mommie tells her, and gigi rushes back to her little white car and pulls it in the driveway, obediently revving up the engine.
mommie walks down the hall and sees that gin and mizzle are talking quietly in the room while boosey stands out in the hall.
mizzle is pleading,.
"i love you, please don't go baby."
and gin saying,
"i'm leaving mizzle."
and him looking defeated, saying,

“okay baby, i love you , will you at least call me?”
and gin murmuring,
“okay,”
and emerging from the bedroom with her backpack filled with school-books and a satchel of clothes.
“i’ll call you tomorrow lula,”
she tells mommie on her way out the door.
and mommie and boosey both look around and notice mizzle is gone.
they rush to the bedroom and sure enough he is choking himself again,
and boosey says,
“it won’t work mizzle.”

mommie is a little girl, eight years old.
she wakes up in her bedroom to a tension in the air.
it is just getting light and she can barely make out the ghostly shapes of the usually friendly stuffies sitting on her dresser, they look spooky and she shudders under her thick blankets,
something in the house doesn’t feel right.
she crawls out of bed, clutching her bedraggled pink blankey, white blond hair sticking up all over her sweet, round head.
stepping on her long nighty,
she makes her way down the hallway toward the kitchen where she hears her mommy crying softly.
fear clutches her chest like a vice and she is barely breathing as she propels herself forward toward the kitchen and the sound of her mommy’s voice.
she stands just out of sight of the kitchen door, listening intently,
terror gripping her heart, her senses are unbearably alert, every muscle tensed, and the hairs on the back of her neck standing on end.
she hears her father pacing back and forth and is terrified he will attack her mommy at any moment.
finally she can bear the tension no longer and peeks her head around the edge of the door into the combo kitchen, dining, and family room.
her father has his back to her at that moment, he is clenching his fists and walking toward her mommy
who is standing near the kitchen table, her face bloody, a big lump raised above her right eye, and a dozen eggs smashed on top of her head. the whole carton upside down on her head, dripping down her long brown hair, and her just standing there looking scared to move and crying real quiet.
her mommy looks up and sees lula in the doorway and her eyes widen with fear.
her father whirls around, red-faced and sputtering, eyes bulging, he snarls,

“get the hell out of here lula,”
and without knowing she would lula runs to her mama,
“mommy, mommy,”
she cries, and her father looks like he might strike, but instead whirls himself around and slams out the back door.
“oh, lula, are you okay?”
her mommy asks her, reaching out mechanically to touch her hair,
“i’m okay mommy, what about you? are you okay?”
“i’m fine lula, everything is going to be fine, i just need a bath.”

everyone (if they knew) saying how mommie’s sick and twisted, a helpless victim who doesn’t know what’s best for her.
“hooker,” “slut,” “bitch,” “ho,”
“look how sick her relationships are,”
“she must like it.”
and sometimes she does.
when she chooses for it to happen it feels good.
in sex
by her choice.
what she hates are the fights and withdrawals
the fist that smashes the plaster, and the head that bangs its own self into walls,
mommie has come to the conclusion that
she will never have a “normal” relationship
(whatever that is)
is she a pervert?
hell yes
does she like to be abused?
hell no.

mommie and boosey stay with mizzle around the clock for the next forty-eight hours and mommie meddles and hovers and comforts the inconsolable mizzle the best she can.
“we’ve been together so long mama, six years now and i can’t live without her,”
he laments.
“whatever you do, don’t call her,”
mommie advises,
“leave her alone, it’s your only chance.”
“i don’t understand mama,”
mizzle cries,
“she said she wanted me to change and when i finally did she didn’t want me no more. i did everything she said she wanted, stayed at home all the time and quit cheating on her, and she don’t even appreciated it.”

“i’m sure she likes it that you don’t cheat and stay home, but maybe she lost respect for you because you haven’t been standing up and taking care of yourself, mizzle,”
mommie answers,
“gin’s been pushing you into the dirt lately and you’ve been letting her. she fell in love with you when you were confident and taking better care of your needs. i know she doesn’t want abuse and cheating, but at the same time she probably wants you to be confident and healthy and have some boundaries.”
“i don’t know how mama,”
mizzle moans.
“you don’t know how. i can hear that. i’m not always so good at it myself. the only thing i know to tell you is just don’t call, give her a chance to miss you, and to sort things out for herself.”
“okay, mama, i’ll try.”
and mommie is proud of mizzle who takes her advice and treats his grief like an illness, lying in bed between mommie and boosie, crying and smoking weed and hanging out with his best friend rizon.
mommie and mizzle have a couple of long talks,
“believe it or not mizzle, this won’t last forever. you’re only twenty-two. how would it look now if i had killed myself over your daddy? that’d be lookin’ pretty stupid now wouldn’t it? seeins how i never give him much of a thought anymore and i’m married to boosey, the love of my life.”
and mizzle cries,
“i’ll never love anybody else, there’s nobody else like gin.”
and mommie pats mizzle’s back, while he continues mournfully,
“i’m white, but i don’t like white girls, i like native girls like gin. i’ll never find anybody else like her,”
and he breaks down in tears as mommie soothes him, saying,
“i love you mizzle.”

the next day mommie’s friend ashley comes over with some shroom chocolates.
“they’re really good,”
she crows,
“i got totally fried last night.”
mizzle, boosey, and rizon say shrooms might cheer everybody up, but mommie hasn’t taken shrooms since she was thirteen and she and cousin cassie and best friend leeda shared a whole bread sack full of freshly picked liberty caps. mommie got so high she turned *into* a shroom. she was way, way too high and it was a terrifying experience for the young and psychedelically inexperienced mommie, who first felt she was under the earth filled with dirt, and then became convinced she was dead.
on the spur of the moment, after a twenty seven year hiatus, mommie

decides to take shrooms again.
“we’ll take six candies,”
she tells ashley, trading her some pot brownies and giving her some cash.
at first mizzle wants all of us to take the shrooms that night with rizon and his cousin cully, but later he is so depressed he decides to go to bed and mommie is proud of him for not getting drunk or taking the shrooms, and instead taking care of himself by sleeping.
he is exhausted and bruised, his lip sore and a deep bite mark on his shoulder turning purple. mommie sits with him until he falls asleep and feels mizzle has taught her something about boundaries.
it looks like mizzle’s going to make it,
mommie sighs to herself.

and by the next day gin and mizzle are talking, hating it at gigi’s parent’s house and missing mizzle’s calls, gin comes back home and she and mizzle make up one more time.

a few days later everybody is just sitting around hanging out when mommie opens the freezer and sees the shroom chocolates.
“hey everybody, when’s a good time for us to take these shrooms?”
mommie inquires.
and boosey answers,
“right now.”
“right now?”
mommie questions,
“it’s 9:30 pm on a school night.”
and boosey says,
“perfect!”
they laugh and ask the kids,
“do you guys wanna fry?”
“sure,”
michael and gin answer, and rizon adds,
“i’m down.”
and they all eat one of the chocolates except boosey who eats two.
“hell, i’m a big person, i outweigh ever one of ya by at least a hundred pounds and gin by two hundred,”
boosey says laughing, and mommie ignores the nagging feeling of doubt that has crept into her tummy about eating the shrooms, and everyone looks happy chewing down the candy, the nasty taste of the shrooms disguised by the delicious vegan chocolate.
when she is done with the candy, mommie immediately tastes metal in her mouth and once again quells the feeling of unease in her tummy, grinning and joking,
“i’m already high, i’m already high.”

and everybody laughing.
things start out okay.
mommie and boosey walk to the store for beer and when they get inside mommie starts to get high for real, everything starts to strobe a bit and she smiles and laughs involuntarily when the clerk addresses her.
boosey has trouble counting out the money and they stumble out of the store in a jumble of laughter, and mommie can tell the shrooms are pretty strong.
of course nothing like last time when she took a hundred times as many and knew the feeling of being fungus.
they make their way home laughing the whole way and burst into the house. mommie is beginning to feel a woozy body high and she collapses on the couch, skin pale and lips red, her head lolls from side to side and she feels she can't get up.
boosey sits down at the table and starts to laugh maniacally.
mommie turns cold inside.
she knows that laugh. it belongs to the absent one.
mommie has met the absent one only rarely, once briefly during a bad fight they had during a trip to california, when he came out and warned mommie she hadn't
"seen mean yet."
and another time when they last fried on acid with ramona and natalie, which had been a total nightmare and had led to a moratorium on acid dropping for mommie and boosey.
mommie was so terrified of the absent one that time she took off driving on acid just to get away from him. she ended up parking the truck and riding the bus until it stopped, finally renting a hotel room at two am, lying awake shivering all night and wondering if boosey was ever coming back.
the absent one is characterized by a complete withdrawal of emotion, love, care, and humanity. in his presence mommie is like a deer in headlights, like a rabbit in the shadow of the wolf,
she can feel his coldness and his desire to hurt her.
he never strikes her or physically hurts her in any way, he doesn't need to.
mommie can feel him and he feels like a pure sociopath.
her first line of defense is to pretend nothing is happening.
when his laughter gets louder and more disturbing mommie resorts to looking at him, trying to invoke her protectors, boosey, derrik, or one of the others.
she catches his eyes and looks sad, a trick that usually brings instant results, and for a moment mommie thinks she glimpses boosey but as he comes over and sits down by her she realizes he is still the absent one trying to fool her.
"whatcha ya doin' baby?"

he asks coldly, and mommie deflates,
determined to ignore things as long as possible she tries placing her hand on the absent ones shoulder and it is like touching stone.
mizzle comes in to the living room from the bedroom where he, gin, and rizon have been cutting up.
he wanders around the room picking up random objects and then putting them back down again, saying,
“i’m so high mama, i don’t know what to do. what am i supposed to do?”
“what do you want to do?”
mommie asks him, and he says,
“i don’t know.”
“what are you holding there?”
the absent one interjects.
and mizzle looks down at his hands and says,
“a hole punch and a plastic bag. i don’t know why.”
and they all laugh and mizzle sits down by mommie and the absent one, who is still roaring with maniacal laughter, but gets up a minute later saying,
“it’s too weird over here mama,”
and he goes back in the bedroom, and mommie feels like fleeing the absent one but doesn’t want to leave the kids to deal with him so she suggests they go upstairs to her and boosey’s room where they lay on the bed, mommie existing in a heightened state of terror.
“you’re scaring me,”
mommie says, and the absent one smiles his empty smile and says,
“i’m scaring you.”
and mommie says,
“i know who you are.”
“who’s that?”
the absent one replies.
and mommie says,
“you know what i mean.”
and mommie’s heart beats fast and she feels sick inside.
they keep talking, and at one point mommie says,
“i don’t think you can kill me.”
and the absent one says,
“what? you wanna kill me? i’m assuming everything you say is projection. you must want to kill me. what’s it gonna be? a nice booby trap on the stairs? hell my weight alone will kill me on the way down.”
and he smiles his frighteningly cold smile,
and mommie shudders,
projection.
days later, she still can’t get the sound of his words from her mind,

“a nice booby trap on the stairs.”
would the others really let him hurt her?
mommie finally falls asleep around three a.m. and wakes again with a jerk at seven-forty.
she feels dead inside, hopeless and despairing.
boosey wakes up and asks,
“do you still love me?”
mommie just stares at him,
and casey comes out and flies into a rage,
“that’s great, you don’t love me anymore, that’s great!”
and mommie is still numb from the night before and
feels broken and outside herself,
“leave me alone,”
is all she can muster.
and casey claims last night was all in mommie’s imagination,
“you always think everybody wants to kill you when you get high,”
she accuses.
“then how come i didn’t feel afraid of the kids or anybody else last night, only you,”
mommie snaps back.
“it wasn’t me.”
casey insists.
and they part on bad terms, boosey slamming off to school and mommie filled with despair, longing for everything to go back to the way it was earlier in the week when she and boosey were getting along perfectly, kissing and pressing tummies and being all sweet to each other.
mommie starts to let in the idea that she and boosey might break up and feels instantly overwhelmed.
how can she make it on her own?
who will pay the rent and help her take care of the kids?
the feeling of lonely desolation runs deep in mommie, all the way back to the days when she cared for the boys alone with only a grudging welfare check to make ends meet.
and what about her and boosey’s love? so big and good yet so fraught with difficulty and pain. mommie has never been so close to anyone as she is to boosey. has never felt so supported and loved, nor had such great sex.
four year together and so much to loose.
mommie feels sick and lies in bed waiting to see if boosey will call when his classes get out. she places the phone by the bed, turns the ringer on, and dozes off and on for several hours, worrying and feeling ill.
two o’clock rolls around. boosey is out of class but the phone doesn’t ring. he has another class at five o’clock and usually goes to the library to do his schoolwork in between. there are phones at the library, why

doesn't he call?
mommie remembers back to the day when he wouldn't even go to class if they were in a fight and bemoans the fact that his level of concern is now so low he doesn't even call her.
mommie feels numb with pain and despair, but she is determined not to page boosey. she decides that if he doesn't call for the whole three hour break she will leave before he comes home at eight. she's not sure where she'll go, anywhere but be here waiting.
let boosey worry about her for a change.
but mommie wonders if she will have the strength to get ready and go someplace, she feels leaden and depressed, like moving would be an insurmountable feat.
just then her best friend and new next door neighbor mika calls her from downstairs,
"lula, the utility guy turned off my lights. can you come downstairs?"
and mommie drags herself up and goes downstairs and mika is in a tizzy,
"i have to go to the school and do my presentation and the lights are off, i called the power company but they don't believe i'm the new tenant and think i'm trying to get out of paying my bill. i'm holding for a supervisor, but i have to go now."
and mommie says,
"i'll hold for you and talk to them when they come on, you go on to school now,"
and mika says,
"thank you,"
and just then mommie looks up and sees boosey coming up the walk holding a bouquet of roses and her heart lifts. when boosey walks in the door she throws her arms around his neck and they kiss each other real hard and squeeze real tight and everything is right again in mommie's world.
"give me the phone mika, you're going to be late."


4
High Life

voodoo

voodoo is pregnant by tremaine.
tremaine, is a "black inner city youth,"
who has been locked up
for most of his short life,
a blood who slangs for a living,
he is in prison again
for violating his parole,
and the last time voodoo saw him
he put a cigarette out
on her.
mommie is furious when voodoo
tells her she is pregnant
and going to keep the baby.
"are you crazy?"
which is a bit of a
messed up thing to say,
considering the fact that
voodoo has schizophrenia.
she sounds passionate and well-rehearsed,
"my baby has a heart that's beating
and i do not feel i can emotionally handle
the stress of an abortion."
"the stress of an abortion?"
mommie shrieks,
"what about the stress
of taking care of a kid
for the rest of your life!
have you thought about adoption?"
and mommie violently curses
the pro-lifers with their
free pregnancy tests
and anti-abortion videos.
mommie is furious.
she grills voodoo
about her plans,
lecturing her about drugs and drinking,
and does she realize what the fuck
she's doing?
"have you thought about
your mental illness?"
and voodoo says,
"my baby will understand

that i have an illness,
and that i am doing
the best i can”
“that’s a helluva lot for a goddamn
little baby to have to understand
voodoo, a whole fuckin’ lot”
mommie rants and raves,
and voodoo stands strong,
pondering,
“i wonder what my baby’s
hair will look like?”
and mommie growling,
“you better worry about what
it’s going to be like taking care of a baby
twenty-four hours a day,
do you hear me?
twenty-four hours a day.”
and now that voodoo is
five months along
mommie has become
a little excited in spite of herself,
and is genuinely pleased
by how well voodoo is doing,
taking her vitamins and
quitting drinking and all.
and between talk of labor,
and nursing, and never letting go,
mommie makes it clear
she won’t be raising any more
babies, and she and voodoo
talk, and mommie says,
“i am afraid voodoo,
afraid i can’t meet your needs,
afraid your needs will overwhelm me.”
and voodoo says,
“it’s okay mom,
i’m not asking you
to raise my baby”
and they agree that their relationship
will stay about the same
as it has for the past
two and a half years
since we adopted just turned
eighteen years old

voodoo into the family.
her parents beat her up again
and she ran
but this time they
couldn't force her back
the magic number eighteen.
voodoo waiting to escape abuse,
her best friend sunday
waiting to abandon street hooking
for the relative safety
of stripping.
fuck voting
what about survival?
voodoo is one fourth mexican
and three-fourths white.
she is blue-eyed and blonde,
and stands six feet tall.
she is a big, beautiful girl
who grew up poor.
welfare, social security,
and food stamps,
her family was
more successful than
most in the system,
and managed to buy
a house through section eight.
voodoo's mom gambles,
and her dad has schizophrenia
just like voodoo does,
and the doctors say
she inherited it from him.
and starting at age five
voodoo's older brother
raped her for seven years.
and she told on him
but her parents refused to
believe her, and he was finally
caught when he raped two more
neighborhood girls.
voodoo told the police everything,
and her brother went to prison
for five years,
convicted in part
by voodoo's scars.

to this day
her parents call her a liar
and blame her
for putting him away.
voodoo's mother beat her
while she was growing up,
had her locked
in mental institutions
at least once a year,
and took all her disability money.
her father collected guns
with armor piercing bullets,
and banged speedballs,
to this day he beats voodoo's mom.
and when mommie and boosey met her,
voodoo's hair was pulled out
in big chunks, and her mother
had got her kicked off her
disability payments,
and mommie and boosey and gin and mizzle
decided to adopt voodoo,
and voodoo decided to adopt us,
revealing her truth,
"if i don't go to africa and touch
king tut's mask the world will end.
she fucks men with abandon,
with a love 'em and leave 'em
attitude,
and calls sunday her wife,
fights hard too,
beats down several attackers
and escapes.
voodoo is tough as nails,
but can't raise her hand
to the one she loves.
even when he is
beating her.
and she cries to mommie
about tremaine,
"i'm just like my mom.
i'm with a man that does nothing for me.
he beats me and takes everything i have,
and i love him."
she sobs her heart out,

and mommie pats her back,
“you have a lot of awareness
about your life voodoo, a whole
lot of awareness.”
voodoo raps in the ‘hood
and people are impressed
by her freestyle,
she’s good.
and mommie says,
“cultural appropriation is
white girls wearing fubu,
and calling themselves voodoo.”
and voodoo says,
“i’m not white.
my mom’s side of the family
hates me, they call me
bean eater, and my
mexican grandma
helped raise me”
and mommie uses her new book learning
to try and explain
white privilege, and how
in voodoo‘s case it is
complicated, but she still has it.
“i’m not white”
voodoo insists, and
mommie says,
“you‘re not white.”

visiting

We talk, we laugh
Sometimes we cry
It always hurts
To say goodbye
For in this happy
Span of time
The world's lost
And you''re all mine
But in awhile
You must leave
I tell myself
Not to grieve
To be with you
It feels so right
My only wish
Is that you might
Take me with you
When you go
For when you're gone
I feel so low

Tmac

i'll make ya famous

she is a short, round, pudgy blonde who would appear pretty if not for the look of conceited satisfaction smeared all over her pink cheeked face. her expression reflects the pleasure she receives at others' expense, and the fact that she has embraced a profession that allows her ample opportunity to pleasure herself.

encased in her blue uniform, sly little smile on her lips, she looks almost pleasant when mommie first encounters her in the visitor's processing room.

"do you have your driver's license?"

and mommie hands over her license, gaze kept strategically lowered to show subservience (and hide her true feelings) she stares at the gold-tone rectangle stuck to the flat, fleshy chest before her eyes, it reads, officer nubley.

realization dawns and mommie's stomach tightens, panic turning to cement in her veins as she recognizes the name, recalling nubley's voice through the phone line. on numerous occasions. mommie even wrote a poem about one of their early conversations called

shedding my skin

it is my sixteenth call
or is it my sixth
or my six-hundredth
call.
the nasty voice on the phone
intones,
"do you have any felonies?"
and the sound of the voice
makes my skin crawl
instilling fear
and disgust.
revulsion.
get away,
slip away
from you,
crawl away
from your voice
and hide

belly down
i turn into snake.
snake is with me.
thank you snake.
thank you, beautiful snake.
cool, smooth snake
you slither
so gracefully
i hold my temper
as the voice says,
“if you’ve had a
restraining order
against your son…”
and before i can object
insinuates,
“only you know
if you’ve had
a restraining order
against your son.”
fuck you itch.
on the street
i’ll take you by the hair
and smash your face into
something if you dare to
take my child.
on the street i will
go after you
and take back
my child.
like the mother
who lifts the car
off her child
and gets wrote up
in the paper.
i will be the mother
i am not.
i will be the mother
i never was.
supermother.
i will lift the prison
off my son.
instead, i say,
“i’ve never had a
restraining order against

my son. i love my
son very much…"
and the voice says,
"only you know
what's on your
record."
my record?
i definitely want to
make a cd,
but a record?
shit! my record.
what did they find?
i swear i don't know
but i feel wrong
anyway.
i swear i don't know
why my name
has a
"hit."
i say,
"i've had two felonies
but they were both deferred,
they went off my record."
and the voice snaps,
"nothing ever
goes off your record.
you probably didn't
take care of it—you
probably didn't…"
"excuse me ma'am, but it
was a long time ago
and i did, in fact,
take care of it…"
"well only you know…
only you know…"
know what itch? know
i will take a hit out
on you, out here,
if you didn't keep my
boy hostage, itch,
if you didn't keep my
boy hostage.
i don't tell the voice
that it took more

than three years
of body invasion
and mind twist
to get those
two felonies
offa me
and that
drug counselor's dick
outta me.
three years of
meeting, piss test,
and make-me-sick
antibuse,
three years of threats.
"we'll take your kids"
or queen anne house
you and your kids
held up under
their roof.
they did me
like the rapos they are.
"your application will have to be
investigated.
signed off on by everyone
and their brother. could
take three weeks. could
take six weeks. can't
really say…it's only you
that knows what's
on your record…"
and i freak out
inside.
did they find some
new old thing?
will they take it out
on my son?
having a
queer ex hooker
for a mother
can get you hurt
in prison,
and the dull
worry-ache settles
a little deeper.

hard
to
breathe.
disoriented.
feel like
giving up.
hiding.
if i feel this much stress
what is my son going through?
why doesn't he call more?
too noisy in the day room
can't hear a thing
and after this
last move
his calls are
once again
billed at more than
1$ per minute.
i say, "please,
i've been visiting my son
consistently for three years
and there has never
been a problem. please,
i haven't seen my son
for months now due to
your rules. please ma'am,
please, let me see my son."
and i feel the jab
of hate as the voice
penetrates
my receiver
with fear and loathing,
"only you know
the reason for
this. only
you know…"
and i say goodbye
softly,
click the phone
gently,
know nothing
say nothing
to incriminate
my son. no protest

to be used
against
my baby.
no spiteful angry
curse can
escape my lips,
my anger and
helplessness
press a little deeper,
rage a little brighter.
i'm belly down
waiting to strike.

mommie.

trying to remember to take deep breaths.

in and out.

five and a half months, thirty-six long distance phone calls, two letters, and an fbi fingerprint check later, mommie is finally being allowed to see damc.

"stand against the wall"
and a computer camera snaps her picture.

mommie is silent and warm in the heavy, gray, long sleeved shirt and matching floor length skirt she has worn in an attempt to pass the notorious whiley state penitentiary dress code.

this is the first time mommie has been allowed at whiley in the five and a half months since dmac was transferred, but she has heard legion about it from her mom, aunt janey, and boosey.

"put your outfit on and let me look at ya,"
boosey said just that morning.
"every time i go they kick somebody out for this or that petty reason. lemme see if you can pass."
"oh boosey please do!"
mommie cries,
"i know they'll be out to get me after all the calls i've made and the fuss i've caused."

and she models the dark, loose clothing with the ugly black walking

shoes, the white cotton socks, and the “jail bra” with the under wires cut out, and boosey looks her up and down and nods his approval.

so mommie is feeling pretty much fool proof as nubley directs her to the back room to be searched by another short, white, female officer whose nameplate reads, officer glick. she is a softer, browner version of nubley, and possessed of a similar smirk, except that glick’s smirk is more of an underling type of a smirk. nubley’s smirk is clearly in charge.

“permission to search?”
glick inquires with a gleam in her eye,
and mommie murmurs,
“yes,”
eyes down,
it is the first time she has spoken.

“look meek and don’t speak unless you’re spoken too,”
was her mother’s advice.

and boosey told her the story about the white lady that came in and made a fuss.
“she comes on in and walks right up to the counter and stands there, and when they don’t help her right away she starts up with, ‘excuse me, i need some help here,’ all demanding like, and they just look her up and down, and whisper all up in each other’s ears, and search her, and send her right back out. dress code violation.”

“open your mouth and stick out your tongue. now lift it up.”
and glick cranes her head around to view mommie’s pink gums.
“hold your hands out to the sides and spread your legs while facing me.”
her hands rub mommie up and down
under her breasts
and mommie doesn’t like the chill hands
so she uses her trick of stepping outside herself and casting a blanket of calm
as glick’s hands go inside her waist band
“turn around.”
hands slide down backside
and only when she has felt mommie up all over does she ask,
“are you wearing full pantyhose?”

mommie cocks her head to one side, uncomprehending,
“pantyhose?”
“yes. full pantyhose are required with any skirt.”

“but my skirt goes down to my feet and i have socks on. i’ve always worn it this way at the other institutions.”
“we aren’t like other institutions. at whiley we have our own rules and we follow them strictly.”
“but i drove five hours to see my son and i was dropped off. my ride won’t be back to get mme until 6:30.”
glick shakes her head in mock dismay, eyes glimmering with false sympathy,
“well, i’ll talk to officer nubley but i don’t think it will do any good.”

she bustles over to nubley and they confer and mommie can only hear bits and pieces…
“no pantyhose…from portland….don’t you know who she is? that’s…”
and glick coming back in shaking her head, barely able to conceal her glee,
“uh…we have to go by the rules.”
and nubley walks over and joins her,
“that’s right, our sergeant tells us to always follow the rules. we can’t make any exceptions”
and she smiles that smile that boosey says,
“gets stuck up around her cheeks somewheres,”
and informs mommie,
“it’s nearly one o’clock now, and we cut off at two o’clock. just so you know.”
“so if i’m back by two i can still visit?”
“that’s right,”
nubley smirks, eyes gleaming with triumph.

mommie is sick and burning up inside imagining dmac dressed up for the visit and waiting in his cell.

normally not a violent person mommie begins to fantasize about some prisoner’s hands around nubley’s pale throat squeezing the life out of her, and then catches herself, horrified that she has wished trouble upon a prisoner.

mommie rushes out the door and begins the long walk to the mall where boosey is parked, and where pantyhose can be purchased. it is ninety-five degrees in the shade on a globally warmed day in mid-september, and mommie is hot in her heavy dark clothes. she rolls her skirt up mid-thigh, pushes back her sleeves, and begins to walk at a very brisk pace. stomping along furiously she composes speeches in her mind, cursing nubley and her lackey glick.

when i'm famous:

"one thing i can say about you officer nubley is that you provided rich material for my book. it's made me famous, and it's made you famous too."

that's right, i'll make you famous itch, and everyone who has ever met you will instantly recognize you and they will all laugh at you!

so there.

and mommie is walking as fast as she can and cussing herself for not wearing pants, and is determined to make it back in time to visit dmac. he won't have another visiting day for four more days, and she and boosey have come so far.

mommie estimates the walk to the mall to be about forty minutes, that leaves twenty minutes to buy the hose, and have boosey drive her back to the prison. if everything goes right she should just make it.

that's right you twisted little slyzzard, i'll make it back and make your sorry ass a household word for…

a car crunches by and mommie snaps out of her reverie, wondering if she should hitchhike but deciding against it knowing that half the cars passing by contain cops, walking faster, feet pounding the hot, dusty pavement she rushes down the narrow street leading to the main road where she watches the bus going to the mall pass by just minutes from her reach,

"shit!"

and she begins to worry that boosey won't be at the little mall, although he'd planned to park there and sleep in the back of the truck, resting up for the five hour drive back home.

mommie feels anxious and afraid.

"grandma? grandma? are you there grandma?"
and after a moment,
"what is it lula?"
"i'm afraid grandma, afraid of disappointing dmac, afraid of how much i hate the guards, afraid it's all my fault! i shoulda read the rules better, i'm just not good enough."

“the guards are bad and you’re afraid lula, but you’re not alone, grandma’s here.”
“thank you grandma.”
“i love you.”
“i love you too, grandma.”

and mommie has a new spring in her step, walking all the more determinedly, turning on to the main road and stopping to ask an old, sad-looking latino man standing by a car on the corner,

“hey mister, can you give me a ride to the mall?”

but he just shakes his head mournfully at the sweaty, wild-eyed white girl before him, and mommie keeps walking, trying not to focus on how dry her mouth is, or how her need to see dmac has become a physical longing.

mommie worries and frets, trying to soothe herself with grandma,
“i hate her so much grandma.”
“you hate her, of course you do, nasty bitch. i’m sorry lula, but that’s what she is.”
“grandma, i‘m scared.”
“everything is going to be fine, grandma loves you sweetie, look how strong you are, chop chop, one foot in front of the other.”

and although she is burning with thirst, mommie is making good time, and when she is almost to the mall boosey pulls up in their small black pick up with bina and rock-o g jumping and barking hello. mommie jumps in and grabs a bottle of water gulping,

“rush to the mall, shopko.”

as the truck squeals off mommie explains everything to boosey and he cusses nubley,
“i told you about that one, she’s somethin’ else.”
and mommie says,
“she sure is. i’m just so glad you’re here.”
and boosey replies,
“ya know that’s the funniest thing ‘cause after i got somethin’ to eat i was gonna go for a ride out that old river road, just to see where it goes, but for some reason i changed my mind and drove here.”
“thank you grandma.”
“what?”
“oh nothing. i’m just glad you’re here. i love you boosey.”

“i love you too baby.”

mommie runs into shopko and grabs a pair of khaki bell bottom pants off a rack near the door. noting the store’s feeble security and thinking about how easy it’d be to shoplift them, she quells the urge and pays instead, rushing back to the truck,
boosey saying,
“you got pants?”
and mommie exclaiming,
“hell ya i got pants. i’ll be damned if i’m gonna put pantyhose on in this heat.”
“that’s right baby.”

and she struggles into the pants while boosey hightails it for the prison, smiling reassuringly at mommie,
“they look cute baby.”
“thanks boosey, but hurry now, just enough time to get there.”

then mommie is back, sunburned and breathless at 1:55 and nubley is grudgingly checking her through, shaking her shoes upside down, and carefully feeling inside all the pockets of her new pants.

mommie mumbles under her breath,
“i’m gonna make ya famous itch.”
and nubley does a double take,
“what’s that you said?”
“umm…uh…i said i got an itch, ya, a big ol’ famous itch,”
mommie replies, only a little too slowly,
and as nubley ushers her towards the visiting room she adds,
“i hope it ain’t the scabies,”
smiling to herself when she sees nubley flinch.

Ori & Roach

Ori & Roach disappeared the other day. They vanished into nothingness, a void; dark through perpetual light. Ori & Roach are gone because you, Reader, are so oblivious, & they're such...criminals. Nobody gives a good god-damn that they too bleed red blood that tastes sweet upon Their lips: Them, They, Their, whoever the hell that is. Ori & Roach were taken to the Hole, or "Intensive Management Unit", where they'll be intensively managed by being left alone in their sufferings to stare at four beige walls & masturbate as they close their eyes & attempt to conjure up fantasies of times of freedom thr-ough blissful arms & lips; torn from their lives like pearls from their oysters. Them, Their, They have no right to such beauty! It belongs to Ori & Roach, will you at least accord them their pittance of comfort? They, Ori & Roach, are the embodiment of good in this world, made clean through their sufferings. For 23 hours a day Ori & Roach will be caged in an 8 ft by 10 ft cell with the lights on, preventing them from reaching REM sleep. The barrage of continual light shining in their eyes will transform them into virtual Zombies after only a few subjected days of such cruel & unusual treatment; which only treats They, Them, Their tendencies toward sadism. No, there is nothing tender, nothing fun; there's grinding teeth & electric sun. Justice. Ori & Roach will receive two books after a few days of continually staring at puke-yellow walls & metal toilets without seats, or sanitation. Ori & Roach will stare at four off-colored walls & shit-stained metal toilets for 72 hours straight; witout a book, a good night's sleep, or breath of fresh air (they'll have to wait years for the latter). Can you imagine? No? OF COURSE YOU CANNOT IMAGINE! You'll never experience anything of the like, Reader, unless you're Committed or are taken Prisoner Of War--because we are the 'blessed' under siege & experimental torture that began with our sanities. We began. Once Ori & Roach receive their books, they'll have to make due until the end of the week. They'll have to be careful not to read too fast & to be contented when the pages run out & they've reread the same stories for the fourth time. They're Offenders & they've apparently offended your sense of humanity, Reader, why else are they allowed to be subjected to such...hate crimes? Ori & Roach stare at walls. The one next to the bed, yes, by the pillow, has a large Swastika drawn upon it's surface in ink, with an adjoining capt-ion calling for the eradication of all niggers, kikes, & race-traiting bitches. The wall with the piss-stain in the corner, opposite the bed, has multiple 13's crossed out by 14's drawn upon it's surface; as well as a giant cock penetrating a women's asshole. Ori & Roach stare at the walls & the shitter, waiting for the shower they've been promised for a week now. The afore-mentioned "hate-crime cycle" will last for Ori & Roach for about nine months. Yes, that's : 270 days, 6,480 hours, 388,800 min-utes, or 23,328,000 seconds of perpetually cold food, diarrhea, staring, masturbation, & incredible anguish without even a shoulder to cry on--so they don't cry but sure blink a lot from the light in their eyes. After the allotted nine months has finished & Them, Their, They feel that Ori & Roach have suff-iciently suffered from sensory deprivation, Them, Their, They will move them to "4-Wing", where the only perk is that Ori

& Roach will be allowed to purchase, if they happen to have personal money on their "Books" of course, one box of crackers a week to enjoy while sitting in their new 8ft by 10ft cells & gazing at new & exciting racial epitaphs written upon beige walls. The one box of crackers, Reader, is to Ori & Roach what a winning lottery ticket or a diamond bracelet is to you. Yeah, caviar crackers--MMM MMM God; and didn't you know, Ori & Roach honestly do deserve their little boxes of gold. They worked long & hard, without complaint, at staring at their walls & shitting their drawers from seemingly endless diarrhea for nine whole months, Reader, & did achieve! Hurrah! After another nine months of crackers & walls, wouldn't you know, Ori & Roach will be awarded a move out of 4-wing & into the actual "Intensive Management Unit". You see, the previous 18 months of 'Inferno' was only a warm-up for Ori & Roach's genuine intensive management. Yup, & after a few more months, in the IMU now, they'll be awarded, for their good behavior over the last 21 months or so, a radio to have in their cells! After 21 months of nothing but two books a week worth of stimulation, Ori & Roach will be awarded a radio; because that now suffices their need for love & humanity. Them, Their, They have now wiped Them, They, Their consciences clean & have "just done the job" well. Hmmm. All in all, Ori & Roach will spend anywhere from 24 to 36 months in the Hole with the lights on; and what could have Ori & Roach done to deserve such fates, you may conjecture? Surely they must have stabbed another inmate, or punched out a Correction's Officer, right? They must have certainly raped an 18 year-old boy, fresh from High School & his mother's love, in the showers one dark morning, what else could it be? Ori & Roach disappeared the other day & it wasn't due to raping, stabbing, or assaulting anybody. No, Ori was guilty of chatting with a group of four other guys on the Big Yard, instead of keeping it to the allowed three. Ori didn't hear the Correction's Officer in the Gun Tower yell "four to a group" at him & his buddies, & he certainly didn't suspect it would amount to much when a Correction's Officer working the Yard asked for his name & ID number. Nevertheless, a couple of days later Ori was gone. Roach was guilty of being told on, for some fabricated offense, by an individual that had gotten himself into some kind of trouble (probably gambling debts). The guy decided he needed to check-in to a protective Custody Unit for his own protection, but in order for him to be allowed to do so he was required to give some names up to They, Their, Them for victimization. I believe Roach was officially charged with strong-arming, though after he disappeared & the Corrections Officers came to pack up his stuff, they found that he was destitute & owned nothing. Strong-armed what? The individual desired protective Custody & told They, Their, Them whatever Them, Their, They wanted to hear. Them, Their, They had been after Roach's blood for some time & Roach didn't even know the guy that checked-in & stole three years of his life; but so it goes. Ori & Roach are now deemed "threats to the security of the Institution" & will be subjected to psychological, state-sanctioned torture for two to three years! Enormous. Unfathomable. True.

Ori & Roach will gradually fill with hatred until they begin to even hate themselves as they're raped of their sanity piecemeal. Ori & Roach are loved & have friends as well as enemies, as we all do. Ori & Roach love &they bleed, yet apparently have no claim to simple human decencies such as sunlight, REM, & fresh food. Ori & Roach now suffer due to the Sociopaths of this country being allowed to run these institutions & ruining souls. Ori & Roach have crackers & not leather sofa seats with televisions & cup holsters. They have no use for atrocities committed around the world wide, as it's in their noses & is vaguely in their scopes of reality. Ori & Roach will never be the same people they were before the hate-crimes were commited against them. Ori may come away only with a twitch, & Roach P.T.S.D. Or they may find a way to die, but it doesn't matter because they should have thought about that before they "offended", right Reader? Have you ever dreamt such things exist? They deserve every last breathing moment of beige walls, stale bread, & malpractice medical care, you say? Do dogs? You, Reader, ask: "Where are my three hots & a cot? Hardy Har Har". Why aren't you asking the right questions, like: "Why does Ori twitch that way, & Roach freak out around cops"? Why don't you ask them for yourself, Reader? The story unfolding here on paper before your eyes is a true one: Ori & Roach aren't going anyplace soon. Ori & Roach are down here in the Hole at the State Penitentiary, but I must apologize in advance for the odour, what can you do? In fact, take all the time you need in deciding to come down because you've got <u>years</u> to make up your minds. Years in which Ori & Roach will pine away in misery & pain without dental floss or Q-tips to clean their ears. Years in which Ori & Roach will get no visits, shampoo, or vitamins. Hell, maybe you'll find me down there as well & somebody will think to themselves: "Gee, Magnus disappeared the other day". I can taste the crackers.

why i write the way i do

i write the way i do for a reason
and i am slowly discovering it.
a little at a time
i teach myself
myself.
do ya get what i'm sayin'?
me.
too?
either?
okay, lets take the issue of
capitalization:
catapult
class
cash
cunt
not clean
what does it mean?
when i insist on
lower case
lower class
and a lower
recidivism rate.
what does it mean?
when my stories
splash onto the page
all swirled up
and splotchy like
hair snatched from a cats back
like blood splatters and
cum
lush lips open
smiling
flash of pink
you
too?
me
either?
what?
does it mean
when it is difficult to say
if conversations are
in me

and out me
yesterday
and this day
tomorrow
should i adhere to
“good” english
at all times?
or borrow just enough
to get by.

leslie bull 9/02

keeping safe

i'm very exact about what i write (except when i'm not)
think about that
peruse me
look at me as if i were a specimen for your perusal
"i'm just so amazed that you could get up there and talk about something so personal"
the girl says, and i'm thinking,
why is my work so much more personal than yours?
"you're very brave"
translate: i can't believe you're talking about being a slut
accompanied by a look of mild to severe disgust and revulsion
eerghehmm. fuck you.
somehow i am too mean to them and i don't care
it is painful when they are afraid of me
yet i feed off their fear
it is my food
the way i keep safe

if anyone can

eee

everyone is afraid of her

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