



WHEN A
BLACK MAN
LOVES

A ROMANTIC JOURNEY

ZACHARY MARCUS CESARE HARRIS

When a Black Man Loves

By Zachary Marcus Cesare Harris

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I Never Read My Own Work

I never read my own work,
recite,

thrust,

voice my dearest feelings to the world,

For I have a strong shield,
and gentle emotions.

I never expose who I am,
what I am,

how I think.

I tell you not to try to figure me out,
solve the riddle of the sphinx,

find the key to the enigma.

And not to ask me questions that I refuse to find the strength and patience to
answer,

but accept me as a separate entity.

I may come off ruff and gruff on the outside,

however, if I let you truly know me,

you'll see that I'm a wealth of feelings and emotions,

one person even called me a gummy bear, another

a cutie.

What you see on the surface,

may not give you an adequate picture of what lies within.

Never judge a book by its cover,

or you may miss the secrets inscribed on the pages.

I never read my own work,

can't you understand why?

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“Who I am ultimately searching for is someone who challenges me in a number of ways and in a number of areas and who makes we want to rise to those challenges everyday”

Of course there is even more to this. I wish that they were ultimately great in bed, have a very healthy and wicked attitude towards sex, exudes sex appeal and grace simultaneously – yes, this can be done – has class, an appreciation of good wine, keeps in shape, has a brain that they actively use and a thirst for learning as well as continually stimulating their mind. Oh, and most of all not caught up in all of the mindless things out here, especially trends of the moment.

My buddy Elizabeth said that I should start with this, and work from here. This of course came during a very humorous and light-hearted conversation as we were discussing her rough edits of the first thing that I sent her in regards to this project. You always need people around you who challenge you as well as can make you argue your points; in the process either you realize that your points were booty or that you definitely are correct. But sometimes when taking the latter fork in the road, you can still be wrong.

It’s been ten years since I first released the book, and I am single as of right now. That is not to say that I don’t date, but nothing is written in stone. She and I figured that this was one of the first points to address and to elaborate on.

The original book in itself consisted of things that were written over the course of eleven or twelve years. It was divided into what was happening in my life, or where I was at romantically and/or emotionally, for each section and for the most part is in exact chronological order. Since then, my talks with good friends such as Elizabeth, Barbie, Arnee, Michelle and others have been and still are continually interesting because as I try to sometimes tell the whole story, it will not only get interpreted by their opinions of me, their take as being women, the relationship dynamics that they have been through with men, by what they think I should do, but also by their own personal philosophies.

If I could sum up the book in just two words, it would be “emotionally honest” or “honestly confessed;” of course, I could use “emotionally honest confessions” as well, but that would be three words. Looking

back at all of it, I really did truly unveil my thoughts with each piece that I wrote.

After writing the book and selling it at the first big event that presented itself, I met someone who I thought was wonderful. She actually presented herself to me and asked me if I would call her up so that we could go out at least once; I was floored because I saw her as totally beautiful and that never happened to me in my life before. The sex was off the chain, and that's the first thing that changed how I viewed, analyzed and rated women. It outrivaled anyone before her and would become almost a mandate for any woman that came after her. And to answer the paradigm and throw out an old belief, it wasn't my feelings for her that made the sex all that, it was the acts performed, the level and consistency to which they were performed, and her attitude towards sex in general and pleasing the man in particular. Many women engage in sex, but leave little to truly be desired in comparison to a woman who seriously focuses on making the man [really] enjoy it. Sticking it in, pumping and reaching orgasm is great, but that in itself isn't everything.

For the next years, I would search for a woman whose skills in the bedroom and attitude towards sex were in league with hers. Occasionally, I found it, or something a little different but equally carnally satisfying, but there might have been other things about the person, their life or their beliefs that repulsed me. Or maybe I found someone good, and while their skills in this regard were nowhere close, I knew that the path of my life was totally different from theirs and that I would forever pursue my path until I either succeeded or my time was up. And I will admit that the ghost of her did ruin so many relationships that could have been, and there are a number of women who I have known since then that would simply like to meet her and find out what made her so special as well as some that I am sure would love to trip her down a flight of stairs.

The next thing Elizabeth said was to define myself, or explain who I was, because in her opinion, a lot of guys would identify themselves as being very similar to me or that many of the things that I am into [like astrology] other guys are into.

And the first way to present who I am is to say that versus having opinions, I have convictions; convictions trump opinions any day of

the week because there is passion behind them, whereas opinions are like assholes, everyone has them but it doesn't change anything. For the same things that I share with other people, it is both my conviction and resolve that differentiates me from many others. Anyone can study or partake in something, but it's the depth and commitment that they bring to it which makes all of the difference. When you start to delve deeper into the waters, you realize who really is just in the shallow end of the pool as well as those who just occasionally dip their toes in the water.

And the most important aspect of who I am is not based on what I know, but my ability to make it work, whether for myself or other people. You can be an expert in one area, but the weakness is that you see things through only one slant; give a kid a hammer and to him everything looks like a nail. It is the pursuit of knowledge and knowing how to relate, connect and apply it that makes me different than many other people out there. My best friend Pace – hey, he is losing his best friend status but there is a bigger story and joke to this one – said that one of my talents was the ability to spot bullshit dead on. I have read enough and know enough to understand things on a bigger level and to realize the difference between substance and flair.

I have failed enough to get a good hands-on education and have also benefited by not succeeding. You know those situations in which they tell you to look to your left and your right, and that one of those people won't be there at the end. Well, I have been that person in two instances and honestly, I am better for it. As they say, experience is the worst teacher because the lesson comes after the loss.

My life is both simple and complex. I was raised by a single mother along with my older sister (we have different fathers). I was the small kid who turned out to be smart, creative and have a cavalier attitude. I have never wanted children because I never wanted to not be there for my child's life, as my father was mainly absent in mine. I started to come into my own after not succeeding the paths that my intellect originally opened up for me. I am a passionate person who is in touch with his emotions and just wants to be happy, but who is also drawn to the fifth profession, and that is the profession of protecting others. I am an animal lover, a lover of women, a lover of good music, a lover of wine and a lover of life. I have always given advice freely and

wanted people to succeed, and even one ex-girlfriend thought of me, and in particular that it was something that I would say when a client of her asked her what she wanted to do in her life when she grew up. I am a man of both arts and letters, and math and the sciences. You could call me a warrior poet as well as you could call me a “can do” or “will do” person; no matter what happens, I will get back up and resume working towards what I always envisioned myself doing.

I am a control freak but not in the traditional sense, but I seek to keep within a framework in which I eliminate many of the ills and potential pitfalls that surround us.

And to more easily understand me, maybe I should define what and who I am not.

I am not that guy who is essential “dick riding” celebrities in the worlds of sports and entertainment. I am not the guy that believes everything that he reads in magazine interviews – because most of it is crafted by publicists -- nor wants to take pictures with famous people. I am not the guy who will turn to any means to be the center of attention, whether drugs like steroids or being some flashy-ass fool. I am not the dude who wants to do everything for a woman, only to lord it over her or make people see me as a baler because I have done all of those things. I am not the guy that wants to hang in the club and pop bottles or wants to have the woman by my side who has what many people consider that baddest chick. I have no inclination to walk like a Neanderthal with pants sagging, or sport an Islamic style raggedy beard, nor don the latest urban styles, nor do anything to make people look at me and possibly regard me [and fear me somewhat] as some mentally inhibited and criminally affiliated hood caricature.

Now, the question is whether I am asking too much of the opposite sex. I don't think that I am. And it is only at this point in which I start to understand the answer to the problem which is the dilemma that we face as we get older. The dilemma is that as we have become disillusioned and have more time behind us than ahead of us, we find no reason to be our best all of the time, and we sometimes expect that of others. The key is to be the best that we can be, and unfortunately too many of us want to make every reason to wait out the other person, judging them by the moves that they make as if we are playing chess on a life-sized board. For each relationship that we had that didn't

work, we carry the good and the bad in that forward, not being able to shed it, and unfortunately judging the next person and our expectations of them by what we have experienced in the past.

At what point do we see the next person as everything that we could want and make the effort to embrace them and bring that out. Ah yes, that's the second conundrum as some people have the capacity to capture the sun and the moon in their eyes and their hearts but for one thing or another, they will never do more than pound the pavement of their own neighborhoods, jailing themselves in a cage of their own limited visions and aborted dreams. As I grow older, the saying that a mind is a terrible thing to waste weighs heavier on my hearts as I see more people who just abandoned hope and let their dreams and wants fade away. They settled, and the reality is that it is easier to settle than to continually move forward. It is easier because we are surrounded by people who will make excuses and sit back and embrace others who have done the same. Misery loves company, and so does complacency.

I sometimes consider myself an asshole, because I refuse to be shackled or denied, and in the face of complacency and death, whether mental, emotional, spiritual, or physical, I reject stopping and accepting that you can't. I became even stronger after I left the Navy, and found as well as tapped into the potential that I had inside. It took me seven years to finally break the plateau of weighing 165 pounds, no matter how much I lifted, and then when I broke it, the floodgates of strength and a new understanding of myself washed in. The same can be assumed in any area of life; maybe you have reached your limit and maybe you haven't, but you'll never know if you stop trying.

I am not the perfect man, as I have not been the best friend, lover, brother, uncle, son, nephew, grandson, but I have been me. And everyday I get up and know that anything can happen, both good and bad. I am thankful for the people who have been in my life, both good and bad, and thankful that while I wish, hope, and work for a lot more things, I could have a lot less. There are people without my mind and without my body and without my spirit and then there are people with more money, better credit, better physiques, better looks and better families. I don't begrudge the latter and treasure what I have, because

as long as I live and can impress someone else to achieve, then my existence has been verified.

Ten Years Later Recap

Phase I:

What's funny about this section is that it was entirely written almost twenty years ago and between then and now, there has been a great amount of experiences which not only reinforced some of my initial views, but also led to me to see another world outside of that.

This section was written at possibly the height of my Black/African identity experience, or shall we say the vocal part of it. It was easy to arrive at it at the point in time for I had just gotten out of the Navy and then went to Penn State, and in both environments had experienced some examples and manifestations of racism which I never noticed before then. It is not that I have abandoned anything about my culture, because I love it and have a deeper understanding of it then when I conversed upon the different aspects of the Black experience with other "enlightened" students while up there.

For the most part, and I will explain this in a minute, I will always have a love for Black women, for at the core, they are where I come from and what is the essence of my ancestry. To deny them would be foolish and subconsciously self-hating. While I don't have anything against interracial relationships, I do have a problem with those whose thoughts of people of another race have more value than those of their own, and unfortunately, you have a bunch of mentally twisted Black men [and to a smaller amount, Black women] who think exactly this way.

If you get to the depths of it, Black people have never been homogeneous, as there are a ton of different ethnic groups – not tribes – in Africa who have differences that involve not only physical features, but also philosophies, religions and spirituality, and even dietary consumption. Some of the most heated conflicts between some of them involve some of the most miniscule variances. However, the same can be said in the Middle East whereas how you eat your tomatoes can show the difference between you and someone else.

When we [African Americans and Caribbean Americans] were abducted, kidnapped, transported and then enslaved, we were forced to get along with each other despite differences for our communal survival, and then in many cases were bred to produce “Super Negroes” that would be better at handling the fields and what not. And even amongst that, some of us still harbored some differences and carried them down generation to generation, and still something in our DNA histories made us still look at certain features as attractive and others not. And then when you throw in the injection of Caucasian blood coupled with the massive and constant bombardment of the concept of white superiority, this has led us to the myriad confusion of attitudes and behaviors that have wormed their ways into our thought processes when it comes to the issues of attraction, lust and love.

And from that, we get to the point of what we are attracted to and why. I love Black women in general, but there are some exceptions to that rule. There are those who I will always find attractive and those that will not move me in any way, shape of form, as well as those in which depending upon some other factors I could go either way. The question is whether it stems from my socialization and conditioning or whether in some cases it stems from something deep within, that is from the combination of genes from the different ethnic groups that my ancestors hail from.

It is something that I have pondered for the past twenty years, but at this point in time the one thing that I don't get swept up into is the extent of the psychological warfare that was thrown at me. What I do know now is that, or more aptly where I am is at, is the point at which I don't just jump at the stereotypical ideals of Black beauty anymore and I look at the woman on the long-term lifespan of her and me, not the short term. Hell, looks fade but character doesn't.

Phase II

Comprising works written during two different breakups, this was an interesting time of my life. The second person I really haven't thought about much, if at all, over the past ten years, but I did try reaching out to the former. In fact, I ran into her once and gave her a ride downtown since it was on my way.

Really, there isn't much to say here. Since then, I had probably four breakups that hurt -- Karen, Etta, Sharon and Greta (yes, she is Black

with that name) – and a couple of smaller things that maybe cut for a quick minute but left no lasting scars. For the record, the following sections involve Karen and Etta, and my second book revolved around my relationship with Sharon. One thing that I did say was that I really wouldn't write about any more of my relationships and for the most part, I haven't.

For the most part, writing poems to women after the relationship ended came to a conclusion with Sharon. I don't think that I ever did anymore pieces after that. I started embracing what Pace and I call the philosophy of "next." This is not to say that the breakups didn't hurt, but after a time, you kind of get used to them and it's a lot easier to get on with your life.

The only part that is regretful about this part of the book are the poems that I don't have any copies of, nor can remember.

Phase III:

All I can say is that I was emotionally whipped right here. I loved Karen so much that it was ridiculous. Sometimes, it's easier for me to just write and this is what I did. Between this and the next chapter you would get the ultimate romanticism of a young Black man throwing everything out on the table.

We actually did a taping for an offshoot documentary based on the book featuring women, and a couple of the other panelists asked her what made her not jump and grab me after all that I said with those letters; she did admit that she was stupid for not doing so.

Phase IV:

Looking back, I think that this was the point that signified another change in how I thought of and reacted to women. It started out with what happened at the end of the first go-round with Karen; notice that I say first because after this, we would deal with each other at least three more times over the following years.

At the point at which she decided not to go forward with me, and the next woman I was looking at also folded on me, I think that I just basically spent time working on my own stuff and also just took to enjoying what and whom life had to offer.

It's interesting because after I re-read through this section, it brought me back to something I didn't immediately recall, which was the love affair that I had with Dana. Man, that was some passion there. She reminded me of a kewpie doll, and she had the most succulent lips, some very sparkling eyes, a lovely ass and let me just stop right there. I even just recalled a dream that I had about her several years ago.

This was one of those situations in which you loved someone but also knew that they just weren't in your league mentally/academically, and that that would be a major problem. She was definitely a loving woman and a great tiger in the bedroom, but I was not going to be happy with her cooking and the inability to talk about things that would interest me. And you know, sometimes, you need someone that you can talk with.

This section contained that very special thing in it, which was the letter I wrote to Vesta. My best friend Pace told me to write it; I was very much attracted to her, and in the end really had nothing to lose. Nothing happened, but I tell you, I felt something when watching the *Unsung* episode on her, and then seeing some of her old videos on Youtube.

Phase V:

The year was 1999 and I had just started doing some contracting for the web arm of a local advertising agency. The money was good and I started upgrading some of the things in my life as well as becoming a very social gadfly. I probably did about three happy hours a week, while still also working out at least six times a week; don't ask, because I don't even remember how I managed that. Dana was recent history and now I resumed looking at and for older game; mind you, Dana was at least seven years older than me as well.

I spent a lot of time between spots in Rittenhouse Square and occasional jaunts down to DC and up to Manhattan. Around one week before Christmas while clubbing at H2O in Washington, D.C., I met a gorgeous honey from Trinidad who introduced herself to me. Life was good.

The next few years had me living the life of Riley [with the ladies] and I had some good fun and some great escapades]. It was also at this point at which I would drop hanging with my old road dog; we had

some good times, but it was time to end it. The funny thing is that the first time that we went to DC, I wound up meeting a very attractive Asian-American woman, who if I had not listening to him, who knows what fun could have happened.

But this was also the time at which I would fall for one woman and give her most of my attentions and affections, and while we never called it a monogamous relationship, I probably would have been better for it if I would have done that. The hurt I went through was no one's fault except my own.

The Rest

It's funny because I really don't relish going back and reading something that I wrote so long ago. It's amazing how much I changed over the years and which things about me haven't changed. One thing that did change was my shyness in approaching women; well, it didn't change, it's just no longer there. I became more gregarious and also more focused.

I retain much of my optimism in certain matters because I am still here and I haven't given up. I am working on projects, rallying troops, learning new things and applying that to making money.

I am more pessimistic when it comes to women, but that's based on all of the experiences that I have accumulated in my lifetime, and since most of the women I dealt with were always significantly older than me, you quickly learn a lot more about women and also see who they really will become. Newsflash to most of you: you really only see the person on a deeper level when they start entering their forties.

What I am not is the bright-eyed youngster who looks at a woman with all the hope and belief that everything will be heaven. This is both an asset and a deficit. It means that while I won't waste time and money needlessly, it also might not make the other person give me their best either.

I also have learned to accept and understand the multiple states of emotions that you can have when it comes to the different people in your life. Some people you will still love no matter what they have done, though you might choose to keep them at arm's length, if you even learn that. Some people you will look at, and continually wonder if they would be a good choice for you, but maybe if you have to think

that many times the answer right there is that they are not the one for you.

One thing is sure about me, and that is that I don't want to settle down to an ordinary life. I am very much not an ordinary person and I can't see myself paired up with someone who is. I even remember one nice little thing I had going with someone ending because they couldn't accept the fact that I didn't want to go to an oldies party. If they tripped out because of that, life with them really wouldn't have been to enjoyable.

The past ten years have been interesting. I've matured some, and shed people and things that no longer served a purpose and/or just brought into my life what I didn't need. Contrary to what a number of people think, you don't want to attract everything, and the power of repulsion can be of assistance as well. It's great when some people know to not even come to you with some bullshit or try something on you.

Now that my best friend got married, I guess that somewhere soon down the line, I will be next. The question is who that person will be. Or else, I will just be a lifelong bachelor and hopefully continually travel and enjoy great wines.

Retrospective: What Had Happened Was

You know, it's been exactly ten years and a number of months since I released this book, and there have been a lot of interesting things that happened because of it. What's funny is that someone said I should pen a follow up book called "When a Black Man Loves: Years After." And maybe I am somewhat on that path anyway.

The book was the culmination of a number of poems of which I wrote over a period of eleven years, something that most people never really understand. Each section, except for the last, was written in regards to something happening in my life, and the book is actually in chronological order; the sections that is.

The first thing that happened with the book was me selling it to people who knew me, and the reactions that I got were very interesting. One associate, Steve Pina, said that he never expected anything like this out of me, rather expecting a book which was a treatise of war and combat. My response to him was that I don't have the biggest penis, I am not the world's greatest love, and that I don't do it for every woman. His response to that was that was probably the most true confession that he has heard from any man in his life, and then related to me a story from his past [which involved a well endowed man who through all of his blustering in the act of sex, couldn't bring his partner to orgasm].

Another response I received was from one of my uncles in regards to him [and my aunt] not imagining that I had that side in me. Well, on one side of it I had to tell them that they wouldn't know it existed, since I was not dating either one of them. And in retrospect, they should have known that it existed knowing me after my heartbreak with several of the women I dated, one of whom they had met before.

There is nothing like creating something that part of your heart and soul has gone into, and then releasing it into the world, whether it is literature, music or art. I have great respect for those that have done it, and do it in a classy way. And there are artists that I reached out to on their websites and said as much.

Selling the first book was one of the things that started to bring me out of my shell. Most people who knew me up until this time did not

realize that there was an extensively shy part to me, and you had to know me real well to know that it even existed. While selling the book at the Sisters event, which took place on May 5, 2002 in Philadelphia, I would find myself behind a table, and with tons of potential customers walking past me, picking up the book up and continuing on their way. It didn't help that the other vendors located near me were selling to the lowest common denominator culturally. My first buying customer was a Caucasian woman with her daughter in tow who was genuinely interested in the book, said so, and purchased it. Along the course of the day, one woman came up, purchased the book, introduced herself and then asked me that if she gave me her information, would I call her up and we go out at least once. In reality, I was floored because I found her breathtakingly gorgeous, and of course I answered yes to her. Helping me out that day were my best friend Edwin Pace, my cousin by marriage Shawncie, and another associate named Maya.

Over the course of the day, something in me emerged and I just started to turn on the salesman and charmer within myself. In total, I sold about one hundred and thirteen books. Pace, Shawncie and I would later have dinner at Copa Too that night, and then Pace and I wound up hanging out with that gorgeous woman and her friend.

Before that day, I did also present my book at an independent writers event in Baltimore in which not only would I meet a very gorgeous sister down there – the incomparable Shelby Dirton -- but also make some acquaintances who I am still in contact with and hang out with every now and then to this day such as Teddy Coates; I call him Teddy Ted.

During the next year, I dated the woman I met at the Sisters event and took the book down as south as to Roanoke, Virginia and north to the Harlem Book Festival. I would meet other authors, both male and female including Dalani Amon --he can tell you a funny story of when we sold our books at a festival in Harrisburg—Nikki Walker, and Brenda L. Thomas (God, I thought/think she is beautiful as hell and like Skee-Lo's song, I wish I was a little bit taller).

And like Lenny Williams famous song "Cause I Love You," and because of her, for the next year I would be in an odd relationship with this woman that made me feel better than no one ever made me feel;

through the ups and the downs and never wanting to give up. Yes, there are some people that you love no matter what they do, including how much they might hurt you. And so for the next years, I would still try to chase her, or chase women who could love me like she did. And for many of the woman that came into my life, they all knew about her, and accepted that I was somehow hooked into her. Yes, it ruined a ton of potential relationships, but it never ruined good friendships. Some lovers became friends and respected those feelings of mine.

Over this time, I made the mistake of just giving women, those that wanted to know me better, the book to read so that they could know who I was and what I had been through. I thought that it would save a ton of conversations, but in reality it caused more problems. Women looked for the romantic who existed in those pages, and the reality was that life had slowly burned away the eager beaver that used to be there.

During the time that I dated her, I also wound up putting together a documentary which consisted of five to six other men who read the book. Each one had a different dynamic to knowing me, and each one was unique in turn. I wound up producing it for less than one thousand dollars and premiered it either in 2003 or 2004. It's actually interesting watching the documentary, or more interesting seeing people's reactions to it. When I premiered it, I wound up meeting a distant cousin of mine; he came up to me and told me that one of my uncles in the video was also an uncle of his.

Oh, I guess that I should mention that in astrology, I am born on the day of the human portrait, which is the reason why I try not only to understand myself, but also understand others and interpersonal dynamics. You see, the book is ultimately about loving, just different aspects of it. And there is the unbridled honesty about it. There were people whom I met before writing it, as well as after it, who all had an easy chance with my heart, but something that they did or didn't do just eliminated that from it. In retrospect, a lot of it was for the better for me, because as I experienced more, I know that I didn't want to be constrained by any one of those people. The book is filled with poems written to women to either win love back or win them over, as well as romantic fantasies and admissions and confessions of not being the best man that I could be (my friend Elizabeth will love that one).

And then there are the love letters. Yes, and they can be divided into two areas: those for Karen and the letter to Vesta. For those of you that remember Vesta Williams the singer, I was totally head over heels for her. There was just something about her that captured my heart. When one relationship had totally ripped out my heart, my best friend Pace told me to write Vesta; as he said, “what did I have to lose.” So that letter is in the book, and so are those that I sent to Karen. She was a woman that I was in love with at first sight, and this was during a time in which we weren’t together. This was really some unchained emotions. What’s interesting is that over the past two years, she was confronted with the letters by another friend of mine and by herself, as to after reading them, why didn’t she make the choice to be with me.

Soon after writing the book, I wound up video-interviewing people who read the book. Two of the most arresting videos were by Eric Smalls (Big E) and Clarence “Giz” Gilmore, a local bodybuilder. The former stated on how many people needed to read the book, men as well as women; the latter told me that I needed to stop whatever I was doing and just turn myself over to writing. I think that they were both right, but it would take a minute for me to start understanding that I was truly talented and charming, and that applying that to what I am truly passionate about can only be beneficial to me.

Now, looking back from where it all began, from when I first wrote “Thoughts of a Black Woman” for Nicole Honeywood to read at the Miss Black Penn State Contest, it has been a journey of a little more than two decades. I have been the good guy, the bad guy and the ass, having entered the screwed up cycle of relationships where someone that got screwed over by another man wound up hurting me and then I wound up hurting another woman in return. It is neither karma nor kismet, but something that we all need to just stop, as many of us are a cross between wounded warriors and the walking dead. I still remember some of the women that I had crushes on but nothing happened; those whom I wished I was in a better position financially [and/or taller] to explore a relationship with; and those whose hearts I unfortunately broke because I was looking for something that another person had, or made me feel.

Oh, I have languished mentally exploring the quandary of whether you should just accept someone who accepts you for you and is a good

person, or someone that looks good and/or is great in the bedroom. After all, when you really get down to it in this climate, not a lot of folks have enough going on to wow you anymore. Out of three things that would make you just go gaga, many have just one at best, and even that is not necessarily cemented. Many of us give up too soon and many of us have exaggerated and inflated ideas of where we stand on the number line. The question is how much we are willing to deal with, or not deal with, and what life do we really want to accept for ourselves. Some of us dream extremely big, but in no way have the means to achieve a fraction of what we think will unfold for us. It's like the person wanting to be the next Whitney Houston, but only has a two octave voice and can't carry a note to save their life.

And I have communicated with many of the women that were the inspiration, if not the reason, for writing one or more of the pieces in the book. Many of them have sat there and listened to me kvetch about one or more women that came after them that just wouldn't listen, and thought that I would be the one to bow down to them versus them being the one to bow down to me. Oh, I am a Leo, but it's not about that.

We men do have our fantasies as well, and maybe one day it would be nice to meet a somewhat wealthy woman who was a lady outside the house, a chef in the kitchen, a freak/whore in the bedroom and someone that I could share my greatest dreams and fears with all at the same time.

Yes, I have walked down the path of questioning matrimony and even looking at someone for it, only to know that they couldn't be the person for me for that endeavor. I have looked at some of the people in my past, and wondered if there existed the possibility of a future with any of them, and in many cases just realized that many of them were stuck on stupid. However, what that didn't do was change the fact for some of them. I would still always have feelings for nonetheless.

Every year after 1997 -- with the exception of this year because of Pace's wedding -- I attended the Congressional Black Caucus' Annual Leadership Conference and would be in amazement looking at all of the gorgeous women in attendance. My mind would wonder what possible relationship I could have with some of those gorgeous women

you see all bedecked out. And if I was in a relationship at the same time, I wondered if the person that I was dating could marvel me the same and I could have a life like that with them.

Life is interesting and isn't easy, and at the end of the day, you should be happy to have those people in it that make it worth living. Whether you know them for a reason, or a season, or longer than that, be thankful; some people have no one at all to share the ups and the downs.

Love is different, as there is no one way that it feels. Love, in different degrees, took me to Vegas, Florida, Ocean City (Maryland), Mexico, Italy, and the Bahamas [and almost to Austria]. Love is a conundrum wrapped in an enigma, and with different people it is different things. Should I be with a sister, or can I choose any woman of color, or can I even be with a white woman who might make me happy in several areas in which some others haven't. Yes, there is familiarity, but then again there are the things which we want to walk away from.

What has captured my eye doesn't always capture my heart or my soul, but if I might be unhappy otherwise, why not grab that which I can while I can.

Looking back and looking deeply, I discover some layers to relationships that existed that sometimes I wish went a little further. And sometimes I look and see all of the issues, whether they be age, mentality (not to be confused with maturity) or whether the issues fall on me or on the other person. Honestly, I have never read my book from cover to cover in years, because looking at it revisits the pain that I endured in that time, and the key is actually to look forward since I am no longer that person. And I fear the later years, of when your lover starts succumbing to the ravages of old age, and you know that if you chose someone else, then this wouldn't be happening.

I look at the women older than me who I dated; they were all that at some point, but now they are starting to show their years, and for many, it's not good. But joie de vive changes all of that, and you can enjoy the mirth and essence of someone despite arthritis and what not, or can you?

To me, love is art and music as it moves through your soul and heart, whether when you are dancing, playing music, singing or listening and channeling all of the great times and warm feelings that you have. It is Adriana Evan's "All for Love" off of her album El Camino, which was the first thing that made me cry over the loss of her in my life. I had to play this song over and over to finally let it all go. And ironically enough, the same day, she would friend me on Facebook. It is Eryka Baduh's "I Want You" which I played in 2003 trying while to get over her hard at least one hundred times over the next weeks while being haunted by specters of gold Nissan Pathfinders at that year's Black Caucus. It is Rachelle Ferrell's "Nothing In the Middle" which allows me to sit in the dark and cry, commiserating in my loneliness with the singer and understanding why my favorite uncle committed suicide [as well as other people such as Phyllis Hyman].

But it's also the joy of music by groups like Mint Condition, Loose Ends, Incognito, Swing Out Sister and Vertical Hold and artists like Vesta Williams, Angela Winbush and even Frank Ocean that tap into your emotional core and make you relate and expose the rawness of the range of what you have been through. And yes, it hurt when my buddy David Rooks sent me an email with a youtube like to Vesta's "Don't You Blow a Good Thing" and then she died not long after. Oh, the tears did well up.

But if you can't hurt, then you didn't love at all, no matter what you told people.

Misinterpretations and Feedback

Another interesting aspect of writing the book was the misinterpretations that people had, as well as the things that they saw in me through my writings which I never realized was there, or didn't realize I had shown.

On the issue of misinterpretations, not only did it come from people not looking at the dates of pieces written in each section, and realizing that the book did span some eleven years [and for the most part is in chronological order], but also there was a lot of not fully comprehending where I was coming from in regards to what I wrote in the Foreword and the New Introduction about attraction in regards to different types and shapes of women. While most of us are insecure in at least several areas of our lives, it was amazing how some women

misread into my words. As for myself, I have lived and experienced enough – and experienced is the thing to pay attention to here – to realize that people are like cookies, as you never know what they taste like until you bite into them, and let me add that oatmeal raisin cookies are not the most attractive, but they taste so damned good.

One woman thought that I was only attracted to women with big breasts – they are nice, to a point, and not the best thing to have as women age – while another was upset with some words that admonished women having tattoos. When confronted on it, I asked her whether or not she wished that the men she dated have all of their teeth, to which she hushed herself and purchased the book.

An interesting component of the book is that two women, each of whom I loved and dated, both contributed to the book by writing what they thought of me and what it felt like to be loved and cared for by me. That combined with all of the experiences that I have had over the years make for some pretty interesting conversations with those who know me, and those who really know me. It's because one major question is whether I have already found who I need in my life or if I haven't found that yet which I am truly looking for.

Not everyone has that dilemma, and I would venture that it's something only experienced by those truly striving for something bigger. Minor material things as well as shallow concepts of beauty only go so far, but those things experienced by entrepreneurs, for instance, put you in a different moment.

What is it that we really want? And can we find everything that we need in that one person?

There are women that you will always love to be seen with, and love to see them in the nude. There are women that will rock your world in bed. There are women who will mentally stimulate and challenge you. There are women who you can always laugh and talk with. Is it too much to try to find this all in one person? The answer probably is yes. As we have climbed and evolved past what we knew years ago, there exists more differences in our thoughts and beliefs, our actions and our understandings, our likes and dislikes. Having someone that has your back through thick and thin is always good, unless it's all of the little things that constantly irritate you and which you cannot just let go and

accept. There is the analyzing of friends, and wondering if they could be that person that you needed all along.

I mean, I remember all of the times that I wished someone could be that one shining star – and the only star – in my life, but there was something telling me that it wasn't enough for what I wanted. I have seen the relationships where either the husband or the wife wasn't really happy on their side, but they stayed in it and walked the good walk... and then wound up getting divorced some years later. Those that really know me well will tell you that if I don't like something, it would be very unwise to put me in that position.

Ask Pace and he will have you cracking up about that time in the movies when I got no candy, but my date got some popcorn with the fake butter on it.

Sometimes, you wonder when your dreams will become reality, of if they ever will. And then you realize that as you get older, the available pool that fits your ideals is grows logarithmically smaller, and even if you could find her, then you're really not in the position to wow her anyway. The flipside is that my good friend Gina said quite the opposite, saying that it must be great for me as I have more of my pick of the litter with women around my age and older. I have no kids, no drug issues, am in moderately good health, have some modicum of class, as well as no kids and no past marriages. She also thinks that I am handsome. Truth be told, I do have some demerits, but for the most part, there is nothing that can't be solved without success and paying off any and all debts; hopefully this book will pay off some things.

The most interesting thing was understanding what has occurred over time with works of art, be they writing or paintings, and how people have over time interpreted them incorrectly through their frame of reference and even taught everyone else their wrong beliefs. It reminds me of the movie "Back to School" in which Rodney Dangerfield's character pays Kurt Vonnegut to write a paper on one of his books, only to have the professor say that he knew nothing about Vonnegut. It's hilarious that when as the creator, you know what you meant when you wrote or drew something, only to hear someone prattle on about it being something entirely different.

The other part of this was what some women picked up when they read the book, and that centered around my loneliness and perchance despair. There were times when I actually felt embarrassed when people said or wrote certain things to me, because simply I did not think that was who I was [at that very moment] and it's amazing how you feel when people tell you about how the book made them cry.

One major thing though was the reaction that I got from men. I actually thought that men would pan the book, but they became some of the most ardent supporters of it.

When a Black Man Loves, is it any different from when a white man loves?

I was asked this several times, and my answer would be a resounding yes. While both are still men, stereotypically – which is true in most cases – what differentiates us are our value systems, our experiences, and our cultural leanings. A Black man can appreciate some extensive curves on a woman, because not only do people of Negroid origins usually have ample breasts and bottoms, but for the most part we have been surrounded by women who were just a little more curvy and a little more rubenesque. And if that woman walks like an angel, sashays from side to side with a rhythmic and sexy cadence, has a beaming smile, a great attitude, good hygiene, is a great dresser, a phenomenal cook and a great lover... well, the man is then outgunned, outclassed and happy. Throw in a talent like singing or playing an instrument, a sharp wit, a good head on her shoulders and it's a done deal. As I said, I was in love with Vesta without ever meeting her.

Now, I know some cool ass white guys out there; those with style – usually they are Italian or were raised in either a multi-cultural setting or just were a little different. Many of them would have no problem dating a woman of color. There is something about dancing in sync with an R&B song, or really understanding the whole concept of the missing notes in jazz tunes. These are things that must be felt and can't be faked.

Now since I opened up the issue of race, some of you out there probably have the question in regards to Black men with women of other races, and actually my book was ordered from a woman in Belgium – she was white – who had some questions. My answer is

that life is short and love who you love, but really understand why you love them. Is it because you think that by being with them that you have made it, then you're already lost. Is it because they can do something for you financially that maybe many of the sisters you know can't, then your motives aren't true. There is nothing like dealing with someone who has an understanding of who you are, where you stand in the world, and what you have to go through. I know Black men whose preference is to only date white women; usually, they get no more than a casual conversation and that's all there is. I know Black women who have either married or date white men; as long as it's true love, I don't have a problem with you at all. I have dated white women, one of whom ranks up there as one of the best sexual partners that I have ever had, and another whom I would trust with anything and everything in my life. There were areas of contention, but that didn't spell doom and gloom for the whole thing. In fact in regards to the first one, the sex was so good that I figured I would just take the criticism that I would receive because I was happy as hell.

In this society, we as African Americans will be dealing with issues in regards to race and complexion for at least another one hundred years; it simply cannot be escaped. We were never a homogeneous people and in that we will succumb to the constant psychological warfare being perpetrated against us by the owners of the society that we live in. We will occasionally yearn for those with some features that reach back to the motherland, but we will rarely accept all of it if we have a choice. And the fact is that we are a hodgepodge of different dominant traits from a number of different ethnic groups mixed in with the bloodlines of white people, Native American people and whomever else got injected into our bloodlines over time.

Myself, I would take S. Epatha Merkerson over Halle Berry any day of the week. And while I would easily throw out Ann Coulter, there is something I love about Judith Light and Stockard Channing. And while other people might not want to admit it, I can see the carnal thoughts that come to mind when looking at Nell Carter or Mabel King -- the mother in the television show *What's Happening* -- let's be real in admitting that some big girls will put it on you and in the best way. But give me a Yahzahrah, an Angie Stone, any of the women in Raheem Devaughn's video for "Woman," Marsha Ambrosius, Lynn

Collins (*John Carter* the movie), Suzie Plakson (she played Worf's baby-momma), or Marina Sirtis and I would still be happy. That is if we got along and they made me smile. Oh, I forgot to add that I loved Roselyn Sanchez in *Chasing Papi*, Lorraine Bracco, and Elizabeth Pena in *Sueno*.

Yeah, that book was a major exorcism and revealing to the world of what I was dealing with, who I was, what I had to offer, and what I had been through. It was a combination of rejection, satiation, loneliness, sorrow, pain, exuberance, ecstasy, and attraction transcribed in both prose and poetry. It showed friends, as well as strangers, a huge depth about me, and it also made them question their own lives and experiences.

This book was one of the first awakenings within myself, and hopefully it won't be the last. If I can seize upon the honesty of self and combine it with my other passions then who knows where I will end up in the end.

May you reach down and also have such a cathartic experience as well.

Thanks, Acknowledgements & Dedications

This section was originally just dedications, but I thought to expand it to thanks as well, because I have a lot of people and things to be thankful for. I finally understand why the most unscrupulous people always thank God first for what they have and where they presently are; you know how it is when you see some rapper or singer on television at an awards celebration who sings, or raps, of some of the most immoral things, but then thanks God for his or her success. Well, think about this, God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. He knows about all of the crap that you might be thinking of doing, all of the wrongs that you have done and all the things that you have tried to hide. In my case, I think about the times that I wrote bad checks, lied (let's not even go there because that is something that damned near everyone does in some form or another), fornicated, etc. It didn't matter the intent of what I was doing, whether it was a small set of wrongs to either survive or to advance myself or another in the future, it was a sin and maybe illegal. I think about the close calls with death, or the fact that it was not intended for me to leave this earth before now.

I have to first thank Him for getting me this far in life, looking after me, and not allowing the walls to come closing in on me when I was in the wrong. I also have to thank Him for the people that I have met and dealt with, either to learn from them, or from the experience or interaction with them, whether good or bad, to make me a better person. I have to thank Him for what gifts he gave me in talents of the spirit, or the mind, and of the body, for everyone does not have them.

To the women that I have ... who changed me in many ways

To Nicole, for being caring, as well as there, when I needed it, and for breaking my heart so bad that I became a deeper romantic. To Keyva, for adding to the pain of my break up with Nicole (it led me to write some damned good poetry). She was the second. To Umber, for showing me that you should not try to spoil every woman, as well as when to walk away from something that really has no spark to it.

To Karen, for having me go around in circles, as well as up and down on an emotionally tumultuous seesaw, which allowed me to be able to know when you can love a woman, but understand that she is no good for you in the end. We still remain good friends and continue to learn from one another and help one another in life.

To Etta, who I will never give up on helping her to attain some success with her God-given talent, and who taught me a lot about myself in ways that she doesn't even know. (Of course there were more women than this, but these are the ones that really got me both riled up and pissed off, or hurting when we split)

To My Friends (no matter what we are going through currently)

Frank (Carlos) Gihan (for opening doors and being a "big" brother), John Westbrook, Kamau McRae, Edwin Pace, and Reggie Brooks, Ashabi Rich, Chanel Forest, Khalilah Allen, Iris Jenkins, Kim Blackman, Zakeia Smith, Barbara Purnell Small, Cheri and Carmella Fleming, for always being there for me to talk to, and understand what each relationship was about when I needed it.

These names are the very interesting ones because friends go through things, and it could be for a number of reasons, but it doesn't mean that the friendship is completely over. As we grow in life and maturity we have more of a greater sense of what matters and of tolerance, forgiveness and compassion. I don't think that these relationships are over and in time may resume where they left off but on better terms.

To those that have helped me in the pursuit of my dreams

Barbara Jean Harris, my mother, who put up with a lot of stuff when the shoe was on the other foot and in her own way provided nurturing support which freed me to concentrate on learning and applying.

Charles and Robin McHerron, my aunt and uncle, who have always been like a second set of parents to me and for opening up their house and arms for me to utilize the contents and the love to accomplish and move on different things.

Phil, Marq, Romeo, Lisa Sherman, Curt and everyone else who saw the light at the end of the tunnel or the spark in my eyes and knew that we could achieve if we tried.

I am not ever going to be ever to name everyone, but thanks to all who have helped me, taught me and inspired me.

Foreword

“When A Black Man Loves,” an interesting title for this book, but one that has many meanings. Every poem in this book reflects my love towards a woman, or Black women, in general. I couldn’t figure out whether to write one poem that revolves titled after this book, or whether to just let it be. The next thing you know, it all starts to come to me... the things that make a Black man love. This book should really be called something like “When a Black Man Loves... the evolution of an incurably romantic and complex brother” or “Confessions of a Black Pearl.”

Etta (read “The Gitback Section”) was shocked that I actually put so much into this book, or should I say revealed so much stuff about my life. Maybe this book is my catharsis about one aspect of my life. Maybe, it will be that one great American book (I doubt it, but I hope that it is very memorable). Maybe, after this, there won’t be a follow up or another book by me on this particular subject. My thoughts, bare all and “put my foot in this” and make it all that I could make it for you the reader. Sure, you’ve read poetry and poetry books, but I surmise that in many cases, it seems to you like people were writing just to write, be heard, be seen, and maybe get some sex out of the whole deal. Well, there is no prescribed formula here, only reality of love, lust, heartache, being gamed; all of the experiences of love. Maybe in my bearing my souls to you, you might understand something, someone, or some situation a little better. Through my blood, sweat and tears may you reap insight. Corny, but maybe true.

In this book I have the strength to admit my faults and frailties, as well as the weakness to assert my strengths and assets.

“When you get right down to it, everything in life is simultaneously a paradox, an oxymoron, a catch-22 and a judgment call or a command decision.”

In this reality, I don’t really know what I want—whether I am looking for that soul mate or an assortment of different people to have different experiences with (as you’ll read in one entry in “About the Author”, one friend of mine thinks she knows what I want and why). It is in times like these that I try to understand what motivates me, as a Black man, to love.

I wonder when I am walking down the street, and I see the beauty in a BBW, I have to examine the possibility that this attraction may not be caused simply by growing up among a number of “bigger” females, but

some more innate predisposition from my African heritage. We have to remember that in many African cultures, big women, if not women with more than ample bottoms [and other parts], are considered more beautiful than those without. And then when I am initially attracted to them but my attraction fades quickly, is it that I have embraced the mental damage wrought on my people as a long-term result of colonization, the Lynch Agenda, and slavery? Or is it that I myself do not quintessentially have a sincere attraction for BBW but only some carnal desires that I want to satiate? The fact of the matter is that, while in the midst of the “biblical act”, many things do not even matter to you, especially if you see with your mind and emotions and not with your eyes.

Was the fact that I was attracted mainly to light-skinned sisters when I was younger the result of a systematic agenda to make me not want to embrace my “Blackness?” Or was it because it seemed that everyone who was my complexion around me seemed to not reach the next level of “accepted” social mannerisms, and it seemed like those of a lighter shade acted more civilized, almost reminiscent of the character of Whitley in *A Different World*?

Can I truly see the beauty of an Asian woman fueled by my natural perception of beauty? Or is it something passed down to me in my father’s genes makes me see a beauty in them, and I, struggling to differentiate myself from him because of our personal history, refuse to allow myself to be myself.

Then, what about white women? Is the fact that I can look at a white woman and find her attractive a genuine feeling? Or a culmination of factors resulting from the oppressors' mental warfare perpetuated on my race? And where do women of Mediterranean, Jewish and Arabic descent fit into this? I think that they have some great eyes and noses as well as love the jet-black silkiness of their hair.

In a nutshell, understanding what truly makes us tick is a journey into not only self-discovery, but also a journey into understanding humanity and its many cultures and clashes. Do we limit our attractions based on what wars and conflicts our people are involved in (remember Romeo and Juliet and West Side Story)? Or do we find people that have what we are looking for in a person regardless of their bloodlines? Sometimes, by living inside the boxes that we let society create for us, we ruin our happiness by succumbing to their walls.

About the Author

While you will undoubtedly learn more about me in the following parts of the book as well as from the previous section [and I may be repeating myself], I would say that I am a very complicated person who unfortunately believes that anyone can do anything, and have a hard time accepting otherwise.

To understand me romantically, it is also good to understand my history. Emotionally, or shall I further add, intimately, I am a shy person. How I act towards one woman may be totally different from how I act towards all the others. Most people don't see this until they really get to know me. At most times, I feel aloof and awkward in approaching, or even, making "a move" if I am holding someone on a pedestal. I have had too many disappointments in life to take everything with the most courageous and cavalier aplomb.

I grew up in West Philadelphia, for most of my childhood in a section of the city called Wynnefield. I lived with my mother and my older half-sister. My father left when I was two and later remarried, from which I have two other half-siblings. Most of my time was divided between my academic pursuits (bookworm) and playing with friends. I saw my father (I can remember how infrequently) and then he moved away to Colorado from which I didn't hear from him until he returned when I was about 11 or 12.

My mother worked two and three jobs and only had one boyfriend since my father, who treated me very well. It was kind of like a good uncle-nephew relationship. I did have positive male role models in my life, but I was more interested in knowledge than women, so those lessons never were brought up nor passed on. I did, however, learn how men could mistreat women by seeing the things that my sister and her friends went through. Since mom worked a lot, my sister was tasked with babysitting me; this meant hearing all of their dialogues in regards to men and relationships. I also used to hang with guys older than myself, who also had very immature and misogynistic attitudes towards women.

I used to develop crushes on girls, but did not know the ways in which to "talk" to them, so I didn't have any girlfriends coming up. Ones that were attracted to me, I was not in turn attracted to. Also, I was not trying to become a teenage father. So, I wound up not losing my virginity until I was almost 20 years old; a fact that shocks most people who know me.

Even then, there was many a time that I wanted to approach a woman but didn't know the right way to do it. I wound up losing my virginity to a woman who I was not interested in, but also who wouldn't leave me alone. After that, sex was something that I wanted, but not something that I was truly just a player in getting. I was still very aloof in "hooking up" with women and thus did much less than I could have.

The one point of inflexion in my life was when one woman whom I cared for greatly broke up with me. Before that moment, sex was something that was more or less mechanical with me, but after that, it was something that I could not get into anymore, or as much as I could with her. Until the time where I emotionally healed, or felt emotionally comfortable with someone, it was always a disappointing thing. I either was disinterested after penetration, or was not emotionally secure as to how I would do; if you think too much, you'll lose it. Consequently, that ruined quite a few possibilities with different women. Sometimes, something can hit you at your core with so much force that those things that are easy for others, are too tender for you to endure.

After the time we broke up, I must have been hurting for about a good two years, and during that time as well as after it. I had a number of dealings with different women, mostly older than me. In that time, I was still the ever gallant and naïve romantic. And through this, went through things with women that a wiser and more experienced man would have walked away from and not allowed him to be trifled with. However, sometimes in life you don't want to be alone so bad, that you will take some pain just to have someone in your life with you (I guess this may be one of the mentalities that allow battered women to stay in abusive relationships).

However, I have learned from the bad experiences and try not to repeat them, nor try to deal with the kind of women that will bring them to me. As far as how I deal with women, if I don't think that you are the "one," but I do think that we can have some good times together, I will "kick it" with you. However, it is hard to get on a very close level with me if I don't see a future. That doesn't mean that I can't have wonderful experiences with someone who will not be the "one," its just that I won't be looking for something that I don't think will exist.

Who knows, over time I may open my eyes and see what I was too blind to see at an earlier moment. Until then, I will be the man who is in perpetual conflict with his own self; pessimistic-optimist; optimistic-pessimist; hopeful cynic, and incurable romantic.

Summarily, I think that I am an amalgamation of my father, mother, paternal grandmother and paternal grandfather. I see my gruffness in my grandfather as well as part of my kindness and actions. I recognize my voice in my father and my attitude in my grandmother. My sensitive and caring side I think comes more from my mother and my father and in that, I truly understand how they came to be friends and lovers [when they were together]. My artistic talent comes from my mother and my spiritual talent(s) I believe from my grandmother.

While I am not any of them completely, I recognize and feel parts of them in me as I do certain things in life.

How some of my friends and associates see me

Who is Zachary M. C. Harris? Perhaps, as the movie *Fight Club* expresses it, nothing special, just "decaying matter" like all the rest of us, but perhaps not either. I met Zach over 10 years ago when he was at Penn State. I was a freshly minted Ph.D. and was out to save the world. Zach walked in my door, and he looked to me like he sure could use some saving. I was immediately impressed by his intelligence and confidence: brains and biceps all rolled up in one package. Didn't Penn State love that? However, Zach refused the mold. Most people who can do multivariable calculus get science or engineering degrees and pass into oblivion behind the walls of corporate America or academia. Ultimately, Zach decided to shrug his shoulders and tell Penn State to stick it where the sun doesn't shine. Was that a smart thing to do? I can't do multivariable calculus so I just don't know.

What impressed me most about Zach at first was his ability to dialogue on a number of topics that only those with the right credentials should be talking about. From ancient Greek philosophy to multivariable calculus, Zach had an opinion, and his opinions were well informed. Even on those topics where his knowledge was sketchy, his ability to critically think through the issues usually made up for any lack of knowledge he might have. He didn't need to know that Leopold von Ranke was the father of modern historiography (although he probably knows that too); he knew that all history is written by the winners and that Western historiography, for all its glory, glories in its shame of exclusion and distortion of the history of non-Western peoples. If Western history is finding a cure (and this idea is highly questionable), the medicine was prescribed by Zach and others who see the glaring holes in its treatment of the experiences of all of humanity.

But my attraction to Zach didn't ultimately have much to do with his mind. Lots of people in this world are smart; some are even too smart. I knew that beneath the bravado beat a human heart that was torn over so much "stuff" that makes up our world. I have a picture in my mind of Zach as a little boy when he heard his first racial epithet. A smile that was previously glued to his face suddenly drops out of sight. He is plunged into thought about the meaning of the words and the new world that the race card has opened up to him. He has begun a long journey that has no end.

This journey is central to the heart of Zach today. The images he brings to us in his words signal the mileposts that he has past already. But still the journey continues. Will his roadmap lead to a land flowing with milk and honey, or will it lead to despair? Zach bends the road with the strong will of his mind, but is it strong enough? So much of history and his own experience tip the scales towards the kind of pathologies that the White mind has seared upon the Black psyche. Only the strong can survive: the White mind has used its hegemony to determine that. But Zach's mind fights on, struggling to find love while his adrenaline seeks a violent outlet. Love is his salvation, which he knows only too well. But does he have the will to love?

Zach's poems are the tangible evidences of his struggle. The Black Woman is the essence of love to Zach. She, the primogenitor of all of humanity, occupies a place of dangerous safety. She is the balm of Gilead with a bite. Here, all fears are drowned out in the common denominator, the great par excellence and authentic deus ex machina all wrapped up in one entity and being. Zach is troubled by his impulses. Do they represent the authentic Black mind? Or are they impositions of Western romantic notions? He seeks to experience the bliss and holiness of the Song of Solomon stripped free of the rhinestones of Madison Avenue. Will he find it? Read, and discover for yourself.

- Michael Blanco

Having known Zach for at least nine years, and having had countless conversations with him, I have had the opportunity to get to know him. Zach is a writer, a poet, and a champion of causes and in my opinion, someone who struggles with deep sadness. Zach reminds me of our many young that have not had the opportunity to get the nurturing that children require. He is different in that because he appears to be a gifted young

man, he has been able to utilize his intelligence to compensate for the lack of nurturing and further, he seeks to nurture others because it helps him to not focus on himself. Even when one might get him to talk about those early years, he does so without affect.

I sense a hole. I sense an emptiness that seeks to be filled. I believe and hope that in the end, Zach will be able to talk about his disappointment he has to those who were expected to care for him, but fell short. I hope that he will acknowledge the elements that are missing in his life and I hope with the insights he develops; he will be able to dismantle the facade he uses to protect himself.

Not that a good woman can solve all the burdens of the world (although she comes close), but that is precisely what Zach needs. She must be strong, unpretentious, honest and nurturing. Further, she has to be self-assured so that when she is pressed to deny what she sees (the sad man-child trying to overcompensate), she will point it out and not be afraid of Zach's overpowering denial.

There is a sad man-child in his heart screaming to get out and wanting to make the pain public. Let the child speak so that so much energy will not have to be used to silence him. There is a truly wonderful, capable person beneath the façade ready to love and more importantly, be loved.

More than anything, Zach wants to be loved and supported into the person he knows he can be."

-Isabel Sampson-Mapp, MSW, LSW, CSW

Zach Harris, a man who gives a fuck. Passion describes this man. He is truly into helping other humans. Fitness is very important to him. Women that are fit, challenging and intelligent are who attract him. A woman who knows her culture will melt nicely with Mr. Harris. Knowledge of oneself is the key to keeping him interested.

Mr. Harris, being a cultured individual, is musically inclined; he plays several different instruments and writes poetry. He speaks several different languages and has a great sense of humor. All that wrapped in a shy male is hard to imagine, however; it is true that Mr. Harris is very shy. His exterior appearance is mastered by self-discipline and confidence.

A man of integrity, high values and morals, Zach strives for justice and understanding. Sometimes being able to see bullshit coming his way

drives many people from talking with him. Women are usually drawn to Mr. Harris because of his physical presence, however, once meeting him they discover a man with brains who is challenging and knowledgeable of many subjects.

Zach is caring, generous, and giving of his time and money. He is a private and spiritual man; not many can say that they have seen that side of him. His loyalty can only be compared to that of a father to his son in a loving relationship. One could not ask for a better friend.

-Edwin Pace

The essence of Zachary Harris: unquestionably, he is knowledgeable, intelligent, and brilliant on many fronts. His ability to share this God-given gift is a compilation of how he sees himself, how others see him, and ultimately the legacy he leaves behind.

Passions: He feverishly pursues a wealth of interests; a love for language, physical strength, and good times as if life itself depended on it. And much to the benefit of others, he readily imparts his thoughts, comments, and opinions.

Nemesis: He refers to himself as the dutiful tibetandog, the loyal iron dog. As a result of exceptional intelligence and strength, he has the ability to soar, or to crash and burn, the latter being the result of an insatiable need to be needed while despising the ineptitude of the dependent.

Family: He and his mom share a special relationship, and like many mother-adult child relationships, only time will bring about an appreciation for what exists.

Love: He is in search of one worthy of his time, attention, and gifts. However, love that is supportive of his dreams evades him. So he continues to search, to protect, to risk never finding. Truth is, despite what you desire, you have exactly what you need.

-Laureen Monica Boles

"My Friend Zach"

I remember when I first met Zach, it was at a job fair in Philadelphia in 1994. He was asking me why I was there and what positions were available at my company for a person with his qualifications. He was

very confident, yet there was an inquisitive side of him. He talked as if he was knowledgeable about every company represented at the job fair and suspected their motives were superficial. Furthermore, Zach felt he was overqualified for most offerings anyway and that many attendees were not. Still, he asked a lot of questions and seemed to be searching for something, maybe affirmation from me or maybe he just wanted to challenge me -- a game Zach often plays.

I knew then that there were, at least, two sides of Zach -- a strong, confident, intelligent and often arrogant man, and an inquisitive, attention/love-seeking boy. The latter most people may never see. As I got to know Zach over the years, he has shared with me many of his escapades and exploits with women. I always enjoyed hearing about his conquests, and yes, defeats. The stories are so colorful and lively.

His extensive interest in women is as broad (no pun intended) as his interest in world culture. When you get to know Zach, you'll hear about the drums of Africa, to the many languages and dialects of the Far East. He's a walking National Geographic! Anyway, he's always calling me about some Nubian queen, Caribbean honey, Black fraulein or Afro-Asian sister he met.

Women chase Zach. They even stalk him, but Zach only gets captured when he chooses to, so he says. Zach chases women. And they always get caught, unless of course, he changes his mind. But you can read his poetry and decide for yourself.

Even as a much older brother, I've learned a lot from Zach. (Zach, now you know!) He's really an interesting Black man. And he can piss you off with his arrogance and egotism. Still, I love the brother.

Dreams and successes are within his reach. Be blessed.

Frank Gihan



Gye Nyame – an Adinkra symbol from Ghana representing the omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience of God.

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Original Introduction

First, let me say that this book scans several different parts of my life. It consists of three very different but related types of poetry—poems that were written before I had anyone, poems written after a relationship ended, and lastly, those penned when I was in the pursuit of someone I had already been dealing with. Or should I say the pursuit of a higher level of dealing with this person.

I think that many people in the world do not believe that most men can truly be emotional, let alone be emotionally romantic, summed up by what we call “sensitive” in the 1990’s. We especially don’t expect this out of Black men who grew up in the inner cities of America. In most media that exposes us to Black men in America, they are depicted as urban rogues who always seem to be into committing crimes revolving around theft of goods as well as of personal safety. They all would seem to take to rap music as their biblical psalms and all drink malt liquor as their beverage of choice. Even when we are depicted in white-collar positions, it seems that the news and entertainment media always relegates us to the roles that are all about material and sexual conquests, no matter what we already have.

Well, this book is a little different. It’s all about the Black man, one Black man in particular, and his love for the Black woman. Not all Black men are insensitive; inversely, some are extremely sensitive on the romantic level as well as on an emotional or empathic level of understanding of what women [Black women in particular] go through in life. I myself am the product of a single parent household having been raised by my mother and growing up with my sister. Most of my good friends turn out to be women, and we usually find ourselves in conversations about the dynamics of Black male/female relationships as well as interracial relationships and how we each feel about them. When I was younger, and my mother worked two or more jobs, I had to hang out with my older sister and her friends. As you can guess, I hated it greatly, but it also gave me a huge deal of exposure to sisters and how they reacted to brothers.

To me, it seems that when we as Black men do not show our emotions, Black women voice their outlooks and opinions on this, which are not encouraging. On the other side of the fence, when we do open up emotionally, it seems that neither the women can not handle it or would have rather we had kept our mouths shut.

The third part of this book is the most interesting because it consists of poems that were written to someone who is/was/still is very special in my life. Sometimes in life, we may come across someone in our travels that may knock our shoes off, and we know we would like to get to know better. Unfortunately, we know that we aren't prepared for that emotionally, financially, or physically (if that may be the case). These last poems are from a collection that I wrote to such a woman over the past seven months. I won't mention her name but those that know me closely will know who she is. I am the type of man who really can fall for the right woman, and I believe I found such a woman in her. We met in 1993 and became good friends in 1994 by way of the telephone. Our initial basis for contact was business, but as time transpired, we became friends. I finally had the gumption to ask her out in early 1995, and we went out a few times. At this point, I knew that I really had my eye in the right direction. Soon after, our relationship expanded to new levels, and I fell head over heels for this woman, as my mother would even attest. However, not everything goes as planned, and differences arise. Anyway, these last poems are those that I wrote to her during a time in which we rarely saw each other but kept in contact over the phone in small pockets of time. Maybe one day things will take back off, but for now we are just good friends.

New Introduction

After much consternation, I think I finally found a title that fits not only myself, but also the poems enclosed within this book. Everyday, as I go out into the world, it always hits me that I truly love women. Two friends of mine from different places, but both happening to be in the same sorority (Sigma Gamma Rho), each told me at different times in my life that I was a man that truly loves women, and that that is something, or someone, you rarely come across. Damn near every woman has a look in which she seems very attractive in one or more ways, whether it is sexual or aesthetic. Unfortunately, and fortunately, for me, I tend to be able to see that beauty in many women.

I must say that it is not the easiest thing to live with due to the fact that everyday you see at least one woman whom just takes your breath away. There is usually something that stands out in a woman that makes you start to look at her whole persona. Whether its the shape of her calves, the curvature of her hips or her breasts, the color of her skin, hair or eyes; something will attract my attention. It could be an aspect of her face, or

of her body. What really moves me is a woman's walk and style of movement. Most women do not exhibit poise and grace, and those that do stand out in my eyes. There is nothing more attractive than a woman who has graceful and flowing movements.

Starting with the body, there are beautiful women of all shapes and sizes. Sometimes, its all the rest that makes you love someone, or be attracted to them. I've always thought that Vesta [Williams, the singer], no matter her weight, is one of the sexiest women on the planet (a lot of other brothers feel the same way too). Vesta had that lively personality, and without that, it doesn't pay to be with a woman, no matter how attractive she is. Give me time with Vesta and after that you might as well kill me, because I've had too much fun for any one Black man to have in life. I think that she was gorgeous as hell in the movie "Posse." When I met Nicole, I saw her "Vesta-ness" and was definitely interested. Some women look great slim, while others look fine just being voluptuous. I've dated all sizes and found that there are things in each size that I like.

Legs are a definite turn on, whether they are perfectly sculpted, muscular, or just a tad bit thick (Flo-Jo had legs to die for, as do a number of other sisters who work out. I remember this one sister name Linda who used to come to my gym. I fell in love with her legs more than her cute smile. Too bad nothing ever happened between us). There's nothing that gets a brother's attraction more (especially mine) than a perfectly sculpted set of calves accentuated by a pair of heels.

Atop the legs, you have the hips. The women that have the most dynamite hips are all of African descent. I must say that there are some other women with hips that should also get notice (especially Latino and Italian women). If you are a Black man, there is something about a woman's hips and gluteus maximus that just arouses your innermost desires. The funny truth behind this is that, in various cultures in Africa, there is a huge emphasis on a woman's hips and butt, with one culture using the root word "bunda," in much of the language (bunda of course refers to the rear of a woman).

Next up (sort of a pun) is the midsection and rest of the torso. In the fact that women come in all shapes and sizes, this is where the variations occur most. As I have said before, every woman has a look (at least one). In this look, you add up all the ways in which you view her elements and come up with something that just appeals to you. A stomach can be very sexy, whether a woman has a "six-pack" or a little bit of "loveliness," which gives her a smoother silhouette. While many women who have

small breasts may be self-conscious about this, it seems that most men look at the overall package. Of course, I tend to prefer women with large breasts, but what is more important is not necessarily on the outside. A woman's shoulders and neck are also very appealing. Sometimes, you are looking for a nice wide back and set of sculptured shoulders, sometimes its a long neck that does you in.

Talking about the sum of a woman, as well as the outside, there is nothing more striking than skin tone and complexion. In "Thoughts of a Black Woman," I explore this in a few lines. There are some women whose skin is so smooth and clear that you can get lost just looking at their cheeks. I remember one time when a fine, light-complected sister boarded the bus one stop before I was to get off. Judging by her appearance, I believed that she might be coming from the home of someone I knew who lived two blocks down from me. After searching for a name, I wound up running into her again several weeks later, only to find out it was someone that I had met a year before in a club and had chatted with for a time. We never got together, but she left a good impression in my mind, one that was full of delectably carnal thoughts.

Now we come to the head of the matter, the head of the woman. There are many different types of heads (skull shapes) as well as faces. This entails the placement of the eyes, ears, nose and mouth as well as the shape of each. A major factor in the appearance of a woman's face depends on the shape of her lips and her cheeks. Some women's faces are cute, while others are dignified, and others attractive in a sexy sort of way. High cheekbones tend to give the eyes an Asiatic slant. I know a sister named Michelle who is part of a singing group named Imani (you may have seen them on StarSearch); well, she has the most gorgeous brown eyes that are slanted like the Baole people of Africa. Since we are on eyes, sparkle is everything. While women of direct African descent may not have the natural range of eye colors that other women have (I just hate to see sisters wearing colored contacts), they do have a sparkle to their eyes, like living onyx. Etta's eyes have the prettiest sparkle to them.

Next, we come to the mouth, which is always defined by the lips. Some women have gorgeous all-consuming lips reminiscent of African statues. N'Bushe Wright has those lips, as does Monet (I can't remember her last name, but she hails from Ohio and went to Penn. Oh well, maybe our paths will cross again, this time with good results), and a friend named Iris. Then, there is her smile. I still remember the smile of Tricia Bent (as well as her cute freckles, another thing that gets me in a woman). It just

radiated love and energy. Unfortunately, we never went anywhere, nor started anything, but it is always great just to be able to meet and talk with a beautiful Black woman, no matter the outcome — as long as it isn't harmful, toxic, or fatal -- some of you know what I am talking about.

Above that, a woman's voice can melt me in my tracks. Some women just have that nice, sultry, deep, throaty voice that kind of starts in their lungs and just oozes up through their windpipes into the air like the sweet smells wafting out of a bakery. Karen has a voice like that. And Etta, hell, when she sings and looks at me, I am about as bashful as a schoolboy who has a crush on his teacher. Sade has that killer voice, and Vesta as well.

However, the most sexy and attractive part of a woman, in my opinion, is her mind. Strong-willed intelligent women are my weakness. To me, good sex is damned near impossible if there just isn't something about a woman's mind that I treasure; it may be their caring nature or their fun loving side, but if I can not "get into" a woman's mind, going to bed with her has no point. To see her mind and her soul as well, you have to of course look into her eyes. Some women have that sparkle in their eyes no matter what type of light is present. Jada Pinkett-Smith has it, as well as Stacy Dash and Angela Basset.

Of course, having the mind without a heart of gold behind it does not add up to much. Too many women have suffered mental, emotional, and in some cases physical and sexual abuse at the hands of men. This in turn can make them discouraged, and discouragement breeds not only lack of esteem and initiative, it also makes a person's heart turn cold. This "coldness" converts into negative attitudes and behaviors. Sometimes, you can look at a woman and see the beauty that resides within her, but realize that it will take some major work for her to bring that out. Sometimes, you get to a certain age where what you look for most is in a person's heart, and everything else doesn't matter.

Take all these things that I have touched and put them in one woman, and I am truly the one who is at a loss. Most men can not understand the problem with this, but the fact is that if you truly love and respect women, you do not want to "step" to one whom you want to respect unless you intend to be in a committed, monogamous relationship with that person. And the fact is that there are a ton of beautiful women out there of all different shapes, sizes, tones and hues, especially sisters. Not every man likes the same thing, and sometimes you can see beauty all around you.

This book is dedicated to all the beautiful Black women that I have had the pleasure of spending time with, whether or not we left on good terms or not, or whether it was my push or their push to discontinue the relationship. Quintessentially, there was something there that attracted me to them in the first place, some picture of beauty that I saw within them that just grabbed, or shall I say moved, me to get to know them better.

Who knows, maybe in a couple of years, I'll meet that one that I've been looking for. Then again, I may turn around and realize that I already know her.

The Crush

As I was walking down the street the other day (and checking a fine woman out), I started to remember the crushes that I had in life and realized that I had to include this in the book. I think I started out having crushes when I was about four. I used to be in a preschool program called Get Set. In that program, I used to have a crush not just on one of the aids, but also two of the girls, one named Dawn, the other Marlo. I just realized that, for the earlier part of my elementary school life, I was only smitten with sisters who had light skin. Maybe this is an example of how bad television and the infamous Lynch Agenda has/had us as a people caught up in this skin complexion/wanting to be white type of mentality.

Anyway, the crush is a powerful thing and I really can't divine the purpose of it. I have had crushes on numerous women over time. Maybe its that love at first site phenomenon that is God given and tells you that this is a person that you need to spend some time with, whether in short or for the rest of your life. Maybe it is just that there is something about the other person that is so arresting, you know that the one that will ultimately make you happy, and that you want to spend the rest of your life with, will have that aspect within them as well.

In my case, sometimes the crush has brought me good times, sometimes it was like a little devil on my shoulder just getting me in to some more emotional pain (they do that you know).

Phase I: When I had No One/Searching

Most of these pieces were written while I was at Penn State University. It all started with "Thoughts of a Black Woman," which I had written for Nicole Honeywood -- a gorgeous ebony sister from Chicago (I wonder if she's not seeing anyone) -- for her to recite in the Miss Black Penn State contest run by my buddies, the Nu Chapter of Omega Psi Phi.

I had met Nicole initially through a friend named Jamil, who would later be my roommate for the spring semester of 1990. He took me to a meeting of Nommo, which was the Black student performing arts company. Nicole was part of Nommo Voice, which did dramatic recitations, so I had seen her in action before.

Anyway, I hadn't seen Nicole for some time around campus, and we finally ran into each other in the Black Caucus office, the unofficial Black student hangout when I was up there. We started to keep in touch, but I don't think that she knew that I was really interested in her (then again, maybe she did, but I was more or less still very shy when it came to initiating "things" with women at that time in my life). Then came the Miss Black Penn State. I think that during the second week, Nicole hated her piece that she was going to do during the talent phase, and I mentioned that I would be able to write her up something that she could read.

Thus the start of my writing poetry had begun again (I had initially started writing during first grade, but had just stopped soon after). Everything that I wrote after that, and before I came back to Philly in 1992 (as well as some pieces soon after that time), revolved around not only what I wanted in a woman, but also the beauty that I saw in different women.

All of the following pieces in this section were written before 1993. You'll note in them that there are a lot of references to things in various African cultures, as well as articles from the African American experience. In many cases, I reference powerful Black women from times of antiquity through the civil rights struggle. Most of them will be easy to understand if you know your history. Otherwise, this may get you to read more about our cultures, here, in the islands, and in the motherland.

Enjoy.

Thoughts of a Black Woman

Sweet,
 succulent as the first dew drops off of an African violet during the rainy season.

Fiery,
 and feisty as a dab of cinnamon as it set upon your palate, quenching your hunger, desire and thirst.

Tangy,
 as tantalizing as an infinite labyrinth carved of the souls of our ancestors.

The Black Woman.
 From the south in the homeland of the Bantu,
 to those living in the metropolitan areas of America.
 From those beautiful blue-black skinned goddesses roaming the desertsides in Bedouin fashions,
 to the saints in the Caribbean & Latin America pounding out Calypso beats.
 Starting with Queen Mother rage, Isis, the goddess of fertility,
 through the lineage of queens of BlackKind like Nefertari, Cleopatra, Makeda and Nzinga,
 along the lines of great rulers deemed Candace,
 to great warriors reminiscent of the amazons like Parks, Sanchez, Davis and Chesimard¹.

Coming to fruition with my mothers and my sisters,
 the present day queens of the physical plane.

The producers of the Black race as well as all mankind,
 giver of life to ancient kingdoms and civilizations such as Timeria, Cush, Kemet and Nubia,
 progenitors of kings such as Solomon, David, Chaka, Menelik II and Mansa Mussa,
 mother of Heru, Moses, King and Shabazz.

Respect me not because I am your mother, sister, companion and friend,
 Respect me not because I have carried your seed and breathed life unto you,
 Respect me not because I am the other half of life quintessential,
 Respect me for me, and all that I encompass,
 my essence is unsurpassed by anything living or dead.
 Only I can make you whole,
 the moon to your sun.
 When you look into the deepest cavities of your heart and the confines of your soul,

¹ Joanne Chesimard, alias Assata Shakur, head of the Black Liberation Army

I am the answer and treasure which you seek.
Black Man, you seek everything and everything is me.
Respect me,
Protect me,
Treasure me,
Honor me:
The Black Woman.

Laying it out on the Table

(originally penned as *Here We Go Again*)

Keep on walkin' sistah,
I've already had my fair share of heartaches and letdowns,
I'm tired of meeting someone, opening up and seeing them leave when
I am too much for them.
Keep on walkin' sistah,
I don't need your short term affection and care,
some fool once wrote that it is better to have loved and lost than to
have never loved at all.
Well, who wants pain,
I'd rather be shot once than over and over again.
Keep on walkin',
I do not need to view the hurt in your eyes when I move on,
nor in my own when I look into the mirror.
Sis,
you have a choice, either accept me for who I am or leave me be,
but I warn you,
don't let something consume you which you are not yet ready to master.

Moon (2nd version)

Darkness,
cloaking all,
consuming all.
Man rests, as well as the beasts of the jungle,
Yet there is light,
is power,
is form.
She,
her luminescence enchants me,
charms me,
entices me.
Casts a spell on my manhood,

beckoning me to approach.
 But the call emanates from within myself,
 as if activated out of divine ritual;
 She holds the cipher to the enigma.
 Great Khonshu and Thoth² pale to her in comparison,
 Her scepter she carries not,
 needs not;
 she rules me with her celestial presence and form.
 She has shown me that which can make the ankh whole,
 but only once a month does she fully bestow her presence upon me,
 shows me,
 allows me to see her whole self.
 I am tempted by her interludes of waxing and waning,
 coming and going,
 until she is there but is not,
 disappearing from the sight of mine eyes but not invisible either.
 Is it that I neglect to see her until I rest my aggressiveness?
 I am forced to wait,
 to endure that passage of a cycle once more.
 Maybe I can catch up with her the next time around,
 and never eclipse her again.

Rain

She has come from up above,
 The Creator has answered my most solemn prayers.
 Earthbound, He has released her soul, mind and body from His grasp.
 She cascades from the firmament with speed as quick as the fleeting cheetah,
 but quiet as if born on the wings of angels.
 She encircles me,
 drenches me,
 devours me,
 soothes and caresses me.
 Her touch chills me to the bone,
 as she warms me with the dew of heaven.
 She soaks me in her essence,
 tickling my spine.
 She is as fiery as the rays of the sun,
 yet cool as the night sky moon.
 Sometimes she visits me in torrents,

² Khonshu was the Egyptian deity that was represented by the moon, Thoth represented wisdom

as if her mind was filled with the rage of a typhoon,
While other times she briefly kisses me,
as if only a passing cloud.
As she slowly fades away, returning back to Him,
I remember every moment, turning every second into an hour
and every minute into a day,
recollecting her love, attitude, fury and grace.
She never stays with me,
she is just a passing fancy,
and I, a passerby.

Delicacy

If you were mine Black goddess,
I'd treat you as if you were the delicacies of life itself.
If you were mine,
I'd savor you like a chocolate tootsie roll pop;
Patiently licking through each coating of layered essence,
As if each pass did not taste as if it were filled with the salt of your sweat,
but a thick sauce made of allspice and marmalade from a Caribbean isle.
Until I uncovered your condensed soul at the very center of this holy
creation;
A perfectly sculpted sphere the color of ebony,
but with a plethora of tastes and experiences ranging from the most gentle
drop of anise,
and the sweet touch of sugarcane,
to the spiciness of a mother's pinch of cinnamon, and the consuming power
of clove.
A confectionery work of art,
with skin as toned as the bark of mahogany,
but with the silkiness and fit of the pelt of the black leopard,
and a center molded of the power of the universe,
much like a black pearl found in the great clam off the coast of
Madagascar.
If you were mine,
I'd consume you as if you were a bowl of tropical fruit,
the very gifts of life set forth on this planet by the Creator Himself.
From peeling off and devouring the layers of your soul and heart like the
flesh of the mango,
To opening your mind as if it were surrounded by the shell of a coconut,
and then drowning myself in the omnipotent juices of your being.
Following this divine ritual of cleansing myself of the sins of man,
I would spread your seeds to the farthest reaches of the Earth,

So that new civilizations of African women and men would spring forth,
 carrying on the reigns of Nikaulah, Hatshepsut and Cleopatra.

New founders of empires reminiscent of Cush, Timeria and Timbuktu, the
 Zulu Nation and the Songhai Empire;

Nourished only by your quintessence and the power of God.

Black Goddess if you were mine

I'd build a throne for you,

with support of ivory from the tusks of the rhino, elephant and walrus,

and covered with the skins of leopards of the jungles and lions of the
 Serengeti plains,

encrusted with pearls and shells from the Ivory Coast,

and diamonds and sapphires from Namibia and Ghana.

Then I'd worship you throughout the physical, astral and mental planes of
 existence:

On this earth I'd follow you to the depths of hell to get closer to heaven,
 which you embody in heart, soul and mind.

I'd join you in the great sun disc of Ra,

that I may bask in your ambient radiance and ethereal glow to absorb the
 rays of holiness that emanate from your

essential being.

I would become Osiris so that I may quell your anger at the sins and
 wickedness of mankind, o Isis, Queen Mother Rage.

Black Goddess you are the only one that can set the evils of this world
 asunder,

And it is you that I seek.

Essence of all that exists and the reflection of the beauty that encompasses all.

Black Goddess you are the delicacy which can quench my hunger, thirst and
 desire.

If you were mine Black Goddess,

All that you ask would be granted,

And the earth would become a heaven so magnificent that all men
 would wage a thousand wars to wrest me from your side.

Untitled

Entranced am I,

as I walk and roam along the planes of physical existence,

askew in desire,

perpendicular to lust,

and parallel to love.

Captivated by those which nurtured me upon the birth and rebirth,

my return to the land of the lost and mortal,

my journey earthbound from the great sun disc of Amen Ra,

through the immaculate birth canal of a Black Queen I call mother.
I seek to reclaim the ability to nourish from,
to be nursed from,
to once again suckle from the true fountains of youth.
Swinging,
swaying,
pendulous in nature as well as in dance...
Reminiscent of the gourds from which the sekere are made,
and melons which are the fruits set upon us by the Creator Himself.
I wish not to pick just one pair,
but to harvest an acre.
However,
I'll have to choose one flower,
one orchid,
and truly savor its petals.

Indulge in Woman

First there is the hunt for treasure,
for an onyx
for salvation through the ankh's other half:
the Black woman
The Black Woman;
mother of all civilizations,
quintessential link to earth, moon and sky,
infinite you.
Without Her there is no harmony,
no peace,
no existence
All is meaningless without Her presence
her body
her soul
and her spirit
The hunt,
the searchings and stalkings
the quest.
I spot her across a crowded room
in a subway car
on a city street
Her look captivates me,
her eyes hold me,
I am lost in the black pools of Her iris
I pounce,

make my presence known to her,
unveil my emotional camouflage.

Phase II: The Breakup

This book is an important book in my eyes because what it represents my emotions concerning love that I did not want to let go. Most Black men, or should I say most men in general, are not the type to open up themselves emotionally to a woman in a very short time span. However, I for one am the exact opposite of that unwritten rule. When I meet someone that I am attracted to on a more than platonic level, I feel the need to be blunt on the topics of myself and what I expect from the other person, as well as how far I think the actual relationship will go and last. However, sometimes the other person can change your, or my, “rules of engagement.”

As most people would say, there are only so many “good ones” that are out there, and when you find one, hold on tight and don’t let go. Well, twice in my life I thought I found that one. The first time I believe I was more in love with the idea of being in love with a person that cared dearly for me than actually having true love for the person—her name just happened to be Nicole. At the end of the first time, I think I really found that I could love that person the way they loved me and had a very hard time trying to let go. They usually say that men are unemotional, but I would stand to say that this is far from the actual truth. I myself had a long period (14 months to be exact) in which I couldn’t do my normal routine (eat, sleep, concentrate) due to the fact that I realized I had really lost someone special. The worst part was that I had actually lost my appetite, if not my ability to have good [if lasting] sex for a long period of time. I guess when your heart is truly hurting, your body just can’t go through the motions like nothing ever happened. That is, of course, if you truly care.

During the second time, I believed I had a “good woman” and was determined to work through all problems and make it work. No matter what anyone else may say, I still believe that person is a “good woman” and wish the best for her in her travels. You never know—if God intends for it to ultimately happen, it will. Our breakup hurt me big time. I remember she had called me at work and told me that she didn’t think that we should see each other anymore. Well, I remember leaving the job and walking to catch the bus. Two white cops happened to ask me if I was alright (I thought that their intentions were of racial harassment, but I guess I could have been looking like someone hell bent on assault), but

when they saw the look in my eyes, they made haste to get the hell away from me.

I think that I was hurting for several months following our breakup, constantly writing her poems and calling her to say, “Baby, we can work whatever problems there are out.” Ultimately, we never got back together, and I went on to fall in love with someone else at first sight (see Phase Three). The funny thing is that I ran into her late last year—she moved back to the area with her husband and newborn son. When I saw her, I knew it was her, but just went on like it didn’t register—which it truly didn’t. Only as I saw her Texas tags when she passed me did I even connect that it was her and decided to stop her and have a brief chat.

This section is a collection of the poems that I wrote after I got the news that we weren’t compatible, and it just wasn’t going to work. I myself look at the horoscope everyday and even delve into the Chinese Zodiac. Even though the western zodiac said a great deal about compatibility (Leo and Gemini), the old and wise Asian version (Iron Dog and Fire Sheep) said that we could “only tolerate each other at best and that in the final analysis, we may both find out that we have too little in common to bear the strain of our very different personalities.”

Under the Chinese zodiac, I represent the Iron Dog, and one of the main characteristics of the noble dog is his loyalty, which can also be his downfall. A dog will stick out a situation to the utmost, and if he does leave, you know that the arrangement was very bad. Couple this trait with being an incurable romantic, and there will be problems on this side, my side. However, this time it only took me seven weeks to get over it.

It was kind of comical that I came to the realization to move on with my life just as she was telling me to. Hopefully this book will explain to Black women that Black men do have hearts of gold as well as strong feelings of emotional attachment.

(Note: the best way to understand this section is to get a book on Egyptian mythology, since many lines reference parts of this area.)

Blue Blackness

(Thor's Day October 21, 1993)

They say beware the Ides of March,

but for me it was the sixteenth of October.

My significant other said she doesn't want to see me any more,

that we're not compatible after four months,

minus two days.

I, Osiris am devastated

my Isis has shattered me back six fold³.

I must pick up the pieces myself,

one by one,

and day by day.

A spirit of,

the spirit of,

quintessential blue blackness envelops me,

courses through my systems,

my meridians⁴ pulsing melancholy.

Great Anubis⁵,

take my hand and leads me to the void.

Six days in transit,

I resist.

The sixteenth,

not a sweet day at all.

I make my way from the city's heart,

and as I await my chariot,

am confronted by the minions of Set.

They peer into mine eyes,

into mine soul,

and see fury fueled from blue blackness;

torches of sorrow and pain.

They desist,

and flee,

for now is not the day to confront one half.

As I return to my pyramid,

I call upon the gods & goddesses of my court,

³ In Egyptian mythology, Osiris was defeated and divided into 36 parts by Seth

⁴ In acupuncture and acupressure, the body has a number of meridians, or energy pathways

⁵ The Egyptian god of the dead

for analysis and advice.
How could my Isis sever our bond,
destroy our union?
I search for the sun disc of Ra,
to become part of Ra.
I offer libation,
and pray for resurrection.
Where is the ankh⁶,
my ankh?
She,
Isis,
calls across the sea of dread and communicates with me.
But I am not comforted,
only saddened,
is she truly reasoning from her own heart?
Set's minions abound,
vultures enticing,
trying to scavenge from an undead carcass.
I resist,
they cannot keep me from my queen.
I do not eat,
do not sleep,
do not focus.
Is it that I do not,
can not,
or choose not?
I seek solace in water,
the music of synthesized pulses and heartbeat,
my djimbe smears with blood⁷.
I call for her,
beckon her,
trying to understand why.
I thought she cared,
am I wrong?
Of course our relationship had its crests and peaks,
and as it seemed we were just climaxing,
I received a daenuma.

⁶ A special cross carried by certain Egyptian deities which allowed the holder to perform resurrections

⁷ I was actually so distraught that when I went to play for a dance class, I split my finger open while drumming

I wrote on my papyrus,
and attached a message sheet.
I seek comfort,
understanding,
and above all the return of my queen.
We agree to meet,
and talk,
queen to king.
And yet she avoids the confrontation,
but wants to talk through Apep's ways.
Only by my meeting with Hathor,
and libation with the nectar that saved Nut's creation,
can I begin to comprehend what I put my queen through,
and thus myself.
But is that just it?
In our negotiations,
I pledge not to give up my quest,
to place Her upon,
back upon my throne for Her.
If she cares,
why does she treat me this way.
I pray to the Creator,
day in and out,
to lead me to heaven,
to find me my queen,
and that my Isis is indeed Her.
I contact once more,
against what She requested.
Did I poison my chance,
or show my fortitude?
I can't give up,
won't give up,
I love Her too much.
In blue blackness,
I drift through analysis,
and calculations.
Concluding she divided me for a purpose,
I am in thirty-six parts,
and have been given thirty six days to reunite,
to get myself together.
My empire suffered,
and I realize the only way to reclaim her,
is to reclaim and expand my kingdom.

I will rejoin the red and the white,
upper and lower dynasties.
I become Heru,
my son,
and use the hawk's power to reforge my form.
Everyday,
piece by piece,
I reclaim myself and my kingdom.
And I pray to the Creator,
constantly and fervently
That when I am almost complete,
that she will unlock my power,
by adding the missing cipher
Her.
Several months of separation,
is worth an eternity of togetherness.

Untitled on October 22, 1993 at 1:33 am

I miss my queen,
her essence capturing me,
captivating me,
charming me,
calming me,
making me whole once more.
I long for her smells,
the odors of corporeal ambrosia.
I wait for her divine touch,
feeling my tender spots,
making me shiver and quiver with ecstasy.
I wish for her,
wish to have her
licking and kissing her all over,
satiating her mind, body and soul.
Thirty one days left,
I have already reclaimed five parts of myself.
"Just call my name," sings Alyson Williams,
as I sing it to Her saying I'll be there for Her
sweet Afrikan goddess.
You are all that I need,
and all that I want,
I await to please you.
Till we meet again;

I recuperate,
and repent.

Untitled on October 23, 1993 at 11:50 am

So Lord here I am,
and I'm wondering why.
I thought I knew,
but maybe now I realize that I truly don't,
just hopeful guesswork.
Was this move to set my dreams in motion,
and work my life out of the gutter?
Or are we destined to be relegated to just friends,
after spending four months as lovers?
Do I want her back?
I really don't quite know right about now.
Maybe I'm at a point of rejection,
and acceptance
simultaneously.
Why must love hurt?
For I am in pain.
Why must love be blinding?
For I cannot see the bricks of the paths that lie ahead.
Is she not deep enough for me,
or truly a gem to be placed in my heart?
Can it be love the second time around,
would it be,
could it be,
should it be,
will it be?
I await the ending of isolation,
waiting for her call,
or my new beginning.

Not Knowing

(October 24, 1993 at 10:21)

Its Sunday night as I sit here,
wondering.
Wondering what is going through her mind,
what is coursing through her veins,
and wondering what is flowing through her heart.
Why must there be devil's advocates,

tainting my thoughts with a dreadful option,
another man?
My friend,
her cousin,
just experienced it.
His woman wants to see another man,
is it due to his lack of true commitment?
Thoughts of another man,
shattering my confidence in her,
questioning her commitment to our relationship,
as well as my presence and power in it.
Infuriating me,
filling my mind with thoughts of anger against her,
and him (if he truly even exists).
If it were true,
what would I do?
Call her a bitch,
and permanently injure him,
or walk away peacefully onto greener pastures?
How much does she love and respect me,
or does she fear my darker side?
Will there be an 'us' again,
or does she truly need time and space?
In love there are questions and questionings
am I assured in myself,
or thinking irrationally?
Not knowing:
if she cares as a friend,
as a lover,
or both;
if it is true we were going too fast,
and needed to slow down,
even separate so that we could reform a better union;
if she was lying to me for my own good,
or just for my benefit;
if she was telling the truth,
but didn't have the guts to say it face to face;
if she needs time and space to find herself,
or build a future with someone else.
No matter what I'll find out in due time,
and pray that God will lead my life to victory.
Its hard when you're young,
and have to listen to the opinions of others.

I'm truly worried,
is it all for naught and fears unfounded,
or has my heart been betrayed,
and me left in ignorance,
oblivious and ignorant of secret rendezvous.
Is this a test the Creator has presented me,
or a realization of my truest feelings for Her?
I don't know how to feel,
trading Gemini for Gemini,
and daughter for mother,
twin for twin⁸.
But she does not seem like she would last,
while I can see a full life of happiness with Her,
or am I having lovesick and love struck delusions of grandeur.
I pray,
and think,
and strategize to reclaim my true queen.

Untitled on October 22, 1993

"Today was a good day"
words to a song I don't know if I can sing.
I firstly battled with my own emotions,
my emotions to contact Her,
causing me physical trauma.
Isolated in influenza⁹,
I imbibe;
drinking pharmaceutical seltzer to heal me.
Inside I am at war,
while upstairs all is calm.
As Ra leaves and Khonshu approaches,
midday comes and I forget about Her
have no longing or desire for Her
do not even miss Her.

⁸ At this time I tried to understand her rationale, and figure or not whether her twin or her mother was influencing her; she was a twin born under the sign of Gemini and her, her sister and her mother are all Deltas

⁹ One of the weirdest things about me is that I can get sick easily when under extreme emotional (romantic) stress.

Blue Blackness: the return

Oh that feeling descends upon me again,
and in some way I welcome it.
What a bizarre and macabre mélange of emotions
a melancholy mixture of cool and cold,
stasis and death,
rest and resolve.
In blue there is comfort,
in black an end.
Cool blue breezes,
soothing songs swaying surreptitiously in my space,
tantalizing tangos of the heart,
filling me fully in my enigmatic emotional state.
Completing the cipher,
but giving me no solution.
Great halcyon sphinx,
laughing at Black Theseus reborn.
An age old riddle,
solved but unsolved.
Yet my answer goes unspoken.
In case of not knowing,
I seal my lips,
and open my mind.
I sought out great Ra the sun disc,
by way of the drum,
but libation went unattended.
While Black beckons me,
calling me to give up and move on,
release my emotional investments;
or tempting me with direct passage to the netherworld.
Anubis on my left,
and Charon on my right,
while Charybdis is at my back.
Each with their ethereal conveyances,
but I stand fast,
or do I?
oscillating and vacillating in my convictions.
I sympathize,
for the other brothers like me caught up in a whirlwind of emotions because
they don't know what's going on with their woman.

Delusions and Questions

(October 20, 1993)

Last night I called upon my 'family,'
I called upon my brother the minister
from him I received camaraderie and comprehension
I called upon my sisters
who shared with me warmth and advice.
I was going to meet her today,
but she forgot to bring what I needed.
Did she intentionally forget,
or subliminally remember to leave it?
Love is a many splendored thing,
and it can also drive a man insane.
Especially when he doesn't exactly know what's affecting his lady.
No matter how much we know about the world,
we'll never quite know enough about our mates.
In Her silence,
are my interrogatives:
is she pregnant;
is she in thoughts about her life my life our lives and future;
is there someone else she wants to see.
I pray for the best,
and am reminded that when one asks for space and time,
they risk losing the one they are with.

A Few Words In Passing In the Breeze Devoted to A Lost***Love, or a Love Lost***

They say that time heals all wounds;
in some ways I can see the truth in this
for time has passed and pain has been anesthetized.
I remember when we met,
beholding a vision of beauty
with eyes sparkling as if black pearls reflecting glints of God's power
moon descending upon my heart
eclipsing a hard shell.
I was entranced,
but yet did not reveal this
did not allude to my divine notions
and true emotions.
Throughout this first encounter,

neither acknowledged anything but candor
and nonchalance.

Yet the chase,
the pursuit,
the stalking began through my proxy,
your proxy,
our link to one another.

Conversation, content and context grew
nurtured despite time and space,
age and distance.

I reminisce over our initial times together,
movies in romantic theatres,
dinners in my favorite spots,
the revelations of familial sides and sidings,
yet you disliked none of it,
saw love existing simultaneously with disarray.

Over time we had our ups and downs,
crescendos and cascades in a relationship shifting both interests and desires,
emotions and wishes.

We shared each other's feelings
unveiling conflicts in our souls and within our societies,
both of us set adrift in seas of absence and presence.

Communicating through our preferences in mediums:
you in print,
I in wire, audio and film.

How I wish it didn't end when it was truly just beginning,
wanting only the best for you and judging this through my own experiences
and philosophies
but unfortunately alienating and turning you away.

Now I fully know how you felt,
for I have recently felt the same way also.

In love there is blindness
and ignorance for love must be forgiven
and anger forgotten.

If maddened at my recollections of our past
forgive me for I am sorry
memories are viewed through emotional lenses
and histories can become tinted
colored with anguish.

Sometimes as I see you in passing
I seek to pull you aside and chat over tea at a sidewalk cafe
or in front of a fireplace on a cold night

all love and desire is gone as if it never existed just the urge for banter remains.

At times a small rage builds

a tidal wave of feelings from one-sided rants and misunderstandings

but inner peace brings a tranquility over my heart and mind from battles past and eternal war.

I often wonder if we can ever be good acquaintances,

let alone good friends,

but am not willing to approach for fear of immaturity and anger on your part,

wondering if you feel the same as I.

Sometimes lightning strikes the same spot twice,

otherwise you just get jolted and then drenched.

No matter,

all is forgiven

and I wish the best for you in your travels across a dove filled heaven

as I return to my sun disc atop the Ibis under the protection of Bast and her legions.

Untitled sometime in 1993

Alas, I came to the end of the tunnel

and then there was no light

a dead end

the candlelight of the torch long since burned out

In my dying days I reach out,

tried to put anger and tension asunder

We had known each other to be enemies,

why not just be friends?

I never asked for an intimate friendship,

just the chance to feel no malice or contempt.

I passed my thoughts to her indirectly

I owed her at least that

Maybe she threw them into the pyre

my soul quenched in flames

I have now closed that chapter,

emerging from the darkness

Man seeks to correct his mistakes before he leaves

but sometimes actions are one with futility

In solace I seek Jane and Joi,

surrounding myself in music;

ambience and sanctuary
They say a warrior and his spirits never die,
 they just return to God and wait for rebirth
I await the transitions of life to death
 and death to life
 to there and back again

Phase III: The [Potential] Future

This section of the book was written during a very interesting time. On November 13, 1993, I met a wonderful woman named Karen. Needless to say, on my side that it was love at first sight. Over time, we got to be friends and then finally lovers. This was the woman that I could see spending the rest of my life with (at that time in my life, meaning then, not now). During 1995, when we finally made the transition to a more intimate relationship, we had a few bad experiences, as all relationships do. At this time, I was much like the character of Mars Blackmon in “She’s Gotta Have It” saying, “Please, baby baby, please,” as far as not giving up on me, and the relationship that we had.

Though I believe that we had a nice Christmas, on New Year’s things changed. I attended a watch-night service with her at her church, which is something that I have never done (I didn’t like the service either, or should I say the first thirty minutes of it—not enough soul). Though we were supposed to spend the rest of the night together, she merely dropped me off at my house. She revealed to me later on her course of action—she wanted to work wholeheartedly on her business for the next six months. After this time, we would (as I assumed) renew the relationship.

Well, over the next six months, I let her know in letter, poems, and phone calls that I was there for her through thick and through thin. However, never over these next six months did I see her even once. All my female friends gave me respect for being a man that cared so much for a sister and was willing to show it and stick in there; they also kept telling me to move on because she wasn’t even worth it. One of my best buddies, Barbara, said that if at the end of those six months things didn’t turn around, forget about her.

This section contains most, if not all, of the poems that I sent her over that six-month period.

Its not easy

Its not easy being a young black man in love,
 especially when you're learning as you go along.

Its not easy being a young black man in love,
 because while you're pursuing your queen,
 the system is pursuing your downfall.

Its not easy being a young black man in love,
 especially when the one you love is a woman,
 and unfortunately you were dealing with girls before her.

Its not easy being a young black man in love,
 because we are not taught to express our feelings as we should,
 and they reside behind an emotional armor.

Its not easy being a young black man in love,
 because you're never working with a woman who hasn't been
 through the ringer at least once before,
 and we all bear terrible scars from past affairs.

Its not easy being a young black man in love,
 because you're up against the world trying to do the right things,
 and it seems you can only succeed through doing wrong.

Its not easy being a young black man in love,
 because you don't know when and if you should cry,
 and you don't know when you should stand firm and be
 unmoved.

Its not easy being a young black man in love,
 but if you are the light at the end of the tunnel,
 I will gladly go through the chase.

Delicacy (Karen's version)

If you were mine Black goddess,
 And this is exactly how I see you
 I'd treat you as if you were the delicacies of life itself.

If you were mine,
 because I know truly that I want you as my other half
 I'd savor you like a chocolate tootsie roll pop;
 Patiently licking through each coating of layered essence,
 As if each pass did not taste as if it were filled with the salt of your sweat,
 but a thick sauce made of allspice and marmalade from a Caribbean isle.
 which sends shivers through my soul

Until I uncovered your condensed soul at the very center of this holy creation;

A perfectly sculpted sphere the color of ebony,
but with a plethora of tastes and experiences ranging from the most
gentle drop of anise, and the sweet touch of sugarcane,
to the spiciness of a mother's pinch of cinnamon, and the consuming
power of clove.

A confectionery work of art,
with skin as toned as the bark of mahogany,
but with the silkiness and fit of the pelt of the black leopard,
and a center molded of the power of the universe,
much like a black pearl found in the great clam off the coast of
Madagascar.

If you were mine,
I'd consume you as if you were a bowl of tropical fruit,
the very gifts of life set forth on this planet by the Creator himself.
From peeling off and devouring the layers of your soul and heart like
the flesh of the mango,
To opening your mind as if it were surrounded by the shell of a coconut,
and then drowning myself in the omnipotent juices of your being.
Following this divine ritual of cleansing myself of the sins of man,
I would spread your seeds to the farthest reaches of the Earth,
So that new civilizations of Afrikan women and men would spring
forth, carrying on the reigns of Nikaulah, Hatshepsut and Cleopatra.
New founders of empires reminiscent of Cush, Timeria and Timbuktu,
the Zulu Nation and the Songhai Empire;
Nourished only by your quintessence and the power of God.

Black Goddess if you were mine,
I'd build a throne for you,
anytime and anyplace
with support of ivory from the tusks of the rhino, elephant and walrus,
and covered with the skins of leopards of the jungles and lions of the
Serengeti plains,
encrusted with pearls and shells from the Ivory Coast,
and diamonds and sapphires from Namibia and Ghana.

Then I'd worship you throughout the physical, astral & mental planes of
existence:

On this earth I'd follow you to the depths of hell to get closer to heaven,
which you embody in heart, soul and mind.
I'd join you in the great sun disc of Ra,

that I may bask in your ambient radiance and ethereal glow to absorb
 the rays of holiness that emanate from your essential being.
 I would become Osiris so that I may quell your anger at the sins and
 wickedness of mankind, o Isis, Queen Mother Rage.

Black Goddess you are the only one that can set the evils of this world
 asunder,

And it is you that I seek.

Essence of all that exists and the reflection of the beauty that encompasses all.
 Black Goddess you are the delicacy which can quench my hunger, thirst and
 desire.

If you were mine Black Goddess,

All that you ask would be granted,

And the earth would become a heaven so magnificent that all men
 would wage a thousand wars to wrest me from your side.

Moon (for you version)

Darkness,

cloaking all,

consuming all.

As you step into my room

Man rests, as well as the beasts of the jungle.

The lion bows to the lamb

Yet there is light,

is power,

is form.

In your stride as well as the movement of your eyes

She,

her luminescence enchants me,

charms me,

entices me.

I am in your control

Casts a spell on my manhood,

beckoning me to approach.

But the call emanates from within myself,

as if activated out of divine ritual;

She holds the cipher to the enigma.

I can't resist your magnetism

Great Khonshu and Thoth pale to her in comparison,

Her scepter she carries not,

needs not;

she rules me with her celestial presence and form.
I am at your whim and mercy
She has shown me that which can make the ankh whole,
but only once a month does she fully bestow her presence upon me,
shows me,
allows me to see her whole self.
I want to see you more
I am tempted by her interludes of waxing and waning,
coming and going,
until she is there but is not,
disappearing from the sight of mine eyes but not invisible either.
Is it that I neglect to see her until I rest my aggressiveness?
am I fighting too hard?
I am forced to wait,
to endure that passage of a cycle once more.
Maybe I can catch up with her the next time around,
and never eclipse her again.

Untitled

When I look at you I smile inside
for I am looking at what I want for Christmas
I see a beauty that can't be touched by the evil of this world
a woman who I will not let stumble and fall by the wayside
I see a beautiful wife
and a dynamic mother
I see someone who can look at others and garner their attention
as well as their respect
I see the woman I want to hold
and to fuss over
The woman who I never mind running a bath for
or buying flowers
A woman with a fierce independence
and a gentle sensitive side
I see the purpose I can believe in
and that can believe in me
As John Coltrane sang, a love supreme
I believe in you
and I'm not going to give up
because you are worth it
and are a treasure to behold in mind, body and soul.
I'd be a fool to not love you
and mama didn't raise no fools

When I look at you I look at the future of myself
 and I know that I must step forward
 Its been a long walk so far
 but I'm not tired
 its come a long way since November 13 of '93
 and I'm still happy
 Its been some time since we spent a night of Latin jazz
 but I'm not discouraged.
 Its been a long time since we took those first steps on your birthday
 and I'm still giddy.
 Its been a while since I've been with you
 and I still care.
 Its been a while since we laughed together
 but I think we'll laugh again
 Its been some time since HoJo's
 but my desire for you hasn't waned one bit.
 Its been a while since we made love,
 and my heart is aching for you.

Heatwave

It was a hot, humid and candlelit evening,
 not a dark and stormy night
 when we proceeded to love one another.

The smells of berries in the air,
 as well as carnal ambrosia
 Yours and mine.

Flames flickering from fans flowing

Tongues teasing
 pelvises poundings
 hips hemming and hawing

I gazed into your eyes,
 tasted into your soul,
 and plunged into your love.

Sweet smelling scintillations seducing souls sensationally

Pores perspiring
 dew dripping

fingers finding
eyes eyeing

Starting from the top with your lips
moving down below to your lips
hearing and tasting your release
an ebony cask aged Chardonnay
Once,
twice,
three times around;
until we are no longer desiring coitally
and finally sated.
Hips huddled,
arms intertwined
sighs of pleasure and comfort escape our mouths.

I kiss you and feel safety in your embrace,
can it be like this always.

A Jazz Medley

Bombastic breakbeats bouncing, beating back bohemian desires
synchronizing paces

Sultry saxophones seductively slivering soulbound
looking and feeling inside one another

Petulant piano prattlings parting past palpitating present primitive urges
heart rates ascending in unison

Agogos affecting astute aortic ambivalences
sexual coughs skipping beats

Violins and violas vivaciously vibrating vacillatory voltages in my nether
regions
shivers slide forth as sensitive spots are stimulated

Congas creating cacophonous carnal Caribbean collages conjoining undead
cadavers
polyrhythms played with only two participants

The greatest pain is the greatest pleasure
striving to satiate not to hurt

Sharing time and space with you is like an orgasmic orchestral opus,
feeling musical etudes rumbling through my chakras,
filling me fully with an intimate energy
I release knowing that my future is safe with you.

(Do You) Remember

Remember the first time:

Two people,
friends associates now becoming intimate.
Candlelight,
a roman bath, flower petals and incense.
Laying down and becoming one with each other,
satiating ourselves in our own desires
romantic, carnal, emotional and spiritual.
I remember finally getting to know you on a different level,
and becoming fully enraptured,
captivated by you wholly.

Remember the day of the picnic,
that holiday weekend:

Never before did I spend a special day with someone that I loved like that.
Eating Jamaican entree and shrimp cocktail,
(while I was thinking of making you my wife)
while being chased by fist sized mosquitoes
but loving every minute of it because I was with you.

And that night,

a Jacuzzi and evening of candlelight,
being with you,
becoming one with you,
loving you how I want it to always be.

Remember my birthday,

you surprising me with an oversized crustacean,
cracking claws under chairs,
and laughing and loving none the less.

A splendid bath,

a splendid massage,
a splendid bouquet of your ambrosia across my palate.

Then the morning after,

always the mornings after,

waking up next to your radiant beauty
and being with you but for another time
to hopefully be with you again in the near future.
The best part of memories,
is always the ability to constantly make more memorable moments,
and I seek to always do this with you my love.

Thursday, March 21, 1996 1:29 PM

A panther walks;
solitary in an asphalt jungle.
Not wanting to roar to give himself away,
and wanting to speak to assert himself.
The outside bespeaks power and grace,
while the inside is gentle and fragile.
Who will I trust not to hurt me,
to love me,
to support me,
and to make me theirs.

Our first meeting

Waiting for the meeting of the cats and other jungle denizens I spy her,
an ebony nymph walking proud and tall.
Power and form exuded in her exhalations and strides.
I am awestruck,
wanting to meet her,
but not truly believing in myself at this point in the cosmos.
She is not to be taken lightly,
for I can see that nothing less than a man should approach,
and don't see myself in her league.

In the trees the jaguar intercedes,
having me state my path in this world.
I am shy and seeking protection in silence,
she scares me because I am so enraptured by her.
But before she returns to her celestial abode I face her,
initiating contact and communication.
Intentions of helping her along and getting to know her better are my purpose.
We exchange cards,
pheromones to our destinies.
I am thankful to Ja.

The first stages

We communicate;
I purring silently while seeing how I can lend her assistance in her endeavors.
I, filled with joy, wait excitedly for her to call me from her territory,
anxiously praying and thanking the creator every time we get to converse.
Her voice chills me and fills me,
echoing somnambulant sensuality in mine ears and mind.
I remember her form,
the body of a lioness controlled by the mind of a queen.
Ravenlike hair flowing in the wisps of eddies that she produces in her walk.
and eyes of onyx.

As times advances,
I fall for her more and more.
Yet feeling too inferior to step up and state my case.
We become friends,
a relationship blossoming more and more as time goes by.

I mature some

I gain the nerve,
the heart,
to approach her and be with her, even if as a friend.
We enjoy Latin jazz,
and each other's company.
I had forgotten how beautiful she was.
She goes away,
but sends me flowers.
Do I truly understand what is written on the note,
or do I fear my own wishes.

The first transition

Taking time to sort myself out I look inside to see what I really want.
Time passes,
and we talk of intimacy.
We agree,
the perfect birthday I attempt for it to be.
Sharing her warmth,
her ambrosia,
her form with mine.

Melding with my dreams in a physical form,
today I am truly blessed.
I am hooked more than I know,
fallen head over heels in all directions.
“Let’s do it again, I don’t want this ride to stop.”

The second transition

Someone wants to come back into her life after a period of time she tells me,
but I know I truly want her,
to be with her,
to love her and reap her love in return.
I don’t see you as a fling,
but as a queen who I would like to build a throne for.
Please don’t give me up,
for I truly and dearly care and believe in you.
We keep going,
in time there are the ups and downs.
I’m not perfect,
but I know to change and grow to get the things I want in life as well,
as well as to share it with those that mean more than life to me.

Metamorphosis

We both are finding our way,
unfortunately for myself we don’t have the time to spend together like last
year.
She has touched my soul,
caressed my inner workings,
I am open fully to her and her alone,
devoting part of myself to her existence if not the whole.
I realize my faults through others,
and hope that we can make it together,
for this is the woman that I pray to God to have as my wife.
I can only dream,
and work to make my dreams come true.
I pray that this will be the one blessing that I need in my life,
the perfect wife in my eyes.

I remember the first time I laid eyes on you my love.
Sensual,
attractive,
graceful,
and exuding power as well as commanding respect you were.
Gorgeous woman who gave me a tingle as I looked at you;

from head to toe,
as well as inside and out.
I knew from that moment that I had happened upon something,
someone majestic.
Someone who could make me come alive,
and be reborn.
Someone who could show me the love I need,
and I've always longed for.
I remember each time I saw you prior to the awakening;
meeting you after a dance class;
enjoying a birthday dinner with you;
seeing you at the Kwanza expo;
enjoying jazz with you at Zanzibar Blue.
Each time you made me feel more alive than before,
getting to know you as a friend and then as a lover.
Please be patient with me,
for there is much that I have to learn.
Whether about life,
loving,
or loving you and myself.
But I know that I love you deeply,
and would choose in a heartbeat to live out my existence with you.
I can step back and see my frailties,
which have prevented us from moving to a higher level at this point in time,
which I would like to move onto in the near future.
But time is something that cannot be played with,
for either of us.
Your clock is ticking,
and so is mine.
You desire to breathe life into another,
and I choose to walk that road entwined with you.
For it is you that I want to please,
to build an empire with,
and to make the world a paradise for.
I never realized your height until you revealed it to me,
for in my eyes you are seven feet tall.
I don't see you as unattractive in any way,
for you are a pearl in my eyes and in my heart.
And I don't worry about what ifs,
because we can cross that bridge when we come to it;
as friends,
as lovers,
as a team.

Sensory Overload

Seeing,
hearing,
tasting,
smelling,
touching you what I feel I am missing right now in my life.
I see a Black Pearl underneath the muck in the clamshell,
radiant ebony beauty of mind, body and soul.
A goddess I desire maddeningly to make my queen,
placing you on a throne to rule with me for the rest of our earthly existence.
I see the muck covering up the treasure within
the damage done by men who cared nothing more than for themselves the
chance to sleep with you,
possess you,
control you,
and dog you.

I hear tales from friends and relatives of how highly you, and they, consider
me
“he’s got his head together,”
“he knows what he wants in life,”
“he’s never late,”
“he just needs an ego adjustment.”
I’m listening to Angela Winbush sing “Angel” and “Please Bring Your Love
Back,”
Joi Caldwell chanting “if you love me take me higher and higher,”
“Starship” by Norman Connors
and “You Send Me” by Roy Ayers.
The music seeks into the crevices of my heart and soul,
reminding me of days spent with you,
and the elation you bring to my life.
I hear what you have said to me and embrace it thoroughly
“you have given me what I’ve had to ask for of others that I never received,”
“be patient with me,”
“its not easy dealing with me.”

I remember the taste of your lips,
your soul shattering kisses.
The flavor of your skin,
the saltiness of your sweat,
the sensual sweetness of your love.

I don't know if my desire for this will ever be sated.

On a snowy day

On a snowy day I think of you endlessly,
wishing that you were here with me,
or with me elsewhere in front of a roaring fire drinking framboise.
On a snowy day I think of the past,
the present,
and the future.
On a snowy day I transform my room,
as I transform my mind and my life,
bringing these things to the next level,
evolving diligently to meet the needs of my dreams.
On a snowy day I walk outside observing the shapes of the snowdrifts,
I remember in my mind the gentle curves of your figure.
On a snowy day as the snow whips across my face,
I think of the transmogrifying effect you have on my soul.
On a snowy day as I am tasting the snow on my tongue,
thinking of tasting your most precious essence.
On a snowy day I listen to soothing sounds of jazz,
thinking of your sultry voice and calling to hear it once more.
On a snowy day I wish that I can meet your needs,
and steady myself to endure the work it will take to lift the scratches and
dents off your soul,
as I try to lift those off mine as well.
On a snowy day I look at 1996 and want to make this the year for us,
for bringing us together in many more ways,
and for allowing us to bear fruit in many ways.

The Love Letters

Sometimes life is so funny in that by trying to do some layout work on this book, I (re)discovered the actual letters that accompanied the letters in this section. Well, I at least rediscovered the typed ones. I thought that it would be interesting to add them, whether in full or partially.

What is most interesting about these is that they are the words of a man who believed fully in love and in a single woman, and had not felt jaded in his approach, nor his position in life in regards to both. I must admit that I was about 25 at this time and she was 34. Being older now, and normally only dealing with women who are close to 40, if not in their 40s,

I don't think that she was ready for this, or could even appreciate and understand it.

Though I had been through good times and bad with women before this, I never stopped believing in love, or the black woman, and I think that these letters truly express that. To those of you who have felt this way [and I think we all have at a certain time in our lives] this should bring back some good memories.

Here they are, enjoy.

12/22/95 12:37 AM

Dearest Karen,

Of course this year has had major ups and downs for me and I'm am not where I want to be: whether it's with you, at home, or in business. The only thing that I can do is keep my nose to the grindstone and pray that if I walk with the King I will be blessed. One of my presents to you this year is this book of poetry. I figured one of the most precious gifts that I can give is myself, and this is very much a part of me.

It may include some old pieces of my work, some reworked, some not, but I am placing them here because I think this way about you. I had more but there was a reset I needed to do and I didn't save my stuff before hand.

I love you very deeply and want to spend the rest of my life with you. I am pulling no punches and withholding no thoughts. Maybe I'll make a tape of my poetry for you since I can't pour it all out onto this machine. Or maybe you need to hear me in person. Either way, merry Christmas. Hopefully, this installment is only the first part of a much larger book that will consume the rest of our two lives.

I love you now, forever more, and always,

1/4/96

Dear Love,

I was thinking of writing a letter to you because I haven't lately and sometimes it's something that I just want to do.

I understand that my talking about certain things that happen to women bother you so I won't talk with you about it any more. I don't know if it's

that you, or someone close to you, experienced one of those types of incidents or were possibly in a position where something could've occurred. I don't know and would never know unless you divulged yourself of that information to me. Either way it would not make me look at you any differently. I just know that as a Black man in this society and the world it is up to me and men like me to confront and correct some of the ills that are in our families. These things really hit me because at every turn I made this year there was someone I either dealt with from the viewpoint of friend, liaison, or lover that at some point in time in their life had one or more incidents occur to them. I guess because of who I am on the sensitive level, when people see me on that level, they tend to share their problems with me, and because I am a man, it enrages me to know that these things happen in our homes and the frequency of which they happen. My only way to stop it is to offer to get involved in more mentoring programs for Black youth and possibly teach some self defense classes for women, but the latter is one that women really don't want to put the time nor the effort into.

Now that that part is finished, I can go on with my feelings. As I said before, I love you very much and hopefully this new year will allow us to grow closer and into a more fulfilling relationship. I know that there are obstacles we have to scale between ourselves as well as in our own paths. I really am grateful that you have let down your guard some more, it makes me feel very comfortable in talking to you as well as sharing with you. This is mostly because I respect your feedback and secondly to know that you feel or think (or both) that I am special to you. I really liked how you expressed the importance of friends because that has made me imbue that within myself with how I deal with people (just for the record I have long since given up intimate encounters with others). It will be great to do the drive out west with Barbie because over the past four years we have been like brother and sister and its weird because we never even thought that much about each other as people at college. I thought she was an airhead for dealing with Reggie's son, and people told her I was a crazy militant. I don't even remember how we became friends, but soon thereafter I was crying my heart out to her about the loss of the first woman in my life that I loved who happened to be a soror of hers from another chapter. Through it all we each turned to each other for guidance in affairs of the heart as well as basic happenings in life. Luckily, I have several people like that in life.

Its about 10:25am and I've just left a message on your voice mail hopefully dropping the topic of our earlier conversation. No I am not

filled with dread but I am filled with a sense of purpose. I am really focusing on what I want this year and willing to work as long and hard as I have to for fulfillment of those goals. It was good for my spirit when the supervisor from the executive headhunter firm called me back and conversed with me for an hour, half of that was through the weekly Wednesday training session they sponsor.

I also seek to get back into my creative self: music; art; and writing. Adimu is going to make me a balafon after he finishes the kalimbas so I'm going to have in essence a set of vibes. Now I'm only relegated to getting a car to get to my uncle's when I want to.

There are many other things I want to say but have to run out the door and want to get this off by noon. You don't have to acknowledge that you received this because there are times I just like to say things for myself and let the other person respond to what they want to and there are times when I want to say something for a minute and then go on as if the other person knows my thoughts and is going to spare me on conversing on several points, that's part of my emotional shyness. We can talk about this in any part if you want, I guess this is just part of whom I am. (I hope I have chosen correct words this time).

I love you deeply as always,

P.S. When are you going to get your bath and massage?

January 5, 1996

I'm writing this letter at 12:08am because there is a lot on my mind at the present time that I have to, in fact, must do something about. I just put on an old tape featuring Swing Out Sister so I'll have some music to keep me company. For the first time after seven full days of lifting and one day of performance I'm feeling mentally, emotionally and spiritually tired. I have a deadline to make tomorrow, or shall I say later on today, and two important meetings to go to.

So anyway, I ate twice today and had a good workout but right about now I have a nasty feeling in my stomach. All this week I have been thinking about you and the possibility of marriage. All this has been on the very serious level and I have explored what is right (walking with God) and doing it. The path is fulfilling but there are still other things that I have to attend to. So here I was laying in bed listening to WDAS hearing songs that hit my soul and made me want to cry. Not necessarily tears of pains but not all tears of joy either. And I'm envisioning myself sitting with

you, holding your hand, and letting you know that I want to walk in the light with you (and at that moment in the vision I cried). Yesterday, I envisioned myself proposing to you. You make think that I am jumping the gun and I definitely am, but you mean a lot to me. I realized last night, right now I mean, that I need someone who will help me to spiritually balance everything. As I was coming home on the bus I thought of “what was it that your ex brought to the partnership?” and the fact that you didn’t necessarily mind him being away.

I’m at great transitional states right now because there are things that I want for me and for you, for us. You’re about to turn 35, and I 36, and I know that to love and take care of you I have to succeed. Business is starting to turn around but I’m nervous anyway because I don’t want to lose you. This is not to say that you worry about money because I don’t think that you are that type of woman, but I do, and I want to treat you like the queen that I see you as. I see your smile in my mind and I am happy like you wouldn’t believe. Not seeing you is a little lonely but I try to remember the times that we had and that those times, if not better ones, can happen in the future. My thoughts are very jumbled because I have a lot on my mind right about now.

I think about how you would be if we were to get married and have a child. I dream of whisking you away to Mexico or Puerto Rico. I think of the future with you as my partner. I want more out of my life. Strengthwise, I’m back. I still have to work on my cardiovascular and calisthenics. Spiritually, I pray every day at least three major prayers and I’m trying to be more patient, accepting and peaceful. Time is my greatest enemy, because no matter what you say, I’m running a race of romance and love against your biological clock. Love is great, but if I am to be the one there is a lot more that I have to bring to the table than love and understanding.

I believe in fighting, and right now I’m fighting for where my soul will spend eternity and how I will live my life on this earth, hopefully in both you will be by my side.

There are no poems in this letter and I think that I better sign off before I really lose my scruples. Its almost a quarter to one and I probably will be getting back up at five or six to do some programming. Then, I may have breakfast with Frank followed by a class he’s teaching at the Convention Center, workout, and a meeting at 5pm.

So I'm thinking about this meal I ate this morning which I saved from the performance and thought of you cooking and that I said something that makes you not want to do it for me again. I'm sorry, please forgive me, somehow I miscommunicated my thoughts. I want you to take that and other mistakes that I have made and throw them in the trash. There is so much about how I didn't do the right thing/say the right thing that I am ashamed and made at myself. There is a lot that we can talk about and that I would like to talk about. No matter what my old opinions were you are the woman that I have decided in my mind I would like to marry and be the mother of my children as well as the queen of my house, that I think can lead me on a spiritually fulfilling life as well as give me what I don't have complementing me and tempering what I have too much of and for that I have the utmost respect for you and your opinions.

Life to me is music, motion and art and the spirit lives within them all. This is mostly what touches me. Additionally you are an opus, a masterpiece and a ballet combined and you touch me on every level.

I love you dearly,

So I just woke up from the phone while having an interesting dream of talking to my ex instructor. I was awakened by Frank's phone call to have breakfast and I still feel woozy. My body is aching from what I have put it through and its about time for me to say my morning prayers (I HAVE TO MAKE A TAPE OF THIS STUFF FOR BLACK MEN AND ONE FOR BLACK WOMEN).

Love

1/9/96

Hey gorgeous,

Today is Tuesday and I'm happy as hell. Great changes are happening in my life.

Anyway, I've also reviewed some things you said in the fact that I'm the one holding up things going further and finally understand that. It is something that I started realizing yesterday and finally finished understanding over talking to Frank and Rod.

Anyway, I feel good and as I said before am willing to stick it out with you (life that is) through thick and through thin.

I love you deeply,

P.S. As I said before, hopefully the book I gave you will never be finished and it will grow into volumes. However, I might just start giving you audiotapes, its easier for me to put my inner thoughts out that way.

1/15/96

My dear Karen Denise,

This year I want to do so much and let life blossom a little bit better for the both of us. I am in the mood of writing letters now because some things I feel that the telephone can't convey, or isn't the proper tool to use.

I love you deeply and really want to marry you in the future. You may, excuse me should be, highly hesitant about it and I can understand that very much. Aside from the financial aspect of it there are many things that we need to be able to come together on.

These past six months have been very interesting for me because they have allowed me to come into contact with a variety of people involved in many different things as well as ideologies. From one I received the doctrine of "as long as what you do you do with God, then that's all that matters." I highly am agreeable with this one. Another person has allowed me to see what is not necessarily comforting about dealing with me as they are like a mirror. I want so bad to talk to you in face, and take in the smells and tastes of you as well as just hold you. I understand that are a certain kind of person and that I may have in some regards inadvertently made you feel that you should not be that person around me. I'm sorry, I need a very loving woman in my life as you are.

Its hard because of where we are in life but I really want to be with you for the remainder of the time I'm going to spend on earth. My friends realize that I really care and above it all some who are like blood sisters to me are jealous because you have someone whose willing to go the distance with you and not give up and walk away.

The thought of a child is something that sometimes is very easy for me to deal with and others something I want. I was very serious before about this issue and feel that I would like to do this with you. Yes, we do have certain differences but that's no reason to throw out the whole tub with the bath water. The tempering of my soul can be achieved with the right amount of love as well as success. The latter that I am concentrating on. Also, I have to say there is a lot of pent up frustration because I have a slew of creative talents but I am limited in manifesting them. (I have not

forgotten about some tapes for your poems but we have to get together on this) Right now I know that my future lies within what I take out of my head and convert into projects that converts into capital. I would like to take you somewhere nice for your birthday this year, hopefully somewhere nice for Valentine's Day.

This is the year for me to finally mature in the ways that I have not already. I cannot continue to go between maturity and naiveté. I love you too much to allow myself to lose you over youthful stupidity. For me, I'm concentrating on being the one to succeed above all others and to be the best man for you. And this doesn't mean losing myself in the process. You mean a lot to me even if you can't see all of what I'm saying. I see you for the beauty that you are inside, not for what you necessarily are expressing and that's who and what I want to be with.

I am learning how to love you better and meet your needs better. If there is something that you need I want to be the one to be able to do it. This is not to be confused with putting anyone else down, but I'm merely trying to be the best that I can be and it's worth it for me firstly and anyone I love secondly, and the woman that I deeply love (whether you can really believe it or not) is you.

{Please don't look at the things that you can't do with me, for those don't matter to me, simply the things that we can do together as a team}

I love you with all my heart,

1/17/96 8:53pm

Dear Karen,

I am writing and sending this letter no matter if we talk tomorrow or even tonight. I love you more than anything in the world and am going to try my damndest to make you my wife (no I am not a nut case). Things and people take time and effort and in many cases when starting in relationships, people don't really work towards making it mutually fulfilling.

I love you and know that I should have presented myself in many times in a better light. Yes, I do have certain things that I am trying to get out of my system as far as pent up feelings about the world. Yes, I need you to love me and stand by me. Yes, I want very much to marry you and take care of you and raise a family. Yes, I am tired of arguing with the world. Yes, I am a child of God.

I need you and want to be with you, I only hope that you grant me the opportunity. I have labored too hard too have taken five steps forward and now take thirty back. You bring me joy and much more. I will not address our differences in this letter because in some ways they allow us to be stronger as a team, than be detractful and cause nothing but pain in the short and the long run. I don't want to see you in pain and can't bear to see you in pain and I'm in a sort of pain when I'm not with you.

I don't know how you feel because most of the time its like I'm talking with a brick wall and I'm sure in some ways you feel that you are going through the same thing with me. Work with me, not against me...let us make it. I love you through whatever bad breaks life gives you, and us. Right now I want to reach out and hold you and just cry because I have you in my life. Yes, I need someone to work with me because I cannot see everything myself, and yes, I do listen to you, it just takes time for it to completely sink in. I respect you greatly, I respect and adore you greatly.

Please don't walk away. I know I won't lose you as a friend, but I'm too scared and too into you to lose you as a lover. You asked me what I want, I want a future with you as my lover, my wife, the mother or my child(ren), my best friend, my confident, and my companion. I extend to you the covenant of salt over Christmas and I still live by that.

Trying to whisk you off your feet in the near future,

2/7/96

Good morning beautiful,

So anyway, I've been doing a lot of soul searching lately in trying to discover how I can be a better person as well as be a better friend and more to you. I treasure you dearly as a friend because you are very good to me in that manner, but I know that I treasure you more as a lover and hopefully more than that in the near future. I keep telling myself that I have to dissipate my fears of losing you because that was not the vision I received. However, even if God gives you a vision of something that doesn't mean that it will happen if you don't put your work into it.

I try to look at the causes of past relationships I was in failing and what I can do to change that from happening with us. I also try to look at and understand why relationships you had with other men didn't work out and am trying not to head in those same directions. In some ways I probably am like others that you dealt with and don't want to make the same

mistakes they made. Between us on the issue of relationships I believe that you are the more wise of the two of us. I've never loved someone like you before and don't want that to end. Some people believe in holding back and letting the other person come around (this may be partially correct), but I believe that you better work your tail off to get the women of your dreams and not allow for anything else or anyone else to come between that happening. I don't know how exactly I fit your bill, but my main problem is that I want to be the one that can do everything you need and I also realize that that is impossible. I can only do my best.

What I love about you is first and foremost your beauty, both above and beneath the skin. You have an emotional beauty, a physical beauty and a spiritual beauty, all of which deeply appeal to me. I remember in the poem you wrote me that you would be changing into a more beautiful creature (not exactly in those words) and I see it happening. I only wish that in doing so we can still have very open lines of communication and see each other at least once a week, maybe for lunch or even just taking a stroll. I miss being able to go walk down south street or Penn's Landing with you. It may be too cold now but we still have the museums. I love that you are taking classes and learning more music both in theory and practice and think the most of it as well as highly respect it. You can't help but to keep playing for multiple choirs (even though you said you would be cutting back last year). That's your love and I understand, I just want to be another light in your life.

I love your singing even though you may not believe it, and your cooking. When you do the things that make me feel special I do love it dearly, you just have to remember that I am not necessarily adept at expressing it. I never had anyone treat me like that and am trying to get used to it. I don't think that if we got married I would ever get tired of running your bath water, cooking your dinner or giving you a massage (yes I do realize that my massage could be a lot better so I am studying reflexology, massage therapy, shiatsu and acupuncture). I like the feel of your massages as well as the caress of your form. I love being beside you in bed as well as holding you in my sleep, feeling secure in your presence. I as a man am still developing myself, I don't have everything in the world but I know there are more things I have to add to my portfolio to be able to give you the type of life I would like to lead with you.

Every so often I have a dream of either walking down and from the aisle with you and in living in a huge house with you, complete with a room enclosed in glass on two sides with your grand piano. I remember you

and y buddy Barbie saying that you can get anything from a man when he first meets you and I may have promised too much already. I can't overextend myself and you are not asking me to, but there are things I desperately want to give you as well as things that I want to give myself. I have often looked at what a life with you would be like, both the ups and downs, and no matter what I think its something I want. Let me rephrase that, I know in my heart that it is what I want.

Its sometimes hard to deal with the fact that most of your friends are men but I also have to realize that most of my best friends are women. Women whom I don't and have never been intimate with. It shocked most of Barbie's friends, both male and female that we were going to drive across the country together. Most of the men she dated were extremely jealous and everyone was expecting some motel romance to burgeon like in the book *Waiting to Exhale*. But she is like a sister to me and I don't even think that I could think of her in a romantic way nor would even try to.

You said that it wouldn't be easy to deal with you, and you're right. However, I find it easier if I start to calm the fears in myself as well as let you always know how I feel about you. I guess its not too much unlike the encouragement concept that we were talking about. I would like to play music with you one day and possibly more days than that. I need to first start practicing my stuff, both traditional West African as well as other styles that allow for interaction with piano such as Salsa and Afro-Brazilian.

As I'm writing this letter I'm also going between several applications and the Internet. But I'm geeking on lyrics and have been and through that I'm understanding your take on music as well, as far as the lyrics and what they mean to you. When I think of you I think of songs like "You Send Me," "Sunshine" and "Running Away" (these also are special because when we went to the jazz festival Roy Ayers closed the concert and he played these tunes which I always loved <I also shouldn't have went off to play drums with the locals, please forgive me>), "You Are My Starship," "Good Love," and many others. To me you are like a women made of gold and silver in many ways. I love you not always for who you express yourself as, but mostly and mainly for the jewel I see that you are on the inside. I know that you don't show this side of yourself most of the time, but when you do it give me shivers in a warm sort of way. I also have to realize that I at times can aid in you not showing this part of yourself to me. In writing this letter, I am also releasing some bad feelings that I haven't released yet.

As I grow I believe that I can become a better partner and mate for you, if you'll have me and allow me to be. I really would like to walk down that aisle with you (you wearing white of course) and have a child with you. It was a thought that took me a year to relay to you when I did over the summer, but now I realize that its something I truly want with you. I don't want to have to struggle, nor the woman I marry nor the children I have, but I know that everything won't be love and roses. Maybe we have ample time and me rushing the clock merely adds more time to it, but I can't hold in how I truly feel about you. That's part of my personal growth, not to hide your feeling concerning the one you love.

I love when you tell me that you love me and when you talk, whisper or sing to me. I love your voice. I love touching you and you touching me. Most of all, I love when we are together, whether by ourselves or with others. I love you, I miss you and I want to do more with you. On Valentine's Day I think the only thing that I may be able to afford is to prepare a dinner for you. I'm thinking of getting a lobster. I would like to take time with you alone and feed you dinner, give you a bath and a massage and make sweet love to you for as long as you want. There are always things that you can teach me about myself, about life and about loving you, I am no expert and I say here and now that there is much that I have to learn.

I can't promise you the world because I don't want to break my promises with you, unfortunately I have already broken some. Anyway, I'm signing off now. I love you much too much as Frankie Beverly would say.

Love always and forever,

Thursday, March 21, 1996 1:29 PM

Hey beautiful,

Just thought I'd drop you a quick letter. Actually I've been meaning to write some poems for you lately, or about you would be more correct. Just been doing a lot of thinking yesterday and trying to clear some bad water away from me.

I've also realized that you are a pretty good listener. I've also, as I said before, realized how I grated on you at times. For that I am truly sorry. All in all, I really treasure you as a friend, and its good to believe in someone on that level first before going higher. I think over what it has been knowing you as well as how things came to pass and am thankful

that for the most part it took the steps that it did because I probably would have not run into you any other way and been afforded the opportunity to get to know you as I have.

Its good to be able to see into the inside of someone. Its kind of like finding a rose in a sea of cheap flowering weeds.

Don't know what else I can say that I haven't said to you umpteen times already. So I go to the poem(s).

I love you as always,

Phase Four: Getting Over It and Moving On

So you want to know how the last section ended, after I sent the load of poems. Well, at the end of those six months, I had to know what the skinny would be. You see, during those six months, I started to take on a training partner, a beautiful surgeon, Wendi. At first, we were at odds [the surgeon and I], and then I guess there was something about how I approached her as a friend in the gym that led to us forever training together. Initially, I didn't like her due to the opinion of her that I had received from another woman I was seeing. This person worked at one hospital, and I believe her or one of her co-workers had a bad run in with the doctor. Upon seeing her in the gym before the two of us even met, she plainly said that she, the doctor, was a "bitch." Going by the fact that the person I was dating was a very good-natured person, I believed them. Later on, I met the doctor through my "brother", Kamau.

The first two times Wendi and I talked in the gym, she was not feeling good and took me to be an overly arrogant, insensitive ass (I will admit that I am arrogant, but not overly—egotistical is more like it in some instances). The second time she came in, I told her that she could not be unhappy in "my" gym, so I put her through a workout. What surprised me is that the next time she saw me in the gym, she asked what we were working on next. From that point on we got to be friends; she also discovered that I was a very sensitive person, even shocked by the fact that I have a cat, which is my heart.

As time went on, we not only went to trained together as much as we could, but we also would go out and get something to eat after working out. Sometimes we would go out for breakfast after she got off Sunday morning rounds, or we would just hang out after a rotation. Other times, I would stop by the lab and bring her something I cooked. As time went on, we both realized that we were attracted to one another, and then it happened. On a Thursday night (the last Thursday of May in 1996), we were out at a Thai restaurant, and I told her how I felt about her. She then told me how she felt. We both realized that we had loose strands in our lives to clean up before we could even approach each other. So, in getting my "shit straight," as she would say, I called Karen and set up a time to talk with her the following Monday about where we were, and what she wanted to do.

In traveling to her house that Monday, my stomach just got worse and worse the closer I came to the house. As we met, I asked her what she

wanted to do as well as told her how I felt about her. Her response was that she wanted to keep working on her business, which said nothing about us. So as I left that day, I turned my back on her. My next stop was the gym. As I got to the gym, I took off my jacket and started benching in full business attire (minus the jacket of course) and reached a new maximum press. Wendi realized how things had gone being that she was the only one who had known what I had gone to do that day.

As time progressed, I received a few phone calls from Karen in which I spoke very briefly and promised to call her back or just didn't pick up the phone at all. The following year, I was at a concert with a buddy, and whose things do I see at a table? (Karen also vends her own line of greeting cards and so forth.) As I hurried to get back inside so I didn't have to see her (you know how hard it is to get over someone that you truly loved), we just deftly managed to avoid her. Back inside, she entered the room and kept looking at me, for which I neither turned around nor looked at her directly. Of course, I was bombarded by a bunch of friends asking who she was. Later on, her sister came into the room, for which I avoided direct eye contact just before it was made. At the end of the event, we avoided passing her by leaving through a side exit.

Two nights later, I received a call from Karen in which she complained about how I ignored her and her sister, and how I said that no matter what, we would always be friends. So, after arguing back and forth, and then conversing for a total of about two hours, we set a date for the following Friday. Okay, okay, we all know that I can be a fool in love. Anyway, we started going out again, and she basically lobbied to be the one in my life. She told me how she made a mistake the first time and really wanted to part of my life..."yadda, yadda, yadda".

So, after saying that she wanted to buy the cow right before a trip I had to Oregon, I guess we were an item (of course, there was no consummation, which I strongly believe in). Later on, June 25th to be precise, she made her intentions known regarding pregnancy. Actually, I had known them since 1994. After struggling with it for a while, I finally assented to the possibility of us making that move, but only after six months time so that we could see where our relationship was. Six months was a good number for me because I figured by then we could work out all the kinks.

Over time, it turned into the beginning of another six-month hiatus, so I sent out a "Dear Jane" letter. A few days after I sent it, I called and let her know that I really wanted us to work out. Needless to say, that didn't do anything. Finally, in early 1998, she met with me after I left a message

with her that I really wanted to talk. We met and talked, and I let her know how I felt about her (again the fool in love). After that, immediately after, I felt that I made the wrong decision.

Months later, I received a call from her on a Thursday morning asking me if I would be home later and if she could stop over—she really needed a hug. Thus, our weird relationship picked up once more. Since then, we have gone out and gotten pretty emotional, but it seems that, while both loving each other, we just can't seem to make it work.

Between the times when we first dealt with each other, through periods when we did deal with each other, and up to the present, there were a number of other women in my life. One interesting woman was Dana.

There is a pretty interesting story behind us in the fact that I kept calling out her name while under sedation. It all started in either the early part of 1993 or 1994 when I went during to the Hospital of the University of Penn to get my wisdom teeth extracted. The molars were coming in compacted, and they would have to cut into my jaws to extract them. Well, my first visit to the dental department wound up with me meeting several of the staff, including one of the assistants named Carmen. Anyway, Carmen and I were talking while I was waiting and realized that we had a lot in common. While I was waiting to get my x-rays taken, Carmen was talking with a young woman who just had the cutest lips, smile and eyes, and a nice figure to go along with it. So, I believed that Carmen noticed me observing her and said her name loud enough so that I would catch it.

The next morning I had my operation and was adamant on meeting Dana when it was finished; I figured that I better not waste the chance. The problem was that I have a high tolerance towards drugs (it took two intravenous injections to put me under, and several more to keep me there; I woke up around six times during the procedure). Well, after the procedure was over, I said, "Where's Dana at," with a mouth full of cotton. The doctor and attendant both laughed at me and said something, but I didn't catch it. Recovering, they had someone tell Dana to come in, and we were introduced. It was Carmen who later had us meet again over lunch, and at that point that I realized that I kept asking, "Where's Dana at," each time I woke up during the procedure.

Dana and I proceeded to get to know each other, but nothing amorous ever transpired—I was busy working on proposal after proposal during my "broke" years, while she didn't believe I was truly interested. We

kept in touch over the phone and then that petered off. For some reason some time later, I gave her a phone call, and the friendship renewed. We wound up hanging out often and then wound up running into each other at a nightclub one Friday evening. Well, she was talking to me while I was trying to get serious with another sister standing beside me. With that messed up, I asked her to dance. After the dance, we're standing to the side, and then I realized that I could just consume this woman with passion. The next day I invited her over, hoping to seduce her, and I guess she was hoping to be seduced. It happened, and it was fabulous.

Pretty soon, we were a regular thing, while not a couple. I didn't want to be her "man" simply because of emotional and psychological methods did not match up. Needless to say, we went back and forth. She found someone who she used to go with, when she realized (and I told her) that I was not interested in a relationship with her. When things didn't work out with him, she was seeing me again. In the end, she chose the wrong person. He wasn't the wrong person simply because he wasn't me, but for the simple fact that there was no love there. While I could not be in a relationship with her, there was a part of me that loved her deeply. I still feel the urge to call her and take up where we left out, but then, where would it end up?

So, this section is filled with poems about trying to move on, mixed feelings, and such. Dana always asked me for a poem, and I told her that, when I write, I have to write from my heart, not about someone because they asked.

After not being able to figure out something to write for her, I now have enough feelings welled up to write to her and for her though I must point out, the poems in this section don't deal with her at all. These poems deal with feelings that came in dealing with other women, or thoughts that came when seeing certain things, situations and events, or imagining possibilities of things in my mind, like contemplating a "happening" between me and a woman I might spot walking down the street, or across a bar.

Current Events

(penned June 17, 1999 3:13 p.m.)

I look in your eyes,
and wonder where we are,
or more aptly,
where am I.

We don't go out any more,
but stay in...
You focus and fixate on me,
on us
Whilst I look at greener pastures.

I don't love you,
nor am I in love with you,
but care deeply.
I deny feelings,
to not wind up where I was before;
wishing on a falling star.

You could be a comet,
streaking across the universe.
Yet you choose to fall from grace,
allowing non-celestial sediments
and serpents to bring you down.
The voice of an angel
whose wings are being clipped by locusts and charlatans.

Where are we now,
I look into your eyes and your actions.
And see both the beauty and the horror;
I play Hannibal to your Clarice in the final chapter,
feeding your enemies their own fallacious lore.

Where am I at;
I love you for who you have the potential to be,
not who you bullshit in becoming.
I see through the charades
and the masquerades.
Making you fuss and fight,
huff and puff,

then smile and laugh at your shortcomings,
and your errors.

I push you to be
what you won't push yourself to,
And make an enemy,
and an ally in the process.

I am the left to your right,
while also being the center
and stepping away into another plane.
So that you can be somewhat complete,
somewhat whole by yourself.

I am relaxed
and comfortable
With you
within you
I see the beauty in your faces,
anguished and passionate looks of ecstasy and pain.
Hearing your moans,
and your shouts,
and your pleadings.

Where am I,
losing myself in a little girl lost,
while leaving and staying at the same time.

Where are we,
two souls entwined and intertwined
Hoping for permanence
while dealing with the temporary.

I look for a way out
and into other pastures
while also hoping to always have first nights
knowing it won't last
giving up what I can,
and taking what is offered.

One of the ten types of relationships
where we are at
the lion balancing the scales
and the temple dog herding the ewe.

I Almost Went There

(penned 7/16/99)

I almost went there,
I almost fell for you the same way,
the same way I fell for other women;
focusing on the good points,
being totally acceptable of the minuses.
I should know better,
but my romantic heart...
...oft wins
over my logical mind.

I almost went there,
I offend that if you wanted a commitment,
then I would willingly be your other half.
Words spoken from heartstrings,
and not logical thoughts.

I almost went there.
I almost lost myself in you,
like I have in others,
giving up myself
fragmenting my focus.

I almost went there,
but thank God my intensity
and your reality
stopped it from going there now.

I almost went there,
but I didn't,
and I can stay on my path
to somewhat happiness.

Wishful Thinking

(penned 7/13/99)

Sometimes,
I look in your eyes
and lose myself in the space of a second.
Sometimes,
I look at your thighs,

and lose myself in thoughts of you and I,
intertwined,
intercourse.

Sometimes,
I wonder
if you could have been the one.
Could have been the one
who was nurturing
was supportive
would grow to be my other half.

Sometimes,
your humor and deprecation
is consuming
your wisdom
is tantalizing
and eye-opening.

Sometimes,
many times
I look at you
and wonder what could've been.

I wonder if I made a mistake,
or truly the right choice.

Almost There Again

(penned 9/28/99 7:17 p.m.)

And so we return,
fool me once
shame on you
fool me twice,
well, that's my dumb ass
faux pas.

I almost went there
[again]
Gave you a chance
where you crossed the line
and showed your
ignominious ignorance once more.

You think you know me,
know yourself...
well enough to use me,
captivate me...
encapsulate me.

My feelings,
your urges,
out coupling.

How many signs do you need,
to see my intrinsic beauty
(where not Rain and Lightning enough)
Or have you held back,
knowing you can't control me,
and will wind up facing your own whining machinations.

I hope you sleep well.
Don't call me
when the windows
in your glass house come crashing in
falling down like London bridge
chickens roosting
over squandered feed
among their own feces.

Damn

(9/28/99)
Take off that ring,
cuz your husband ain't
treating you right
and I could
just fall into your eyes
and assuage
your body
and spirit.

Unyoke yourself,
and let a real man
love you
for the beauty he sees inside.

Don't Wanna Play (That Game)

So why try to impress
you.
You see
what you want to,
when you want to,
how you want to.
Sometimes big things,
come in a little package,
and I don't need to drink milk.

Desires

I want a woman,
who can rock a hat,
murder a tango,
burn a mean skillet,
and not be afraid,
to love.
I want zest,
and raindrops.

Do you qualify?

Point and Counterpoint

(November 20, 1999 3:26pm)

I,
never want to see you again
look into your eyes,
so deep and precious,
onyx set in alabaster
sparkling like life itself

gaze upon your form
and remember times
when I explored every curve
huddled into yours
cuddled into our
shapes combined
tasted

and basted
in the juices at your core
ambrosia
of a Black queen

hear your voice again
its sexy bass undertones
to an alto-baritone
angelic pipes
which shivered
and quivered me
when we first met.

I,
never want to see you again...

Damn I miss you so much.

Forbidden Fruit?

(Nov 20, 1999 3:28pm)
Sweet,
juicy,
shades of scarlet at the core
Smooth and silky
just one thought,
or one look gets my mouth watering.
Memories flooding
of past dinings,
carnal delights
now past and digested
That filled and fueled me,
sated my desires
and quenched my thirst.
I love to eat cherries,
don't you?

Untitled 9/28/99 7:34PM

So this is me
serious
humorous
romantic
frantic

The lover you never had
wanted
and ever needed
I guess you'll
chicken out

Untitled 9/28/99 7:35PM

Can I
lick you until you
squirt,
cry,
laugh,
beg me to stop,
Beg me next time,
for more?

Ecstasy/No Limit

(9/29/99 7:37PM)
Do you like it,
when I make you...
say uuungh,
make your
eyes roll up in your head.

Untitled 9/28/99 7:40PM

Will you,
love me
when I am at a low
as well as at the top
of the game
when I am wrong
more than when I am right
when no one else will
when I won't cook for you
or tell you the right thing to do
when I don't change
my stripes.

Ruff

Forgive me for being a dog,

Loyal,
honest,
trustworthy
Guardian to you
when you feel insecure

Always offering a lick of the tongue
and a warm nose
as well as a warm body for lying next to

Forgive me,
for believing in you,
When no one else would.

So when I am gone
just look to Sirius¹⁰
and remember how serious I once was
about you.

Call Me

(November 20, 1999 3:38pm)

Call me,
dial my number
ten digits
and the lift of a handset
is all that stands
between you and I

Call me
elate me with
your conversation
your voice
needs, wishes and desires
Call me,

¹⁰ The dog star

let me be
the one
if not for ever
than for now

Call me,
see what I have to offer
you
see what
and how
I will receive you

Call me
and let us
begin a journey

Ask Yourself

(November 20, 1999 4:00PM)
Have you,
figured me out
given me a chance
to show you the heart within?
Or have you
listened to the opinions
of those
who don't know me
are at odds with me?

Have you
seen me
for more than a buck
or a brain
but one of the last romantics?
A heart
buried under the debris
from past wars
with those I thought
would not use me
abuse me?

Have you,
let me be me

and accept
the complexities
the honest
the man
flawed but trying?

Changed

(November 20, 1999 4:07PM)

So you don't like
chocolate anymore

Was he,
were they
those you didn't
take your friends advice on?
see for who they were?
and expected too much of?
Were they
less than a man?

Do you think
another flavor
Will understand
your richness
your textures
your density
your packaging
and what made you
what you are today?

So you don't like
chocolate anymore.
I guess
I'll just take my cone elsewhere
dripping with
love
history,
and understanding.

I hope you don't dry up from this.

Agape Love

(November 20, 1999 3:48pm)

if you love me,
would you be
my friend
as well as my lover?

If you love me,
would you be honest with me
Even if the trust
would ruin our friendship?

If you love me,
would you lift me up
when I am
down?
for me
and not for personal rewards
and benefit
later on when I have succeeded?

If you love me
will you let me fall
when I need to learn a lesson?

If you love me
will you watch over me
even after I have run you away?

If you love me,
how can I fail?

Inner Strength

November 20, 1999 3:35 PM

I want you,
but am too strong to say it,
or am I too shy?

I look at you
and see what could be
and become

Despite,
what you don't have
or have too much of.

I am attracted
to some
but not all
My mind rationalizing
and calculating
both sides of the argument

Am I strong enough
to stand up to what I want
in you
in a woman
and not accept less?
Am I strong enough
to accept you for who
you are?
Am I strong enough
to awaken the sleeping giant within you?
Or am I truly weak
when I let you pass me by?

??

November 20, 1999 3:43PM
Who gives a...
if we make it
or if we don't

Who gives a damn
about how I feel
and what I am going through
when you're discussing
"us"
with your friends
and your hairdresser
and
your family

Who gives a...
when they realize

I am not the devil
but the saint
Giving you more
than I gave for myself

Who gives a...
about me
when we are no longer
together?

The world we live in.

Regressions

I wish
that I could go back
and change the past
to see
what could
have been
had I
been whole
and not as broken down
or simply shy.

Maybe
We could
Have won this thing
We call life.

Maybe
We could
Have learned from each other
And elevated ourselves
Whether as one
Or as individuals.

Little Boy Lost

I honestly
Don't know
What I want
and am too shy

too afraid
to say it
to that person I want it with.

I honestly,
couldn't tell you
if I am
looking for the woman
or the experience.

I honestly,
can't fully give you
my heart
because its between
pain
and recovery.

I don't know
where I am.

Your Thoughts

How do you
think of me?

In dearest terms
with sincerest feelings?
Or as someone
you can use?
A means to justify
your ends?

What do you
think
of me?
As some deranged genius
trying to make a difference?
Or as someone
who can't follow one trail?

Do you
think of me

with any
good thoughts?

Ripples In a Pond

A thought plops into my mind,
like a stone dropping into a still pond.
Concentric circles;
waves of memories flow through my heart
and my mind.

I still remember them,
black queens with muddied crowns and scepters.
African American angels,
with tarnished halos and mottled wings.
They came into my life
and reaffirmed my faith in God...
that He would
send me someone.
Someone to brighten up my tour of duty.

I remember their ethereal glows,
ancestral auras of beauty forged over millennia,
As Abel I accepted them
wholeheartedly.
As Job I accepted
the ups
and downs.
As Noah,
I realized,
and accepted that everyone can't be saved.

Yet,
the memories of the past,
flood my mind eternal,
crashing like waves and lapping like ripples in a pond.

Like water for chocolate

Here I
come...
we come
spreading into a

sea of emotions
and waiting liquids.

Chocolate,
melted white
liquid ebony
flowing like sepia
in a photo-developer's solution.

Bathing
in its embrace
and resistance.

Like water,
for chocolate
you receive my seed
and it battles you for dominance.

How Do You Feel

How do you feel
about me now?

I am not the same man
I was
years ago
or even yesterday.

How do you feel
about me now?

Now that I
have,
become bigger and stronger?
smarter and wiser?
more successful in my career?

Now that you have
read my work
and see what kind of man
truly
lies within?

Quintessence

Can I have
just
her?
Can I have a woman
without the weave,
the wig,
the colored contacts,
and the tattoo(s)?
And without the mentality
that accedes to
those accoutrements?

Can I find her,
not clad in every
designer label
telling me that she thinks
more of their names
than of
her own?

can I see her
free of gaudiness
and tackiness
but radiant
in the beauty
of her own self
mind, body and soul.

Am I Ready

Am I ready?
truly ready?
for you?

will you be the one
who keeps me fully sated
and nurtures me
on all levels?

Will our paths

converge
and never divide?
Will you wholeheartedly
accept my life
conviction
and passions?

Can I devote
myself to you
on all levels,
and never feel that
something is missing?

Am I ready to be,
the man that you
need?

Stargazing

Starshot...
I don't know
how much time I have
just the fact that all
my salvos
need to hit
their marks.

One,
looking into your
eyes
facing you
head on
the chase has begun

Two
sizing you up
taking you in
surveying
assaying
your form
and intent

Three

Spotting
you again
like a forest animal
frozen in my high beams.

Call me
Mesmer,
or Rasputin;
mad I may be
but insanely
fond of you

How
will you return
my silent overtures?

Hate Me

Hate me
do you?

Simply because
I won't fall for your feminine
wiles...
if you want to call them that.
What makes you
so sure
that I want you
or find you desirable
in the least?

Hate me
of not wanting to
involve you
deeper
into my life.
To shackle myself
with your issues
and your problems
Denying myself
of my successes
and experiences

Hate me

because I don't
want to be
a ready-made daddy.
Just add a sucker to the mix.
And I don't want to be judged
to fill someone else's shoes
who knew better
than to stay
around you and your ways.

Hate me,
now that I ma coming
into my own
and with someone else
who didn't try
to use and abuse me.

Hate me
for standing up
for myself
and being true
to me.

Hate me
and fuel me on

Occipital/Optical Overload

Oshun
told me about my eyes
Something like "protect them"
a blessing
is also a curse
I see too
much
and too deeply
Feel
the energy
behind the picture
spiritual and emotional

I am at

a loss
of what to do.
Too shy to say hello
and smart enough to realize
my weaknesses

One half of my odu
revealing my fate
Kismet,
that my main weakness
is God's present
to man;
woman.

I see you,
do you see
me
staring into
your core,
thinking of us
embracing,
caressing,
intertwined?

Yet I fear
if it happened
that I
would not
could not
stay entirely
with you.

Would we,
make it as a team?
Could I
share all of me
with you
and have no fears
of betrayal?

Quiet Storm

Its funny that I was given that moniker...
even funnier still how I got it
and funniest
that it suits me to
a tee.

Its been said
that
I can
hit you like a Mack truck;
Emotionally,
physically
mentally,
spiritually and academically.
And that has
been proven many times over.

Maybe I
am a metaphysical
meteorological phenomena
where vapor warmed by the sun
meets
less air and less heat;
crystals suspended in air.
Beautiful to watch
and imagine upon
but a bitch
for a human to pass
through
cause you get drenched
and never know what is on the other side.

Sometimes,
I am just a mass of
storm clouds
roiling and rolling from here to there
not wanting to
shed a tear
on anyone.

While at
other times
I will soak you
with my anger
monsoon style
until you are flooded
with the remains of my emotions.

In like a lamb
roaring like my double Leo self
and then
back out
with a whisper.

Sometimes

Sometimes,
even I cry
When I think
of all that
has happened
to us.
Who we
have become
and
have let happen to us

Sometimes,
even I cry
when
I get tired of holding
all of the planets, stars
and moons
in my galaxy
in perfect orbits
so that no celestial cataclysmic events occur.
the Zen cop falters

Sometimes
even I cry
when all

that you
confide in me,
bestow upon me,
gets to the
essence of my soul
and makes me
want to take action
Even though
I know you'll make me promise
not to get involved
and you'll handle it
but you and I
both know
that you never will
emasculate of the Black man
Sometimes
even I cry
When
I see so many of us
lost
and not focusing on reality
but rather
wasting our time and money
on the tomfoolery
of sybaritic lifestyle
ego-trippin
and
loathsome self-pity

Sometimes,
even I cry
When I realize
I have learned
too much
to fit in
with the rest of the world
following most of the lies

Sometimes,
even I cry
when I am
alone
with my

painful emotions.

Too Many Times

(penned 6/16/00 7:47 AM)

Don't ask me thrice
to spend time
or offer of myself
When you've failed to move
once
or even
twice
Waiting
for when I
have committed elsewhere
doesn't count at all

Everyone
deserves a second
chance
but maybe not
a third

When
will you get
it together
I really have
better things to do
or better things
to drink

Don't ask me thrice
make it real
this
time

Mexican Standoff

Here we are
again
We both know

what
we want
But neither feels
secure,
or strong enough
to make that
play

We both want,
yearn,
need it
So why
bullshit ourselves;
something
or someone has got
to give

If the first time
isn't good
let's do it again
We have as much
time
as we allow
and provide

Who's gonna draw first?

End of the Road

So that's
how you feel?
Well,
fine then.

I'll see you,
or in fact won't
see you
on the flip side.

Please don't
change your mind;
Come back with

some b.s. excuse,
or alibi down the pike
I really don't
have the time,
or the love

Finito

Romanticide

You killed him,
or a significant part of him,
me
in the least.

You,
her
and she
Made it harder
for the next woman
Who may
have been
a hell of a lot
better
than you.

That bright eyed
bushy tailed
naïve romantic
is now a
jaded
old dog
with no time
for "soldierin'" for anyone

Drawn and quartered
raked him over hot coals,
flogged and flayed,
burned and suffocated
Y'all killed off the
light;
extinguished the
love.

Will it,
he
they (his mind, body and soul)
ever regenerate
like damaged nerves
or the missing limb of an amphibian?
Or will it
turn itself
off
forever?

I Went There

I went there,
tried one last
time
and you responded

I put it
out
there;
figured what did
I have
to lose.

You responded,
could have
responded
negatively
or not at all
But
found yourself
happy
that you did.

Found
a cure
for your
blues
in a place
that you once turned away.

Too Shy To Say It

This section was not really going to be a full section but merely several poems that deal with the fact that sometimes I can feel something but not have the assertiveness to approach the person and say anything, let alone the right thing. As I probably said previously, I am a shy person at times, which is more of a look at who I am on a deeper level. Sometimes, a woman can either take my breath away, or I see so much in her that I treat her like I am holding a newborn baby in my arms, ever so careful not to make a move that could hurt the tender young thing that is in my grasp.

Over time there have been women that I have passed on the street, saw at an event, worked with, or been introduced to that I found something in them that I wanted to get to know better. For all of you cynics out there, its usually her mind. At times its good that I don't say anything, because I may realize later on that I fixated on things that were not really there; sometimes you can have profound knowledge and wisdom, except for when it comes to matters of the heart, and the heart is a lonely hunter.

Remember that this book was years in the making, and at times where I felt that I was done writing, I came back with a couple more pieces in my head that I couldn't let go. This section contains three pieces; one is a letter to someone that I have always been enamored of, and two poems.

Enjoy

A Letter to Vesta

Dear Vesta:

Well, this is kind of a new thing for me. I have always wanted to meet you, and like many other men that I know, have always been attracted to you. Unfortunately, I was not able to get tickets to attend your performance at the Keswick Theatre on March 7th. Its kind of funny, as soon as I heard you on the Tom Joyner Show saying that you were looking, I went on line and found a site with you on it and emailed you. Well, I never received a reply, but that doesn't mean that you received my email either. Anyway, a friend of mine was in the audience and said that you still said you were looking for someone; well, I am available. I told her that she should have gotten up and told you about me; her reply was that if she knew I was interested, she would have definitely given you the scoop.

Actually, I have been a fan and admirer of you for some time. I still remember the songs from the 80's as well as those in this decade. Your last album is a winner, especially track #6. That's one of my quirks, sometimes I'll know the name of a song, but many times I'll reference it in my head by what album its on and by its track number. Its interesting that your last release deal with relationships, I myself am about to self-publish a book of poems from three phases of my life all dealing with relationships. A friend of mine who is a jazz vocalist says that she wishes she could write and perform songs whose lyrics are as deep as my pieces (I'll send you a copy of the first piece I wrote after a long hiatus).

Besides poetry, I also am a musician but don't hold that against me. I play various instruments from different parts of Africa, the Caribbean and Brazil. Unfortunately, I don't have the time to practice like I used to but hopefully that will change soon. It basically started from some doing some novice level beats for a quasi-moderno-African dance class while I was a student at Penn State University. As soon as I returned to Philadelphia, I had plans to throw something like a Miss Black Cultural Philadelphia pageant. I ran into a person who would later become my first drumming instructor. I soon started attending his dance classes to play a djembe; not seriously though. After a year with him I went on to help a student with their senior project that had me switching over to a bigger drum because no one would play that one right. That led me to want to become second djunjun player in my instructor's dance company.

Besides that I used to play the French horn in the school orchestra for two years as well as try to compose my own classical works (this was when I was much younger). Otherwise, I would love to learn how to play marimba, vibraphone and balafon. Now I am trying to take my knowledge of various instruments and some of their rhythms as well as music in general and start producing my own works. Mostly surrounding the acid jazz, house, underground and world music venues.

Other than that, there is my writing and my desire to teach youth and adults in several areas. As far as my interests, they are many. As you can tell I am into the arts and music. I used to draw, but that's something that I put down a long time ago. I also love to dance. My worst experience is to go to a party and they are not playing the type of music that I love to dance to, and/or there isn't anyone to cut loose with. I do practice martial arts, but that is another thing that I haven't had the time to do in several years. I am an avid fitness person, trying to maintain a level comparable to where I was when I was in the service, as well as to where I would be if I would have stayed in.

Lastly, I love to drive long distances. There is nothing more calming than traveling more than 100 miles with some good music playing on a sunny day. However, I have never gotten the chance to do that with a convertible that is one of the things that I will definitely have to do this summer. The northeast doesn't have any spectacular drives until you start to go from New York City to places like Maine and other New England states, though the furthest I have gone was to my old base in Newport, Rhode Island. I visited a friend in Oregon several years ago and then took a drive from the sleepy town of Springfield (right next to Eugene) all the way up to Portland. I can tell you that the air was magnificent; extremely clean which is not something that we have in Philly. Also, the sites and sounds were spectacular. The Pacific has a beauty and calmness to it that you don't see in the Atlantic. There was also the spots where you could see seals and sea lions, as well as go out on the water to spot whales. The latter didn't appeal to me, and at that point I figured that a whale's best friend is a Black man; someone who will just leave them alone to be them (the ocean is not my forte which is weird since I served in the Navy; I'll have to tell you about my sailing lessons). Also there is nothing like sea air, which of course reminded me of fond memories in the Navy. Did you know that in places like Newport you could actually see the sun go down (witness it's fast motion) during the late fall and winter?

I almost forgot to add that I love animals. My baby is my cat Gizmo. I've had her for thirteen years and she's about to turn fifteen. She acts like my grandmother, not just a grandmother, but my mother's mother. Before we had her she was my sister's cat.

I even forgot to tell you what I do for a living. I currently own my own small business through which I more or less do consulting in the areas of web site development and construction, computer based training, and database and other software solutions. This is my third fourth year in business and now I am building a database application for one city agency while doing a 9-5 consulting piece (very low bid) for a Black-owned business. I just submitted a bid for a contract with the Coast Guard that I hope to get. I figure that if I can get three to four small contracts I will have more or less office independence. Additionally, I have my books, my photography, and my music, as well as whatever else type of products can be produced from that. I am also working on producing several free database-driven web sites that I will hope to sell to larger companies like Yahoo and America Online.

Well, that's really a lot about me for now. I don't know what type of letters you get from fans and admirers, but hopefully this one will stand out. I hope to hear from you soon. You can always get in touch with me through the telephone, email, or just writing me at my home address. My home number is XXXXXXXX and I usually am in after 9 PM EST. Work currently is (215) XXX-XXXX and I am in from 9-5; I am a contractor there, so if I get this other contract and some of my business ventures turn successful, I'll be out of there like third period French. I forgot to add that I do have an interest in cultures and peoples. I have studied Mandarin Chinese, French and Spanish. In high school I was taught the Latin, Greek, Scandinavian and German roots of words. From there I can understand a little Italian and Portuguese, of which I would like to learn the latter in addition to learning to fluently speak Chinese, French, Spanish and German (of which I was trying to teach myself). Other language interests include Bambarra (spoken in Mali), Japanese (a hell of a lot easier than Chinese and structured like German), and Russian (just because). I have two email addresses: irondog@vcsn.com; and tibetandog@yahoo.com. They both refer to my sign under the Chinese horoscope.

Sincerely,

Zachary Harris



Phase V: The “Gitback” Section

Since it has taken so long to get this book out and there was one other major romantic “event” in my life, I thought to finally include it in the book. This is called the “Gitback” section for two reasons. The first is that all the poems contained within were written when I wanted to get back together with a person that I finally realized “through weird circumstances of time and stupidity” that I was in love with. The second reason is that this is part of the nickname that this woman’s daughter gave me. (I was going to just refer to this woman by another name, but hey, let’s give her the love and respect that she deserves, she is Etta)

Let me explain further...

I met this woman many years ago on a temp assignment and was instantly attracted to her, so of course I asked her two questions to do a quick astrology analysis on both her, and the potential for an us. She came out to be a Libra in western astrology [which is a sign that had already put me through some drama], and a sheep under the Chinese zodiac, another sign that tends to give me problems. As luck would have it she was in a relationship, and me being the person that I am, was not going to interfere with that.

We kept in touch over time and I would always call her up and jokingly say, “marry me.” We would tend to run into each other on the train downtown in the mornings when she was running late and talk about different things. Much of my talk turned her off [as it pertained to dysfunctional relationships that I had or was having with dysfunctional women], but as she got to know me, she realized that there was another side. That and the fact that after she read my poetry, she knew there was somebody different.

Over time we would occasionally bump into each other downtown, or have lunch. I met her boyfriend once at a jazz performance that she did and realized at that time how much I was attracted to her; it wasn’t him that I intended to disrespect, it was her singing and when she looked at me while doing it.

Anyway, years later I called up and said my regular opening line. I don’t how long it had been since we last talked and she was surprised to hear from me. After finding out that she was single [after asking about her boyfriend], I intimated that we had to go out soon, and we did. I really knew that I liked her and one thing led to another. However, I made the

gosh-darn idiot mistake of telling her that we could never be in a monogamous relationship because I knew from the door that she was not the one. As things progressed I still dated as well as dabbled and dabbled with other people, but she was the special one in my life. Once she almost moved away but I asked her to stay at least to finish an album; she is a jazz vocalist and I was trying unsuccessfully to assist her in recording an album. Well, she stayed the first time and then asked me around Christmas how I felt about her because she was again thinking of moving away. The reality was that I loved this woman, but I could not motivate her to use her true potential and that was one thing that I could not accept of someone that I was in a committed relationship with; them not using their potential. Anyway, I figured that there was no way that I could convince her to stay and do her thing, so I told her to just go (sometimes you have to let somebody do what they think is right because they are not going to apply themselves another way unless they exhaust their own theories).

She took this as a sign that I really didn't love her and that nothing else would happen deeper between us. She wound up meeting someone while on an errand and being very attracted to this person and here comes the whopper...

One Saturday I was planning to go to a black tie event. Upon coming back from a dinner date in Harrisburg I had decided to take her with me. I had been going to these types of events before but never took her with me and started to go about a change. I called her all through the day and could not get hold of her; her daughter fielded all of her calls. I wound up going to the event solo and tried to reach her when I got in; she wasn't in. The next morning she called me and me through my super powers of deduction and reasoning uncovered what happened; she had been with him.

At that point I realized that I was in love with her and didn't want to share her with anyone else. The next couple of months were crazy and draining on me. The ending was that she was back with me, but still moving away [hopefully, temporarily]. At this time, no ending has been cemented and who knows what will happen.

These are the poems I wrote during that time (those initial three weeks since the morning of the 3rd of March when it was revealed to me).

Her words (I thought that it would be interesting to add these):

Zach and I were introduced about five years ago through a former co-worker of mine. She knew that we were both into music and thought we should meet. At the time I was learning some African music and learning to play African percussion. It was a brief encounter, however in that little time I was impressed by his knowledge of several African percussion instruments. Zach and I would continue little conversations from time to time in the office or during lunch. I found him to be very easy to talk to and quite humorous at times. I also found that if I was struggling with something in particular he had a way of getting to the very root of the subject matter and shedding new light or resolving it within the blink of an eye. You see that reveals something about his character. He definitely takes the "im" out of impossible and is willing to give 110% to getting something done.

To Love Zach

As the song goes "To Know You Is To Love You". Well, I must say you do have to get to know him (if he permits you to) to really appreciate his goodness. I know of several people (myself included) upon first meeting him probably wonder "Who the Hell Does He Think He Is" only to, at a later date become captivated by this charm. He does have a way of keeping you at bay until he figures out your true intent. There aren't many that are close to him but the ones that know that he would do practically anything to keep you out of harm's way.

Why do I love Zach? First, because of his honesty.

There are no guessing games with him. He will tell you exactly what's on his mind even if it does sting at times. There are so many different sides to this brother that tends to keep my interest. His intellect keeps me impressed. He is very serious about life and what he wants to accomplish. There is the funny side of him that keeps a smile on my face. Then there is the romantic side. I won't go into detail because I don't believe in advertising the goods (smile). Let me just say that there is a lot of passion wrapped up in that "Leo" and he loves to cuddle.

To Be Loved By Zach:

Zach makes his presence known and his love felt. He is very giving. He shows his affection not only in the traditional way of flowers, long romantic walks, candy, and etc but he feels that he would be far more

valuable to you by helping you realize and manifest your highest potential.

Double Barrel, Second Shot

Its
happened to me,
again,
twice in my life
Name me “idiot of the last
five years”

I said that she
wasn't
the one
but chose to
play the game
anyway

And when
she
reversed
the play
I shook...
to my deepest core.

You see,
I loved her,
as best I
could
while holding
back
me.

And it wasn't
fair
to either of us

I do love
her
but not enough

for that long walk
or am I
fooling myself.

It wouldn't work
for our paths
are inexplicably different
and who knows
how long
they'll intertwine

I don't know
what I want
but I don't
want
to let her
go

Look In the Mirror

I've come
full circle
in the past
two days.

And I hurt,
and I pain
both in my heart
and in
my soul

I never realized
how much
she cares
and how
my actions
questioned her
loyalty
to something
I never
firmly set down

But being

on the inside
looking out
the view
is crystal
and who
will save me.

Turnabout

All
the pain
that you
feel
whilst I was with other women
now comes to me in one instant

True,
it never
was
a committed
monogamous relationship
and I
played my
part
and never looked
deep enough
within you
and now
when you have
looked out
for you
I pain

Who is at
fault?

No one
and just me

Its Over

Better I
hurt,
than you...

Deep down
to the
quintessence
of my soul
my heart
and
mind

How
will I get
by

There are plenty
women,
but only one you

I fear the
Ides of March
as this
has become
my
Winter of discontent

The End of the Road

Is it that for us,
or a new
beginning?

Do we
correct the
errors,
or move on to
greener pastures?

Is that grass
greener
on the
other side?

Or will you want
to come back
and play in my
lawn?

And will I
allow you
through the fence?

Who

Who
will I run to
now that I
have lost
you?

Have I
lost you?

There are
many to
comfort
me

but none
like
you.

Who is
“illogica”
now?

Damn (2001)

I fucked up
been tripped
up

by my own game
and
didn't realize
my heart
would fall

and shatter
into pieces
that would
stare back at me
all saying
"fool!"

I Can't Win

If you
won't
be your best
trust me
and be open
and honest
with me.

That holds me
back,
and was my reason
for not going further

I lose
when I keep it
bottled up
inside

My bad.
I am
the sorriest,

Please
give me
a title shot

Funny Thing

Funny thing
is
I could have seen this coming
and did nothing
to stop it
all my music
is betraying me
I am wrong
and had it coming

I set up the scenario
and fell victim to it

Funny thing is
I
am
not the one
laughing now.

Coffin Case

Numbness
paralysis
mindlessness
these all creep over me
I feel dead,
dead man walking
crying
and not eating

I lost
someone
and lost
part of me
in
the process

Who
grieves
for me

How Many Left

They say cats
 have nine lives
I might
 have eighteen (hopefully)
since I'm a double Leo
 I already count
 eight
killed off
 in the throes of
 love and romance

Can I please
 have this one back
 so that
I have
 more to give?

Rehab

Can we go
 back
two years
 four months
and thirteen days
 and start again?

Can you look
 in my soul
and see
 what I feel?

Can you come back,
 to me
exclusively?

Self Inflicted

It all came back
 to me
like universal law
 what comes around...

but not the same way
goes around

War of the Hearts
Sade Sings
and all the
bullets I fired
over
time

Come back
as one
a-bomb
(‘A’ could be for asshole)
and
obliterated
me
emotionally

So next time
player
when you sense
nothing
which is the heart of something...
duck!

If That Don't Make You Happy

There
I am sorry
For my
heart spoke
and I translated
and orated
it's words
to you

You have the ball
and if you
drop it
that's on
you

I understand
what made me
not
show
you it
before

But
I have said it
now
If that don't make you happy
then I don't know
its not up to me
anymore

Untitled

You called
and said
you would be
there

I called you
back
and got
voicemail

Maybe you're
in the
shower
now
but I didn't
get a call
back

You're not good
at this
hiding the
truth
thing
And it
always hurts
me when

you
do it.
Cleaves
a deeper rift
between
you
and I

My mind;
the brain of Solomon
calculates
all
possibilities
and looks at
every other possible
slip and
error
in your game.

I worry
most about my
physical health
for who knows
in this triangle
whether or
not I am the
only one sharing
those fluids with
you

If I sicken
you are no more
to me
in life
or after it

Wrong Exit

I chose a later exit;
an off ramp,
thinking that the view
would be
better

if I drove the extra blocks

How-
ever
I got
snarled in a
traffic jam
and could've
been where I wanted
to be
a lot sooner

It took
this to realize
that maybe
I should
have went there
sooner
with you

Did I miss
the time
and will you let me
drive back around?
I love you

The "Citback" Section Conundrum

Okay, so I have found a woman that I love and am in love with, however, I might be truly more in love with who they have the potential to be – that talented beautiful singer with the captivating eyes and the arresting voice who is shackled underneath fear and delusions of what is the right thing – rather than who they are, or choose to be for the moment. I see the whole record, while I think they are that 45 that you have that will always skip and stay at a certain point, at that certain point unless you apply pressure to the needle by taping a couple of pennies to it.

The whole thing right now is that I am in limbo with regards to my love life. I really can't move forward and I can't move backward until this whole thing is sorted out. Of course I can go sideways, but that is no step forward.

The reality is that this woman is under my skin deeply and for all the reasons that I really can't figure out. While I can easily say what I want to change in her, ultimately that doesn't change my feelings for her but just make them that much harder to deal with.

All the things that I am focused on doing for her are causing me to expand my horizons in certain areas, is this ultimately her gift to me, evolution through love and frustration?

I have been looking at the situation and knowing how I feel, but also knowing what I need and trying to solve for an equation in this situation that may be the wrong one to apply. I have heard the pros and cons from friends and associates about seizing love and also accepting when something can't and won't work for whatever reasons there may be. I have argued on why I am there in her life and why I keep going forward, while at the same time complaining on that which I can't stand about her. I have fought to keep her in my life, and to be the only one in her life, when I was losing her. What war am I ultimately fighting? The battle to have that one, but also to accept that one? There are many, and much too many to analyze and understand, let alone accept.

I want to make it big in life and want to see her flourish in her own right, but can't afford to throw caution in the wind and possibly make a decision that will slow me down, if not drag me into a morass than propel me forward

Yes, I want to see her fly and while I am looking for certain things...

I received a call from a friend that I met through the internet named Sheba [and no, I haven't slept with her for all you people who jump to conclusions about me prematurely]. Anyway, the call came in at 4:50 in the morning and I hadn't gone to sleep until 3:30 AM. She called to tell me what she thought of the book so far (I had sent her an unfinished copy in Adobe Acrobat format) and was very moved by it's depth. The funny thing is that she hadn't even finished the first section. However, she told me an answer that affects my romantic situation and life that was entombed in a friend's words about me. If you go back to the beginning and read the words that Isabell wrote about me, they are very poignant with regards to the type of woman that I need in my life, as well as the type of person that I am.

My pal Frank has said pretty much the same thing regarding the type of woman that I need as well as a number of other friends. But what is even stranger is that Isabell saw some things in me that very few people see;

the sadness. Weirder is that the day the morning of that fateful March 2nd, the date that I had in Harrisburg and I had gotten into a deep conversation and in it, she saw the same thing in me.

... maybe all she needs is love to move her forward.

The worst thing that hits me through all of this is my music, and by that I am referring to the music that I listen to. As you can tell by my writing, I feel certain things. Well, how would you feel if the songs that you really loved start to hit you from different angles.

I have been listening to a lot of Swing Out Sister [one of my favorite bands – I would love to see them in performance and also meet with the person who writes their lyrics—and one of the best groups around] and a couple of their songs have been just hammering my heart and soul. *Not Gonna Change* sounds like a song that sometimes is coming from me, and sometimes coming from her, and in those times it may be the voice talking about themselves, or the voice talking about the other person. *The Waiting Game* just hits and hurts as bad. Let's not talk about *Who Let the Love Out*. And *Alone* just speaks about my needs to sometimes get away from everything and everyone and let it all out in tears and get back to my mission in life.

Even more than that, I have pulled out all of my Mint Condition albums and it seems like I could have written those lyrics as well. Next I will probably let Phyllis Hyman body slam me, followed by Patrice Rushen (damn I wish I knew her) and Vesta. That brings a question, what is going on in Vesta's life? Did she get and read the letter?

Okay, back to Etta. She knows what I need and is she willing to be that person, or do we just stay friends? Do we just see what happens and take it day by day and wait for the fateful time when one of us plays *Before I Let Go* by Maze for the other? Who knows, but this all brings me into the next section, which is one that I need, some answers to.

Note: This more or less has been resolved. Friends first, foremost and always, and if it is meant to be than it will happen.

Why Me?

Upon leaving the house of someone that I go out with, I began to ask myself what is it about me that makes women want me and want to stay around? This question becomes more poignant the deeper a person is because they start to look for reasons beyond money, looks and material

possessions. Some people want me for some reasons that I do not like and some look for maybe a man that they can get their hooks in and control in the future. Bad move ladies.

The answers that I am looking for are why me when I didn't have everything. Maybe I had a little something, but I ask these questions because right now, life for me is not at a crest, but at a nadir that seems to look somewhat like an abyss. Yes, I will come back up and higher than before, but why me?

Why me when I was rocking a twin bed, a computer, a black and white television and no car? Why me when the furnace was broke and I used a kerosene heater for the house? Why me when I was in over my head with the house and not making no moves to change it? What did they see? Here are their words of one of those people:

Chapter 1 - Zachary Harris The Attraction: Strong, Sensitive, Smart and Sexy

A. Strength

That is the attraction. You come across as not only strong physically, but strong in your spirit and in your soul. A strength that is not measured by things you own, but by who you are and who've become. A strength that is actually more important to most women than even, believe it or not, a man's bank account.

B. Sensitive

A man who will write poetry, bring you flowers and give you a massage!!!! The attraction elevates to a whole new level. The idea of cloning crosses your mind for a moment that all of your sisters should be able to share this aspect of man RARELY if ever seen by woman.

C. Smart

Someone who actually can speak and you aren't saying to yourself "what an idiot!!!"

D. Sexy

That needs no explanation.

Chapter 2 - Zachary Harris The Lover

I once told my sister that someday you will make some woman incredibly happy. I am speaking only from my own point of view. I believe that as

you get older and mellower, your strength and sensitivity will combine in such a way that you will be the essence of what a woman wants and will complement her in every aspect of her life. I have come to realize that we as women too often seek validation from our men. Whether we grew up with a man in our household or not. I was a Daddy's girl and no matter what, I was always Daddy's girl. Regardless of how I wore my hair, regardless of what style of clothing I chose to wear; whether I was fat, thin, short, tall, I was Daddy's girl. I distinctly remember my mother and father having an intense discussion about straightening our hair. My father was totally against it. Renee and I have always had a head full of hair and we wanted it straightened so combing wouldn't be such a challenge for mom or for us. Dad let us have our way and we were still his girls.

The funny thing in all of this is that I now have the answer myself. The answer lies in what friends and associates think about me [much of what was written in the starting section of the book].



Words of Reflection

[It is important to note that this section was written in 1999 when I thought that I had finished the book. For one reason or another, I never published it then, so there is another conclusion behind this section. I guess God has a reason for everything, and it wasn't meant for this book to be released in that year or the following one. Remember that these are words of me being two years younger, or really three.]

As I am finishing up this book, or endeavor as it may be, I believe that I should give up some more information, or "dirt," as you may want to call it. I was conversing the other day with someone that is dear to me, and we were reflecting on past relationships and why they didn't work out. In this, she revealed that someone told her, maybe its not her, but them. In looking at life, sometimes that is the case.

In Chinese geomancy, what we would translate into astrology, they say that there are ten different types of relationships between people. Several of those are temporary. Of all the relationships that I had, I have looked at the person not only for who they were when I met them, but what final butterfly they had the potential to metamorph into. However, not everyone wants to climb Mt. Everest or dive to the deepest spot in the Marianas Trench. There are many people that are content with what every slice of life they eke out for themselves. My problem is that a huge part of my dreams revolve around not having any dependents or putting down any roots. This is itself is contradictory to forming a lifelong, monogamous relationship with anyone. I am always searching for my female doppelganger, but in reality there is no one equal to anyone else. We are all different like snowflakes in where we have been, what we have experienced, and what we believe just to name a few factors. On the flip side, though, there are a number of women I wish could and would be the one for me.

In viewing every woman that I have been attracted to, there was something behind her eyes—in her essence—that beckoned me closer. It just may have been that emotionally, intellectually, philosophically/ideologically, romantically/sexually, and/or religiously/spiritually we were not able to coexist. That does not make them not good, just not in the long run good for me. Not everyone is going to be able to agree with and respect my taste in music, which ranges from acid jazz, house, and R&B to rap, bass, and African. Or with my love of African culture and all that it encompasses versus being a "go with

the flow” fan of ballet, jazz, the opera, and what is called “classical music.” I love to be able to find the riff or sample of an African American song in some rap, house or R&B cut and be able to pull out the original after I’ve played it. I love being able to go out and dance to house and all its forms to three or four in the morning with no restrictions, hopefully to a ripe old age. And I hate to dance with someone who won’t go with the rhythm. I like to be able to bug out anytime of the day with friends, or someone I am involved with, while still being serious, for the rest of my life.

Everybody has different combinations of life’s elements which make us all unique, and in our uniqueness is our struggle to form something with someone else that involves compromise, humility, respect and to some part just dealing with not always being what your inner desires want you to be. Sometimes, you may choose to give up 5% of what makes you happy, to find someone you can have the other 95% with. You may hate one aspect of a person’s behavior, but still be with them and not get mad about it simply because there are so many things about them that you adore.

In Karen, there were a lot of things that I loved, especially when it came to her feistiness. Even though we had the Aries-Leo fire sign connection, there were too many other things that came into play. After all the things that she put me through mentally, there is a part of me that loves her dearly but realizes that there is no way in hell that we could form a lasting relationship in which we didn’t wind up killing each other. That is unless both of us were ready to give up some things about the each of ourselves. After everything that I went through with Dana, there is still a part of me that loves a part of her. Again, there are the differences in us that I am not willing to change in myself and that she is not willing to change in herself.

Wendi once said that friends are like clothing—you can’t wear them everywhere. More and more each day those words mean more to me. However, everything has an opposite, and for me it is in the fact that, when it comes down to certain people, no matter how much that they do wrong I still give them more and more rope. This is partially because I look at the fact that in many things I keep getting another chance, whether it is one more day in life to make a difference or correct my own transgressions towards others, or the leniency that someone shows me when I have a debt to pay. In turn, I can in the least afford that to the next person, because in the end, we all sin.

When I was younger, I was always seeking to keep a relationship going and concentrate on making it work, as most young lovers do. Maybe it was also because of the fact that many of my dreams revolve around me being alone, and I seek to treasure every little moment that I have with someone else. Now, I am kind of at a point where I feel sorry that something didn't work out; not sorry for the other person, but sorry at the lost chance to grow myself, and perhaps to teach and share what I have with someone else. Alas, I cannot save the world, nor can I love every woman that I come in contact with that catches my eye.

Some things are meant to happen for whatever outcome may transpire.

Que sera, sera.

8 years off

Sittin,
resting,
chillin high above the ground
Here he sits,
lays,
prays
Reclined along a branch
the solitary tiger
Waitin for another;
his mate
His territory he marks with scent
his calling cards...
Claws sheathed
soul camouflaged,
emotions shrouded by the stillness of his eyes.
Only others like him feel his pain
in this case misery hates company
In his silence is his power
in solitude grace
but in union
heaven

The Baobab

Old,
withered aged bleached and dying slowly,
returning to the Earth which nurtures you and you anchor in.

He was once a strong tree,
protecting his seeds and flocks from wind and storm,
warming us in moon,
and shading us in sun.
His seeds scattered,
traveled away in the ever shifting earth,
their branches to far away to extend their support back to their father.
His body failing him,
roots leaving the nutrients in the earth,
leaves not catching nor filtering the rays of God,
cycles of day and night reversed and inverted,
branches not bearing fruit for his keep;
the guardian losing.
Yet the small Cyprus stands by his side,
cradling his once massive trunk,
branches supporting branches.
Ancestor and descendent grafted together,
trees can talk to one another,
and the great Baobab whispers his history in breeze to Cyprus,
passing the whiles of old sap to young juices.
The old one damaged by the white man's chemicals and wars,
transfixes himself one the young one's shoulders
a botanical atlas.
Grandfather to grandson,
In death the process ends
and the young Cyprus become the Baobab.

Legacy

Today I saw my grandfather cry,
and call the Lord's name,
his sister had passed.
A strange sight for me to witness,
a tough old man,
softened in one instant of time,
not a second after he heard the news.
Here is a man whose days on earth are at an end,
withered,
wizened and weathered.
Yet here I am,
the young Turk following in his footsteps,
absorbing his life in days and weeks,
trying to arrange a peaceful exit for this once great ebony tree.

Soon I will be in his place,
will I cry too?

To Cry

Metamorphosis,
the conversion of thoughts and emotions into physical essence,
a lipid orb.
Sadness, grief and pain are united,
in a corporeal raindrop.
A cleansings emerges:
both of the lenses through which we see the outside world;
and of the heart through which we relate to it.
Man's expression of his inner self,
his quintessentiality;
but deemed unmanly by society.
Just as great Mateo shed her tears to form the streams, rivers, seas and oceans
for her children,
I release a droplet soon to be followed by another.
Cascading down my visage
-it seems paradoxical to my sentinel facade-
only to be returned back to majestic Nut and become part of her ambrosia.
Evaporated by the fires of rage and frustration,
of futility and sorrow,
awareness and reflection upon future and past.
I shed a tear,
and retract its purpose.

Memoirs

I will not be forgotten,
when all others around me are in the spotlight.
When the world has passed me by a century,
I will not be forgotten.
My deeds will be inscribed in the annals of history,
and ensconced in the book of Life.
My name will be whispered on the tongues of both young and old,
revered,
romanticized,
feared and honored.
My actions,
laid out and pondered in the classrooms and war rooms of the future,
changed the way people talk,

think and treat each other.
 My soul,
 back to the great sun disc,
 reality
 eternity,
 infinity.
 Who will call on me next?

Images of a Black Future

If I had a wife,
 she would not be a wife but a queen.
 A queen of radiance that would challenge all the devices of man and show
 their ineptness.
 One with a gaze that mature a boy into a man and a man into a god.
 I'm not looking for miss light, bright and almost white,
 I want a Black woman.
 Her hair can be in braids, relaxed, in curls or a sculpted afro,
 her skin can be as light as coconut milk,
 or as jet black as the onyx.
 Her eyes need not be covered with contacts, because brown eyes are just as
 beautiful to me.
 I only care that her soul is pure
 of narrow-mindedness of foolish men who know not God and preach of
 Him,
 is at harmony with God, Earth and nature
 and respects me, accepts me and adores me for me.

If I had daughters,
 they would be the new queens of this world, sought out by all men,
 but only wed to those strong of Akebulani roots and culture.
 I would imbue them with names lost to us through tricknology,
 Isis, Odessa, Makeda, Nefertari and Nzinga;
 or name them as the jewels and treasures that they would be,
 Onyx, Sapphire, Ebony.

If I had sons,
 they would be the next great suns of the earth,
 with names that tell legends of old:
 Chaka, Hannibal, Haile, Toussant, Akhneton and Imhotep.

To my children,

I would imbue the lost knowledge of the mysteries and sciences of this earth,
each one the master of an elements.
A royal house resurrected.

Untitled (written sometime in 1993)

I shed a tear,
in my crying is a monsoon of emotions in full bloom;
rage against genocide,
sorrow against solitude,
pain against betrayal.
If I shed another tear I give in to Chaos,
in to invulnerability.
The Juggernaut stumbles,
swallowed in his own hurt,
his armor loosens;
the Achilles heal revealed.

The Essence of My Soul

Stranded...
how long have I been floating in the essence of my soul.
Adrift in a metaphysical abyss,
frozen in emotions infinite.
Yet I try to forge order out of chaos,
drawn inextricably between freedom and enslavement.
How could I let myself slip this far,
or has it been self induced trials and tribulation,
that in my toils and transgressions there would be purification and
absolvement?
The ordeal of fire and water,
the shaping of the blade followed by the tempering,
treating it to withstand the maelstroms of battle.
Shaka new the significance of this process,
as did Musashi.
As I sit in darkness,
in absence,
I find myself.
Gaze transfixed on heaven, earth and hell,
the three realized as one in the third eye.
My veins and arteries become antennae,
in my blood I hear the world and smell my surroundings,

touch the pulse of the wind and rain;
my locks absorb the power of Ra reflected by Khonshu.
At my sides lie the servants of Bast,
protected my body while I am in the astral.
In this void,
where the souls of mortals float in disarray,
I find solace existing as a master,
a Black Zen policeman.
Order out of chaos can only be constructed by those of unrest,
those seeking inner peace,
but not finding it until their purpose is fulfilled.
In this I exist,
the essence of my soul.

Untitled

The release,
ethereal catharsis.
If I shout all heaven will hear,
and Set will be deafened.
If I pound the earth the mountains will shake,
and the oceans will reverberate with ripples from the deepest depths,
to the shallowest creeks.
When will the moment come,
when will I, the conduit, pass the pain,
transfer the despair,
channel the rage outwards,
the Black rage.
How long have I been storing it,
amassing this inner void?
an emotional vacuum.
One lifetime,
or since the coming of Heru?
It has turned me into a spiritual and metaphysical powder keg,
the time bomb of Geb.
I walk with the seraphims clearing a path between mine foes,
and those others who would seek to offset the delicate balance.
If I unleash,
the cleansing of my soul,
purification of actions past and thoughts unclean,
what harm will I have wrought upon the Universe?
Upon myself?
the true big bang.
Only to be reborn in the flesh,
arisen from chaos and pandemonium,
rising from the flames as the phoenix eternal to begin the cycle once more,
yet returning to the waters just as the Ibo to finish this period.

Unanswered Questions

If I could scale back the hands of time and change my life,
would I be a different person?
Would I choose ignorance and tomfoolery,
over knowledge, wisdom and purpose?
Be the jackanape or the empowered?
The star athlete or the intellectual dreadnought?

Would I lead a carefree sybaritic existence filled with phantasmagoria,
or choose the paths of righteous indignation?
Would I seek to become a grandparenting septuagenarian,
or die a young lion?
Try to fit in a world that is desperately trying to fit me out of the picture,
or carve a niche for the diaspora and myself with the blood, sweat and tears
of foes?
Would I be the ever-accepting peacemaker,
or the ever-vigilant crusader?
The white dove or the black swan?
Apocalyptic thoughts in an apocalyptic era,
encrypted in pain and solitude,
questions to which answers are moot.

In Dreams

In dreams,
there is light
life
and death
truths
and lies;
machinations
of a restless
or tired
soul and mind
In dreams
lie the
future
and the past
for the present
doesn't exist
Metaphysical
transcendental
psychospiritual
links
to the
whole
which we
can't
access
while awake.

Last Word

In reviewing this book in my head and my heart over and over, I can paraphrase the intent of each section, and give a another name for each part of it in relation to where I was in life. The first section was essentially me waking from the emotional cocoon that was my life. I had just left the service with the potential to graduate from the United States Naval Academy to come back and help out family. In essence, I sacrificed for others and things did not turn out how I wanted; some turned out good, some bad. As I turned around and went to a civilian college, I longed to return to the military and received offers from three services to return, but never in the capacity that I wanted. This is when I became more of a Black nationalist revolutionary, but unlike the romanticized kids who were in school with me, I actually knew how to do things and had a level of commitment and sacrifice that they couldn't bring to bear on the situation. That is why all the poems in this section were written from the very Black conscious level point-of-view.

I chose not to lose my virginity while in the service, but I really can't even say that. I would have lost it in a minute, had I known how to approach women, but alas, that was not a developed, nor a discovered, talent at that point in my life. In this section, and for many years following, I was the naïve and impressionable young thane who looked at the world with an idealist vision of how the ways things were and tried to live that way.

Well, upon losing my virginity, things changed, but not by much. It still took me years to "master" how to get to the level I wanted to with a woman; actually, I am still not completely there. I had fun, did things, but none of it ever touched my heart until Nikki. This brings us in to the second section of the book.

This second section was the section of pain through losing a life raft while I was adrift in a sea of emotional turmoil. No, I never adjusted [at that point] to the civilian world and still desired to go back and secure a spot in the teams doing counter-terrorism. Nikki, followed by Keyva, were women that I could sink myself into a find solace and security. In both cases, it ended, but not for the typical reasons. Actually, they were pretty much two different women, of which I drew myself to for two completely different reasons. In dating Keyva, I needed a relationship to make up for the insolvency of what Nikki and I had.

The third section was a section of true romance and hope. In this section I was looking at a woman that I envisioned marrying and wanted to make sure that it would happen. It didn't which brought me to the fourth section.

The pearl emerging from the shell – the fourth section. At this point, the carnal me really started to awaken and I started to really explore life. Why not be honest with a woman that you meet in telling her that you would love to consume her in the most erotic of ways. It was the time of “two beans in a bucket, fuck it.” Live life, for keeping everything inside would make me crazy anyway. And in this time, I prospered on those levels, still not as much as I would have liked, but I did a lot. I might add though, that never during this time was there the total immersion of mind, body and soul into the act of lovemaking, just “fucking” to scratch an erotic itch. There was a part of me that could never fully turn into the man who could screw for hours every which way with a headstrong ego and no worries about not satisfying his partner fully. There were women during this time, and after Nikki, who I would have liked another chance with simply because who I am now is much different than who I was then, and in that there is another me that I have to offer.

The following section [after that] was just poems that dealt with me; it was to be just some additional works at the end of the book when I was thinking that the book was finished several years ago.

The section after that dealt with what happens when you have something in your left hand and your right hand doesn't realize it. Yes, the men who play the most get hurt the most when their main one/woman/love does something/someone, which is not them. Not that she and I were ever really meant to be together on a permanent level, but over time I really developed some strong feelings of love and “in love.” This is more of a “look twice before you cross the street” section. And now for the rest of the conclusion...

In conclusion I label myself as an “imperfect gentleman.” What that means more or less is that there is no way that I can be a perfect gentleman, for that is something that is unsettling to total essence. Over time [and mainly through experiences] my personal code of ethics and morals has changed; evolved, devolved and simply has altered over time and space, hence making me an “imperfect gentleman.”

Like many Black men raised in this society, I exist at certain states of arrested development [and there are many valid reasons for this]. I am not

going to claim all of the other things that people have claimed for the aberrant ways, because I am not an aberrant person. However, those things still had an impact on me. I didn't grow up with, or under, my father and for that I missed out on a lot that I could have learned or been imbued with, like a better work ethic. My mother and I have a weird relationship, but she for the most part, is the one that raised me. However, she has her issues as well, and that also affected my development; let's not even get into what the two of them passed into my genetically.

My development mainly was a fact of my nature as a mostly good-hearted person; some people just really don't get into certain things. In growing up I had my older sister to learn certain things from and to deal with on a daily basis. I had a good friend in my next-door neighbor, who was like an uncle and there was a boyfriend of my mother's who played a positive role in my life while he was here on this earth. There were even the guys in my neighborhood who were several years older than me that I tagged along with, still not understanding everything because my physical state of development was several years behind them. From those people, they brought me around others whom I observed, and either noted qualities that I admired, or that I detested and despised.

The biggest advantage that I suffered [besides not growing up in a two-parent household] was that I was unfortunately not placed in venues and places of learning where I could have excelled and came out a more advanced and developed person. We didn't have the money to send me, nor do I think my mother had the inkling or the time to think to place me there. While I did gain a lot from what the educational system had to offer (I won't say that public school was bad when I went; if you wanted to learn it was there, and I took advantage of what it had to offer me) my development in the creative areas of my life went mostly untouched. I did French Horn for two years in elementary school, but always wanted to get into the marimba, vibraphone and xylophone. Now I am playing an assortment of instruments from Africa, Brazil and the Caribbean but know that had I started earlier, I would be a lot farther in my abilities. At this point, I may have to concede that I can only take it so far, and while that may be the fact that I started late in the game, it could also be a result of the reality that there are other areas of my life in which I am destined to go farther.

More to the point, I was always the short kid coming up, and for that evolved a Napoleonic complex which is something that is not easy to let go. I was that kid who had to prove himself in many ways: in the

classroom, in the schoolyard, in the neighborhood and to the people that could help me get to where I wanted to be. I dealt with the malaise attitudes of those around me who could not see themselves escaping their conditions, and in many cases I was fighting to go further than they wanted because my position was lower than theirs’.

At one point in my life I wanted to be an engineer, and looked at either a long-term career in the Navy, or so many years and then coming out to do it in my professional career. As fate [and probably God Himself] would have it, things changed. Family situations arose and I made choices, or as I shall better put it, “command decisions.” I would have liked to have stayed in the Navy, or have gone back, and followed my military career dreams, but that’s not how things turned out. In the turn of events, I think that I have learned more than had my road not changed. What I gained there [in the military], I applied to my physical development and academic development; it is there that I learned that what I thought were my limits were nothing more than me not believing in myself enough, or ever being pushed to certain limits. A decade later I am a man with a wealth of knowledge in myriad areas, and have uncovered innate abilities [including genetic potential] within myself. I thank my drill instructor/assistant company commander for kicking my ass when I needed it.

Through my turns in life, I had to accept at times that I failed, while later on in life understand that there were reasons those events happened, and that was in order to bring my mind and focus to a spot where I could accomplish bigger deeds. I realize that one aspect of my life that allowed for me to not develop quicker, and even has stagnated my development greatly, was that when confronted by someone who wanted to get something across to me, I always had somewhere to run. By this I mean that I had some way via some area of knowledge, or expertise, to make a retreat and then a new stand. I couldn’t be cornered, and in that, never had to really stand and fight. The military was different, because in that I was measured along a certain track and could only deal with that track. Nowhere else in my life was anyone able to pin me down to one thing and one thing only. That’s my loss, because the more that I would and could have been humbled, the more I could have relented, deferred, accepted, learned and then advanced. I always say that if you want a kid to listen to you, beat them at their own game, and on their own level and they will surely respect you; okay, some may still not listen, but hey, some will, and they are the ones that you can help and will amount to something in

their lives. Sometimes, you have the best knowledge but can't apply it to yourself, or in my own case, no one else did.

Of all my flaws, the main one is my heart; I am a big gummy bear to those who really know me. I will give the shirt off my back and move heaven and earth for those that I truly care about. My love knows no bounds to the point that my actions for others will either jeopardize myself, or when I need something, leave me with nothing because I have already given it to someone else. There are those that have come into my life and used that for their own good; yes, I have been dogged by both friends and lovers. Doing what I have done for others has not only rusted my knight's armor, but also hampered it's flexibility, meaning that it is harder for me to do it for the next friend or lover that comes along in my life. For instance, I used to cook for the woman I was interested in; hell, its been a long time since I did that.

I once lost a friend of seven and a half years. This was a woman who knew me when I was at my most "militant" phase of my life and had gotten to me, in fact parts of me in ways that no one else got to know. We never had sex or anything like that, and while I liked her from the start, she chose to be my friend mostly because she thought I was crazy.

Anyway, over time I got to know not only her, but her mother. Finally, in the summer of '97 she asked me to fly out and attend her college graduation. Since the time we met, we had only seen each other once, which made two times. She did invite me to come visit her in New Orleans, but that was in my "broke and learning business" days, so I chose not to impose a ticket off of her being that she was going to cover the costs for everything else.

As I prepared for my travel out there, two things happened. The first was that the woman who I was gaga over, Karen, had come back into my life and told me she wanted to be in a committed relationship with me. While I agreed, it was bad timing, and I knew she did it because I would be out there with another woman. The second was that this friend talked to me about having sex with her [since there were no brothers out there who were sleeping with sisters, and in fact really no brothers up there when school wasn't in session; we are talking Oregon folks].

Upon arriving in the Northwest, she tried to hit on me for sex the first night and I turned it down; I told her before I came out there that I wasn't interested in having sex with her and that we were platonic friends and nothing more than that. After surveying the scenery out there I finally

relented; she lied to me on the last time she had sex anyway I later found out. While out there she asked me about being in a relationship with her, which is something else that I didn't want; I was attracted to her in the past, but not now. I said no, and that we would remain friends always.

Upon arriving back in Philly, Karen asked me about having kids, to which I was not happy with the idea but said that if we did it, we would have to be married and to even get there, we needed at least nine months of bliss between us. Upon calling my friend about this --we could talk about anything and everything with each other—she intimated that she might be pregnant. Well, there were many things that were suspect about this and just about every woman that I knew said that it was too soon for her to know and that she was just pulling my heart strings knowing what a good person I am. In a nutshell, conversations went back and forth and I presented her more than enough opportunities to come clean. She said she would take the abortion pill series and send me the prescription. She also said that it didn't work and in this case the only way it wouldn't work is if she was more pregnant than she thought [which would eliminate moi as the daddy], or she was outright lying. The next event was that she “had an abortion and borrowed the money from a friend.” When she complained about repaying the loan, I figured that so many hundred dollars was worth writing someone out of my life who obviously would try to deceive me for their own selfish purposes. I never did get medical documentation that said that she had the procedure done.

Funnier still, years later she contacted me and told me a bunch of stuff and still tried to act as if she didn't lie to me. This was a sister with two degrees trying to get over on me, and never proving her case with documentation.

My next major flaw is my attitude. While my heart feels, my brain feels another and reacts, not always in the best ways, and I know that to change it will take outside help as well as time and reflection on my part (I bet there are a bunch of people out there smirking and smiling, but most of them aren't in my corner anyway). Sometimes people can be pulled in a number of directions, and may find comfort in varying what they do at certain times to find peace within themselves, I am one of these people. My attitude is a combination of things, including vindication, heroism, frustration, and intolerance of things that shouldn't be. No, I don't like the way the world is going. I don't like the way that we treat each other as a people nor the fact that many of us have no dreams, goals, or aspirations. I cringe when I see a woman not be herself but merely do

what is fashionable on the street to gain the attention of some men who only want one thing from her anyway. I hate to see brothers treat sisters badly, and hate to see sisters do the reverse. I hate to see men abuse, molest, assault and rape women. I am also frustrated by the fact that when it comes to an abused woman, I can't do anything that would really change the situation until she is willing to not want to be in that situation any longer. I hate to see, and am frustrated when I see, talent wasted or not realized. My attitude, the good, the bad, and the ugly; take it or leave it, but it is me.

My business card has two titles on it: "dragonlayer" and "zen policeman." The first is pretty self-explanatory; part of me is St. George, a man of good heart, [a knight even,] who rides a white horse and saves damsels in distress and townspeople from beasts that are plaguing them. And I do get my share of bruises from doing it. The second title deals with the fact that in seeking peace of mind for myself, I can only achieve it by aiding others in getting theirs' when they are powerless to do so.

The Christ Complex

I was almost finished this book again but through several turn of events had to put this one down. In this section, I mention several times about sacrifice in helping others above all else, I would like to coin this the "Christ Complex" that I have. It came up when I was with Nikki, as well as with Etta and other women that I had relations with. At times, I have allowed myself to be interrupted by a phone call from a friend while I was hanging out with a woman, much to their displeasure. However, in many of these cases it was a friend on the other line that either needed my help or needed the help of someone else who that I could get for them. In other cases, it was an old friend touching base with me whom I had not spoken to in some time.

Probably every person that gave themselves for the greater good suffered on a personal level. There were probably times that Dr. King's wife and Malcolm X's wife would have liked for them to have spent more time at home, than risking their neck for others. However, that was not their feeling... to be selfish.

After hearing one friend's rant while I cancelled hanging out with her two days in a row for other friends, it dawned on me that Jesus probably had to put up with people being disenchanted that they didn't spend more personal time. Funny thing is that one of the people who called me needed a place to crash for the night as well as someone to talk to. By the

next day she was on her way, had her old job back and a place to stay. Even more important was that her old landlord had not thrown out her belongings so she didn't lose anything.

“You can and should never turn your back on a friend, because that might be the time that they need you.”

My resolution for people's feelings of abandonment when I comes to a friend's aid that is not them at that time, “if Jesus had to deal with it, then so can I.”

However, in doing, and being, all of this coupled with my Napoleonic complex and the utter reality of the experiences that I have been through, I have developed not only a chip on my shoulder, but an attitude of displeasure, or difference, to those that are not like me. One associate mentioned that it is not that I am a mean person, but that I am intolerant to the fact that we in this world tolerate those things that should not be accepted; they know better but won't do better. This displeasure does not come from feeling superior, but the feelings of victimization and inferiority that others express when dealing with me, in addition to them not understanding me, and criticizing me, or trying to change me. I saw a tattoo somewhere that said “soldiers are made, warriors are born.” Well, it is that concept that has placed me not in the midst of those like that, or like myself, but those that see life in a different way because their path is not that of the warrior. In this, I feel the alienation of myself from those members of society who don't understand the concept of the warrior and his/her code. Nor do they appreciate those under this banner until they need them to save them from destruction. One cannot just rise to the occasion when one is needed but must be at a constant state of readiness, and this is something that others do not understand and agree with.

I once dated a woman named after an Italian food [believe it or not] who asked me of a scenario in which I could choose to destroy my enemies totally, or do it the hard way only to not destroy to children of the enemy. She didn't like my reply but this is also a Christian woman, and in that there is a story in the Bible where God tells the Israelites to destroy another people and to leave no one living, old or young. How can she accept God and not agree with God's wisdom and logic today?

A warrior is many things, and a true one is a scholar of many subjects and disciplines including the arts and letters, music and the sciences. Most people don't see, nor understand this; the true warrior only looks at combat as the last option, not the first. In this, I am complete, but even

though I have the “code of the warrior” in my soul, I still am incomplete without a woman in my life. I am also mature enough to realize that I am no way complete in my individual self, knowing that certain things will take me years to achieve. I also am wise enough to realize that it may also take a good woman to aid me in reaching my goals, both internal and external.

But am I ready for that? While I may get one half of the equation, the other just might not come. In this, I examine my core nature, which is a combination of all aspects of a culture but also over-riden by my natural desire to be a warrior. There is that part of me that has been put on this earth to do this, and all things else come secondary. The tragic hero. It takes a lot of strength for someone to admit their weaknesses, but also more for a strong person in mind, body and soul to reveal that. While at times some people may see different things in me [depending on the dynamics of our interaction in that past and at that instant], it takes a long time to get to know the wounded heart underneath which is made of gold, or the man possibly searching for a lifesaver in certain areas. Look at me and think me a blowhard, or even an asshole, and never see the man underneath testing and prodding you, to see if you have what I need in my life. Or maybe you just caught me on a day in which I needed to bug out and let my emotions run wild.

As I said earlier... over time my code of ethics and morals have evolved, devolved and changed in certain areas. That’s not to say that I have become a worse person over the years, just that I now look at things in different ways, and my actions may not be what they were before. I have me, and the things that I like to do which sate parts of my spirit and soul but do not change my choices and actions. I am a range of frequencies, sounds and emotions and keep them all spinning in one multi-dimensional gyroscope that is my soul. I have my rap music that I like which may be for riding, getting hype, or just bouncing that southern way. I have my house music which may be for lounging, chillin’, or exorcising the spirits in my soul through dancing until everything on me is soaking wet and it is 4 A.M. in some club in New Jersey, New York, Maryland, or D.C. I have my books and my action movies as well as my romance movies (yes, us guys like some of them) and comedies. I have my peace at a Yoruba bembé as well as my heart swells through good gospel music that makes me want to cry [because it touches the soul; note: all good music makes me want to cry].

Sometimes I feel like the character in a book, like Richard Whelan in “Blowback,” or parts of characters in a movie. I have been likened to the characters [and their issues] of Morris Chestnut and Taye Diggs in “The Best Man” and Morris Chestnut in “The Brothers” as well as Lorenz Tate in “Love Jones,” [a buddy of mine said that this movie was nothing more than my life]. What differs from me versus the characters in these works of fiction is that they find people who are more of a complete yin to their yang, and in my case I wonder if it is just where I am at [geographically] or that it is not in God’s plan.

Yes, there are plenty of good women out there, but you only have one life, and in that need to make the correct choice and not jump too soon. If my life were any different, there are women in it that I would marry with no problem at all. However, my brain tells me that you cannot just go on the matters of the heart, while you might love them, there may be parts of them that you just can’t tolerate. You have your goals and she hopefully has hers, and if there isn’t a way for both of you to achieve them by being in a relationship, then don’t do it. The last thing you want to do in life is to blame your spouse for standing in the way of your dream. Another thing is that you don’t want to get involved with one person, and then meet the person for you. Take a listen to “Before I Let Go” by Frankie Beverly & Maze for an example of that scenario.

Here I am, a Black man on a mission who still wants to love and be loved, confused and confounded by his dedication to his beliefs [which also consist of saving others, if not the world] and in that doesn’t have time nor the misdirection to start a family and leave them without a husband and a father if something happens to him, and his desire to find a mate and live happily ever after, with or without children.

I don’t think that I intend to make people feel less than themselves, but in being me, find out that other people perceive it at that due to the differences in our commitments, goals, duties and actions. It is this dynamic which does more to make me alone than anything else. I am driven, to the point of which sometimes there is only me and my crusade. Hopefully, I won’t wind up like Jack Nicholson’s character in “The Pledge” where even though I am right, my actions to save others in the future by eradicating something in the present, combined with other actions which are beyond me, don’t have everyone abandoning me, and me going crazy wondering what happened.

This book is a culmination of a little more than a decade of my love life. While it does not cover every woman that I have dealt with, nor every

romantic, or even, sexual escapade that I have experienced [and there were many of them], it does cover the major areas. What's funny is that in the past decade, I have only truly been into two committed relationships. There were periods where I was only seeing one person, but nothing was agreed upon that it was an exclusive arrangement. What is more ironic is that the relationships that I have had where nothing was hammered out was the more fulfilling experiences that I have had, both good and bad.

While I might be one driven Black man whose calling and upbringing cast him in a certain weird dimension which precludes the typical storybook romance from happening, there are many Black men out there like me in one way or another; wounded, disenfranchised, and driven to prove themselves to themselves and the world. They struggle to find a place to fit in and cope with their emotional, dreams and wants in being there. We have not only problems of racism to deal with which affects us on levels too numerous to mention, but also the infighting within our own ranks, much of which is a byproduct of that racism over time. We fight with, more than support, each other. We seek to find that which we can get along, and get ahead with. Consequently, there are those of us who can not see what we really represent, nor where we are, nor what we bring to the table, but what about those of us who can see things for what they are?

We as Black men in America have our own storybook dreams of romance [and sexual escapades] but unfortunately, there are too many things that stop them from ever happening. There are also too many psychological "variances" which shape some of these dreams and make them either unattainable, or misguided in reality. In truth, to find "the one," many of us have to break through these mental misperceptions and cultural biases that we may have. Why is the lighter skinned sister, or even the white woman, considered more of a "prize" to us? Why do some of us keep looking to be in positions of financial dominance, if not intellectual dominance, over our woman?

Summarily, we are left with several questions on one side that we ultimately have to answer:

Maybe the person that will bring me joy is right there in front of me, or maybe there is someone else more suited to me? Maybe there is no state of compromise where my soul will be happy, or at least at peace with this woman or with that woman? Maybe, I am not too picky and should stick to my guns? Maybe I should hold off until I find her, because she is out there? Maybe, in the end, I won't find her, but she will come and rescue

me? Or maybe, I should just be happy with the one I am with and see what pans out.

Yes, we are ultimately conflicted in our cores, and that's what makes it all the more spectacular when we can, Black men that is, transgress all of this, and not only find, but also fall in, love.

Possibility

(written in my head on 2/14/01 inspired by listening to Everything is Everything by Lauren Hill on my drive to work)

Everything is everything
eternally
Sometimes we can't find,
in our searches,
and our travels,
anything.
At times
we only
discover
nothing
But
once in a blue moon
we find,
spot,
espy
something.

Everyone is everyone,
as time passes
by
Sometimes we can't
find anyone
who seems to be,
and deal with
having
no one
But I
have come to know

through chance encounter
of time and space
someone
who could be
the One
and have a
meaningful
Thing
with

You Again

(penned 9/19/01)

You
new you
not old you
have I
met
but old you
is still there
holding on to past events
and
past attitudes

New you
not rid of
old you
though
acting
as if
new you
is
new and
changed

Old you
won't leave
won't she
holding new you
back

New you

needs to
exorcise old you
and understand
the past

Find out why
I, old me,
turned away from
old you
Why
new me
with knowledge
from the experiences of
old me and old you
don't like
and won't accept
old you
in
new you

New you
needs to shed
old you baggage
and embrace
new us

The Road Home

(penned 12/8/01 7:48 PM)

I never thought
it would be
like this,
or maybe I did
and wrote
it
before I saw you.

I am what you
have
sought,
but not expected.
Too black,

too strong?
there is no cream
in this
coffee;
no watering
down of its essence
to make it
imbibible
for you.
Maybe its goodbye,
maybe it's just
the ride home
for now.

Moments in Time

What if,
I could see the
beauty
in you
physically, mentally and
spiritually
for a space
in time
nestled in the depths of your eyes
the curves of your form
the timbre of your voice
and the flow
of your
movements?

What if I knew
the vision
wouldn't last
a lifetime
but maybe just
a second,
a minute,
a romantic interlude
or weeks,
and months?

Would you then

indulge me?

What if
in that place
between two points
in four dimensions
we could evolve
each
other?

Would you
allow
for that

What if
you take my hand
and
lead the way?

Sizing it Up

The measure,
the metrics
the assessment
of beauty
is not just in the eye of the beholder
but in their
mind,
body,
and soul

The measure of
a woman's beauty
Cannot just be
in her
eyes,
face,
physique
but also in
her attitude,
behavior
and mood

Sometimes it's
the sparkle in her eye
or the resonance of her voice
It can't be
measured by
the core between her thighs
but rather by
the whole experience
she includes you
in on

Not by the lips
she kisses you with
but by how
it makes
you tingle
inside

Or by
the shape
of her hips
but how it makes you
feel when
you're holding
them
on the dance floor
or in the bedroom

It
can't be judged
by the
softness of her feet
but by the distance
she will walk
with you,
for you,
by you

Sometimes
the measure of a woman's
beauty
lies in all that
she

gives you
and how
she makes you
feel

How many times
have we
misjudged them?

It Doesn't Matter

It doesn't matter,
if I tell
you that I
think you're beautiful,
gorgeous
or captivate
my interests

It doesn't matter
that
I
may be
more interesting
than anyone you've ever known

It doesn't matter
that
I may be
what you've been
looking for
or really need

Because you're not
going to give me a
chance
based on what
you
think you see.

Honestly Vulnerable

There are times
when I wish
that I had
the skills,
or the talents,
and/or the abilities of others.

Their
histories,
experiences,
successes and failures.

There are times
when I wish
I had
chosen
or taken
a different path
But when I
look closely
and analyze...
I might see
that part of it
may not
truly be for me

And sometimes
I realize
others think
the same
towards me

And in the long run
I will be
scrutinized,
dissected
and demonized,
So that
no one will see the real
me

and that
 my life
 will seem to
be hollow
 and pseudophantasmagoric
when
 kids
 and those that
 have not
 struggled
will ridicule me
 and “friends” will depart
that I will
 be considered villainous,
 or incorrect;
a Black Tesla

Maybe
 someone will discover
after my demise
 that I had some of the keys
 after all.

(I found this poem when I started looking for all of my originals and as I started to type it in, realized it wasn't about love, but I kept going, because maybe it is fit for the last poem in this book)

Recapitulation:

So, as I try to get out this version of the book before 2013 comes in, this past year if not these past few months have been some serious ones of discovery, including self-discovery.

If we look at the concept of when a Black man loves, common sense would show that this is no longer the same that it was ten, twenty, thirty or forty years ago. I am at the age of forty-two and I can reflect on the changes in attitudes along with the changes of trends and music that I have seen in my brief existence on this planet. Not every Black male is raised in the same set of circumstances and correspondingly how they relate to Black women specifically and women in general can run a wide gamut. And also at issue is what is not only expected of Black men, but what these men in turn expect of women.

For me, I unfortunately see some of the worst examples of a well kempt man out here and feel sorry for the women, and then I look at the women and feel sorry for the men. There is nothing wrong with following certain trends, but like a song there is a time when the record is over. As all of our basic goals should include making a difference and leaving the world a little better than when we came into it, the one thing that we should try not to do is let certain trends define and brand us for the rest of our lives. Most of us are followers at some level, but some are sheep of the dullest kind, or very dim light bulbs. It actually astounds me the levels to which some people will go to be accepted by those that will never be in a position to advance their causes.

We have cadres of grown-ass men wearing their pants sagging down to untenable heights as well as have marked themselves with ink on places that can't be hidden with clothing. My question is, "for what is this for and to what end?" I am not necessarily knocking everyone because you'll find gems where you'd least likely seek to look at times; there are always exceptions to the rule. However, it seems that many people are emulating what they see in music videos, crappy movies and of certain celebrities who if you did a good fiscal accounting you would discover aren't really worth more than you are [if not their supposed riches will be gone in several years anyway].

Early last century, many Black men, regardless of their jobs in life carried themselves with a dignity and a bearing that made them look more respectable, regardless if what they did was legal or not. Suits, hats, ties and dress shoes were aplenty. At least the outside looked presentable. Today, you have people who think that a white t-shirt is acceptable wardrobe options,

and I literally want to puke in my mouth every time I see male wearing sagging pants, with one or two layers of underwear exposed, and with a little girl with them [perhaps along with their female companion]. These little girls are looking at the wrong examples for men that they might want to be with later on down the line.

And the lack of actual self-development amongst the men is also a let down. No one wants to crack open a book and learn anything. Nor learn a musical instrument or develop a talent other than trying to lie effectively to get women in bed. What have many of us become?

I am a Black man, and while there are many other great Black men out there, the sad reality is that who we usually see aplenty are those which aren't the best archetypes of what we should be about. What we have redefined as Blackness is actually a combination of behaviors and attitudes that for the most part, will not advance our position in this society, the world or even our own interpersonal relationships.

And my story is not the same of every Black man out there. I grew up under a single mother, born in a lineage of men who seem to have a problem with fidelity or infidelity and I will admit that I have done my share of philandering as well. For some [of us] men, sanity in a relationship might be surmised by engaging something outside of the relationship, whether one-time, for a short time, or permanently. Sometimes, it's not the move to walk away at that point, but to just ameliorate our own needs and desires.

I grew up in an economically lower class but also among lower middle class families [and some very middle class families] many with both parents in the home. Though it was the inner city, we had trees, and some folks had yards and it was a place where neighbors communicated with one another and kids could be safe hanging out on steps or porches to midnight. For whatever we didn't have, I never went out in tattered clothing, or with an uncombed/unbrushed head of hair or with a rumble in an empty stomach. We were on public assistance, but that didn't define us in the least.

I grew up at one point with a crush on some light-skinned, aka "red bone" Black females, but would also have some crushes on some chocolate skinned sisters as well. As I would transition through grades, my school choices would take me to the predominantly white Greater Northeast section of Philadelphia and then to a very multicultural school located in a predominantly Black section of North Philadelphia. Oh, there were some white girls that I had some crushes on, as well as some Black girls too.

As I grew up in the world, and wasn't living the basic life-paths that many of my contemporaries in my neighborhood were doing, I would come to get exposed to all types of people from a variety of walks of life as well as different races. Love for me was not predicated to any particular type of person and my feelings were honest and free.

I sometimes wonder what would have happened had I been successful with some people that I liked in my past, or if some people that liked me would have won me over. I still remember a white girl in my Speech Communications class at Penn State who floored everyone when she said her goal for the class was to know as much as she could about me; you know, she actually was very pretty.

Like Chris Rock once said, most of us were not someone else's first choice in love. Had I been, I would be married to Juanita Lolita Wroten, or is it Lolita Juanita Wroten? Life and love is a strange thing. I am forty two, have never been married and have no kids; this latter point is confirmed! I never wanted kids at all, and now I have to look to see what and who I want in my life, because I don't anticipate marrying at this age and then getting divorced. At this age, we get more particular for what we want and also want people to give us leeway for where we are not in life as well...

See, one major issue is that at this point in our lives, we do want peace in our home. But you know what, I also want excitement, which means mental stimulation and challenge as well as sexual satisfaction, and I don't want to hook up with someone who is going to have a ton of health issues like obesity, hypertension and Diabetes. And maybe I want someone who isn't trying to keep up with every fad, including those that will also give her other medical problems such as foot problems caused by wearing shoes which are too damned high! And as a single man with no kids, do I want to wind up becoming a grandfather to a step-child's offspring?

I look back, and examine all of the past lovers that I have had, and then amongst them those that were the best sexual partners that I had, and I ask whether or not I could have made it work; whether I was willing to give up enough of my own dreams to make them happy so that I could stay happy, and the answer is no. I can't compromise my principles no matter how good the "bumping uglies" are, but on the flip side I need that level of satisfaction with the woman I would choose to be mine for the rest of my life.

Honestly, I have met many great women, and some who if they can tame me, I could have a wonderful life with. Some have been Black, some have been white, one which I wish I could have made the one was Filipina!. I would

just like to be happy and not regret making that ultimate choice, you know the one regarding marrying someone. Life can be the movie or the song that you want it to be, but you have to take the time to craft your part in it. And you know what, I want it to be a good movie with an excellent soundtrack. I would love Mint Condition to sing at my wedding, and for each week to have at least one great night which reminds you of a great scene with Audrey Hepburn and any great leading man where the mis en scene is all that. I want to laugh, dance, fly, soar, savor and be sated.

And I think that many Black men want to ultimately love like that, regardless of their circumstances.

Soft Eyes

Soft eyes
It's what happens
Every time I see a woman
That catches my eye

Soft eyes
I look
Assess and analyze
Taking in every detail I can
And then
Compare and cross correlate
Looking for what I know
And what I have seen,
Experienced
And endured in the past
I hear
And remember
Record and play back
To better figure out all of her angles
I smell
And detect
Both odors and aromas
I wish I could taste
Both lips
But that's too forward
And I might regret it anyway

Soft eyes
I calculate
And imagine
Our futures
Our ups and downs
Wondering if this ship
Has finally found its port

After the Fall

After the fall,
or when I am gone...
have left you alone

it's funny what has become

One:

Gained weight

And still couldn't find the truth

Was it the steady diet of food

Or lies

Which ballooned you up like this

Two:

Started to endeavor

On all the things I tried to urge

When we were together

But still ignored my truths

And took two steps back

For every step forward

Three:

Third marriage and still not happy

Lamenting not listening

To my heart the first time

Four:

Mixed goddess

Of perfect sexual synchronicity

But blown mind

Four times wed

Twice divorced

And now another annulment

I wonder if we'll ever

Play the game

Again

Five:

You lied to everyone

But you lied to me

And on me

And you still want my friendship

And my concern

Why?

Especially when you'll still keep disrespecting me

And my wishes

Why bother?

After the fall,
or when I am gone...
have left you alone
it's funny what has become

Avoidance And Aversion

Avoidance and
Aversion

Those are your tools
Which never
Ever
Move you ahead
And which keeps us in this endless loop
Ad infinitum

Every time I
Raise the issues
You look away
Walk away mentally
And things
Don't change physically

We could
Be so great together
But you are the weakest link
There's no strength in avoiding the issues
In making excuses
To yourself by the boatload
And trying
To keep convincing yourself that those lies are truth

Distance and time won't resolve things
What are you really thinking?

A Meet, a Dream, a Kiss

A meet

A table of ten
Or twelve

Me: fortunate enough to get the last ticket
You: unfortunate enough to be seated
Without your group
Me: doubly fortunate for that
So we met,
And the sparkle in your eyes
Stole my soul

A Dream

You had
Randomly five months later
Which had
You and I together
And me giving you
A kiss
Which stole your breath away

A Kiss

I would like to finally do it
Are you finally ready?

Memento

I still have them
In a box;
A photo, a trinket
A kiss
And a statue
Things you gave me when
We were together

I still have them
In my heart
Those thoughts of you
And the memories of every passionate kiss,
Embrace,
And cuddle we ever shared

I still have them
In my soul
Those feelings I get when I hear your voice

Or see you in person

Maybe I should make space
For someone else
Or maybe
Always hold on
And treasure what we had
When we had it

Crying Overtime

Am I crying overtime,
Or crying over time?

I do it when no
One's watching
In plain site
But you don't see my tears
For you don't acknowledge my pain

The loss of treasured ones
Both through death
And discourse
The trials and tribulations
Of life
And the search for answers
And truth
And the joyous things I sometimes see
But when you
Stop
Shedding tears
Then you have died already

Keystone

I can't love you
Though I want too
Badly
I want to take you
Into my heart,
My soul
And my life
Passionately embracing,

Pleasing
And satiating
Your every desire
For every remaining day of your life

I can't love you
Because something is missing
The keystone
For making everything
Fall into place

I have yet to
Find it
And wonder
In which house
Does it exist?

Maybe

Maybe,
I should have loved
You more
Been more attentive to your needs,
Your wishes
And your desires

Maybe
I should have said less
Which broke your spirit
And sapped you of good feelings
And should have said more
Affirming you of who you are
And what you meant to me

But then again
Maybe,
I should have
Left you alone in the first place

When a Black Man Loves is a provocative and deeply sensual collection of poetry and prose that spans a little more than eleven years. It is utterly revealing and explicitly honest. It encompasses and explores five areas of love, lust, attraction and romance (of which all of us have experienced):

- When there was no one;
- After the breakup;
- Strengthening a relationship;
- Moving on (and living life); and
- Trying to win a lost love back.

This book is not merely a look inside how I, a Black man, felt during different phases of my relationships, or more aptly stages of my life, but also into those realities of love, lust, desire and need as well. These are aspects that form all relationships, no matter what ratio is used.

When A Black Man Loves is more than simply the ruminations of its author, Zachary Harris. It is a statement regarding basic human dilemmas: ecstasy and pain, risk and rewards, richness and barrenness. The book stands at the crossroads of race, Americana, the hood, class, and beauty and renders a verdict on life and why we even bother to live it. You might put *When a Black Man Loves* on your coffee table, but it probably won't stay there long. You'll put it on the nightstand and read it while your lover prepares to join you in bed. It will be your friend (or foe!) when your life is breaking apart or when it is just starting to come back together again. You may put it down for several years, but you will eventually pick it up again. It is hallow, haunting ground that doesn't brook fools well. Don't read this book unless you are ready for it to read you.



Zachary Marcus Cesare Harris was born in Philadelphia, PA. He also has several other manuscripts which are in various states of development. He is also a musician and a photographer through which this book will be extended into the audio and visual domains. He currently resides in Philadelphia, but is dying to get out and explore the world.

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