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The Moment in Which Time Took Over

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The Moment in Which Time Took Over

Writing Process

Editor's note: This submission was named the issue's Best Multi-Genre Work, which came with a \$100 award.

While writing this paper, I felt that it was important for me to “let loose!” I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to write about, but I knew that my abstract topic had to be time. There were so many stories that could’ve been shared, but I believe the appropriate ones made it into the final draft. The writing process concerning this assignment served to be challenging at times, but that was only due to the need of capturing time properly in order to convey the story I had been trying to tell. I enjoyed creating these pieces mainly because there were no restrictions. Writing has always proved to be friendly to me even when I do not display the same kindness back to it. When writing about time, I knew the “right things” would be said because no one could experience those moments the way I had, not even the fictional ones. So, I’m glad to have gotten the opportunity to write these things down and to tell stories that have for so long been enclosed within my mind.

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Amariá Jones

The Moment in Which Time Took Over

I remember when you were on my side. When I could go for days, weeks, months, even years and look exactly the same. I remember being in first grade thinking about second grade. Being in sixth grade, thinking about senior year. How you flew past me for so long without even looking back. Then you stopped flying and started nesting in my body, my face, in my mind, and my hands. You took the resemblance I once had to years prior and gave me a new identity. I no longer stayed the same, I left girl to become woman, stayed daughter but became eligible for wife. I remember blowing out candles at Chuck E. Cheese for my third birthday. I remember thinking you'd never come for me, that things were moving too slowly. You came for me, though; you swept me up and ran with me! You aged me like fine wine, grew me like a rose, and instilled in me the lessons of life. How I thank you for finally catching up with me, but oh how I wish you'd slow down.

Top 10 Things to Do to Kill Time!

1. Turn off your phone and read a book. I usually go for fiction, but it's honestly whatever suits your fancy! Reading allows for imagination and world making; and in other worlds, time is not likely to exist.
2. After turning 30, stop counting! You'll be doing yourself a favor—so I have heard. If someone happens to tell you that you are twenty-two, there is absolutely no reason to correct them. (According to Dela's [CORE devotional leader] older sister.)
3. Watch a Netflix series! Man, those things are dangerous! How did you get through three seasons in four hours? Never mind, I'll spare you the embarrassment.
4. Have a conversation with your best friend! After talking about your future spouse for 2 hours and giving the annual "I wanna lose like 30lbs" talk, make some crazy jokes and go on rants about your new lives as college students!
5. Take a nap without an alarm, then you will have experienced a true hiatus!
6. Take a nature walk. Although I have only done a few of these, I hear that they are truly invigorating!
7. EAT! Obviously don't overdo it; but you know... a little nibble here and a munch n' crunch there will do you some good.
8. Have a meaningful conversation with a group of friends! Conversations like these usually lead to great insight on how to deal with different problems on a larger scale.
9. Work out—I am not saying that I condone this type of radical behavior, but to each its own!
10. Connect your phone to the nearest speaker and have a jam session! And yes, I do expect you to sing all the lyrics—mhm, even those incomprehensible riffs and runs singers always insist on doing.

When Doing Grandma's Hair

I visit Umi at the end of every week. That's when it makes the most sense to go and see her. She is usually already waiting for me—on the front porch—because I always come around the same time. She never tells me that this is what she has been doing, she simply says “It took you long enough!” Umi—grandma—has never been keen on waiting. She has always been a stickler for time.

“I saw Erma yesterday at the clinic. She asked about you Noni,” Umi says as she scooches back in her warped and splintered rocking chair. She cups each of her hands around the bear-pawed armrest. Her figure begins to mold unto the chair as if she is becoming a statue. Her brown leather-like skin reminds me of raisins and cranberries.

“I know, Umi,” I respond as I shuffle around to the back of her rocking chair. I begin to remove her bonnet and start to undo the long thick gray braids streaming from her head. She rocks back and forth in her chair while humming the tune of an old Negro spiritual.

“I know, Umi,” she repeats back at me. I know what she's gonna say next.

“What don't you know, Noni?” She doesn't really want an answer from me. She's just telling me to listen.

After undoing the two braids, I begin combing through her hair from bottom to top. I start at her ends, detangling the knots from her thick mane, I separate the lengthy strands and continue this routine until I am satisfied. When I first started doing Umi's hair, I was about five years old. It instantly became our thing. After teaching me the basics of braiding and cornrowing, the rest was history. For as long as I have been doing Umi's hair she has never been “tender headed” and if she is now, she never says anything.

I part her hair into four sections by dragging the rat-tailed comb down her scalp. The parts are clean and fresh—it takes lots of time and practice to get them this way—I grease her scalp with argon oil and mint. This part of the process takes about 30 minutes, but I always slow down towards the end, just because. Umi continues to hum her tune and begins to tap her foot again the hardwood floor.

Lord I keep so busy praisin' my Jesus
Keep so busy praisin' my
Jesus Keep so busy praisin' my Jesus
Ain't got time to die

'Cause it takes all of my time (It takes all of my time, it takes it all)
All of my time (to praise Him) If I don't praise Him the rocks are
gonna cry out Glory and honor, glory and honor Ain't got time to
die

Umi starts to fidget a little, I continue to redo her hair—into four braids
instead of just two.

“You almost done Noni?” Umi asks me a little hard pressed.

“Almost Umi, but not yet.”

The Idea of Time & The Lack There of

We are all seconds, minutes, and
hours away from our next “bad decision.”
What I do not know today I may never learn tomorrow.

Tomorrow may not even have our names on its roster.
It may not pick us up. It may never stop by our houses
on its yellow cheese bus.
It may never ask you if you are “tagging along.”

Today is today as long as it is presented before you.
Today could end now, you may never see tonight.

Yesterday is much like your last birthday!
while you may remember it,
you will never see it again.

Today, tomorrow, yesterday, and the others
are all parts of an eternity we hope to someday enjoy.
Seconds, minutes, and hours
are passing us by all of the time.

On The day I Encountered Time

I know what you are thinking! I know what you want me to say! You want me to say that I saw clocks, but I didn't! There was not one clock in sight, no dust bunnies hopping off of their backs or trailing after their feet. No wrinkles or creases, no nothing—just time. I know what you want to hear, but I cannot tell you! I cannot tell you if it knew your name, if it was sorry for taking your mom away, for ruining that relationship, or allowing that night to happen because it did not say. It did not tick or tock, it did not “ding-dong” at the twelve o'clock hour, nor did it allow the rooster to crow! I offered it a chair, but it never took a seat. It reminded me of myself, but it reminded me of you, too!

I know that you would like for me to say that it had a face, but it did not! It was more like a shape shifter that occasionally casted shadows. There was no hourglass, or sun dial in sight! It did not stutter, nor did it hum. No, it never looked within itself and said, “Oh my, I am running late.” It simply waited and watched as I made the first move. I smiled and laughed to lighten up the mood, there was no gesture given in return. There was me and there was it, in the presence of one another once again—just waiting.

(an abstract physical description of time)

Tracey, Thee Immortal

She didn't know what she was doing! *She planned every part of it.*
I couldn't call her selfish even if I wanted to! *She left it all behind.*
I know. *She knew!*
She wanted space. *It was selfish!*
They were all looking at her. *They were looking at you too!*
I know! *She knew.*
It was the deadline! *She could've asked for help!*
Again? *Again.*

*I bet you were pacing around the room—scared
—looking for the right words to leave with your boys.*
I remember that day, it was weird.
*I waited for you for a long time
because we were supposed to be going somewhere.*
I remember calling your phone until your voicemail filled up.
I remember hoping you were okay.
*The crazy thing is, I can't help to think
that you were already gone before I even picked up the phone.*

But I know what it feels like when nothing is going right.
I didn't know at the time, but I know now!
When the closest thing to freedom looks
like a noose or blowing your brains out.
When time ain't on your side and you can't see the bigger picture,

when the light lit within you starts to bob in and out and flicker.

I know that you probably regret it and

I wish that you were here,

but then again it was a lot going on around that time of the year.

You were supposed to be getting married

to the man of your dreams,

but he called it all off when he found out about that other thing.

You were scrambling up your money, robbing Peter to pay Paul.

After a while it got too hard and you decided to leave it all.

I wish I could say I was blameless,

but that day always plagues my mind.

Was it the fact that I kept calling you?

Asking about England around that time?

I can't say that I agree with the decision that you made,

but I understand the pressure that comes with those dark days.

The devil sittin' on your shoulder,

telling you risk it all,

tempting you to jump of the cliff and just hoping you'll fall.

I still think about you often and in the distance, I can hear your voice, saying
"move with a purpose Amariá," but only I could make that choice.

It took time Tracey, it took time. (*A poem*)

Delilah Deveuroa's Untimely Bladder

Delilah was three, and even at three she was expected to at least act as if she were five. Mrs. Deveuroa—her mother—insisted on having the girl at the dinner without a diaper because it did not fit well under the girl's dress. As a part of the help, I was made to stand off to the side and once the festivities were to start, I would be directed out back with the rest of the Negro workers. As I stood against the wall, I felt something twisting in my stomach. I knew something awful was gonna happen tonight. Delilah and I didn't have no time to figure out her bladder yet. She had gotten better at telling me when she had to go, but I weren't there by her side, and she knew no better than to piss on the floor—cause I was always there to clean it up.

I seen her twisting and twirling before I was made to sit out in the yard with Simon and dem, but I couldn't do nothin', they wouldn't even let me go back over to Mrs. Deveuroa. They told me it was time for me to leave out, so that's what I had to do!

There Delilah sat clinching and fidgeting in her chair. She was so used to brown hands and brown eyes watching her every move—looking out for her. She never learned Ida's name, but somehow, they always communicated. Mrs. Deveuroa, so used to only wearing titles knew nothing about her daughter's current state. Occasionally she'd look down to check on the girl, but she never once asked her "Do you need to relieve yourself?" Ida had always asked that question, and that is what Delilah was waiting for.

Mrs. Deveuroa laughed and sipped at her flute of champagne, totally ignorant to her daughter's discomfort. About an hour passed before Deveuroa looked down to check on Delilah. By check, I mean she glanced and nodded before returning to the conversation amongst those sitting at her table. Delilah began to grow anxious; she was unable to communicate her needs.

She tucked her small pink hands in between her legs, her big green eyes looked around the foreign area in search for a familiar—brown—face. Delilah began to stand up but was told to "sit back down." by Mrs. Deveuroa. Delilah's round face began to flush red—she looked a lot like a tomato. She crossed her legs, and clasped her hands, she wiggled in her chair and began to cry. Mrs. Deveuroa pinched Delilah's arm and left a purplish pink mark a little below her shoulder. Delilah looked out into the sea of people hoping to see Ida, but there was no place for Ida among those folks. Delilah squirmed and murmured hoping that her mother would take a hint.

As her bladder grew tired Delilah began to stand. She removed both hands from her legs, she no longer twisted or squirmed! She pissed, right there on the hard wood floor!

The people were astonished. Mrs. Deveuroa was embarrassed. Ida was uninformed and Delilah was relieved.

That night did not end well for Ida, even though she was outside! She had been cursed at, called irresponsible, and fired all in one night.

When the party was over and the people were gone, Ida was made to clean up Delilah's mess. Ida had been in the wrong place, at the wrong time.

Adrenaline Rushes

It wasn't like he had to do it, but with all the pressure from his friends, why not? It was just another dare. He wasn't really gonna shoot the store owner. He just was gonna have a little fun. You know, wave the empty glock around and ask for the cash. They told him it would be fine, why wouldn't it be? They had stolen cars, purses, broken into apartments—it was all fun of course. Nothing serious, nothing but a quick rush of adrenaline! Cause you know time flies when you're having fun. Hours move like seconds! Too fast for their own good!

Marcus handed him the gun, it was empty—he thought, that's what Jay told Marcus. Why would he need to double check? He took the steel hesitantly, not really knowing if this is what he wanted to do. He walked across the street from BK's and into the corner store.

It wasn't like it had not been done before. Just a few months ago the carryout had gotten held up and nobody got hurt! What was the big deal?

One [heart pounding, head heavy, breathe picks up] “Wassup wit chu!” sweat dripping from his brow, hand gripping the glock from the inside of his pant.

Two “Oh so you can't hear? Wassup wit chu! Open up the register, now nigga!”

Three *Removes glock front pant leg and aims right at the glass between he and the store owner. *

Yeah, there were kids around, but when were there not?

Yeah, the store owner had children too—they went to school with the boy holding the gun.

No, he didn't mean it, it was all just fun and games!

“Open the register now! Open. It. Now.
OpentheregisternowbeforeIshootyounigga!”

Quarter pieces, like lost soldiers, like rage, like no GPS. Hot metal catapulting into midair. Didn't ask for an address or BODY to empty into. Stopped life in its tracks. Took moments, seconds, minutes, and hours from an innocent man! Bullets don't have no name on them, they just hit! Just pierce! They just kill.

He couldn't run fast enough! Seconds moving like hours, scuffed air jordans pushing hard up against Ms. Concrete! Hot steel placed back in his pant. Sirens

going in and out, sing songs of death. Reflect red and blue, foreshadowing of trouble.

It was supposed to be fun! It was supposed to be a joke, moments, seconds, and minutes alike! it was just a big rush of—

Two lives lost in one day, cause bullets ain't got no names on them—not even when it's twelve warning shots coming from the police.

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Wake up at 7:00am, 6:45am on a good day.

Washes faces, brushes teeth. (Sets timer)

Takes off bonnet, takes off durag, fixes hair... gets dressed.

looks at time, keeps track of time

Packs oatmeal, tea, and yogurt.

Leave out by 8:00 am

Eats breakfast at VWK... spends no money, Free!

*brings own breakfast, uses hot water & a bowl.

Might buy a \$1.00 fruit.

Leaves VWK for class @ 8:30 am - 8:35 am

I usually listen to music on my walk down

If I get there first, I set up the tables for class

Waiting.... others come in.

On phone for a while, might listen to music again.

English 100 starts @ 9:05 am.

When Tyme has had Her Say!

Dear Tyme,

So, my boyfriend and I have been dating for ten years and I'm so ready to be married I don't know what to do. I don't want to scare him away, but I'm unsure as to why he has not popped the question yet. What should I do? I've invested so much time into this relationship and I just can't see myself leaving. He tells me he loves me, but I am starting to become unsure of his commitment.

Analise Decaydis,

A fan.

Dear Analise,

I believe that it's time to go! You know like I know, that men are trash! It's just a hard fact that we as the female species must accept. Even female spiders know what's up! After they get what they want, they kill the idiot! Do like I have done! Find a dog and move on! After my fifth marriage I have realized that men just don't understand me—Archie, my French poodle does! I have decided to drip myself in jewels and call it the day. If you plan on waiting for him to act right, you might as well make like a tree, and grow some roots! However, as I like to say

“There is no Tyme like the present.”

May the seconds, minutes, and hours you spend in that relationship bless you with common sense.

—Tyme Thompson

Citation & Inspiration page

(google lyrics & <https://www.ranker.com/list/famous-negro-spiritual-songs/ranker-music>) 10/15

“Ain’t Got Time to Die” was the Negro spiritual I chose to use in my fictional vignette with Umi and Noni. I chose this spiritual because it goes well with the topic of time, and it also gives Umi an age range without being specific. After looking through a few different lyrics of Negro spirituals, I found this particular selection to be most fitting.

(Inspiration from “The Help” Written by Kathryn Stockett, Narrated by Jenna Lamia. 10/19)

I remember watching “The Help” starring Octavia Spencer and Viola Davis when I was much younger. One of the two scenes I explicitly remember is that of when Mae Mobley—who was in the care of ‘Abilene’ [Viola Davis] uses one of the public toilets delivered to Hilly’s front yard. I chose to use inspiration from that scene for “Delilah Deveuroa” because it expressed another element of time that I had not yet incorporated within my paper. The time period, the relations and interactions, and the background story all gives a new element of time.

(“Quarter pieces” inspiration, Kendrick Lamar’s “DUCKWORTH” 10/20)

One of my favorite songs from Kendrick Lamar’s 2017 “DAMN” album is “Duckworth.” Within this song he is telling a story of how his father and a stranger became best friends through a series of uncanny event—one being a robbery. In one part of the song, Lamar says something about “quarter pieces”. Although, I am not sure if he is referring to bullets, I wanted to reference the song in that way along with the inspiration of robbery. (Adrenaline Rushes)

(my neighborhood, SE DC, Anacostia *Inspiration* “BK liquors & corner store 10/20)

Anacostia, SE D.C. is my neighborhood. Not too far from my house on Martin Luther King Ave was an old building that used to be a liquor store called “Big K” liquors—which I shortened to “BK” in “Adrenaline Rushes.” The carryout and corner store that I mention are right across the street from Big K’s. However, I don’t know if either of them has ever actually been robbed before.

(inspiration, A former mentor “Tracey Roach”10/19)

Tracey Roach was an amazing mentor that I got the pleasure of experiencing from grades four to six. I believe that she is a huge part of my success story, and I try to pay homage to her whenever I get the chance! #Suicide Awareness (Tracey, Thee Immortal)