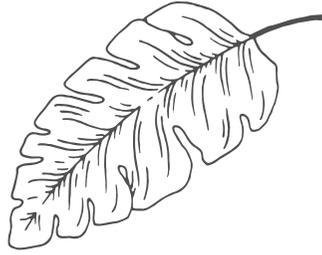


Ashan R. Hampton

*SOUL
THOUGHTS*

poems & essays

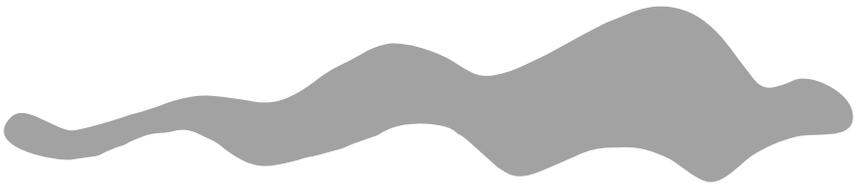




Soul

T H O U G H T S

PART I



Little Sister

Young Nubian
walking alone
amidst the depression
and depravity of
her neighborhood.

Hair kinky
disarrayed
breaking off
due to a wickedly
unkempt perm.

Dark sepia skin
ashy against
the floor-length
sapphire blue
sleeveless
cotillion dress;
much too big for her.

Accessorized with a
cynicism, despair,
carnality...
much too big for her.

No one ever told her
she was a Nubian.

Little Sister

The sight of this young girl still saddens me, although several years have passed since I took notice of her, casually driving in my car on the way to my parents' house.

The blue, semi-formal dress she wore was anomalous to the low-income housing complex she was walking within. But, she could have been going to some party or cotillion for all I knew. Somehow, I doubted that.

Her form looked like an eight or nine year-old girl, but the wear in her smiling, young face told me that she had already seen too much. She took long, child-like strides - almost skipping - along the sidewalk toward her destination when I happened to glance over to the side of the road. Me, a complete stranger grieving over the suffocation of her fleeting, bright-eyed, innocence.

I chose an association between this girl and the Nubian people - strong, proud, beautiful - because I assumed she had not heard that message very often. That she was a black rose; lovely and powerful, regardless of her circumstances or environment.

All kids, especially black kids, deserve to be kids; to be loved, protected and shown the potential of all they can contribute to the world. Our silence, our apathy as we pass by are killing them.



DATING * MATING

INFATUATING

Young Man

The age difference
meant nothing to me
until the night I
trekked across campus
in the dank night heat
in search of that which
you'd given me.

While standing outside
your dorm,
perspiration creeping
down my arm
like the graze
of a mosquito.
I swat it and wipe
the slimy slickness
onto my pant leg.

It occurred to me
when I heard one of
six late pubescent
modishly dressed
young ladies say,

*"Are you a football player?"
Could you tell Eugene
in room 216 to come down
please?"* that you were younger
and I was definitely
older.

When Being Single Sucks

Being single sucks when you're broke. Broke suggests that you're gainfully employed, but low on funds at the moment. However, when the next payday rolls around, you'll have more money, and will thus cease to be broke. Until you pay monthly bills or try to fill your gas tank that is, at which point you'll cycle back into broke-ness. This is how it generally happens for the average working class single, not the fab, glossy, sitcom television version.

Basically, you're in between paydays and find yourself saying things like, "*I'm just gonna stay in tonight,*" or "*I don't have anything to wear*" when you're asked to mingle at places that require money. You give whatever excuse you can think of in attempts to decline the invite gracefully. No one likes to admit to his or her financial challenges, even among friends who'll readily pay.

However, my cousin Kevin and I have decided that honesty is always the best policy. So when confronted with social broke-ness, we politely decline with, "Nah, I'm a little financially embarrassed right now, but catch me next week or something." See, we come across as witty and fun instead of losers with no money.

Dating while broke is possible, but it doesn't create the best first impression with a new potential. Broke dates could involve a dollar movie and high-end fast food like Arby's or Backyard Burger, Little Caesar's and a movie rental or a vintage style, "Happy Days" car date at the Sonic drive-in. Actually the options for broke dates are endless for the low maintenance dater. Truthfully, only people with great personalities and smooth

conversation skills can successfully pull off broke dates, because something has to overshadow the fact that you're working it on a budget.

Although dating while broke is possible, it sucks differently for men and women. For example, if a man meets a woman he's interested in, he's expected to ask her on a date within a couple days of their first conversation. (Yeah, that's the unspoken rule.) If he offers to take the woman on a broke date, he comes across as pathetic, but if he tries to hold off a week or two until he gets enough money for a more upscale date, he seems disinterested and aloof. This catch 22 can really suck for the poor guy who's just trying to work his way into a little something!

The broke date also sucks for the woman, because all of her girlfriends will want to know every detail. Who wants to dish about a *Budget Gourmet* date, especially if it's been a while since a man has taken her anywhere? A woman wants to tell about a high romance, grown-up date, not some high school hangout, especially if she's over thirty, at which point descriptions of hangouts just sound plain pathetic. There is an exception, however.

If the guy is creative, drives a nice car or otherwise makes a good salary, the broke date becomes charming and unpretentious, and is thus forgivable to the girlfriends. However, if he's just a regular dude with a regular job, the whole thing swiftly descends back into being pitiful.

A woman who is asked on a date while she is broke suffers a different kind of dilemma. Being single and broke sucks for a woman when she meets an interesting man, but has no money to get her hair done or buy a cute new outfit for the occasion.