Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Watch The Throne: Below The Heavens

Christopher · Monday, September 20th, 2021

“Stevie! Watch out!” Mom yells out as Dad quickly switches lanes on the pitch black freeway heading north to avoid oncoming traffic.

“I got it Denise! Calm down!”

“We were on the wrong side of the road! We could’ve got hit!”

“Do you wanna fucking drive?!”

Usually mom and dad’s constant bickering irritates the living hell out of me, but for some reason it’s not bothering me that much now. Listening to “No Church In The Wild” by Jay-Z and Kanye West, I am hyped, excited and nervous all at the same time thinking about how college is going to turn out. My heart is beating fast looking outside dad’s 2008 Black Ford Expedition truck to a moonlit starry sky on a two lane road going north on the five freeway heading to the new world of Monterey Bay. Back where I’m from in Los Angeles, you can’t see the sky this clear. It’s beautiful.

Once Mom and Dad stop arguing, Dad pulls out one of his swisher sweets and starts smoking in the car. The smoke clouds my vision as mom turns to the back seat.

“Hey Chris, how you doing bug?” I take one earphone out.

“I’m doing good mom.” Yes. My nickname is bug. No idea where it comes from. My grandma calls me chocolate kiss. I’m her little chocolate kiss. My dad calls me “Wolf-Ticket.” That is the most bizarre nickname I have ever heard. I don’t even know what “Wolf-Ticket” means. Anyways, I put my earphone back in my ear and continue to listen to music. Chapter Six by Kendrick Lamar comes on. My phone vibrates receiving a text message from a girl named Kasey.

It reads, “I miss u. Thinking of u. Xoxo.” I stare at that message for a couple minutes then close my phone, and sigh.

Chris, senior year of high school

I met Kasey earlier this past summer performing poetry at this writing workshop in East Los Angeles hosted by my writing mentor, Mike The Poet. We are not dating, however, I found Kasey attractive at the time I met her, but I could not bring myself to actually make a move. I was too preoccupied getting over a heartbreak that occurred earlier this year in February 2011 with another young white woman named Ava.

I met Ava in May 2010 through a different program hosted by Mike The Poet. After the first few conversations via Facebook I got her number and thought things were good to go, for the infamous chase. You know, the give and take, the good morning text messages, compliments, the random ass conversations about literally nothing and doing everything in your power to keep them interested. Oh geez. Just thinking about this situation now with my iPod shuffling to "In Case It Doesn't Work Out" by Charles Hamilton is making my stomach turn in and cringe. All I got to say is: feelings are one hell of a drug. Getting addicted has the side effect of irrational thinking and becoming infatuated. The fact is I am not good at participating in the chase sequence.

She would send a message saying, "Hey, good morning Chris :)" my caveman, bump on a log instincts would have me staring at the message periodically all day, and not replying. Check the technique: I go back and forth thinking I should reply saying, "Good Morning Ava!" Or "Good Morning :)" or "Hey." There's a ton of different ways of saying the same shit without saying the same shit. I don't want to look thirsty with fruit punch flavored Kool-aid on my white T shirt. Unfortunately, that became the case as there were a few mornings in a row I texted "Good

Morning” and didn’t get a response. This extremely long chase that lasted 8 months. Yes, 8 months. Ironically around the same time as Valentine’s Day. I had a friend give her a red rose, a little bit of chocolate and a teddy bear. She texted me that she loves the gifts. About a week later, her school hosted an open mic and they invited me to perform poetry at their library. I decided I wanted to talk to her about my feelings. It was a rainy day. I had a somber, yet soulful instrumental my good friend of mine, Jalen created called “Smokey’s On Fire” on repeat trying to calm myself down. On the car ride to the school, I was extremely quiet. Just trying to mentally prepare myself for the worst. Sitting down in the library, anxiety hit me like a ton of bricks to the balls. It was unbearable. I was constantly looking around to see where she was, looking down at the logo of my shirt freaking out just realizing it was fading, shaking non-stop. I had to take multiple deep breaths throughout the open mic. Then suddenly I just told myself it’s now or never.

“Hey Ava, can I speak to you?”

“Oh yeah! What’s going on?”

“Huh.. in private if possible?”

“… yeah sure. Let’s go outside. Lemme grab my sweater.” We go outside and stand under the building, because it’s still raining hard.

“So.. what’s on your mind?”

“Well… uh..” she looks at me with a face of concern.

“I think you’re beautiful and…” her face starts to blush red.

“I have feelings for you and I was wondering if you felt the same.”

“Ohhh.. chris…I don’t know what to say…” she starts to look away and covers her face.

“I.. I.. really appreciate you being there to talk to me during tough times and checking in on me.. but I .. I don’t share the same feelings for you. I see you as a really good friend.”

Needless to say, I was heartbroken. Shit, still thinking about that situation on this long ass drive to Monterey Bay puts my mind into a frenzy. Couple days after sharing my feelings towards her I saw a picture of her kissing this other guy on Facebook. Frustrated as hell, I cried. I cried hard. What the fuck does this other guy have that I don’t?! Returning to class the following week, I put my head down in every class. I didn’t speak to anyone. Randomly, a guy blurt out a hurtful truth in the middle of my seventh period economics class while on the topic of marriage:

“Chris is too dark for anyone to marry! I mean look at that mothafucka, he’s burnt to a crisp!”

Everyone laughed. I cried more. That sadness turned into anger, because shit, what if he is right? I mean Ava’s boyfriend is a white boy with a curly Afro, who has glasses and plays guitar. A year earlier, another woman I had a thing for looked at me and literally said, “eww.. dark skinned black guy” in the middle of a dinner party. All of this anger resulted in me punching a hole in the wall of my room. It’s one thing to feel rejected by someone of a different race, but when it’s a room full of blacks ridiculing your skin complexion, the battlefield turns into a war zone where you can’t trust

anyone. Since then the question that echoes in my mind is who will love me now?

See, love has always been a strange concept to me. In Disney and cheesy romance movies we always see a character fall in love with another character by magically bumping into each other. Back home, Mom constantly annoyed me to look presentable whenever I step out of the house.

“Chris, you put on lotion?”

“Yes”

“Brush your teeth?”

“Yeah”

“Wash your face?”

“YES..”

“Good, cause you never know who you would run into. You might get a girlfriend. Girls, love chocolate hehe.” mom snickers as she picks lint out of my hair in the bathroom as I’m looking at myself in the mirror..

“Mom. I’m just walking around the corner to McDonalds. I’m not looking to be the next Flavor Flav.”

“Alright, Alright bug. I’m just messing with ya. Now, go on and leave. See you when you get back.” I roll my eyes leaving the house. UGH.

“OH YEAH CHRIS! Call me if you need something!” Mom runs back inside the house.

Who knew you can find love walking into a McDonald’s on a Saturday morning? Maybe, feelings blossom as we get called up to grab our meals at the same time because the cashier accidentally gave us the same number? Maybe feelings blossomed because we both ordered a large orange juice? Maybe it can blossom by both of us grabbing the same table while not paying attention? Coincidence? Probably so. According the holy scriptures to life or whatever the fuck, always says, “things happen when you least expect it.” Point is, that love shit is for the birds. You can pour extra salt on my attitude. When I’m on a date what makes my potential significant other think that they can just eat off of my dinner plate? No. I don’t want the sauce of your Chicken Alfredo in combination with whatever the fuck has been in your mouth in the past to touch my twenty dollar steak from BJ’s because you was “curious” to see how it tastes. I know the sizzling heat and smoky smell mixed with A1 steak sauce smells delicious. It’s a no fly zone over here though. If I see a greasy fork hovering over my food, I am liable to smack the fork out of your hand. I remember catching my Dad as a kid putting his lips on the carton of Donald Duck orange juice in the refrigerator once early morning.

“Dad!”

“What?”

“Why don’t you get a cup?!” Looking at him with severe disgust.

“What’s wrong?”

“You put your lips on the carton of juice! I was going to get some!”

“Then get some!”

“No! That’s nasty! I’m not about to-”

“Boy, we kin! Get you some damn juice if you want some. Nobody ain’t got time for this.” He put the cap back on the carton and put it back in the refrigerator irritated.

I even hate it when people talk with their damn mouths open. Growing up my grandmother used to talk with a full mouth of food. My cousin Jamal and myself used to cover our food out of fear that the chunks of zucchini would fly in our food. In conclusion, if you are so damn curious, order one yourself! If you don’t like it, I’ll happily buy you something else you would like. Maybe.

But hell, that’s love in a nutshell for you. We would bend over backwards just to please that one person we think can make us full and warm on the inside. Holding hands together. Walks on the beach. Sharing the same drinks, eww. Going to the movies. Going to concerts. Talks about life, the goals we set for ourselves the next five years, and all that corny bullshit. It may sound like I am a big ass hater, and that’s because I am indeed one. I can’t even stand next to a woman without feeling awkward. If I tried to hold hands my palms would get extremely sweaty. If we walked on the beach, I can almost guarantee I would fall face first into the sand. If we go out to the movies or a concert, I would be more focused on not making the wrong moves than having fun and enjoying the moment and time with my partner.

I take out my earphones again.

“Hey mom, are we there yet?”

“Not for another two or three hours Chris. Just relax and try to sleep so when you wake up we’ll be there already.”

Man. Fuck. I hate sitting here just thinking about all this depressing shit. Plus, my legs are feeling a little numb. I have this rumbling gut feeling that my life is going to change in college. I am going to get the respect I deserve as a poet. Ima have a girlfriend. Everyone will know the name Christopher James-Justice Siders. Justice isn’t really part of my middle name. It’s another nickname given to me by Mike The Poet, due to my social and political commentary in my poems, but you get the point. My confidence is going to be through the roof! Ah yes. A chance to start everything over again. I open my phone and go back to the text message sent earlier by Kasey that says, “I miss u. Thinking of u. Xoxo.”

I reply to it saying, “miss you too. <3 <3” knowing damn well I don’t really give a damn about this girl, because I don’t share the same feelings… currently. Who knows? In the future something may come about. So I continue to flirt with her. My phone vibrates and Kasey replies instantly saying,

“<3.” I’m looking forward to developing a new me. Developing myself into someone that isn’t so gotdamn timid.

For example, in the eighth grade, I was invited to a friend’s birthday party that took place in their backyard. This girl I kinda always had a crush on was there, so I thought this would be the perfect time to make a good impression on her. Her name was Charlotte. Entering the party, I was stiffer than lil bow wow’s rap skills. It was so bad. I saw Charlotte and went in for a regular hug, but I looked like Frankenstein excited to get some good lovin’ attempting to wrap my arms around her.

“How are you doing?” She asked.

“I’m doing great!” I said doing the robot. Oh geez. What in the actual fuck was I thinking?

Other kids from my class were there and they were staring me down like a pack of wolves. These wolves weren’t hungry for flesh, but for tears of my pain and humiliation. Later on the adults went inside the house and left all the kids outside to themselves. The party’s music went from the cha cha slide to Lil Jon screaming “FROM THE SWEAT DRIPPING DOWN MY BALLS” through the speakers. A few of my friends left the party so I was just relaxing on one of the chairs outside next to a torch that’s keeping everyone warm on a cold night.

Literally out of nowhere, my arch nemesis at the time, Meagan, came up to me and asked if I wanted to dance. I said no. Now before I continue this horrific story of where I’m going to make a complete ass of myself, let me bring you up to speed with another horrific story, where I made a complete ass of myself. Again.

Since the seventh grade, Meagan done her best to make me look stupid. Every chance she got. One time during an English class she kept hitting me or giving me love tabs as our fellow classmates would call it. Mr Brown was giving a lesson on alliteration. Students were struggling to stay awake amongst the cold 8:30am weather seeping through the windows.

“Chris…Chris…” Meagan whispered while tapping my shoulder.

“You like Danielle, don’t you?”

“… what?” I turned and looked at her crazy.

“I know you like her Chris. You don’t have to lie. Don’t lie.” Meagan continues to taunt me.

“Chris likes Danielle. Chris likes Danielle. Chris and Danielle sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N—

“YOU KNOW WHAT MEAGAN?!” I stood up from my seat. Everyone in the classroom including the teacher, Mr Brown looked at me extremely shocked. In a small room of thirty students, all eyes were on me.

“YES. I LOVE HER! I AM GOING TO MAKE THIS VERY CLEAR. EVERYONE… I LOVE

DANIELLE MOORE!” I yelled out while I pointed at Danielle.

Poor Danielle. She was a cute girl just minding her business. Just like me, she’s a quiet student. Never bothered anybody. Straight A student. I let Meagan get under my skin so much to where I blurt out some shit I didn’t really mean. I honestly didn’t have a crush on Danielle. The results were odd however. Detention for two days, and got respect from all guys in the class saying what I did was some, “Real Nigga Shit.”

Now, back to Charlotte’s party. It ain’t looking too good. I just did the robot, an old dance move that dates back to the eighties or some shit. I got a crazy ass girl that didn’t know the meaning of personal space. Also I was twelve years old. What the hell do I look like doing that dance with a girl in the year 2005? If you guessed a damn fool, that would be an understatement. This girl proceeded to grind her butt on my privates. I had no idea what was going on so I asked her to stop and move out the way, the kids that were still present were laughing their asses off.

“What the hell are you doing? STOP!” I yell frantically.

“C’mon! I just wanna dance.” She said in a playful yet weird tone.

I backed up and hit the torch.

“CHRIS… You’re on fire!” Meagan grasped covering her mouth

“Ha ha ha, very funny…”

“No you idiot, you are literally on fire!”

I turned around, and sure enough my 30 dollar blue plaid button up shirt from the Marvyn’s store was indeed on fire. I ran around the backyard frantically not knowing what the hell to do.

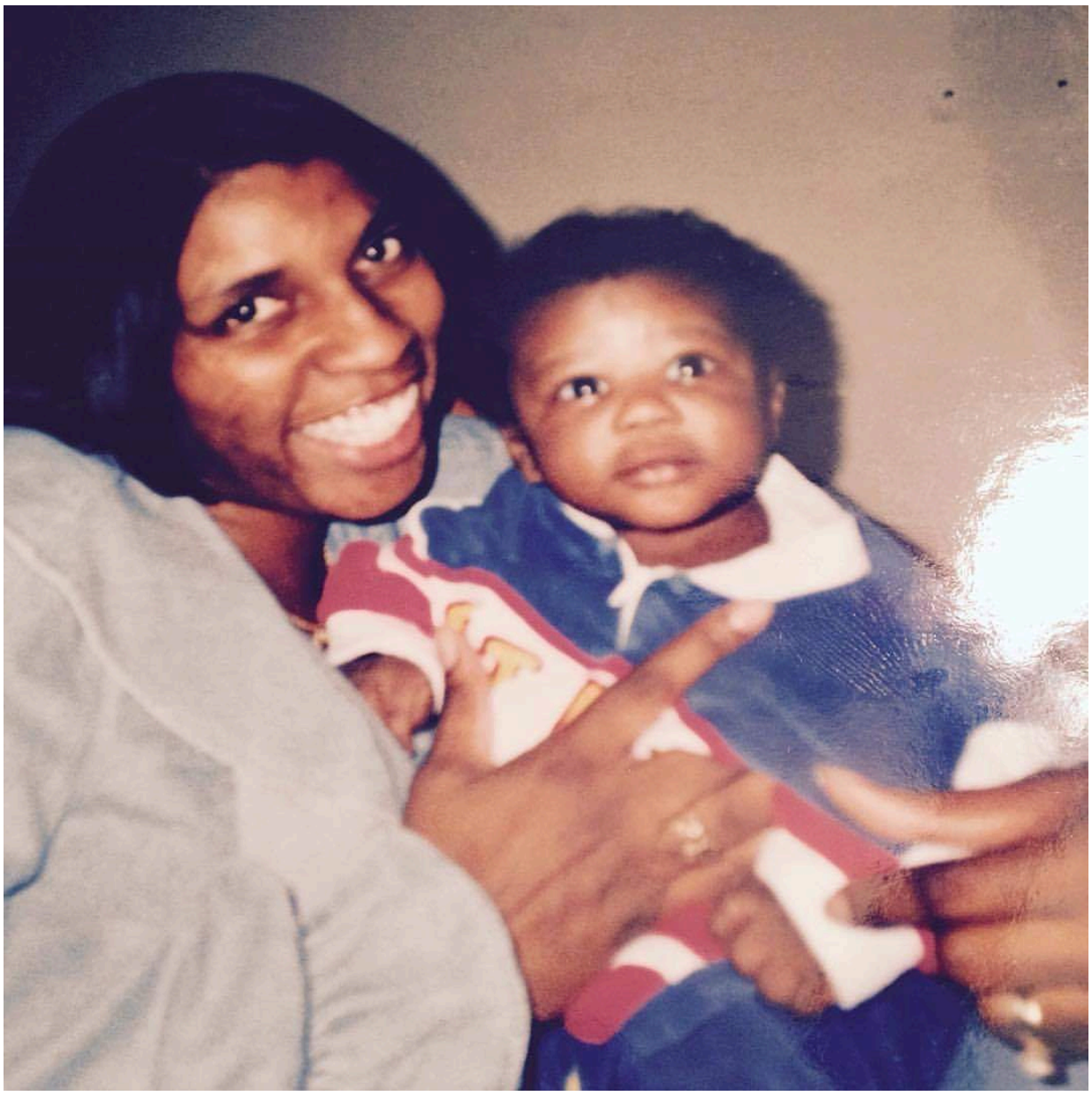
“STOP, DROP and ROLL! STOP, DROP, and ROLL!!” I heard someone yell out. So I stopped, dropped and rolled on the grass.

“NO NOT ON THE GRASS YOU IDIOT!” Everyone yells.

Someone turned on the water hose and made a puddle. I stopped, dropped and rolled in the small puddle of mud and extinguished the fire that way. I lay there on the muddy grass, feeling dirty with patches of grass sticking to my clothes, thinking, “What the hell just happened?” Reflecting on this now, what in the world were the parents doing inside the house to where they didn’t hear all the commotion outside?

Anyways with that in mind along with hundreds of other stories, I always choose not to bother much with female interaction. One slip up can cost you public humiliation or a potential new

friend. However, those moments when I'm not making a complete utter fool of myself, talking about life and the goals set for the next five years, something inside feels warm. It never gets old. Even though I always get self conscious with my breath control during a conversation causing me to run out of breath every one to two sentences. It feels good to share your hopes and dreams with someone you care about. As a black kid from the inner city of Los Angeles people think I would have the confidence of an early 2000's rap artist, but I really don't. I was a huge nerd. My childhood consists of watching anime, playing online video games like counter strike, listening to underground hip hop, and watching G4TV all day long. At one point I used to hangout with the kids in my neighborhood a lot until I got robbed by three gang members outside of a liquor store down the street from my house. The guys threaten me with an imprint of what looks like a gun in their pants. They told me "no cops" and walked away casually. As soon as they got far enough I called my parents and the police. My folks got there within ten minutes, while it took the police one-two hours when their station was literally down the street. Police told me that there was nothing they could've done so I never really felt safe walking outside. Missing out on a huge social portion of my childhood, causes me to miss out on social cues and signals.



Baby Chris & Mom

"Chris, we are here." Mom says

“We here?!”

“Well we are in the area. We are about to go check in to the hotel.”

It’s 2am. Dad pulls up to the hotel office to get the keys from the employee clerk. As me and mom get out of the car to go inside, I notice it’s freezing out here. Feels like it’s about 50 degrees. Dad stays in the car smoking another swisher sweet. I text Kasey telling her I made it to Monterey.

“C’mon Chris. Let’s get ready for bed. Have a big day tomorrow.”

The dynamic between my parents is weird. I mean how they communicate and interact with each other. They always told me and my older sister, Jasmine, not to do what they did. Marry your high school sweetheart. They met in the 10th grade of high school back in the mid 1970’s, encouraging me to explore my options and see the different types of people that’s out there. I agree, I should explore and have fun. However, whenever I hear “explore my options” or to “keep options open” I feel that people are suggesting that I should play with someone’s emotions. I’m not the type of person to “talk” to two people, and drop one because I’m digging the other more. I want to dedicate all my energy into one, and if it doesn’t work out, it doesn’t work out. Some may call me a fool, but fuck it, I don’t care. I’m not out here looking to bullshit around. My phone vibrates, it’s a text from Kasey saying, “Have a good night :) xo.” I turned off my phone and headed inside to go to sleep. I gotta get up early tomorrow to move in and meet my roommates!

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