

Begin

A room of lavender
wallpaper with a small
locked window in my rustic
palace likes to take me to '89

when girls tied ponytails on the side
with bright ribbons;
tights and oversized blazers
were worn like skin and shells
with colors in competition
for the definition of fashion.

I must tear it all
down now—the paper
and wall, build white
cabinets and a marbled island;
bring my charcoaled pots and dishes
then finally, open that little
elderly window
where more wind was thrown out
than let in.

~ *♦*♦*♦*♦*~

Not Another Night

A breeze whistles and lifts her gown
as she strolls the deck like a ghost
nun, and dusk is there,

waiting on her face to turn, to shut
daylight. She strokes the swing set,
fascinated by the character of the chains
that held them for so long. The scrapes,
tiny bents and details of a story
she never wanted to tell; the weight
they held: flesh and memories. Fogged
memories of the little voice that once
spoke to her as she pushed him; his feet
pedaling in the air; how tight he held on
to those chains, and when he grew,
how tight he'd try to tie them—again.
Especially the ones within,
after his father's passing.

She sits by the lake, admiring the
twirls of timid raindrops. They make the
waters seem so peaceful. Someone had to
drown. And he did.

To the very bottom. She swears
he's there—still. So still.

She wonders if she crosses the street
without a glance if she'll be

as still.

So, she does. And dusk remains

wherever her lighter-self travels.

~ *♦*♦*♦*♦* ~

Route

There's a route to that village of cocktail
mist that sweats
the lawns and gardens
from noon till night.

The yellow lines that separate east and west
curve all the way down a lost road
where age rots with a stench that creeps
out the loudest memory. But where's
my avenue?

Every passing shadow mocks me on the highway
leading to cities where the coyotes curl
'round lindens with grins that grind skins.
Mine's too thick—ruling out flesh and color.

I watch the neon lights mate with glass. Inside
the restaurant, a storm of laughter bends me.
I beg the wind that rips
the Oak branches to split this path.
Not that it's too long. It's too proud and wide and loves
to remind me

I belong nowhere.

Still, there's a route to nowhere. Where's *my* avenue?
I've watched streets killed
and rebuilt into cities, and cities shrank into
castles; castles multiplied to kingdoms.

My many years will soon be none
and journeys will move along. If only I could
find my avenue.

Born in the Caribbean and raised in the U.S., Tia Paul-Louis began writing songs at age 11 then experimented with poetry during high school. She earned a BA in English/Creative Writing from the University of Florida along with a M.F.A in Creative Writing from National University in California. Her works have appeared in literary magazines such as The Voices Project, Ethos Literary Journal, and Rabbit Catastrophe Review. Some of her favorite authors and poets include Langston Hughes, Emily Dickinson, Maya Angelou and Edgar Allan Poe. Apart from writing, Tia enjoys music, photography, acting and cooking, though she mostly finds herself and others through poetry.

~ *♦*❁*♦* ~