



# OBSIDIAN

Literature & Arts  
in the African Diaspora

Call & Response: Experiments in Joy  
Furious Flower:  
Seeding the Future of African American Poetry  
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## FROM *HEADWRAPS & HAIKUS*

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I am not sure how Derby and Rose's relationship went because there wasn't that door for us to come in and out of their business. I mean, I know she tried moving in with him but that didn't work because they both require too much personal space and found that they did better visiting. I know that she got him and a couple of us to do college poetry tours through her nonprofit which was really into promoting literacy (the one she started when she was like fifteen when she found out her grandmother didn't know how to read since she was from that island that I can't remember). I know neither one of them was afraid of being with or without each other in public. I know he wasn't a fan of her sister who liked fucking NBA players. I know she didn't love his Masala family since they weren't very warm to her, but that's because they weren't warm initially anyway. And then I know the pregnancy scare put them both over the edge and they realized (there are rumors that one of them "realized" it more than the other, but nobody can get it together to say which) that they weren't right for each other.

"Two alphas leave no room for the rest of the alphabet to spring from our equation and bring forth new," he wrote in a poem that he did one really sad night at Tulip. He pulled a Miles Davis. You know that story? Maybe you don't since it's a Detroit tale and not many folks are hip. Rainy night in the 1960s in Detroit. Miles Davis walks into Baker's Keyboard Lounge with his trumpet under his blazer. He walks on stage and plays a heartbreaking rendition of "My Funny Valentine" and is gone as fast as he came in. I love that story. That's what Derby did the

night he and Rose broke up. He wouldn't have a serious girlfriend until he met his current wife. Crazy. Lots of Derby-ians in between though.

He eventually forgave Gayl, but you know something else happened to change their relationship from potential to “hell to the naw” that neither one of them ever talk about. I heard it was after he and Rose were on the outs. I heard they met up at the Cadillac Bar (it's exactly what it sounds like—long, leather, flashy, pimp, red, and time warped) for drinks one night, both to pour their broken hearts out, which was tricky since Gayl's broken heart was because of her changed friendship with Derby. And Derby's broken heart was over the girl he'd always imagined he'd end up with. One of the Catty Kids saw them kissing in the Clinton Washington subway. Gayl didn't answer her phone the next morning (I remember calling that day for something so uninteresting that I'm not sure what it was now). Here are the words that they both let slip over the next few years about it:

**Derby:**

Lonely  
Shit  
Jack Daniels  
Coke  
Sick  
Shit on neck  
Favorite socks gone?  
Torn muscle?  
Crazy

**Gayl:**

Lost jacket  
Strep throat  
Soup?  
Bruise from stool  
Special  
Painted circle on her floor  
Crazy