Name: Christian Rodriguez

Work title: Boyfriend Material

Category: Poetry

Award: Silver Key

.....

Relationships are a lot like jackets

They're not necessary

and to an outsider they sure look comfortable

To be wrapped around by silk so soft it covers up insecurities

Threads that stitch up scars

Cloth that can work wonders

I knew I wanted one

I knew I wasn't going to cheap out

I didn't want these connections with cheap friendships

I wanted something that was going to keep me warm in my dark hours of life

Something that wasn't going to rip in a light breeze

Something that wasn't going to fade in a wash

Watching these tares slowly heal with strong string

The opening in my heart would finally close

But I could never find one that satisfied my needs

Nothing hugged my skin tight enough

They constantly itched more than they said they would

20% loving and the rest were labeled as other

Other things they didn't want me to know

And so I thought,

If I learned the technique

If I sewed every week we would be woven together

The right hand motions crafting the beginning

It would all be naturally put together with my own two hands

Tailored specifically for your enjoyment

Our love would be finedraw

Secured with high-quality knitting

I'd make sure it's fitting

For an "us" to be sewed together

The threads I spun up until this point would make needlepoint

Our backstory told through back stitches

Even when the hem stitching is finished

The mesh will still need work

I know we'll work it out

I've weaved through obstacles

Resewed my approach to love

So the final product wouldn't fall apart

As the years loosen by

Even when our love has a couple of loose ends

I'd like to preserve it

An ancient textile

These works of art

Connecting to tell a story

Intertwine our lives with one ball of yarn

The patches to match our long journey together

For an "us" to be ironed in history

I thought I would know when I got strung along

The pinches on my skin I thought were part of the process

That patterns wouldn't repeat themselves this time

tares that went unnoticed slowly ripped

Ripped out the place you were supposed to go

Using scissors to cut me off

Now these scars can't be crocheted the same way

And as I look through materials and fabric

The story I fabricated about our perfect story told through art, slowly fell apart

And I still can't fathom the way you left me

The button holes you made still haven't closed properly

Nothing fits quite right ever since that night

I wear protection two sizes bigger

While you doubled down on your feelings for me

Trying your skills on me

While you were out trying on different men

You just couldn't commit to a fashion trend

I guess I was so last season and

You allowed me to overcast

And cast me aside

Being tangled with me wasn't good enough

I tried avoiding this pattern

I still find myself getting hurt the same way

Was our love worn out?

Was my work worth throwing away?

But it doesn't even matter anymore

This sweater that slowly weathered away is just another lesson

Motivation to keep quilting on

Not to quit just because there are some creases

This pain I felt is embroidered in my history

But I was able to salvage the selvage not for you but hopefully for her

You said That I wasn't boyfriend material

That I needed to be a little bigger

That my material made you too comfortable

That I was merely an accessory for your popularity

But I think I finally found someone who likes soft guys

Name: Devin Modia

Work title: Comic Book Love

Category: Poetry

Award: Silver Key

.....

I've always wanted our love to be a comic book

I would replace all the superheroes in Marvel and DC with me

and the Damsels in distress with you

But, in my stories, you were the one saving me

For instance, I would pretend I was Green Lantern and you were my ring

It was the closest I got to you being wrapped around my fingers

I was obsessed with the comic

I guess it translated because I felt like a superhero around you,

Minus the animated suit - I don't think green flatters me

Or I would pretend you were my hammer and I was Thor

It was the closest I got to you being attracted to me

With you in my hand, we could be gods

There's no real lightning, but is it weird that I still feel sparks when I see you?

I'd love to be Batman and for you to be Catwoman

They say opposites attract,

And I don't see anything more opposite than a bat and a cat,

so I guess it works out?

There's no one else I'd rather share my bat cave with

I want our love to be Spider-Man and MJ

I wouldn't have to knock on your front door at eleven o'clock at night -

I could just climb your wall

Which I guess sounds creepy?

We could sneak out the house to go webslinging

I want that different multiverse kind of love,

The kind of love where I'll find you no matter

what Earth we're on

It doesn't matter because you're my world

I want our love to be Superman and Louis Lane -

You give me super strength

I promise you I'll be respectful with my X-ray vision

Besides, my powers won't work around you

You're my Kryptonite,

You're the only person I'd want to be vulnerable around

I want our love to be like The Incredibles,

A big family with crazy kids

I'll be a much thinner version of Mr. Incredible,

And Elastigirl fits you because you're so easy with change,

You are incredible

The most realistic comic book to us is Archie,

I'm Archie and you are my Veronica,

I've chased you throughout our whole book

I've never been fond of the Betty's

We'll have that old-school love,

The type of love where I'll open a door for you,

Pull a chair out for you,

Send you paragraphs when you go to bed,

Give you my jacket when you're cold,

The milkshake with two straws in it kind of love

I want that love where I'm under the covers with

a flashlight, reading

Clinging onto your voice

Waiting for your next word

I want that comic book love

I want to know you from the front cover to the back cover

I want to fill the empty pages with us

My heart bleeds for you

The same way the pen on the page does

I want the "To be continued..." sign at the end of

the book kind of love

There will be no secrets between us -

The dialogue boxes at the top of the page take care of that

I want us to have pointless conflict and resolution,

For every day to be our climax

For our biggest problem to be a paper cut

That the only supervillain will be the mortgage on our home

I want our sequel to be me finding you in another life,

But I wouldn't want any other book than you

Most of all I want to make our own story

Our comic book will have a TV show

It'll be aired for the rest of our lives,

Through sickness and health

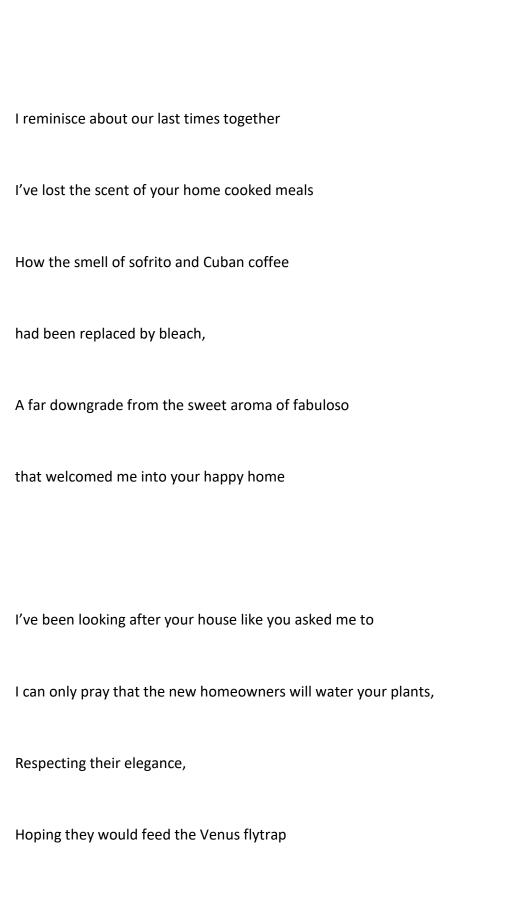
We'll go #1 on the charts because you are my #1

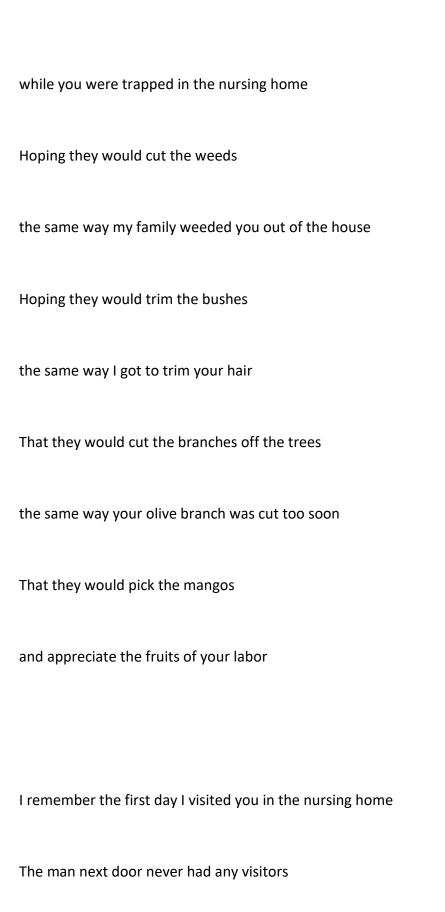
People say comic books aren't really books because of the pictures,

But they are books. Because I can picture us together.

To be continued!

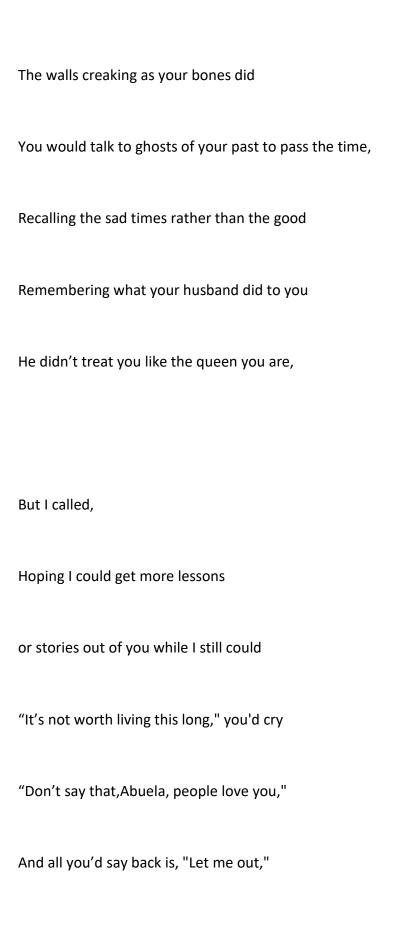
Name: Devin Modia
Work title: Dear Abuela
Category: Poetry
Award: Gold Key
Abuela,
It's been a long time
I want you to know
I've been getting straight A's
like you told me to
I still save my money instead of spending
I pray every night
I'm still writing like I promised to
I'm trying to stay on a straight path
Like you taught me

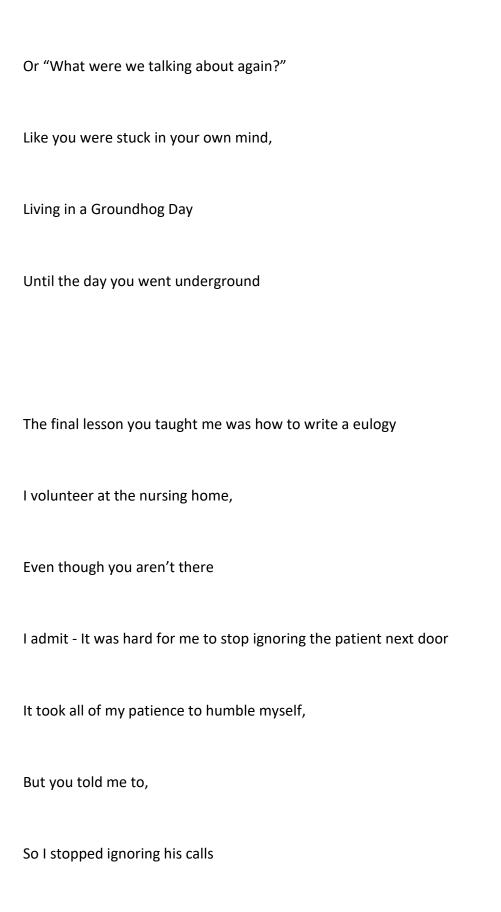




He'd watch as people went in and out of rooms	
So lonely, even the nurses didn't pay him a visit	
So neglected, that the only words that came out of his mouth spoke out of desperation	1
asking, "Are you here to see me?"	
So unnoticed that even I didn't pay attention to him	
I would replace	
"hello's" with excuses to him - after all, I was just there to see you	
I didn't want you to end up like him with no visitors	
Like him whose family no longer calls	
Where nobody listens	

tell me stories of your past and marvel as you told me
You were my broken record who had no record of ever telling me
the story you said a thousand times,
It never got old,
But you did
Your happy-ever-after didn't end with a castle
Your prince was merely a nurse
His noble steed being a hospital bed
You would wander,
Chasing after your memory





He was unfair to you, Abuela

Cheated on you more times than you could count

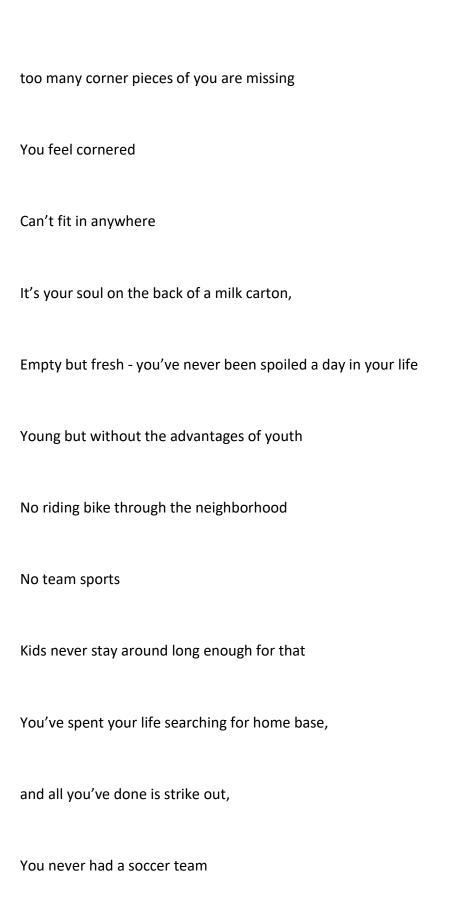
But since you were never able to cheat death,

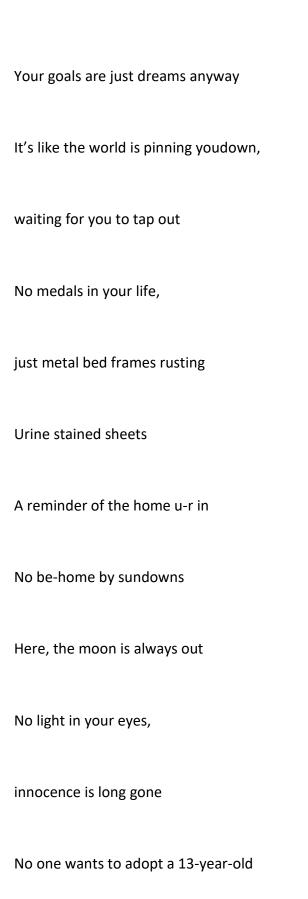
He was all I had left of you

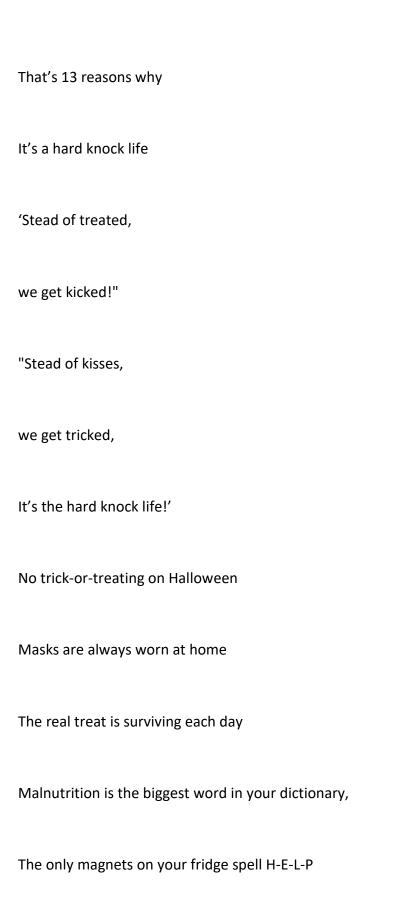
So when he asked for the 100th time, "Are you here to see me?"

I replied with "Hola, Abuelo, yes - I am."

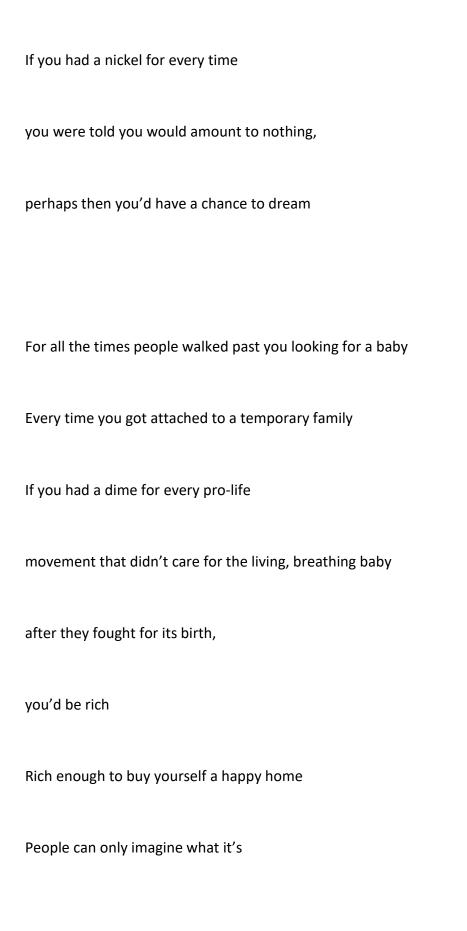
Name: Devin Modia
Work title: Hard Knock Life
Category: Poetry
Award: Silver Key
'It's the hard knock life,
For us,
It's the hard knock life
For us.'
Imagine a life where no one really does care
When no one knocks at your front door
Where doors keep closing
No one even opening her arms to you
Puzzled by your loneliness,







You seek nightly refuge under the bed
Putting the covers over your head doesn't hide the fact that society
doesn't see you as worthy
Society has crossed the line with you
No lines on the wall to mark your height
No Hallmark birthday cards
No one to sing you lullabies
No lull in the quiet of the night
No one interested in what you have to say
No penny for your thoughts,
No coins for the wishing well



like to be a number in the system
A system that raised the bar of
corruption so high, you are forced to play limbo,
'Santa Claus, we never see
Santa Claus, we never see
Santa Claus, what's that?
Who's he?'
Santa Claus is the final reminder that you're unloved
When you're old enough, you realize
his lack of visiting was not because you were naughty
You discover everything you knew was a big lie
You used the coal in the stocking to keep the room warm

Everyone else's hearts were cold
And while you didn't make your bed,
you're forever forced to lie in it
Alone
Knock knock
Who's there?
(Pause in silence)

Name: Christian Rodriguez

Work title: Father Folklore

Category: Poetry

Award: Gold Key

.....

I love urban legends

One of my favorite urban legends is the one about fathers because Father folklore goes through many iterations

Mothers will tell their kids Daddy went to buy milk

To buy more time

Until the narrative turns sour

And when her children are at the age where gullibility expires

She'll say Daddy made some bad decisions

She'll say Daddy got locked behind bars

Frames the conviction as a misunderstanding

Paints the picture that daddy wanted to see his children grow up

It's the kind of story that gives you hope

That one day, he'll come home

My mother told me my father left when I was born

Which is a parallel phrase to my father left because I was born

I've tricked myself into thinking that one day he'll come back

I'm filled with hope when I hear the doorbell ring

Hoping the person on the other side

Is the man that is responsible for my existence

I've heard if you say his first name loud enough before you go to bed

You'll wake up with him right at your side

But I wake up from the same dream

Forced to live a nightmare I've been stuck in for the past 17 years

My life is lucid dreaming, except I can't control the outcome

I have had to learn the definition of a man

From hand-me-down books

With outdated knowledge of the world

I've been treating my feelings like an urban legend

Stomaching my sorrows and making them a myth

Creating an alter ego to put on just to go on with my day

Happiness just seems like an emotion someone made up

And "I'm fine" are two words placed together to politely answer a question

I'm now questioning if it's healthy to still wait for my father to come home

I've interpreted this story my own way to swallow it like a pill

And the side effects are more than I can handle

I'm wondering if my anger was inherited or if I just learned it

The same way I learned to throw a punch when a classmate made fun of the way I threw a football

I made their face a black stain

A shade that matches my internal scars

Who knew absence would be this critical

Dad has become a forbidden word for my sacred tongue

And dared not to be uttered in my presence

I've created the perfect response if he ever came back into my life and asked for forgiveness

I'd tell him my answer was hidden away

It was lost treasure I buried for him to find

And when he opens up the chest with nothing inside, I would say

Aren't you proud of me, Dad?

For giving you false hope

The same way I hoped you come home

Aren't we just one big happy family of disappointment?

We're sticking to tradition

I come from a long line of fathers who abandon the family they created

But I will break this curse

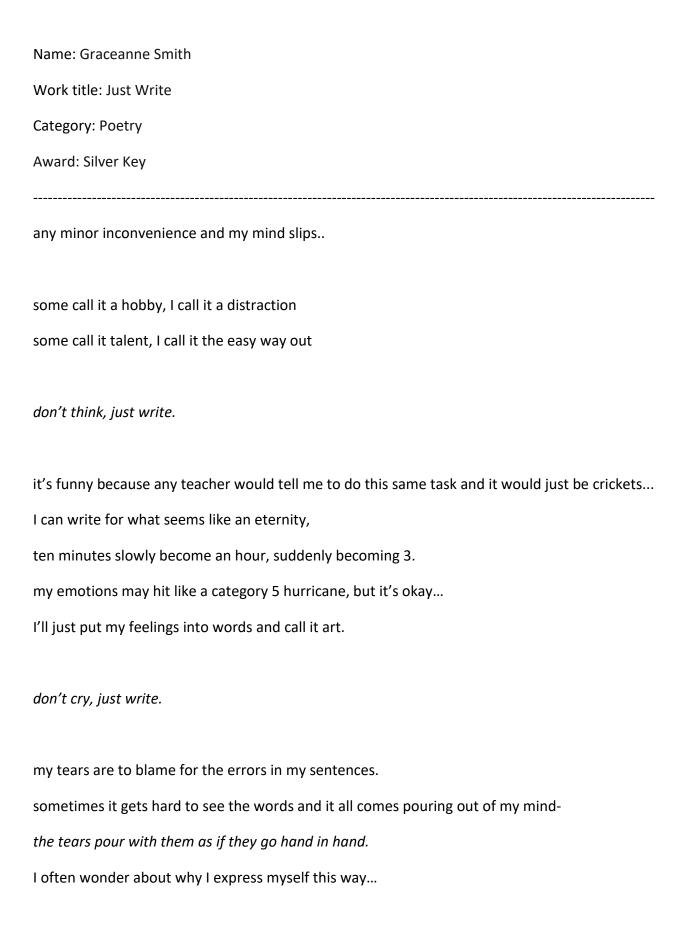
So my legacy won't become another tall tale

You will be nothing but a bedtime story for my children

And when they ask, "Dad, will you be here when I wake up?"

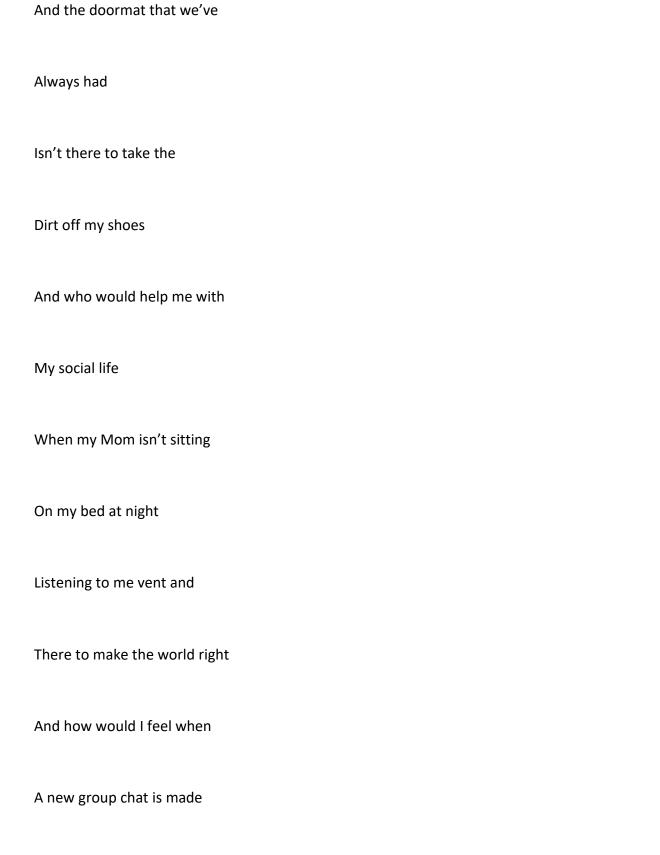
I'll say, "Of course I will."

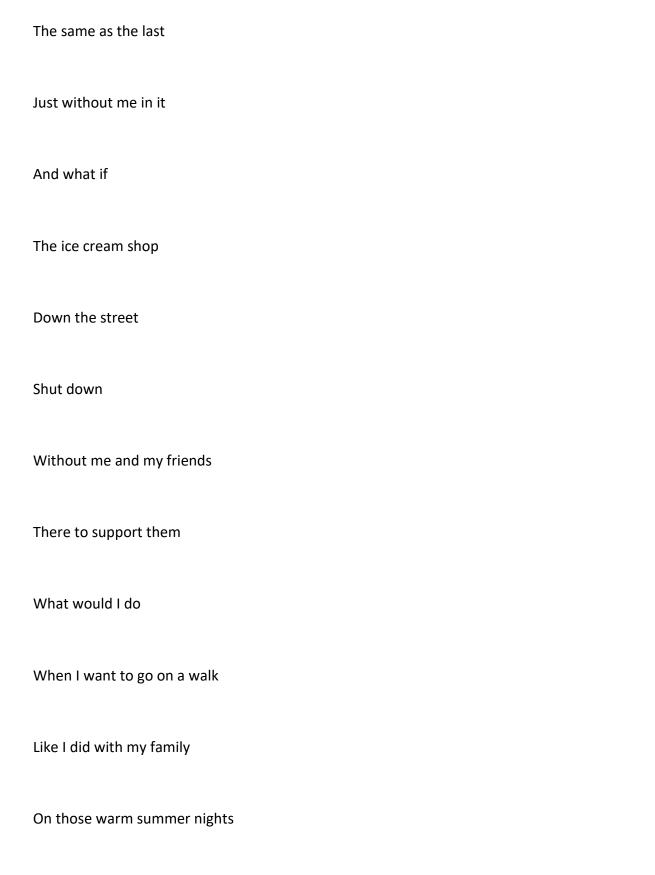
Because it's just an urban legend





Name: Rebecca Elitzur		
Work title: Leave		
Category: Poetry		
Award: Silver Key		
I would leave right now	 	
But what if my window		
Won't open		
And my Dad won't be		
Down the hall		
Ready with pliers		
And tools and his hands		
To fix all my problems		
What would I do when I walk		
Into my new home		





But now I must go all alone
Without the security of
The familiar streets
And my parents' hands
Shielding me from danger
So therefore I can't leave
Because
I don't know
l just
Can't

Name: Avery Redlich
Work title: american classics
Category: Poetry
Award: Silver Key
one of these things
is not like the other
how's my breath?
he whispers
to his friend
while eying a girl
near the window
he reaches into his pack
to pick out peppermint
and plop it
onto his tongue
TRIDENT
reads the mint-marked
wrapper
left carelessly
beneath the desk
I guess there are worse things
to be left carelessly

beneath desks

one of these things

is not like the other

they clink and clang

against the bottom

of his cello case

ah, the rebellious teenage spirit

he sneaks the canned beer

around during the day

for a parking-lot party

set after his four o'clock

band-practice

did it spill? can they smell it?

no, teachers now have other things

to worry about

besides underage drinking

teachers have other things

to worry about

being hidden in backpacks

one of these things

is not like the other

```
gameday!
his duffel is adorned
with pins
and stickers
and youthful joy,
it's stuffed with
shoulder pads
a jersey with Patrick Mahomes'
number "15"
and a brand-new helmet
with a CHIEFS logo
painstakingly stuck on
with double-sided tape
if only a football was
the most American thing
in a school-bag
one of these things
is not like the other
shiny wrappers
sticky fingers
a tongue turned to
```

raspberry-red the candy casing crinkles and wrinkles in the inner pocket, a sweet treat when the bell rings feeling like "a kid" again the bag unzips and he reaches in for a dum dum lolly one of these things is not like the other it's heavy hidden in the pencil case it rubs against his CLASS OF '24 sweatshirt, loose sheets of loose leaf. it scratches his TI-84

graphing calculator

and his AP U.S. History notebook

nestled near the cartridge.

little bits of its powder

taint the peppermint packaging,

the never-used helmet,

even the shiny BUD LIGHT labels,

and poison

the sugar on the lollipops.

it's heavy

in its weight

what lies in its wake

as it lies in the backpack

of a secondary classroom

why is this thing

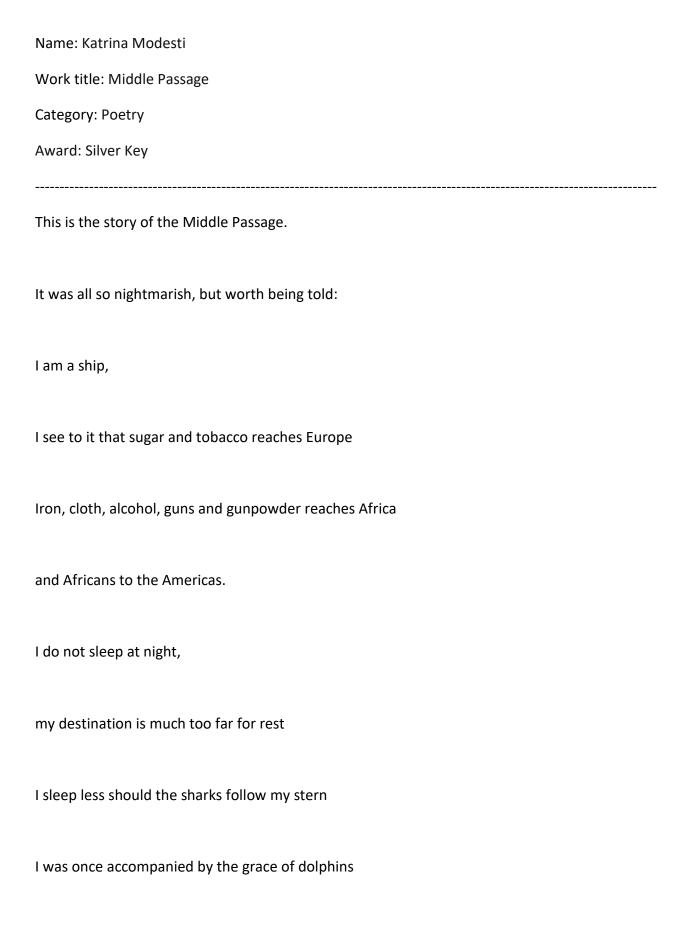
in a school

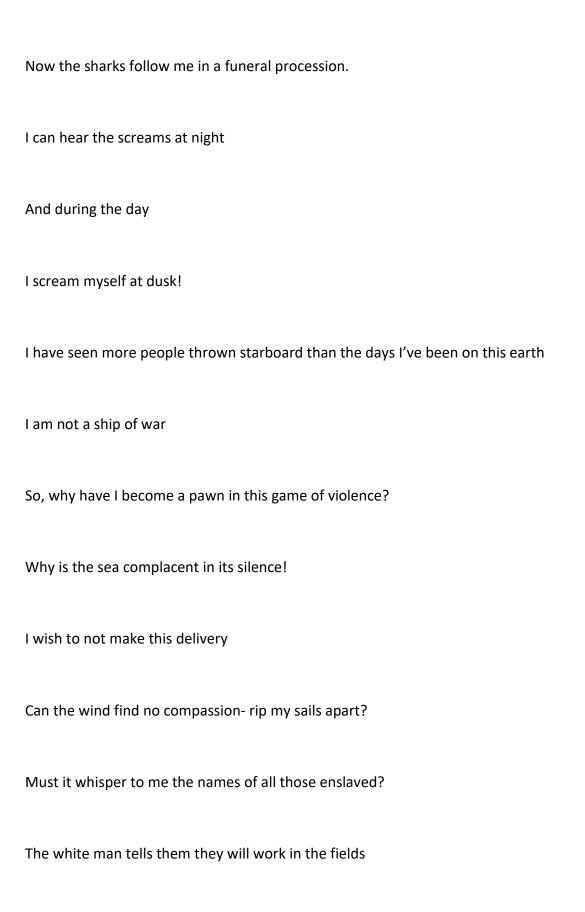
with the others?

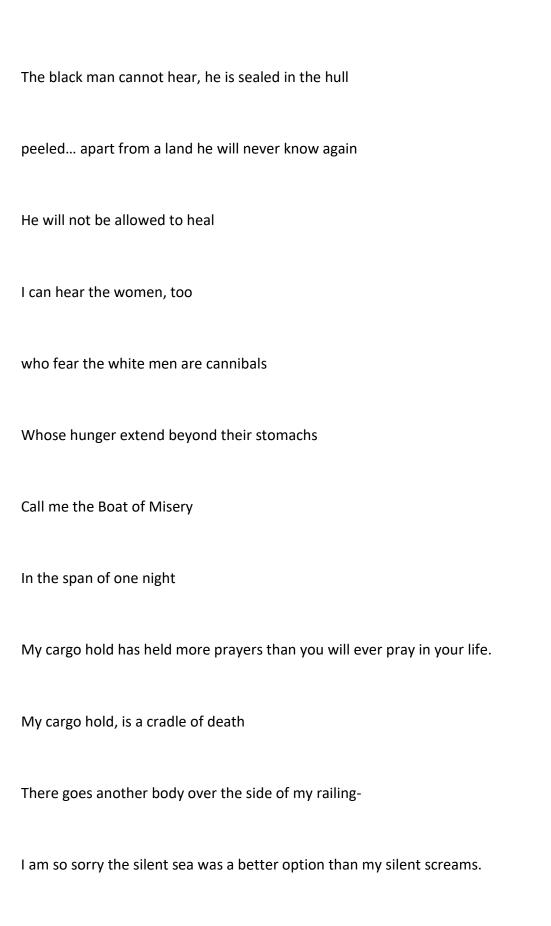
Name: Avery Redlich Work title: do you wanna walk under my broken umbrella Category: Poetry Award: Silver Key do you wanna walk under my broken umbrella and risk the rain on your shoulder just for a chance to brush mine do you wanna take cover under my weak protector because you know I'll protect you from the raindrops myself do you wanna stand under my flimsy shade knowing that chilling water may trickle down your neck but my breath

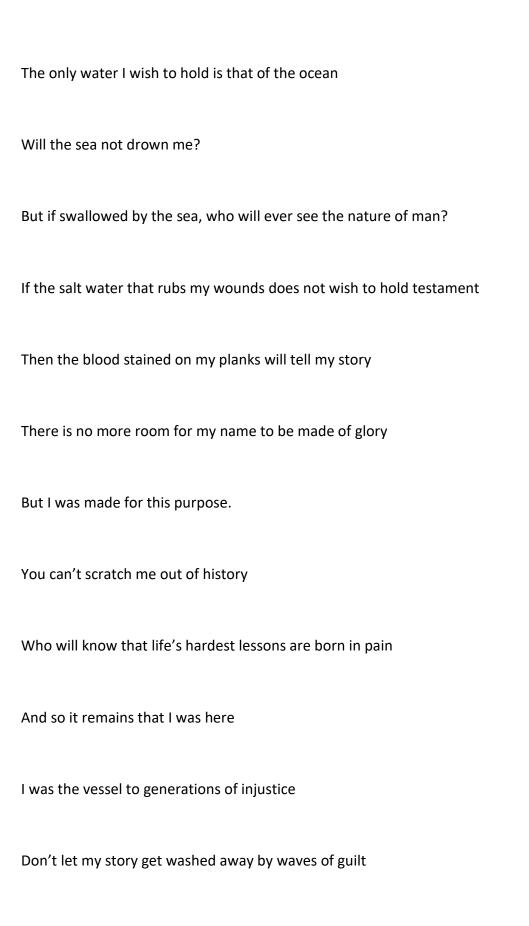
so near

will keep you warm and do I never plan to use another umbrella because I know I can handle a little rain if I have the sun at my side "what good is a broken umbrella" puddles still splash at naysayers' shoes their skies remain grey and cloudy but I don't mind the haze and you don't seem to mind it either





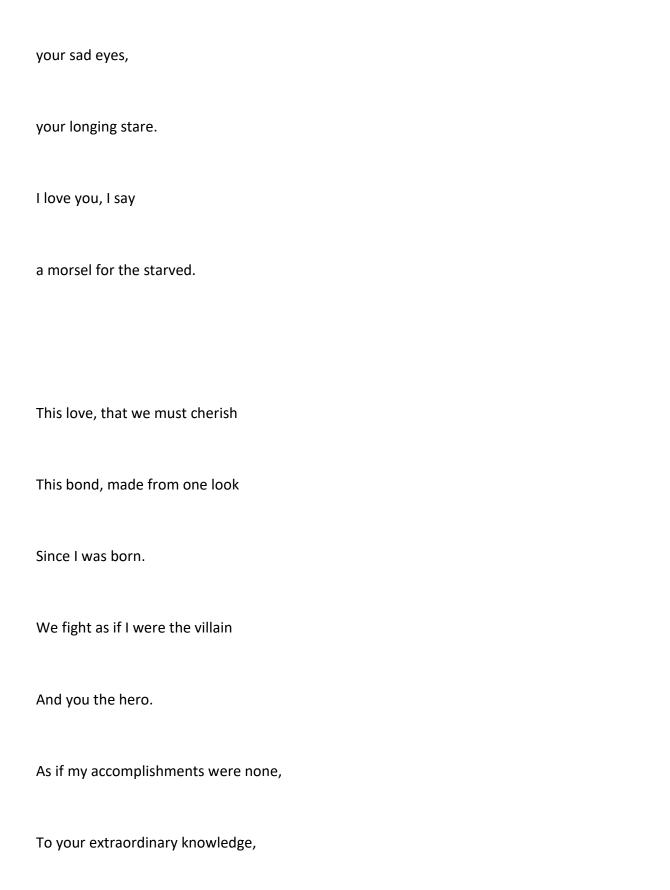


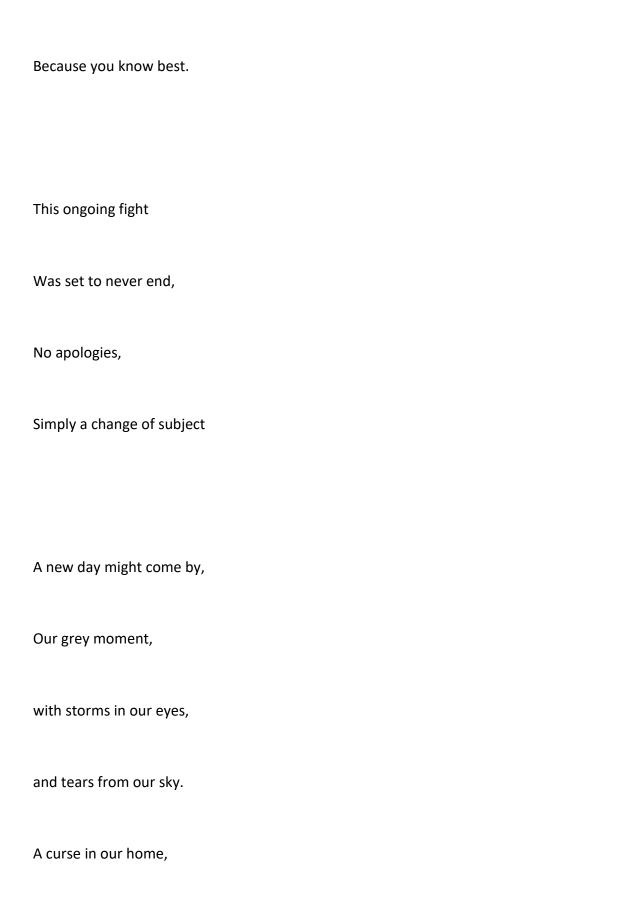


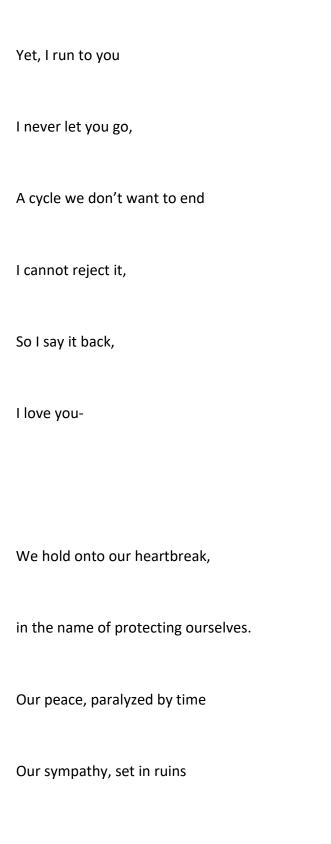
Name: Crystal Robinson
Work title: My Hair is NOT Social Justice
Category: Poetry
Award: Silver Key
Social justice, defined in terms of
Distribution which includes all of the above
Wealth opportunity and privilege
So when I wake up in the morning and decide to walk out with an Afro
I'm not doing it to provide you with tutelage
I don't want to see an out turned fist
I don't want to hear it's not about black and white
And yes my Afro is a show of "black excellence"
But for me
When I wake up with a matted bed hair in the morning

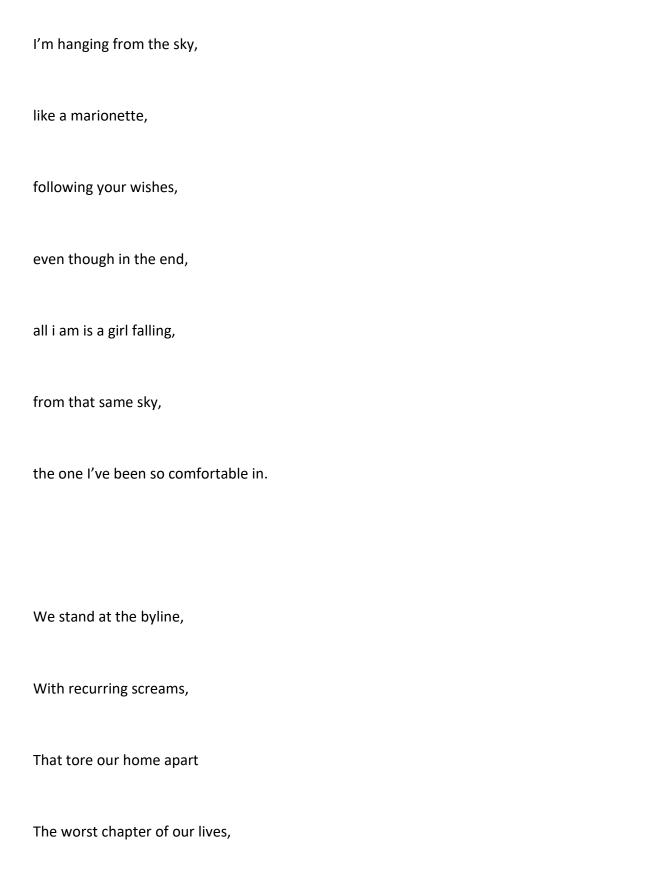
When I'm getting ready for school
When I grab a spray bottle to water my hair like a plant
When I wait for hair to curl up
My Afro is just an Afro
Not a statement about Black Lives Matter
Not a representation for people to stare at
It's my go to style
My favorite way to wear my hair
It's my Afro
My hair

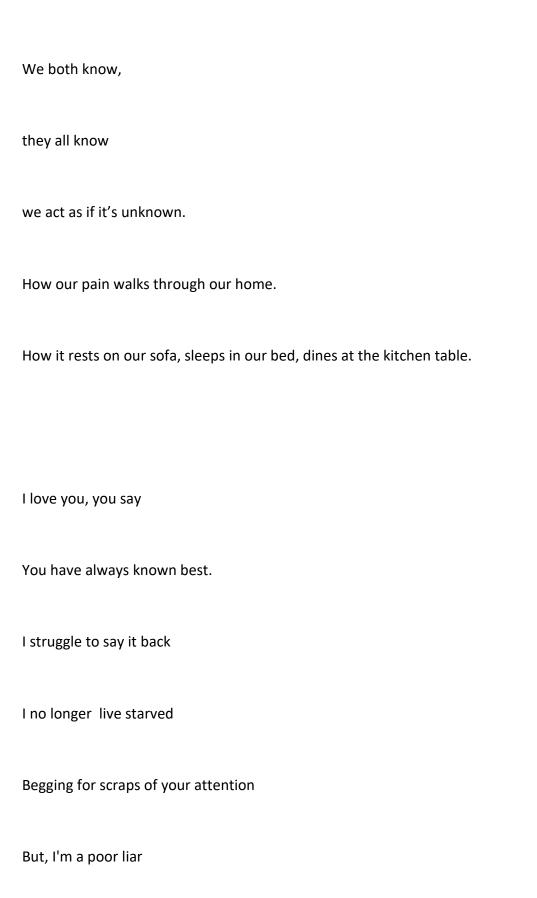
Name: Alice Machado Bernert
Work title: You, Simply You
Category: Poetry
Award: Silver Key
You, simply you
I watch you from the shadows
I carry you in my heart,
I tolerate your painful presence
as you tolerate my heart.
I look at you,
I watch you from a far,
Anger fills my bones,
I look at you,











The hurt we share comes in waves
The nare we share comes in waves
We will hurt tomorrow,
As we did yesterday.
But I will forever love you.
but I will forever love you.
My dearest,
My mother,
I love you.

Name: Savanna Osei
Work title: Maternal Lines
Category: Poetry
Award: Silver Key
Don't you hear the voices?
In the places where edges meet
Aren't the maddening whispers drenching your soul
Don't you feel them quaking the ground beneath your feet?
I looked down and saw the cracks in the sidewalk
Twisted children's rhymes racing through my head
And I fell.
And I fell.
And I fell. I fell flat on my face to avoid that crack in the sidewalk
I fell flat on my face to avoid that crack in the sidewalk
I fell flat on my face to avoid that crack in the sidewalk That rip in the fabric of all things good that baited me to step on it
I fell flat on my face to avoid that crack in the sidewalk That rip in the fabric of all things good that baited me to step on it
I fell flat on my face to avoid that crack in the sidewalk That rip in the fabric of all things good that baited me to step on it And break my mother's back
I fell flat on my face to avoid that crack in the sidewalk That rip in the fabric of all things good that baited me to step on it And break my mother's back
I fell flat on my face to avoid that crack in the sidewalk That rip in the fabric of all things good that baited me to step on it And break my mother's back The back that carries the weight of the world, my world
I fell flat on my face to avoid that crack in the sidewalk That rip in the fabric of all things good that baited me to step on it And break my mother's back The back that carries the weight of the world, my world That void hidden under suburban society knows me well

And tear-soaked maternal lines

It's sly It's sick

lt

Lies

Lies

Lies

It's that tumor, inches from her heart
It's hands that were held being dragged apart
And if you asked me of its wicked origins
I don't think I could even begin to start

It's the Spanish moss that haunts trees hung with rope
It's the scythe that severs angels' wings
It's row after row after row of cotton
It's the cloth shoved down your throat, silencing your screams

And I think I know

I will never be free

Name: Ashlyn Gao Work title: Mathematics Category: Poetry Award: Silver Key <u>1+1=2</u> What's plus??

It's when you put something together, my father says

Together?

Yes.

What does that mean?

You and me are father and daughter

And with you, I am happy

<u>1-1=0</u>

What's minus??

It's when you take something apart, my mother says

So it's broken?

Yes, broken.

What does that mean?

You and me are mother and daughter

But without my daughter

I am nothing

<u>1/1 = 1</u>

Who shares a cake with themselves? Uh, me, my sister says That's why I left my friends! Uh, what? Uh, what do you mean, what? When you're alone, You can have all the cake you want! And eat it too? Of course, darling, and eat it too. $\frac{d}{dx}[1] = 0$ How does that work?? 'Cause one is constant, my boyfriend says Constant? Yes darling, constant (Like me) What? What? I said nothing Fine

I guess I'm the derivative of one

Because I'm never leaving your side
I'm gagging, shut up
I'm trying to be romantic
The integral of 1 is $x + C$
Who defined C?
You define C, my teacher says
C is anything
Anything?
Yes, anything.
So there's no answer?
No, quite the opposite
The answer lies not only in x
But the infinite Cs that lie behind it
<u>undefined</u>
I look in the mirror
With my father I am happy.
Without my mother I am nothing.
With my sister I am myself.
With my boyfriend I am constant.
With my teacher I am anything.
l am
Infinite.

Name: Giuliana Leon-Velarde

Work title: Summer Nights

Category: Poetry

Award: Silver Key

Take me back to summer nights

with freedom salted air,

ice cream cones by tennis courts,

and short walks by the beach where

sand and sea breed ecstasy.

Eating age old recipes

of carne asada

and ceviche.

Take me back to summer nights

with star-speckled skies,

long Disney movie marathons,

and small white-coated lies.

Playing telephono malogrado

under the street lamp light,

and giggling all night long

till' all the air left our lungs.

Take me back to simple nights

with gentle honeyed dreams,
big chocolate covered coffee cups,
and short not-thought-out schemes.
Wondering what life will one day be
when we're all grown up
and wishing time could sprint
and let us leave.

Take me back to when I didn't know growing is not what it seemed.

Take me back and make time slow, make it last until eternity.

Name: Giuliana Leon-Velarde

Work title: Till My Bones Turn To Dust

Category: Poetry

Award: Silver Key

Loving you is easy

Loving you is ice cream

under the summer sun

Loving you is filling

It's feelings

I never thought I'd experience

Loving you fixed my bleeding heart

And nothing hurts more

than being apart from you

We might be young and naïve

But I'm willing to bet in the impossible forever

I'll write a novel to our future

dedicate each sentence to your smiles

Write prayers to your lips

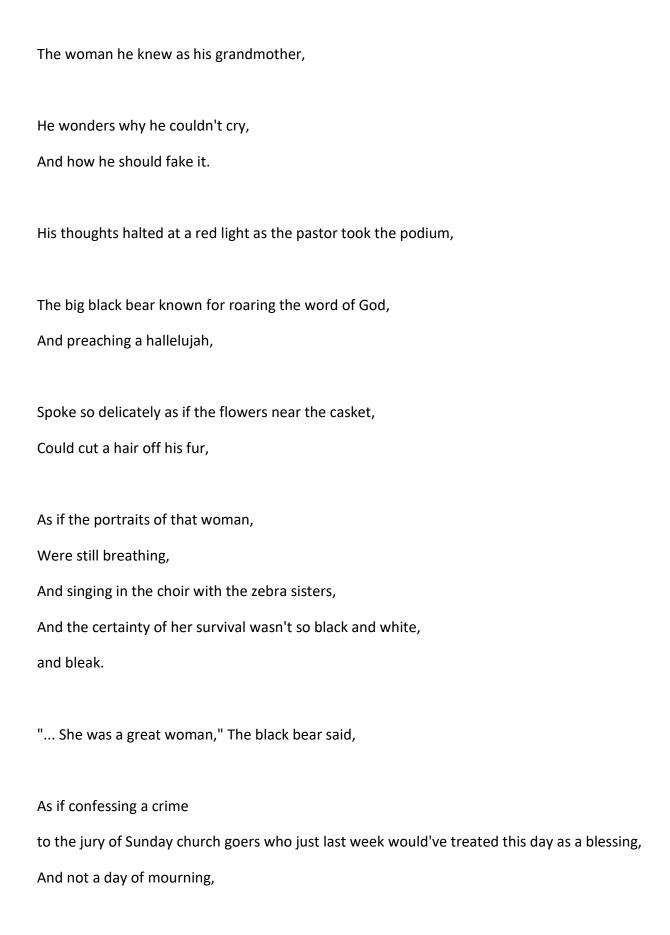
Trace all our memories in permanent marker

I thought I was smarter

Than to set a future in stone

But loving you is simple It's automatic They call it problematic But its never erratic This world is unjust And we'll get looks of disgust forever But I'll love you till my bones turn to dust They'll try to tear us apart, Until they can see what they want to Until they could call us friends Confuse us for sisters Ask us where we're hiding our misters They'll try to keep us apart But our love is insisting Resistant to the hatred Persistent despite their ignorance Our love is prideful So it's doubtful that they'll Ever leave a dent on us.

Name: Calvin Fleurinor
Work title: Crocodile Tears
Category: Poetry
Award: Silver Key
A crocodile with a tie sat in the front row of a church,
In remembrance for a woman known as his grandmother.
The whole kingdom payed a visit,
from the packs, the flocks, the clans, the murders,
To gather around a woman in a box,
Painted to look alive,
Who they knew to be his grandmother.
Lil' Miss Elephant's makeup tries to conceal her tears as if conducting espionage,
For the crocodile's mother
It already gave up.
But for the crocodile with a tie,
Knowing that woman since birth,
The woman painted fake,
The woman in that box,



The bear gestures then announces the viewing.
The front row rose in unison as if they're all linked by rope,
with a little slack on where the crocodile sit before he too cautiously stands up,
Funneling to see someone's fate on display,
It was uncomfortable.
First it was the crocodile's aunt,
The business woman,
The professional,
The Economic maestro,
Watching her battle her tears is like seeing titanium shatter like glass,
But in an instant
She pulled her head up, and walked out of line.
Next his mother
Who was an ice sculpture,
Until she touched the woman's hand,
Her emotions thaws violently as if it was a hornets nest swatted,

Screams forecasting her tears going category 5 Her heart, begging on its knees, She's pleading, "God no please!" She never tries to make these outburst publicly... And she just, Kept, on, going, and going, With her back hunched like a dead worm, Her emotions ice skated frictionless downhill her cheek Until she waddles out of line. Now him, The crocodile, Face to face to that woman in the box He knows as his grandmother, and yet doesn't feel attached to, just staring at her painted face

pretending to be alive
Here is where someone would feel remorse,
Here is where the pain of her death causes bleeding in his mind,
But he didn't feel anything,
Which made him feel guilty,
That when faced someone's final cymbal crash
Their conclusion-
When there's not a drum beat
A heartbeat signalling
That they might be okay,
That this just felt like another Sunday,
He walks out of line.
To sit in the front row of a church,
In remembrance of his grandmother,
This time fearing God,

Because if he was real, his grandma would exist in heaven disappointed,
If he was real, his Grandma would know her love was one-sided,
If he was real, she would know more about the crocodile then he likes to admit,
He dawned on this,
His tie felt a bit tight,
Then his eyes water,
Maybe now he cries crocodile tears.

Name: Calvin Fleurinor
Work title: I Won't Miss You
Category: Poetry
Award: Gold Key
A while ago,
At family dinner,
My sister announced that she will be enlisting in the military.
So on the last day,
When her yellow bedroom became a bit less vibrant,
She asked, "Would you miss me?"
Next to the open door,
Seeing the wind impatiently tug on my sister's new cap,
I stared at her as if she got my order wrong,
And I wanted to tell her "No."
That missing you would be the most selfish thing I could do,
Because missing you is just missing my memories,
And I'll never hold my sister to the expectations of my imagination,
I'll simply smile that you happened.

Like cherry blossoms,

When they bloom, they're a spectacle

And as you marvel, you forget that they are ephemeral-

That you, are ephemeral.

That you are an impatient jack-in-box

fueled by chicken wings and electric guitars,

That, if you were to disappear for the last time,

You'd want me to be as brave as when you said goodbye.

So I won't miss you,

I'll cherish you,

With a temple made of fake marble

Like our counter-top where we dine like royals

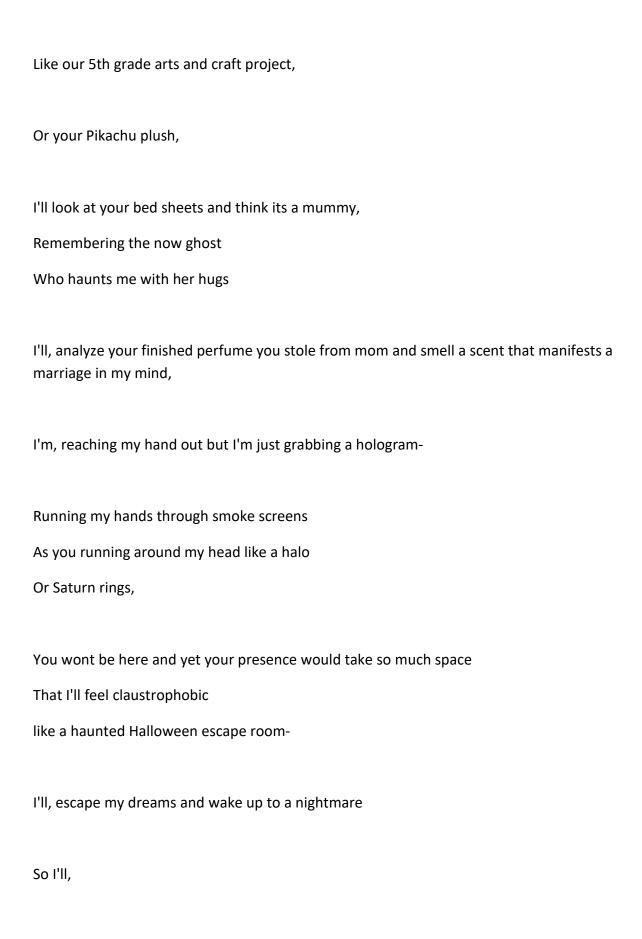
Eating spaghetti off of paper plates,

I'll sing your name like a 1 man choir

Telling legends about Alexandra the Great,

I'll look inside your room and pretend it's a museum,

Uncovering ancient artifact



I'll, fight wars like you, I'll be on the front lines capturing Alpha 8 times on my school's report card, As you sail around the world and prove it's round 8 over, I'll brush my teeth As vigorous as you brushing your arms against leaves Training for a conflict I'll hope you'll never perceive, I'll ask out my crush With the precision of a sharpshooter, But I'll still miss like a Stormtrooper, All to let you know that I'm okay. So when you come home... All you have to prove is that you are you And that you are my sister,

And as I speak I realize that maybe I'm am a bit selfish,

Pretending to be as calm as a ballerina surgeon preparing pufferfish
I'll still miss you with dense love that requires a pressurized tank,
I'll miss you so much I see you in other people's faces,
I'll miss you so bad but when I call Sherlock Holmes he tells me it's a cold case,
No I cannot miss you-
But, I'll miss you so frequently your voicemail will run out of breath
It would be to painful-
to miss you, like I'm searching for the last popcorn in a bag
That's what I wanted to hell her,
Alex.
So when she asked,
"Would you miss me?"
I stared at her as if we met for the first time
and said,
"Yeah, just a little."

Name: Noa Dobzinski

Work title: Their Hands, My Hands

Category: Poetry

Award: Gold Key

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I light a candle in my room, braid my loose curls, take a sip of water

By now these tasks are of second nature, daily activities that bring me peace

And suddenly, I think to my grandparents, my great-grandparents, my great-great grandparents

In whom the same actions were just as ingrained

The hands of my ancestors strike the matches, plait the challah dough, bless the fruit of the vine

They light the Shabbat candles, eat the bread, drink the wine

And I realize no matter how far detached I feel from my homeland

In my hands I carry generations of family within me

Tradition and legacy.

My culture is embedded within, an inseparable part of my being, tangible, holy within my grasp

My soul, my mind, my hands

My roots run deep, even when I feel my connection becoming shallow, I remind myself *I can* reach out and touch them

I am a vessel, adorned with the imprints of my lineage, carrying the torch of tradition.

Tomorrow, I'll take out our silver candlesticks and our embroidered challah covering

And I'll light the candles

I won't let their flame be extinguished.

I'll braid the challah just as I braid my hair

Over under, over under, over under (don't pull too hard)

The hands of my ancestors reach out to hug me everyday as I am enveloped in the embrace of generations past

And in the flickering glow of the candle's flame, I feel their eternal warmth.

Name: Deren Akin

Work title: World Without Eyes

Category: Poetry

Award: Gold Key

World without eyes

You look at me,

as if I am someone entirely different than your kind.

I ask you,

Why the disdain?

You tell me a mere face never betrays,

it holds the traces of a thousand.

Oh to live in a world without eyes,

where perception didn't rely on the concept of visualization.

Lines are only drawn where you can see them,

somewhere on the verge of actualisation.

You gather a little here and a little there,

you push the unaccustomed the furthest away.

For in your tongue it seems,

that native defines what only comes from the land below your feet.

We've become the violent creatures,

the shadow behind your glees,

those that taint your translucent society,

the image behind the muted seemingly perfect glass,

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for you only put only what needs to be seen the closest,
the rest discarded,
unnoticed,
unwanted,
in a place far behind the pane.
Is the thing you're afraid of,
what the truth speaks?
You do not care to say my name,
so much hatred you hold for mere vowels.
For the simplest vibration of a chord holds fragments of a million,
a reminder that time never forgets,
it lingers within every crease of our skin,
the roughness of our hands.
Still I speak in your tongue,
I flow in accordance to the motion of your lands,
I flow past the curses you spoke,
the curses not only towards me but to the centuries of love that thrived,
to plant my feet upon this ground,
to live in a land that will not say my name.
They say the heart never beats the same,
it pounds in accordance to the motion of the soul.
When a child cries,
still it is a child of this earth,
and a mother shall love the pieces of herself the same,
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she sacrifices her dignity,

for the sake of her children to be held higher above her head.

You seek to find the outlier,

the one that sticks out in the facade of generations.

I who have forgotten my name,

mutter letters in your accent,

the words that will sound right to you,

the sound that will blend in with the translucent noise.

You smile at me cruelly,

for a face always reveals more than words.

I find myself left to wonder,

What part of me was it that betrayed?

Perhaps it was in my dark brows,

the curve of my nose,

the distance between my eyes,

that you found the outlier.

Or was it the fire igniting in my eyes,

the flame that surpassed the boundaries of physical reality,

that threatened your demeanor?

Oh to live in a world with eyes.

I tell you to open them,

those marvelous glassy orbs,

vision unaffected by the color around those pupils,

reflecting the light of the new age.

The very ground you step on is not one land,

it is part of a world not of the same form and shade.

Choose to look at not only what is in front of you,

but broadly across fifty seas.

Once you meet our gaze,

we will hold it,

with eyes stricken by the ash of the pieces you burnt.

And despite the mist,

and the haze of anguish and longing,

we see the future that lies in the distance,

the world behind the translucent pane of glass,

we see it all,

our vision clear.