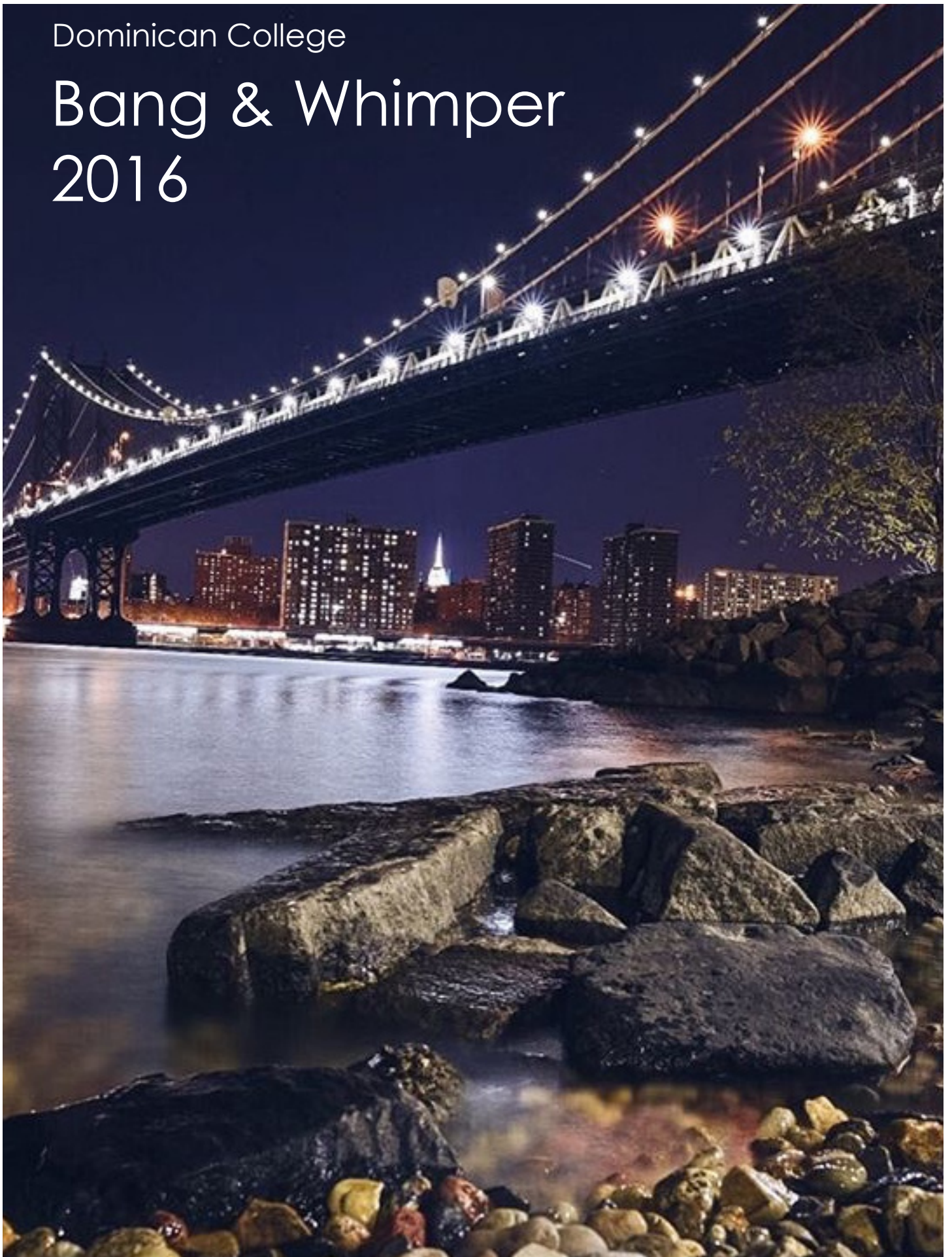


Dominican College

# Bang & Whimper 2016



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Complicated Love  
by Ashley Ann Courts

The way the two of them looked at each other, everyone would say they were deeply in love.  
Maybe they were without the chaser or even the glove  
cleaner closets is what they both needed.  
To him, she was his queen, but her king size bed wasn't big enough to hold his insecurity  
and the thoughts of that day she got caught.  
How could you still love her when you know that she cheats?  
Her secret love affair with a her seemed to be more than just secrets in between the bed sheets.  
Her heart that once was his, belonged to another and each day that went by  
he died more and more on the inside.  
He was committed into taking his own life and the idea of taking hers too was quickly justified,  
by the thought of them being together eternally in the deep depths of hell.  
He was burned by every "I still love you" and every other lie that she was still trying to sell.  
How could his angel turn into the devil?  
Even though her new love was viewed as a sin because she chose a her instead of choosing a him,  
she was ready to face the criticism that came along with her decision. He stood before her  
and she begged him just to listen.  
She took a deep breath and slowed down her pace.  
Knowing she committed a first degree murder leaving his heart a cold case, she reassured him  
that it was never her intention in the first place.  
He asked her why and hesitant with her reply she spoke with such passion.  
When I'm with her something deep inside ignites and the Sparks of love do more than fly, they soar.  
She fixed my broken wings, making it so easy for me to believe in love.  
I was her muse and she was the easel that held me together.  
Her name became inscribed across my heart when she signed the picture that she painted.  
How could something that seems so perfect be so complicated?

Probable Cause  
by Zoe Cruz

I wonder what stopped you Mr. Officer  
Was it the darkness of the night  
Or the darkness of his skin  
Was it the bass of his music  
Or the beating pound coming from within  
Was it his hood or that he was in the hood  
Somewhere he called home was a war zone  
Without no protection from you  
Gunshots became broken lullabies  
That seemed to make a man of him  
He never needed a mother  
When the streets raised him  
To never flinch at a gunshot  
But fear what was strapped on the waist of a man who looked less like his father  
The promise to take a life faster than given was attached to a belt of someone  
Whose hands will never know what it feels like to hold an innocent body as their blood makes a finger  
painting on their mothers' concrete belly  
You took a son from two mothers that night Mr. Officer.

Life of a College Student #1  
by Christine Ditzel

The computer screen  
Bright light glows at me, so bright,  
Waiting for my words



Photo by Andrea Taitte

THE MAGIC of SUMMER  
by Jose Del Orden

Oh friend of mine:  
Rise this day,  
And behold a true miracle.  
See the leaves on the trees,  
Filled with colors so vibrant and full of life.

It is a time of celebration,  
A time of relaxation.  
It is the time for birth and renewal,  
The time for your heart to sing out in joy.  
It is the magic of Summer.  
The compassion of our ever present Mother Nature.

Live not in gloom.  
It is our beloved and fair season of summer.  
Forget your troubled ways.  
Shrug it off for later,  
We must embrace our younger spirit,  
It demands that we put down the tools and come out to play.

Therefore, no matter what may be your age,  
Jump off the stage.

Enjoy the fruits that life brings.

Remove the business attire,  
Find that bikini or the swimming trunks you last berried in your closet all those years ago.  
It is time to show your inner glow to the world.

On previous years,  
I many times heard you speak so wistfully of that tan you had always wanted.  
This is your chance.  
Do not push this gift away.  
Enjoy the magic of summer.  
Remember that no matter how far you've come in your years,  
The sparks of joy and fun will always be within reach.

I wish you the best of luck, dear friend of mine.  
Although it is time for farewell,  
And this day I leave for adventure,  
It is my hope that we may meet again.  
Perhaps walking at some park I shall see your familiar face.  
Maybe find your trace on a hike up the Himalayas Mountains.  
Or even if we happen to meet for a swim at our favorite beach.

I am  
by Andrea Taitte

I am from the trees all over my yard, from mango, coconuts and cocoa plants. I am from the green house down the road, the biggest house in the block, the one with beautiful smelly flowers, those that fill up the night with wonders. The house with the big mango plant, the one kids climb on summer nights.

I am from the calm, flowy river down at my aunt's house, the one where clothes were washed up. The one that could flood up the entire town, when rain was poured down.

I am from dark nights when the lights went out, where my grandma told stories to scare us children. "The boogey man in going to get you at night, so be good and listen to your dad." I am from the stories of witches and the evil hour. I am from run before the chanclleta hits you, and from "do you want me to get the belt." I am from peaceful nights of my grandmother saying "sleep with the angels, but don't let them take all of your bed."

I am from "close the gate before the dog gets out, if he does it is your turn to get him."  
I am from the one and only creator, the daughter of the king, I am from the kingdom of heaven and  
He is my  
king.

I am from the # 1 coffee shop, from Carlos and Carmen's laugh, from an early cup of dark coffee and from soursop to sweeten the heart. From my mother's womb to my grandma's arms, from a healthy person to a sickened heart. From the memories not spoken, those that cure the heart, from earth to heaven, from heaven to my heart.

I am from where you were and where you are, that place in heaven from where you watch and the promise still awaits, I'll see your smile next to the river again.

My Contradiction  
by Darian Fernandez

Writing is therapy.

Every blessing, every moment I spend stressing, writing is the dressing I apply to the wounds that come from our confessions.

And to those confessions left unconfessed, on this page these thoughts I shall profess.

Neither of us have professed love,  
though I confess I've thought about it.  
But neither of us can end hugs either.  
Maybe for just a few moments, just to take a breather.  
I believe that means something, you're more than just a teaser.

I feel it, love is in season.  
And if our hearts break, it'd be odd if they didn't break even.  
We're no cliché, but when I breathe out I swear I feel you breathe in.  
Like a seesaw, every time I go up, I hope you see what I saw.  
And if you're reading this and missed that metaphor, save me the "aw."  
I'll even drop the rhyme to make sure you understand it all;  
I wanna share the world with you, every rise and fall.

But our luck never lasts.  
Though our feelings are strong, it's too often that we're apart for far too long.  
I await your return hoping that when we meet again, we'll still be strong.  
And we are, always but not forever.  
Your inevitable departure will be the drastic measure that ends our pleasure.  
I take comfort knowing the past we share can never be severed.

Our time apart proves my persistence.  
For instance, we have a reverse tolerance to distance. The longer we're apart, the more my heart beats off the charts when I dart to your apartment -- I mean dorm, but I swear what goes on there is not the norm.  
What we do is special, like a rainless thunderstorm.

It was no chance that I stole your heart with a question and a glance. But it wasn't so simple as me taking a chance to advance.  
I studied your stance, and when our pants displaced, I thrust forward like a lance, eyes forward, locked in a trance.  
Our joust was no happenstance.  
My work alone didn't make that circumstance.  
It took more than us both to start this romance.

Natural Disaster  
by Christina Ortega

I am a natural disaster  
And no I am not talking about my hair  
I am talking about the flair that has lit in my soul because these demons now call it home  
Yes I am a natural disaster and no I'm not the kind you hear in the news  
But if you encounter me you will probably lose  
Because there is no building up and repairing after me  
You see  
I've been through shit and every friend of Red Cross has tried but not succeeded getting me  
through it  
You know  
They say when you're at your lowest you look up to your Highest  
But God  
Damn when you're as low as me all you feel is what high is  
Because that inhale of the smoke that lies from within turns to an exhale of relief as I try to  
begin  
To forget all the hurt that these men have caused me  
And I don't wanna hear a "sweety but you're only 18"  
Because not you or your friends really know me  
Or rather what I've been through  
Because the short time I've been alive I'm already 1 out of 6  
And my No meaning Yes to him made me a statistic  
But don't get it twisted I am not the disaster of a twister but I do have that circling reminder  
that my body was carefully threaded by god's hands to create something so beautiful  
This does not change the fact that I am a natural disaster  
Or that I am his natural disaster  
Because the Sunami of my love has washed over him and he cannot breathe  
He is drowning but won't leave because of how much he feels sorry for me  
But I told him from the beginning  
That I am an earthquake and I will shake him until he feels like hurling and then to make him  
feel at ease I will take his tectonic plate and shift it back where it's supposed to be...  
In me  
He is in my mind  
And the disaster of this hurricane leaves tears falling from my eyes  
Because he is not really mine  
But I am waiting for him to realize what he has and to appreciate it  
But every guy before him has shown me that that is not realistic  
That the reality of a guy loving a disaster like me just might never be  
And Because of that I have become content with the fact that I might be the only person  
that will love me the way I'm supposed to be  
Because throughout all of my disasters I am my only master

80 Proof  
by Zoe Cruz

I can see that human finger tips are the most sensitive part of the body  
But if used correctly the finger tips can silence the demons of the mind  
Whether they are placed gently on your face, or traced across your scars  
inducing a lullaby  
Fingertips are powerful  
They leave their print without even meaning to  
Skin can be placed next to each other and assure you that fire is found by man  
But heat...  
Heat was brought together by bodies who knew how to burn for each other  
That the puddles of midnight sweat were the tears of your skin thanking god  
for sense of touch  
The bonfire our bodies made was not a waste of time  
I knew that when you kissed my waist every time  
You didn't seem like the type to have lavish things, but as my body  
lied next to yours  
Your chest became thousands of acres of grass land  
Your mouth became a moat, and your mind was a castle  
I remember when you said "You can be my princess instead"  
In our sleep we became royalty as if every part of me had value to you  
The last night I slept next you I let you hear my heartbeat  
As you slurred your words about how you liked me  
The drunken mind sometimes can dirty dance with a sober heart  
My sober heart welcomed the pressure of you on the locked chamber  
The thunderous beat against my chains did not wake you  
The winter storm in me came too unexpectedly to you  
The blizzards I made of us happened slowly then all at once  
I should have remembered that you loved summer  
Vodka burns like you did, but it will never fill me like you  
It will only make me as empty as the bottle throughout the night  
If you are reading this I hope it's not too late to say  
My body had a pleasure of meeting yours.

Mad Woman  
by Mayana Patterson DeCosta

I was the rage on the road, the wreck behind the wheel or maybe beside it, or in front of it. I just know I was a mad woman driving 70 mph through a calm suburban neighborhood and anything in my way was at risk. It was only 1 in the afternoon on a Tuesday, but I figured it was 5pm somewhere in the world so I treated myself to three tall cold beers and two shots of Jack Honey. I swear I'm not drunk although I hit one squirrel, three curbs, and ran a red light, I managed to swerve in time to avoid the little boy riding his scooter in the middle of the road. Go me!

I kind of wished it were my ex-boyfriend who just dumped me this morning via text message. I would have accelerated to 90 mph, hit him straight on, and probably even reversed over his ass too.

"Hey jade, it's not u, it's me. It's ovr," he wrote. Can you believe that after three years of all the bullshit I put up with, that son of a bitch had the audacity to be so cliché and inconsiderate. Love isn't anything but a four letter word nowadays.

young love, a recipe  
by Thrupthy Jacob

Ingredients:

- \* one (1) dark, tragic past
- \* two (2) known major addictions, finely chopped into remission
- \* one (1) failed long-term relationship, aged five (5) years
- \* one (1) engagement ring, returned
- \* assorted positive personality traits (ex. kindness, sincerity, intelligence, inherent goodwill towards all of humanity)
- \* ambition (measure acc. to personal taste, generous serving recommended)
- \* physical attractiveness, masculine (measure acc. to anyone else's taste, generous serving recommended)
- \* persistence, aged one (1) month

Directions:

1. Slowly mix dark past, addictions, failed relationship, and engagement ring in house for twenty (20) years over medium heat until boiling.
2. Remove from heat and pour above into separate house filled with minimum of four (4) close friends. Let sit for two (2) months to cool.
3. Sift in positive traits, ambition, and attractiveness evenly. Stir well until mixture has turned into a soft, golden color.
4. After cooling, add one (1) potential romantic interest (see ch. 5, pp. 21-27 for recipe), frozen and in small increments. Whisk mixture for thirty (30) minutes, then set aside.
5. Prepare persistence by simmering in large thunderstorm until small bubbles begin to surface. Do not overheat.
6. Quickly pour mixture into heated persistence and raise to medium heat. Stir until mixture's color has shifted from gold to brick red. (Note: romantic interest should remain clear, dark green.)
7. If romantic interest does not melt, increase temperature of thunderstorm to maximum heat.
8. If romantic interest still does not melt, wait.
9. Just wait.
10. The mixture is starting to evaporate. Romantic interest inexplicably remains frozen.
11. Something is very wrong.
12. The air now smells strongly of ozone. What have you done?
13. There is barely any mixture left. All that preparation wasted. Pathetic.
14. Romantic interest still has not melted. You should be ashamed.
15. You have made a grave mistake.
16. You are a grave mistake.
17. The mixture has disappeared. The storm is cracked with lightning. Too much heat. Can't you follow directions?
18. You must be used to failure by now. Do not blame the romantic interest. Do not suspect the romantic interest. There is nothing wrong with the romantic interest.
19. There is something wrong with you.
20. Add yourself (0) to thunderstorm. Retain maximum heat. Let sit until thoroughly charred. You shouldn't have tried. You should have known it wouldn't work. Overheat. Burn everything.
21. Ah, at last. You are finished. You taste better this way. Well done.

Trust me, it's life lessons  
by La Dream Garcia

Mardochee once told me  
"You can love someone but also love them from a far. You can love someone but it doesn't mean  
you always have to Be with them. "

I mean Why love someone that beats you down makes you feel less than what you are  
and leave so many emotional scars ?

We're human I get it,  
we crave affection ,and we're all trying to fill this void of Being wanted , or should I say loved?  
we get bored and just move on to the next craving we have that someone else could provide.  
It's a cycle  
We're simply complicated beings

We watch movies and fantasize on how reality should be

We're in love with the idea of being in love.

Truth is we don't know love like we should

We can preach over and over again to someone on how much they mean to us  
Like saying  
"I love you unconditionally"  
Or  
"I'll die for you"  
Oh god  
save your breath

Because Truth be told:  
when And if I stop stimulating you,  
You'll get bored, leave me and move on.

The "I love you unconditionally"  
Turns into "It's not you it's me" or "I just don't love you anymore"

Broken pieces  
What were left with  
no one can really guide us on how to deal with the  
"Broken fairytale"

Maybe the reason why  
Were left brokenhearted  
Is because we  
don't get a chance to know ourselves,  
were so quick to identify ourselves with someone else and become ONE.

remember that appearance isn't everything

And that Beauty is on the inside and out,

No my dear, God didn't make us perfect but trust me

when you start observing people from the inside  
you'll know  
what true beauty looks like,

sounds like  
and how it makes you feel when you're around them  
you will probably fall in love with the person especially their state of mind

In life many people intrude our lives,  
Trust me, some may bring out the worst in you

There will be times where you catch yourself and notice that you transformed into somebody that  
isn't you

People should bring out the best in you, help you grow in life and challenge you

That's what true lovers do

Take this for example  
you go shopping

You see a shirt you really like  
So  
You purchase it  
bring it home  
You look in the bag  
Is it the same shirt you love?  
Does it still make you happy?  
No matter how many times you blink your eyes  
the shirt is still there how you purchased it right?  
No surprises?

That's how a relationship with love should be like.  
No surprises, no rips and tears, no stains just happiness

To whomever is reading just know that good things come at the right time

never chase them  
Let them come to you  
Because once you find the love in God and you  
Trust me your knight and shining armor will be running to you  
Know that your worth more than a million stars

And never ever my dear let someone dim your light  
Your god's gift from above and he made you to stand out

Know that  
Love shouldn't hurt  
And that  
Love does not involve abuse of any kind  
Love doesn't mean to reopen mended wounds just for it to get infected again.  
So if you have wounds that are patched up

Don't have the infection spread again  
Find yourself  
Respect yourself  
Look for your own demons

Stop looking for the enemies in others

Because until you concord the enemy in yourself you can't deal with no other.

Trust me

The After Party  
by Mardochee Julien

Empty.

I am as empty as the vodka bottles next to my bedside.

Dealing.

I was a deck of cards to you dealing with me because you had to.

Lately.

I have been going late to own my pity party, lately.

**It's my party I can cry if I want to.**

Bursting.

*Where's the confetti?*

You made colors of me

I stopped trying to repaint you after you showed your true colors.

Music.

Pulling my hair like cello strings, you made music out of me

We weren't symphonies anymore

More like the basement whore who grinds to Jamaican beats

Crazy.

~~Jamaican-me-crazy.~~

Inamorato  
by Anna Zmuda

What a love so cold

How could someone be so beautiful, yet so ugly  
The outside of you so alluring  
and the inside so crumby

You showed me your true colors back to back  
You stole my heart and returned it with a crack

How am I supposed to heal  
When the man I love doesn't feel

No feelings, no mood, no nothing  
But to come of this, you wanted something.

How can we grow together  
If it's just me in this cold weather

Love found, definitely love lost,  
Our hearts and feelings being tossed.

I'll miss the love we shared  
The heat of my heart and your heart elsewhere

I've been lost in this abyss  
But you saved me with your lips.

You've turned away now, leaving me to freeze  
I wanted to make this work, which you failed to see

Our love will always be present in my heart  
My love didn't change from the start

Why did you have to leave  
When it's only me that you need

I'll hold you tight and never let you go  
Just please get rid of this heart masked in snow.



Photo by Annu Vincent

The New World  
by Darcelle Lindor

Sitting in the backseat of my grandmother's car, I peer outside the window at the strange characters known as New Yorkers. The whole city was filled with people of different colors and features. It resembled Jonah's coat of many colors in the Bible. They all looked very busy and moved quickly like a hamster would on the wheel. There was someone walking at every turn as well as billboards, stores, and restaurants on every street corner. This was a weird world. I felt like I was an alien from the planet mars visiting earth for the first time. I've lived in Kiev, Ukraine all my life, a knot in my stomach formed as the thought of being in a new continent entered my mind. All at once with no warning, warm tears ran down my face. I bit my lip hard with the intention of calming down, but I could not control my emotions. Before coming here, I knew that my country had some small problems with our neighbor, Russia. The small problems turned into big problems, when policemen were killing people who disagreed with President Yanukovych. What was so wrong about people having their own opinions? My parents disagreed with Yanukovych as well and were involved in multiple protests. I just turned eleven the week before they sent me to live with my grandma, with the reason that they'd fight to make our home safer. Once they did so, I'd be able to return home. My grandma saw me in her rearview mirror. With her eyes focused on the road, she tried to comfort me.

"Maksym, do not cry, I know you miss your mom and dad, but I am here still and New York is not as scary as it may appear to be. There is always something fun to do, and new people to meet here especially in Brooklyn."

The only response she got was the whistle of the wind implying that summer was near its end. My grandma was a heavy old woman with welcoming brown eyes and crooked smile. She paid me a visit every winter and liked to shower me with goody bags filled with all types of chocolates and sweets. My grandma made a right turn into an older neighborhood of buildings made of brownstone, with multiple stoops and doors. I had never seen such weird homes. They were like wafer cakes squished together by cream in between. My grandma parked the car near the gate and we continued with my luggage in my hands. She lived in the end of the building in house 22.

The house smelled of fresh babka bread with long narrow hallways and creaky floors.

"Come my Maksym, I'll show you your room." My grandma with her hand in mine led the way upstairs. It was much larger than the one I had in the Ukraine, but still its large size did not comfort me. I knew that I was a stranger to this house, this new world. I could not mask the sadness I held.

My grandma knelt down on her knees to my level and smiled her crooked smile with her chipped gold tooth, shining in my face. "Maks, we shall cook some borscht together. I know that's your favorite." I answered with a nod. I love my grandma, but even her silly smile and kind gesture didn't make me feel better. My grandma stayed with me in my room and helped me unpack. We then went downstairs into the kitchen. I grated the beets, carrots and sliced the cabbage while my grandma boiled the beef. When the soup was ready, we hugged and embraced each other for our great teamwork. The aroma of seasoned potatoes and beef filled the whole kitchen, and in this moment, I felt at home. My grandma and I slurped our soup as she reminded me of the fun times we had when she'd visit. Everything was going well until she reminded me that I'd be starting sixth grade tomorrow. She tried to tell me that everything would go well, but the news hit me. I zoned out on my grandma's lips moving, but I was unable to hear anything she was saying. I went to bed at around nine, but I laid there in my bed, frozen with fear as to how I'd survive this new obstacle without my mama. I was literally an alien here-with my gray eyes and ash blond hair. And me being small with my skinny bowlegged legs, I'd be an easy target for bullies. My mind raced with ideas of how I could escape. Maybe I could play dead, no I can't hold my breath for that long. I could pretend to be sick with a stomach ache. My eyes were wide awake the whole night. In the morning, I pretended to be asleep when my grandma came in to wake me. She shook me and called my name, but I refused to get up. I hoped to tire her into letting me stay in bed, but she continued to shake me until I gave in. She pulled me out of bed but I threw myself on the floor and squirmed and cried in pain.

"Maksym no time for games, get ready." I told her that I had stomach trouble, but she ignored my lies and put me on her back and walked to the bathroom. My grandma was a nice lady, but everyone had a mean side, so I cooperated and showered and got ready for school. I sat at the kitchen table to eat my breakfast, but I could not. The thought of spending another day in this city nauseated me, and I cringed as a pain shot through my stomach. This time I wasn't faking it. I ran to the bathroom and threw up. My grandma sat by my side and gave me a big hug.

"Grandma please don't make me go, I don't know anyone here. Pleeese, I promise I'll be ready soon, just give me another week."

"My love, you are not going to die if you go, I'll be right here when you get back, no need to be scared. You don't know anyone now, but you will. She held my face in her hands and said you are lovable, you will make friends." These kind words did nothing for me, but I stood up in defeat and agreed to go. As we took the last steps down to the car, I turned right to make a run for it, with no thought of where I'd go. But my grandma was one step ahead of me, and yanked me back.

She made a deep sigh and looked down at me. "Maksym Kozak, you have my word that if you behave yourself, I'll buy a card so you can call your parents. Do we have deal, young man?" I nodded in slight relief. If I could make it through the day, I'd be able to hear my mom and dad's voice. I opened the car door and climbed in the back seat.

Learning Worth  
by Nicole Awooner-Renner

Heaven only knows,  
the mysteries of life,  
the endless wonders that sever and disconnect my mind from Soul.  
The Growth from a child to adult,  
wise beyond your years.  
Words of a moment can I say that I'm glad I lost what I have  
to push me in the right direction,  
from fear to focus I realized I am golden forever  
I am chosen, because heaven only knows.

## Vices

by Kristin Aquilante

Gin and tonic is my favorite drink, or I should probably say was my favorite drink. I pretty much always had a drink in my hand. That was until I developed sclerosis of the liver and had to stop. This was a shame because the drinking kept the voices away. The voices that asked “why me?” or repeatedly muttered “dumbass” or “bitch,” almost like they were taunting and begging me to feel sorry for them. The drinking numbed their voices. But now I can’t drink and have to find a new way to deal with them.

When I was sixteen my parents got a divorce. My mom received full custody of me, but she sent me to live with my uncle because she could not look at me. “You look too much like your father. The spitting image of him. It hurts too much to look at you,” she said. So right after the divorce, I moved in with her brother Fisher.

Fisher was forty-five, never married, and lived alone. He was very aloof about what he did, but he made good money. Fisher had two cars and lived in an upscale part of town; a nice guy, but there was always something off about him. When I first moved in he gave me a mini lecture about the basement or his “office” as he called it. “Claire,” he said, “you must never go down into the basement. It is really for your own safety and well-being. I tell you this because I love you and you’re like a daughter to me.”

I did as I was told and avoided the basement. However, one night in December, around Christmas, I heard this terrible moaning. I could not sleep; the constant moaning and crying was a distraction and then an annoyance. It was coming from the basement. I had to find out what it was because it was bothering me to no end and all I wanted to do was sleep. I rose from my bed, put on my robe, and went down into the basement. I knocked on the door. “Uncle Fisher, could you stop or lower the volume of whatever you’re doing. I can’t sleep. I can hear you.” Frantic moans, almost like a cry for help, was the response I received. I slowly opened the door to a woman lying in a dentist’s chair. She was strapped in. Her mouth was duct taped, and she was an amputee. Both of her legs were removed right below the knee and her arms had been amputated right below the elbow. Her waist was strapped to the chair by a thick leather belt, so she had free range to move what was left of her limbs. There was dried blood on the floor. Her stitches were well sewn, as if a doctor had done them. She was a functioning amputee. I looked at her for a while and she looked back at me. I could not look away; it was like I was in a trance. But suddenly I heard a voice behind me say, “What did I tell you about the basement?”

I turned around to see Uncle Fisher with a look of panic and horror washed over his face. “I heard moaning from my room and I couldn’t sleep. I knocked and I heard more moaning, so I opened the door. I only wanted the moaning to stop so I could sleep,” I said.

“Why don’t you go to your room and wait for me. I would like to talk to you.”

“Okay.” With that I left the basement and went upstairs. I sat on my bed waiting for him for thirty minutes. For the first minute, I heard frantic moaning once again but it soon faded and then there was just silence. He finally came upstairs and lightly knocked on my door before entering. “Hey sweetheart, can I sit down?”

“Sure.”

He sauntered over to my bed and sat next to me. He looked at my wall when he said, “I took care of the moaning. You should be able to go to sleep now, I hope. I hope what you saw did not frighten you. I love you, and I wanted to protect you from what you just saw. I have a problem or vice; a compulsion. What you saw is something that keeps me sane. It’s actually quite cathartic.”

“I don’t understand. Did you do that to her?”

“Yes, a slow torture. Take away from her little by little until she is nothing. But I did not finish. I had to shut her up, so she would not bother you again. I slit her throat. But I usually like to take my time.”

I stared at the wall with him in disbelief. I did not know how to respond. Finally after a long silence between us, I looked at him and said, “Show me.”

He turned to face me. “What?”

“Show me what you do. I want to understand.”

He looked at me in disbelief and after some time he said, "I'm going to give you one of my sleeping pills. It will help for tonight. But tomorrow I will have a surprise for you. I think you will like it."

He got up from my bed and exited the room. He returned shortly after with a white pill and a glass of water. I put the pill in my mouth and then took a sip of water to wash the pill down. I got under my sheets, laid my head on the pillow, closed my eyes, and fell asleep.

I didn't wake up until noon. The pill really knocked me out. I took a shower and got dressed. When I entered the kitchen, he was sitting at the table eating a sandwich. "Hey, how did you sleep?" he asked between chews.

"Good."

"Sit down," he said. "Let me make you a sandwich. After lunch I will show you your surprise. I'm really excited to show you. You're going to love it."

We ate lunch in silence. After we finished, he collected the plates and put them in the sink. He turned to me and asked, "Are you ready for your surprise?"

"Yes," I responded. I was a little nervous, but also excited about what awaited me.

"Great," He said clapping his hands together. "It's in the basement. Follow me."

He started walking downstairs towards the basement and I followed suit. When we got to the door, he stopped and turned around. "You asked me to show you and I am."

He opened the door; I walked in, he followed behind and closed the door after him. It was not until the door was closed that I was able to process what my eyes were seeing. Strapped to the chair with duct tape over his mouth was Dave, a boy that had tormented and bullied me for years. He raped me; choked and spat on me, threw his hot piss on me, and called me names like stupid and dumbass. I hated him and now he was lying before me, completely vulnerable.

"Claire, I usually take my time. But this one is yours. You can do whatever you please."

"I get to kill him?"

"Yes, torture and kill. You wanted to experience what I do and now you can. I figured Dave would be a perfect first for you. Your mother has told me over the years all the horrible things he has done to you. This is your time now. He will be the victim."

Uncle Fisher walked over to a metal tray with various sharp metal objects that was displayed next to the chair. He picked up a small knife and held it out for me to take. I took the knife. "Now as you can see he is naked," Uncle Fisher said. "You have free range to do whatever you please."

After Uncle Fisher said this, Dave let out a moan and gave me pleading eyes as if to tell me not to do what I was told. I began to make several incisions on his right bicep; he let out short, muffled screams. Blood slowly ran from his body and it was enticing. I moved the knife down to his forearm and continued my cutting. I made shallow wounds all over his right arm. I then walked around to the other side to continue the process on his left arm. After making small cuts all over his arms, I felt the urge to do something neither he nor I would ever forget. I placed my hand to his throat. I traced my fingers all the way down his throat, his chest, his stomach, and then to his penis. I gave him a few light strokes. Dave began to grow aroused. "Do you have a sharper, bigger knife? I want to cut this off." Dave began contorting his body, trying to free himself from the restraints. He let out a muffled cry as a plea sure disappeared from his face and fear took its place.

"Yes, I do. Here you go," Uncle Fisher said. He handed me a butcher knife.

I took the knife from him and looking at Dave I said, "I think you've seen too much."

Using the small knife that I held in my left hand, I forced the tip through his pupil and gouged both his eyes out. Streams of blood danced down his face. Now he would only be able to feel the pain but not see what was happening. I gave the knife back to Uncle Fisher. I lifted the butcher knife that I was holding with my right hand and slowly cut through his flesh. He let out a piercing scream. His manhood flopped to the floor and beautiful squirts of crimson red pumped out like a fountain of blood. Turning to Uncle Fisher I said, "I can see why this is cathartic. Little by little until there is nothing left. Do you know how to stop this bleeding? I think I'm done for the day. I'll start up again tomorrow."

Anonymous  
By Aliya Herndon

He looked at every word she wrote  
His eyes followed her pen as she signed dated  
He tried to talk to me asking questions  
I could see the look in his eyes  
He didn't want his baby to die  
And I her friend couldn't say anything  
I acted as if I wasn't there  
Just a shadow in the walls of the planned parenthood  
I write as I watch him still he's breathing heavy  
She takes out papers for her records  
Any moment now she'll go in 5 weeks pregnant  
I've begged her to not do it but I know it's not my place  
But I just see this man and his face  
His face his face his eyes as he stares at me screaming don't let my baby die  
She wanted me here to turn her sadness into happy tears  
But is that really why I am here?  
I'm never quiet I always say my part but can I let this baby no longer have a beating heart  
So her head is down his eyes have not left the paper any moment now 5 weeks will be no more  
If I can't stop her what the hell am I here for?  
She walks...  
He puts his head down  
Two hours passed it felt like a day  
Two heartbeats went out  
Not one two  
Two souls two little babies



Photo by Christine Ditzel

My Baby Story Or the Story of My Baby  
by Paul Merson

It was late in the summer of 2015, one could tell things were winding down - the shimmer of the leaves, cooler evenings, shorter days. A change of seasons is a beautiful time to be a New Yorker. Summers are notoriously hot and humid, the winter of 2015 left absolutely no doubt about the fact that I forgot all about my days growing up in Russia and playing hockey in O F weather and have grown to dislike the cold. The cohort effect, of some of the older people moving to warmer climate was certainly affecting me. I was thinking about it a lot. The generational cohort effect in the text for this course was referring to the people born between the years of 1946-1964, but I had a few friends move to Florida, Arizona and Texas and I was experiencing something like it, perhaps something closer to age graded effects. I will have to bring this up to a therapist or a psychology professor to find out which effect I was experiencing. In any case changes were happening around me and therefore probably to me I just didn't realize that the biggest change was still forthcoming. One that would have profound effects on me in every way possible, life was definitely going to be different from this month forward. Some changes are permanent. This felt very permanent. The summer of 2015 was unlike any other in my life, I had finally met the girl of my dreams. She was unlike any other, not perfect but perfect for me. We met on the coldest day of the year during one of the coldest winters on record. Clutching our gym bags in nearly frost bitten hands on our way to a random bar on 8th ave. The rest was history that I will leave for another journal entry. Fast forward 7 months, a glorious summer of love was in the books. I felt invincible, yet innocent kind of like I did when I was 21, before all the desensitizing life has done onto to me. (As I am taking Neuroscience concurrently with this class chapter 2 felt wonderfully familiar.) The study of the aging brain and neuroplasticity was what I had to thank for the feelings I was once again having. They were reciprocated. As it turned out she loved me too. To put it in the technical terms of neuroscience our respective hippocampuses, which are parts of the limbic system were sending a lot of information to the amygdala - the almond shaped organ of our brain that is responsible for some of our deepest emotions. Perhaps there was too much of them at some points. We were powerless against this electrical storm. Autumn now surely on the horizon I was walking briskly to the Rite Aid superstore that sits in the middle of Brooklyn's China Town of Avenue U. It was time for a pregnancy test. The love of my life, 11 years my junior was waiting nervously at "Pho" one of our favorite eateries but neither of us were particularly hungry. She grabbed the bag from me and proceeded to the ladies room, emerging 5 minutes later with tears in her eyes. That is when I knew I was going to be a dad. We both suspected this was the cause of some obvious physiological changes that my now "fiance" was going through. It came in the form of a faintly drawn line in the middle of a plastic apparatus that reminded me of the old mercury thermometer we used in Russia. This one telling a different tale. We have created a life with which our lives will be forever intertwined with. The next few days were an emotional roller coaster filled with late night conversations fueled by Starbucks. After the usual "how could THAT have created THIS" denial I began to feel the weight of this new responsibility. Almost immediately my outlook on life changed. I was a brand new person, I grew up in an instant of time. Suddenly I was more attentive, empathetic and noticing every baby and every toddler I encountered throughout the day, studying them and their boundless energy out of the corner of my eye (thats peripheral vision and the optic chiasm for you Neuroscience geeks). Seven months later the "new me" is still intact. Armed with polaroids of the sonogram variety and a whole lot of new knowledge I don't know what life would have been like without this little creature growing inside of the woman that I am now proud to call my wife, or wifey on occasion. I don't think I want to know. As the winter is melting away, new signs of life are emerging all around. The next big change is just around the corner, we are due in late May. And everything will change again. The new me will be preempted with yet another new me.

"The only thing constant in life is change"

- Hiraclitus

Dark Fruits get Hung from a Different Tree  
by Ikea Poole

If I could die today, I would smile while taking my last breath. I could feel the warm thick liquid connecting, and close my eyes, reach up and whipping the hatred and shame off of my face. I have to control my anger; I can't let them know they are getting to me. Ma'ma told me that they want me to fight, so they can have a reason to kill me. She said "Harvey, people like that don't know nothing, but killin', rapin' and going to church on Sunday, pretending to be good Christians." Please God help me just make it through this. I extend my hand grabbing ahold of the person next to me. Our pigment made us brothers. We were the darkness inside all of this light, interrupting everything that was simple here in Podunk Mississippi.

I was in a special group of unlucky coons smart enough to go to this fancy God forsaken school. Surrounded by a bunch of clear people, who were all some version of Klan members. It didn't matter if I changed my hair, speech and dress to match theirs, I would never be white enough. I was an Uncle Tom nigger, but I was nigger just the same. They could see it in the thickness of my hair, the size of my nose and how low my large genitals hung that I didn't belong here. The melon in my skin put a target on my back. I hate being black. Black means nothing in the eyes of so many. The only time that crackers accept a monkey like me is when I am entertaining them, swinging off vines from tree to tree. I feel the weight of an object hit the back of my head. The white light blinded me and I faded into the uncertainty, I didn't have time to react before it was over. I hope there is shade in heaven.



Photo by Annu Vincent

CIA (Colored in America)  
by Mardochee Julien

Every time you leave I wait up for you, I always make sure I tell you "I love you" and you think I'm nagging you but I want to make sure I tell you just in case it's the last time I see you  
I know I didn't give birth to you but I did raise you and watching you grow up has been a pleasure.  
No matter how big you grow you'll always be my baby boy  
Your kinks swim in your roots, your smile bright as heaven's gates, your dimples as deep as the sea.  
You are my king but your mahogany skin tells the world you're different  
Your name isn't Zack which means I have to protect you because you are black  
Be careful, Big Brother is watching  
The government is watching  
They are watching  
CIA is lacking...you are CIA

*Colored in America*

You are not safe

Do you remember when daddy got mad at you when you pierced your ears? He just had the fear you'd be the stereotype, you know the type that stands on lines for welfare checks to spend them on NIKE checks just to fit in with the rest

America swears they know you best, he didn't want them to lay to rest, so he begged you to take out those diamonds because he wanted you to shine in front of him not in heaven, at least not yet.  
Do you get it now?

When you turned 16 and I gave you those keys, kissed your mahogany cheeks and told you to come home safely. I wasn't worried about you speeding or driving into a tree but DWB.

*Driving While Black.*

The adrenaline that pumps through young African American veins is insane

A sudden burst of energy from an increase in the hormones

*adrenaline*

Your mahogany skin becomes a diabolical combination of perspiration and fear

Your heart starts to not beat but instead bang against your chest as if it's being held captive and your lungs become a baby being pushed under water

That is the *rush* you'll feel when they stop you

But don't worry stay calm because if you move you'll be labeled as violent

Don't you say please officer, you'll be branded as rude and don't you remind them you're just a boy trying to go home because you'll become a plotline to a story that doesn't end well.

A punchline to a joke that isn't funny

A hotline to the ambulance that never blinged

A hashtag that no one will remember by next week because Kim Kardashian had her fucking baby

You will end up being another fabricated cover story

Another song that sounds way too familiar

"Lord please protect him for me, do this one favor for me. He never had thuggish ways got ways, man fuck the police"

Don't you forget baby boy, your brothers are still under attack

We are in a horror movie and it just so happens that all the victims are black

The boogeyman is real, he is just a white man with a badge

But don't you move

You'll be the outline using chalk lines making headlines by the morning

They want you to stay quiet because black boys like you are too loud to live

Because if your hands up you'll be face down

Remember when you turned 17 and I sobbed at your graduation

I was overwhelmed with emotion

You made it, you did it but do you know what that means?

We're still in this scary movie and you're White America's biggest fear

You're an educated black man

Run! Run! Run as fast you can but watch your back  
These motherfuckers like to play God  
Tickling the trigger, asking "should I shoot this nigger?"  
You got into college because you earned it not that bullshit affirmative action  
Be careful on campus, they'll be aggressive with their actions  
Just practice what rehearsed because even in real life black boys die first  
These white men with guns are just fucked up sandmans taking away black mothers dreams  
by killing their black babies  
Freddy Krueger isn't a nightmare anymore  
He stopped killing people in fantasies  
He is the salt and pepper hair white male sitting in the republican party  
This is the scariest movie I've ever seen  
Staring people who look like you and me  
The government isn't going to protect you, don't listen to the white kid in your American Consensus  
class. In this movie, his privilege will save his ass  
While your struggle will kill you  
So please, come home.

TOGETHER  
by Jose Del Orden

Together we shall rise:  
Through summers hot,  
And winters cold,  
Through autumns red and autumns gold,  
And through all that spring leaves untold.

And together we shall fall:  
Through joy and strife,  
And through the ever-changing states of life.  
Through day's shining light,  
Or the eternal darkness of night.

From freedoms brought through youth,  
To adulthood's deadly truths.  
Through life bound and set,  
Together, remaining, to the doors of death.

Together we shall reach the summit of this world,  
And together,  
We shall make it our own.

Dear Mom  
by Christina Ortega

I am in love  
It is a woman I want to be with  
And she woes every man that tries to deceive her  
Dear mom  
She is beautiful  
You know that kind of beauty that takes your breath away making it hard to breathe  
I look at her and she finally makes it easy for me to be  
Me  
Dear mom  
I want you to understand, it is not a phase that I chose to love a woman  
August 21, 1996 You said I was unique, well don't doubt my ability of escaping this world of a man  
She is my world  
Every continent of our love makes the thoughts of those who doubt us shake

Our love is so strong that we cause earthquakes in every tectonic plate  
Our love is burning we are on fire spreading because I want everyone to know about her  
Dear mom  
You always wanted me to be happy well guess what  
Happy is an understatement  
She makes me ecstatic, the static of the concept of us will shock everybody  
I know last time I said that would be the last time but this is just the beginning  
With her we are both growing individually and spiritually and she makes it easy for me to express  
myself lyrically  
Dear mom  
She makes me want to live my life and when she's in my presence I feel like I'm finally  
doing things right  
Throughout my whole past all they did was leave my feelings disintegrated, but with her I am that  
lily in the field as she makes me feel liberated  
Free  
Free from the investment these men seem to call love  
They claim they love you but all they want is your profit  
They prophesize that they won't leave you broken, but they do  
And if God is so against my love then why did He say he will heal the brokenhearted and bind up  
my wounds  
Or just look back at Proverbs ten: one-two  
Hatred stirs up conflict; but love covers all wrongs  
Every kiss cures every conflict, leaving me feeling so secure in her arms  
With her I feel at home  
Dear Mom  
This is all you ever want  
I'm finally in love, this is the perfect start  
She is my waterfall, my love was stuck in a vacant body of water but when I met her I was finally able  
to flow over  
Don't go chasing waterfalls, please stick to the rivers and the lakes that you're used to  
But if I wasn't supposed to chase her then why does my heart yearn for this cascade  
Dear Mom  
I know this is new for you and it might be confusing, might take a while for you to actually believe it,  
just take a second to foresee it  
Because with her I'm not leaving, I am sticking by her till she stops breathing, through all  
the screaming. She is my reason to keep on reaching.  
She just completes me  
My heart is at a complete bliss  
I thank God every night for this simple bless  
Everyday day she is by my side it renews my faith  
That love does in fact exist  
When you fall in love with your best friend it's like a scripted romance movie  
All those fairytales have come true mommy  
She stuck by me past 12 not allowing me to leave my glass shoe, promised me she wasn't leaving no  
matter what struggles I go through  
She opened up a cage to a beast, then wondered why there was so much beauty in me  
She told me she would protect me from all the rottenness of wicked men because  
I deserved more than being treated like that time and time again  
Dear Mom  
You always ended those bedtime stories with happily ever after  
This is just a 21st century love story  
And after I met her I am happier than I ever have been.

