

# Then & Now

This collection of poems from the JSASCO pod of students from the Get Lit's Why I Rise Summer Fellowship. This group really wanted to focus on time and the ways in which we adapt and the steps we take despite its chaos.

Here's to those who don't get a poem.  
Whose song is never sung.  
Though we'll never know them. We know that you wrote them.  
To spark the tongue of a new generation.

For the girl that learnt that society says she should be seen and never heard,  
That her body speaks louder than her words.  
So they hid their voices  
Until they could rewalk their steps and remember where they lost it.

For the days nothing else will grow  
it's the only proof / Something was alive here

Secure arms holding me turn jagged blades of paradise  
His rough movements spell out my eulogy

Sometimes there is nothing  
to do but fall in love,  
just for the sake of love poems

here are fingers, / a couple less than a dozen;  
crimson-stained and finally lethal / enough for  
static. watch him charge

A shiver and a breeze / I collect leaves,  
craft a home / using chlorophyll to  
my advantage

Grass O n c e touched my toes  
Now, I'm walking on concrete

I am not a mother, but I admit  
To myself and my country that  
*I am afraid to have a son.*

America doesn't expect white mothers to  
disappoint their sons  
By telling them they were born a crime;  
They only expect that from *Me.*



*To the lost, and the blind, and the almost found.*

To the voices that make noises without a sound.

To the whispers that leave blisters to listeners' ears.

To the pioneers with no fear to interfere.

Here's to endurance, the interminable assurance that reassures us.

That cures us.

AND REMINDS US WHO WE ARE, ONCE WE FORGET.

To **never** letting up, to **never** confusing **trust** with **folly**.

Love with trepidation

Or obstinacy with

determination..

Casey West Simpson



may they never forget their first step.

Here's to the president's janitor

To to-do lists.

To opportunists

To midnight trysts

To the does did and done.

But more to the yet will and be.

To unpublished novels

And the inventor of blueberry waffles

To the overlooked

And the never looked.

To the unseen who still dream

To the new

The

The in between

The shrewd

The rude

The misconstrued

The politically pursued

The ones who refuse

The hullabaloo

To those who revolt and reject the status

quo

To the journeyer on their thousandth mile,  
may they never forget their first step.

To those feeling purposeless. And to those  
healing and hurting less.

And even to herbalists.

Here's to those who break the cycle.

Who don't give their injury revival

To those who recycle even when they're  
suicidal.

Here's to the president's janitor.

To to-do lists.

To opportunists

To midnight trysts

To the does did and done.

But more to the yet will and be.

To unpublished novels

And the inventor of blueberry waffles

To the overlooked

And the never looked.

To the unseen who still dream

To the new

The **Green**

The in between

The shrewd

The rude

The misconstrued

The politically pursued

The ones who refuse

The hullabaloo

And the ones who say in lieu in lieu of  
instead.

To those who revolt and reject the status  
quo

To the taciturn terse talkers whose talents  
trigger transmutation

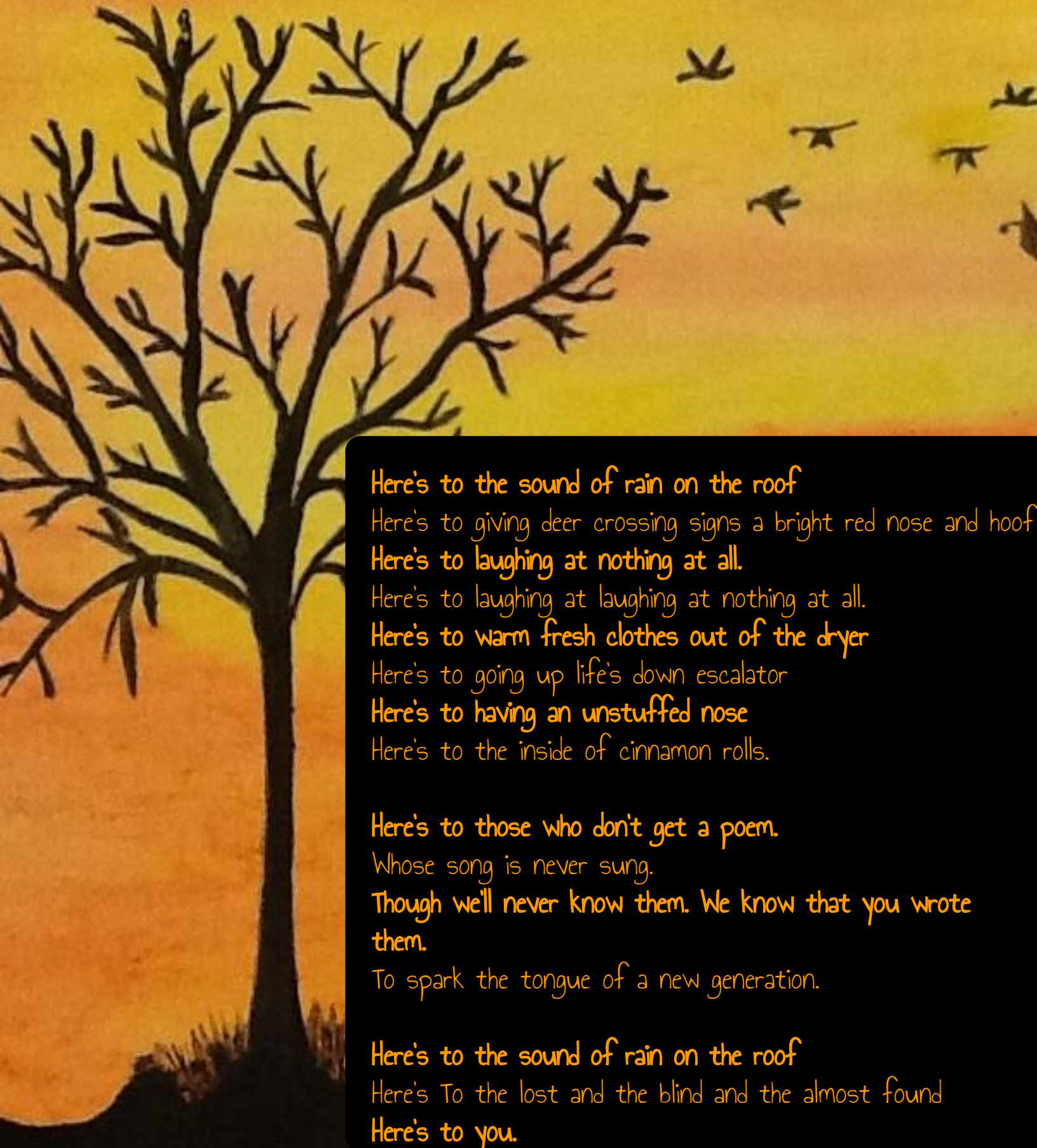
To reiteration

To the overuse of alliteration.



“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.”

— George Bernard Shaw



Here's to the sound of rain on the roof

Here's to giving deer crossing signs a bright red nose and hoof

Here's to laughing at nothing at all.

Here's to laughing at laughing at nothing at all.

Here's to warm fresh clothes out of the dryer

Here's to going up life's down escalator

Here's to having an unstuffed nose

Here's to the inside of cinnamon rolls.

Here's to those who don't get a poem.

Whose song is never sung.

Though we'll never know them. We know that you wrote them.

To spark the tongue of a new generation.

Here's to the sound of rain on the roof

Here's To the lost and the blind and the almost found

Here's to you.

# Something? Nothing Everything!

Caris Wright

“..a mime”

“I tried to”

“I hoped to”

“words that are always circulating but never said.”

“Over and over again”

“Nothin”



“Concealed in writings”

“...has already spoken for them and that there's nothing that they can say.. or do.”

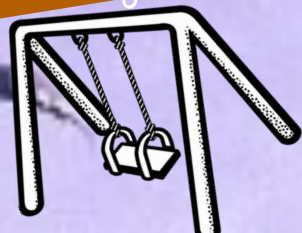
“..the girl that learnt that society says...”

“...her body speaks louder than her words”

“I can't find it”



“Sitting on a swing”



“Silence isn't nothing...”



*Caris Wright*



*Something? Nothing. Everything!*



*Something?*

**“Until they could  
rewalk their steps and  
remember where they  
lost it,”**

*“...words that are always  
circulating but never said”.*

**“I feel bad when I  
do nothing..”**

*“But decides to keep  
his story to himself”*

*Nothing.*

*“I want to be their voices,”*

**“For the boy taught to  
silence his emotions”**

**“I’m trying so hard..  
to not be  
hypocritical...”**

*“Sometimes it's...”*

*Everything!*



# CHAOS BROWNIES

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup + 2 tablespoons salted butter, melted
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup melted milk chocolate chips
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup milk chocolate chips
- Chaos mix-in of your choice

## CHAOS ADD-INS:

- Pop-rocks
- Hot sauce
- Marshmallows
- Coconut Shavings
- Peanut Butter
- Tootsie rolls
- Mustard
- Mint leaves
- Butterscotch chips
- Fingernail clippings
- Pancake syrup

## STEPS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line a metal 9x9 pan with parchment paper.
2. Pour melted butter into a large mixing bowl. Whisk in sugar by hand until smooth, 30 seconds.
3. Add in eggs and vanilla extract.
4. Whisk 1 minute. Whisk in melted chocolate until combined and smooth.
5. Use a rubber spatula to stir in flour, cocoa powder, and salt until just combined. Stir in whole chocolate chips.
6. Pour into prepared pan and smooth out. Add chaos.
7. Bake for 30 minutes



# Homecoming


By Caia Lomeli

For those of us who survived  
Whatever it is we weren't supposed to

This isn't about your guilt  
Or the way fear grows like forget-me-nots  
on the front porch  
Displaying invasive uncertainty  
For the days nothing else will grow  
it's the only proof  
Something was alive here  
This isn't about regrets  
Or remembering with only a pillowcase to  
stuff them in  
This isn't for closeted backpack skeletons  
Swelling  
With socks and a second chance  
Or mildewed grief  
Covering the countertops





The image is a collage. The top half shows a two-story wooden house with a gabled roof and a chimney, appearing aged and somewhat dilapidated. The bottom half of the collage is a vibrant, out-of-focus image of autumn trees with bright orange and red leaves. The text is overlaid on these images in white and yellow rectangular boxes.

this is about the fact  
that you have done something  
extraordinary

I call this existence  
a miracle. This is the kind of holy you  
you don't want to deserve  
{or display on the fridge}  
Condemn them with your memory  
And don't apologize to our ghosts  
This is for the triumph of today and the  
Fighting

The undercurrent urge for the world at once

For proof

I say that you've made it

I mean, you're here



I see children who wrenched their way up  
from asphalt.

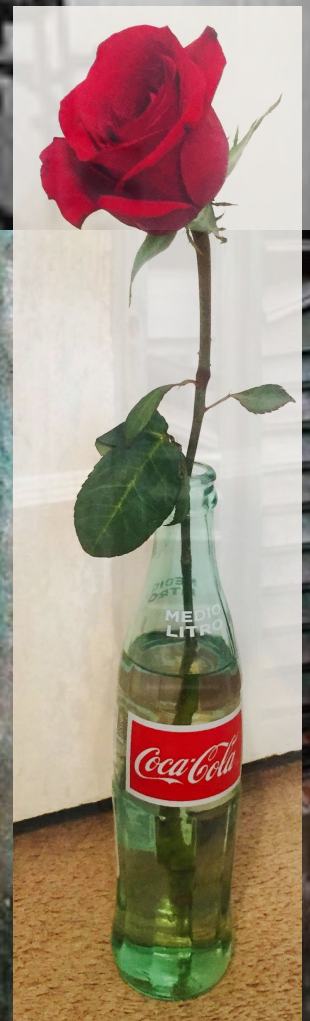
I've watched you shed shame like a second skin

I see your knees shake in applause

say  
Congratulations! That was hard!

I see you didn't make a home out of a shadow  
Rediscovered the sun and its seeds

I don't know what to do with fear  
But fear doesn't know what to do with anything



## illusions of eulogies & honey by Olivia Sparks

I was mothered by lonely women

The scent of cocoa butter lingers forgotten

With plumes of smoke for husbands

I think of how wasted they might feel

the stern look on their face and wrinkles tell every story  
they wish to hide

Rejecting their truth of abuse  
amplified by each bruise

They “cruise” through the cracks and crannies

of a broken heart

subject to an illusion of love

In the night their deadly whispers spill over  
pools of rotten honey

leaving them stuck in a puddle of shame

the shame

their shame

my shame







What do I have left?

Absolutely nothing

secure arms holding me turn jagged blades of paradise

His rough movements spell out my eulogy

The structure of my being

hollowed

Scooped up gallons of blood between my thighs

Emptied out room

for a temple

My screams become daily prayer for those who enter

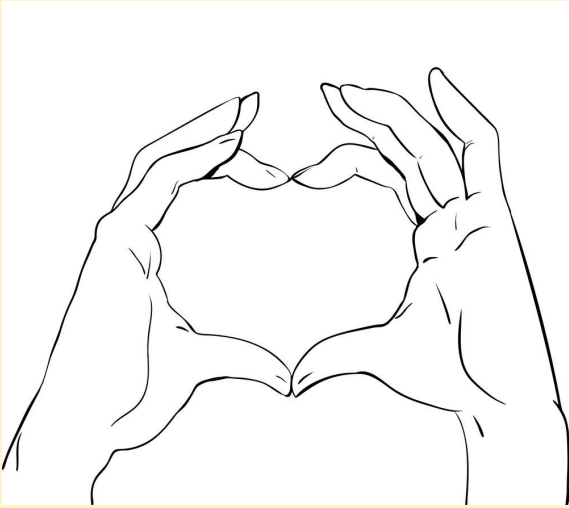
And my tears flow into every surrounding river

The water to clean our golden brown bodies

Feeding roots of the place we call home

# PLAYLIST

[Spotify Playlist Link](#)



Don't Stop Me Now - Queen

Let Me Go - NF

Say Something - A Great Big World

21st Century Machine - Catie Turner

Wrong Crowd - Tom Odell

Wait For It - Hamilton & Leslie Odom Jr.

7 Years - Lukas Graham

Hug All Ur Friends - Cavetown

Lean on Me - Bill Withers

I Don't Pick the Music - Noah Floersch

Taking Care of Things - Cavetown

Cough Syrup - Young the Giant

Coming of Age - Foster the People

Idle Town - Conan Gray

Under Pressure - Queen

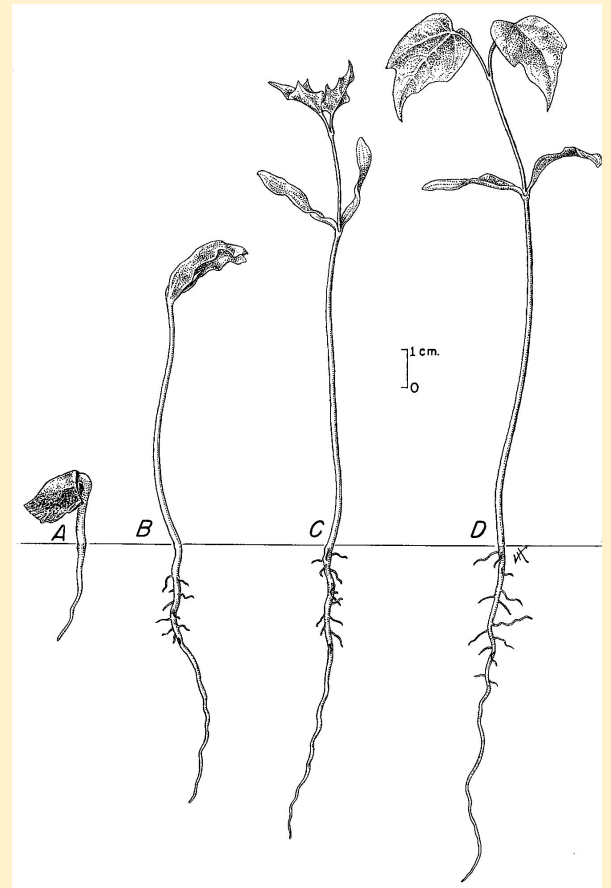
I Lost a Friend - FINNEAS

ODE TO FAT - Tobe Nwigwe

The Story - Conan Gray

World Gone Mad - Bastille

It's Nice to Have a Friend - Taylor Swift



for the lonely and the love-less

Audrey M. Schlieff

sometimes there is nothing  
to do but fall in love,  
just for the sake of love poems,  
for the embers awake in raging fires, or only the  
weighted days made lovely in scrawled poetry.



for love,  
lonely  
no love,  
only dreaming.

there are risks taken in every breath let out,  
every small word uttered--  
life newly found, can be lost, there is risk  
even when there is loneliness, tight chest caught  
in waiting, bodies all tangled in lonely

or lovely.      thorn reminder; the romantic always loves last  
first: the unwilling, the non-believer

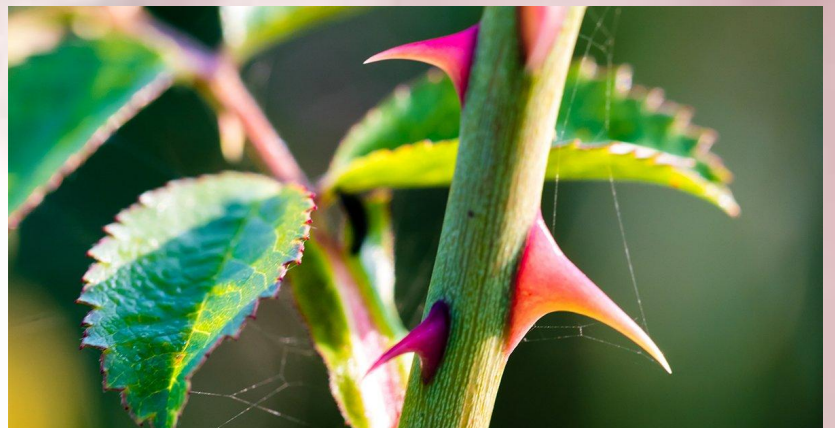


for love,

risks

left with lonely tangles  
poets cannot live  
any other way

loveless lovers left alone  
imagination takes up all the space in  
gooey believer brains,  
february 14th spent sadly, full  
of unkept promises  
to the self





and the poets are the worst at loving, busy heads  
torn from melancholy to messy hope  
when things are good again,  
we forget to put them on paper  
we forget to write each bright stare and polished smile,  
all the peachy dawns and needy midnights,  
I forget  
I'm forgetting.

the word  
• ɥsɹɹəɥɔ

but all the dreamers are dreaming,  
loose hope lovely like cloud lace haze,  
I can imagine the beautiful things,

I'm always dreaming.

after reading, listen to this song:

<https://youtu.be/8Rz0npqmUvg>

[fire escape](#)



# *ekphrastic of my mom's shattered radio*



JONAH HENRY

it's baseball season and the fm radio in his lap  
is revving up to life. his favorite player is batting  
in the eighth and he is listening somewhere

in california, or as far into california as the sound  
waves race each other. on the third strike, his hand spirals  
into a boxer's fist and he is only waiting for it to obey

gravity. for adrenaline to unzip itself into his father's  
son. on the old-fashioned radio, you can hear a stadium  
howl. a news station fading to a cigarette ad. his veins

inside him; pulsing into a purple we would usually call  
an ambulance for. so here's a boy and a radio, stomach-up  
on the kitchen linoleum. here's his punch, fresh from summer's

womb as it nosedives off the black wires. here are fingers,  
a couple less than a dozen; crimson-stained and finally lethal  
enough for static. watch him charge. watch him tackle the frayed

antenna until it's whimpering and hardly even here. watch  
the radio's battery paralyze in its own flesh the way a dead doe  
on the freeway shoulder is still afraid of traffic.

//







in the debris, he remembers frantically the radio's am dial.  
its nirvana blaring in desert sunlight as dad mowed the lawn.  
its ella fitzgerald whenever mom's elbows swayed across

her sewing machine. perhaps evolution gave us these arms  
by accident. it's funny. some of us never learn how fast a boy can drag  
the music out of a family if he isn't careful. in the bathroom,

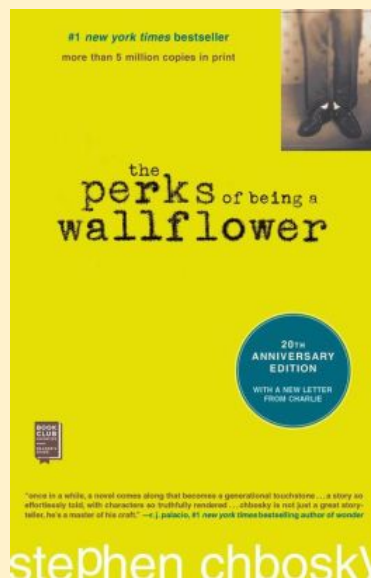
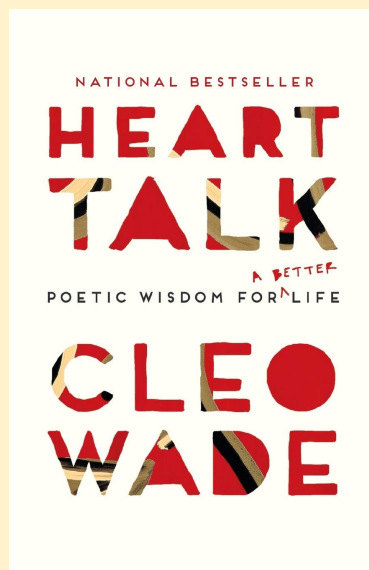
he spins gauze around the scrapes. fixes the radio with rusted  
tweezers until houston stutters on in the fissured plastic.  
when mom's home, she kisses his fingernails to wash off

the blood. says *don't worry* cause what else do you say to a son  
who is one haymaker away from war. says it's her favorite lipstick.  
murmurs *sorry*, over and over, as if imitating the radio;

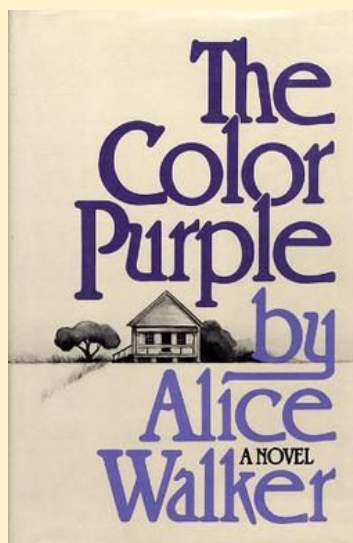
how it wakes up from a boy's messy fingers even louder.  
he says *you should see the other guy* and she laughs  
her stomach swollen. dances around the radio's harmony

faster than men circling a brawl. and how human of us. fragile,  
yet so vermillion; to mute a body dizzy and name it a fair fight.





# BOOK SUGGESTIONS





This Part of Me  
by Shana Collins

Ever since grass touched my toes,  
I've been trying to  
climb trees



Those times,  
twigs didn't grow bitter  
with daily snow burials,  
disappear  
like lightning,

quick enough for  
eyes to blink  
once

I have only had  
Time  
to blink Once

I've drifted  
away  
from memories  
warm  
like a mother's milk:  
white and hazy  
as if clouds  
linger  
above canopies





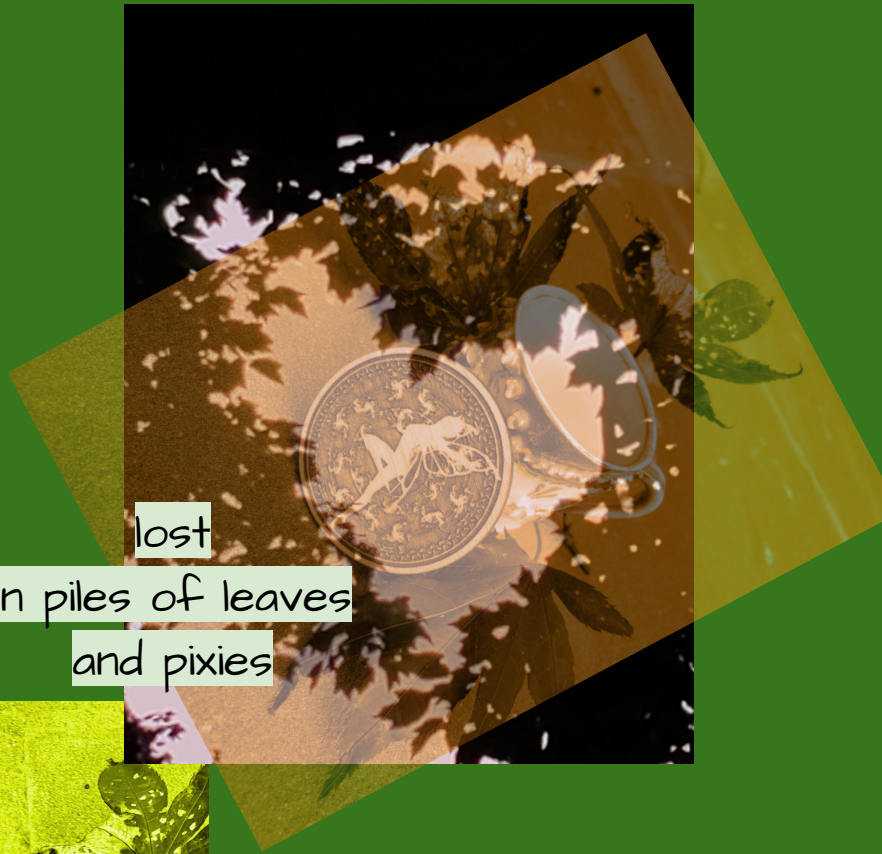
My smile emerged from  
the swing I sang for,  
tasting waffles and peaches  
on Saturdays,  
Scribbling  
With sidewalk chalk

Now, scribbles are

lost  
in piles of leaves  
and pixies

The sun hasn't risen  
or set  
winter is coming  
up here  
in the oak tree,  
a shiver and a breeze  
I collect leaves,

craft a home  
chlorophyll to  
my advantage  
the welcome mat  
is maple  
This is where  
the winds washed  
me:





Always

a part of me

I never want to lose

this part of me

where

I never want to lose

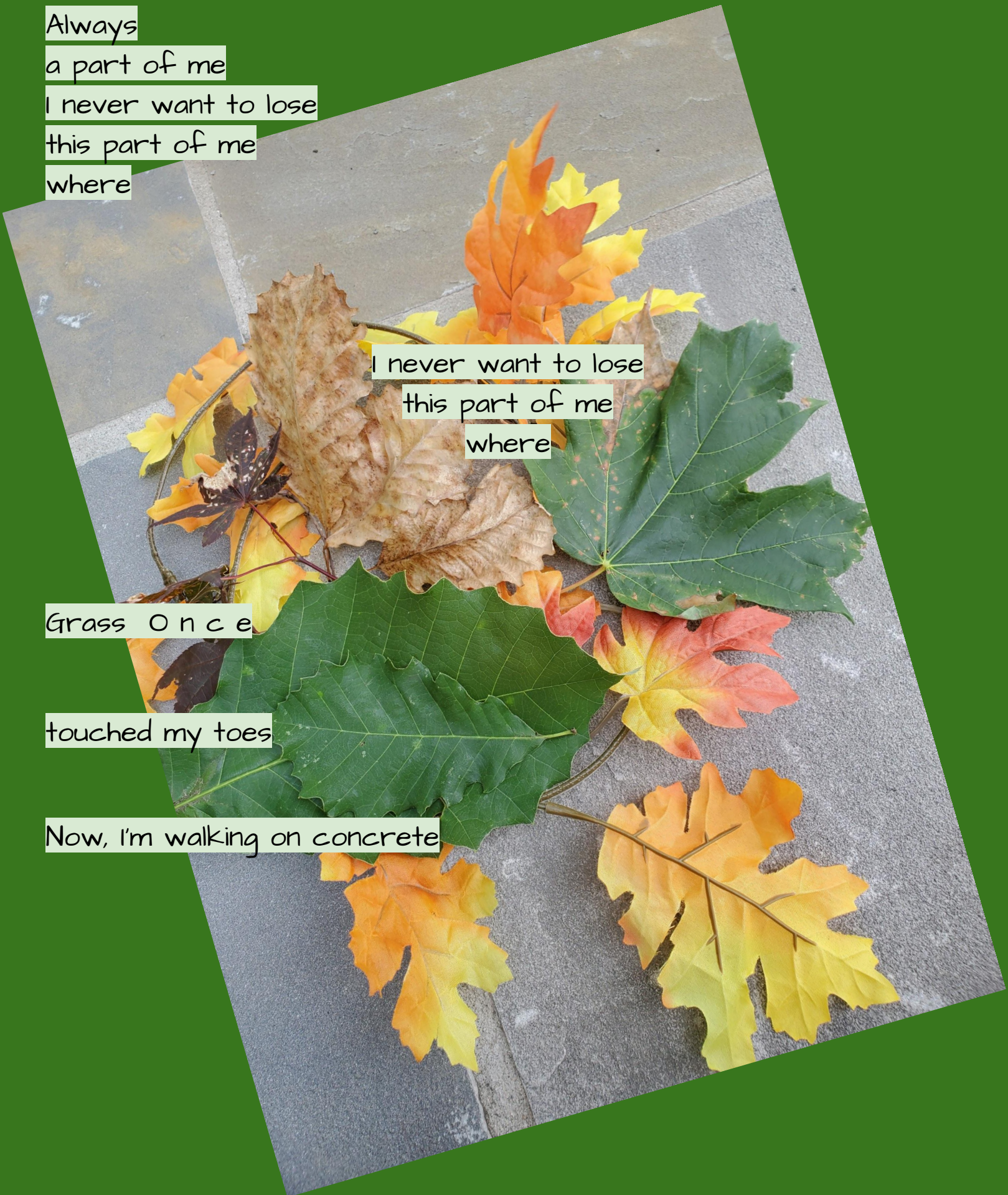
this part of me

where

Grass O n c e

touched my toes

Now, I'm walking on concrete





A Boy No More by Cielo Valenzuela



I admit  
To myself and my  
country that  
*I am afraid to have a son.*

It would take more than  
Spanish and tamales to  
keep him alive.

My American Dream  
is my son.



HE IS MY *legacy*



A Boy No More by Cielo Valenzuela



Like champuradas  
and conchas, he is  
the historia  
Crumbling in my  
hands.

*White people want a*

**story**

America doesn't expect  
white mothers to  
disappoint their sons

**BY TELLING THEM THEY WERE  
BORN A CRIME;  
THEY ONLY EXPECT THAT FROM  
ME.**

# Gratitude

**Casey** would like to thank “Shoutout” by Sekou Sundiata, the whole Get Lit team and poets in the fellowship and in particular Jonah, Caia, Shana, Audrey, Caris, Olivia, Cielo and Sheila, and his first mentor, Master Oogway.

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# Gratitude

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