

## EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN, MAYBE

By Dezjuan K. Smith

There are few spaces where I am not the other. I meet most of them softly, so I don't bring attention to myself. It's the combination of a lot of things that takes me away from being comfortable. Everything my Mama has told me, those binding words and binding eyes. I guess it all makes me insecure. I'm always a little insecure I believe.

According to bell hooks, my mama never properly taught me how to love. bell hooks says, "love is an action, never simply a feeling" and that our generations do not love the correct way. I wonder what my love means? Sometimes it doesn't seem enough for the people around me.

My mama seems to like stipulations:

"I love you, but I don't want you wearing those clothes."

"I love you, but I want you to act like more of a man."

I always take off my jewelry when I visit. Removing every ring and pin till there only the clothes she has bought for me are left to wear. Love is an action...love is my suppression.

She complicates what could be so easy for the both of us. Now that we have these walls between us, I think she's trying to be more conscious about what she says. But words do slip out, as words eventually do.

I can no longer think about it without my wrist stinging. Her hurt, her tired expressions, and fed up comments of annoyance and loneliness. She doesn't understand why I don't call her more. Why, she has to walk to see me. I say it's because I'm busy, and that I forget, when I'm wrapped

up in school and life. Really, it's because seeing her hurts me more than I believe a son should be hurt, by seeing his own mother.

Really, I'm just embarrassed by my own pain. I reflect on all those moments with her growing up, and wonder if I'm just being dramatic. It was never bad, just uncomfortable. But as I see the way my friends smile around their parents those thoughts creep through me. I guess she could've been a little tender. And, I guess I could have been allowed to explore myself more. I do want to be there, closer to her. However, I also just want to rush free.

Mama wants a man, whatever that means, to command his way through spaces. That All American Black Masculinity that stretches around walls wanting to be seen. Her love is two fragile hands suffocating. I am not a person, but I am a child. I am not a being, but I am a son. Though I cannot be contained by those three letters.

Anger inside of me is a cold blue snake that paralyzes love. I hate it. The feeling of poison coating every word I say. "Mama." "Hey." "I guess..." "I don't think so." Each unsaid thing hangs heavy between us and mutates from sad to angry and back again. She makes me angry. But it's not just her, in her are all people in pain. I want to heal her, but to do so means to address too much, injustice, unnecessary poverty, mass incarceration. So instead, I think of what I deserve in this world. I deserve the edges of self and others. I deserve every pink and purple and yellow that was considered too feminine to wear across my skin. All lovers molded in bodies similar and different to mine. I want it all, I deserve it all. Everything under the sun.