

## //FRAGILE. DO NOT TOUCH//

I am overwhelmed by the love  
I have for my mother.  
It's an ache that I've packed  
Into a box, neatly labelled  
With a sign that says  
"Fragile. Do not touch".  
Because my love for her comes  
At the cost of my sanity  
Trying to juxtapose love  
And dislike, maybe even hate  
Like they're two playing cards  
And if I line them up evenly enough  
At least one  
Will disappear.  
I am overwhelmed by the grief  
That comes with understanding my mother.  
A butcher bird that impaled herself  
Who took a spile to her  
Dreams and drained out love and passion  
To make room for a daughter  
who came a decade too early  
And a husband who shed off promises  
The way one sheds uniforms  
at the end of workdays.  
I am overwhelmed knowing  
That even if there are scars from words  
That she used like whip over my skin,  
Well versed in the art of using language  
To go far deeper  
Than a hunting knife ever could,

learnt from her time  
In a home that gave her no love  
But calloused hands and bruised bones  
And a body broken  
and stretched after childbirth,  
She raised me by the skin of her teeth.  
She raised me with so much love  
That she sometimes did not have any  
Left for herself.  
She raised me despite men  
Who took hammers to her once again  
growing dreams. She raised me  
with the imperfections  
That you would see in a child  
Playing house house  
In a playground  
Because that's what she was  
A young mother who tried her best  
To raise her daughter.  
I have the root of grief and hate  
Placed under my tongue  
But it has blossomed into nothing  
Other than love.  
The foundations are unsteady.  
Dangerous.  
Might blow up in your face in a fit of rage  
Where you scream I HATE YOU  
To the one person in your family  
That loves you more than love itself.  
But it's love nonetheless.  
Packaged neatly into a box  
Labelled as  
"Fragile. Do not touch."