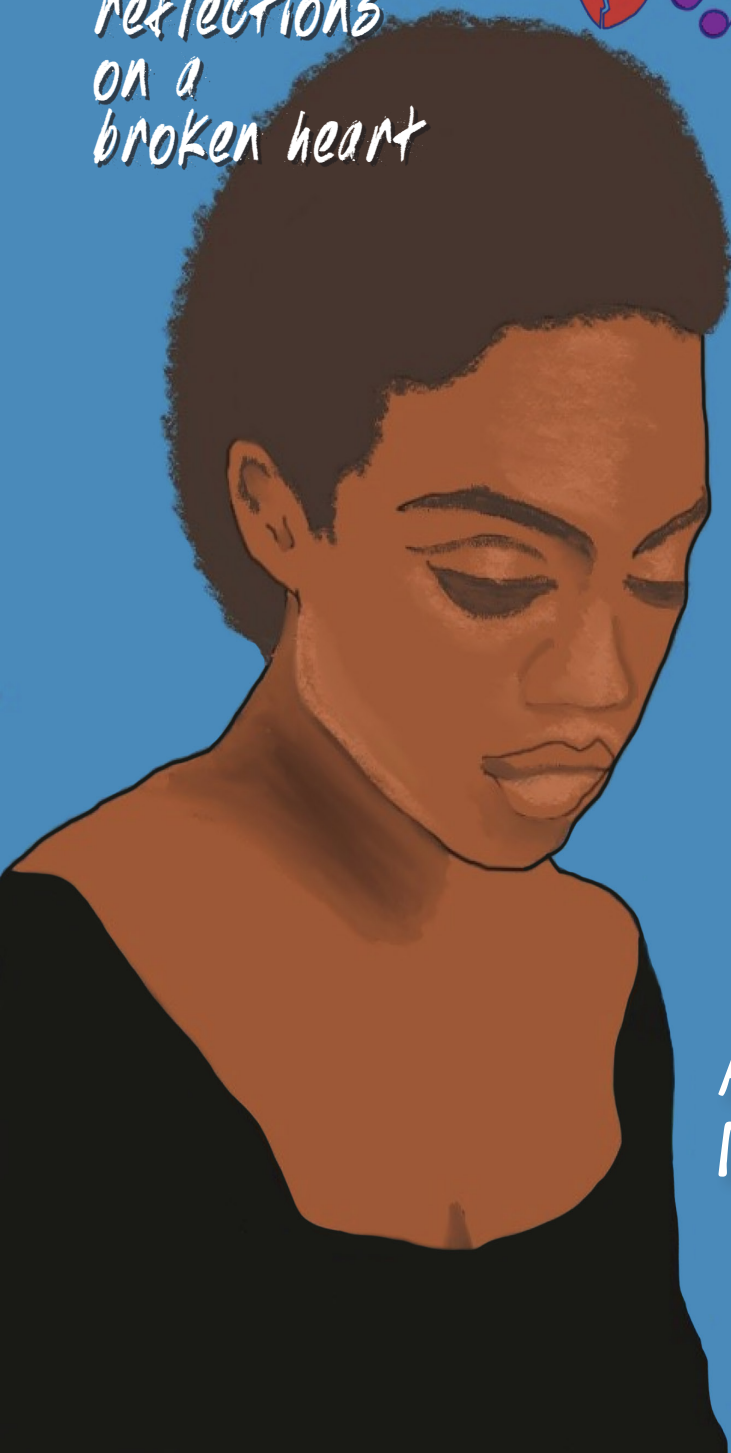


# Jazz Poems

reflections  
on a  
broken heart



AURORA  
M. LEWIS



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# *Jazz Poems*

*reflections on a broken heart*



AURORA M. LEWIS

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*Dedicated to my mother, Bette Jean,  
who introduced me to Jazz before I could walk  
April 21, 1932 - July 3, 2009*





*“If you understood everything I said, you’d be me”*  
*—Miles Davis*



# CONTENTS

Loving a Jazzman	1
Broken	2
The Deepest Cut	3
Wrong Way	4
Wizard of Cool	5
Clark Kent Played the Shrine	6
Will it Ever End	7
I Need A Haunting	8
He Wrote a Song for Tina	9
Thelonious Would Be His Name	10
Rice Paper Walls Played on Cornet	11
Doo-Bopping with Miles	12
Mambomania	13
Dizzy Blew Voodoo	14
Just Play My Music	15
Things He Gave Me	16
He Played the Cornet	17
Trane is My Favorite Thing	18
I Got Lena To Sing To Me	19
What Billie Sang About	20
For the Love Of	21
Chronicle of A Love Supreme	22
A Blues Song	24
It's All in a Lady Day Song	25
I No Longer Have a Man	26
Was It Me	27
If Only I Had Been His Cornet	28
Blue Beads	29
No Goodbye	30
Spring of 1963	31
Sojourn	32
He's Gone	33
Love Me Some Miles	34

Notes from Miss Ella Fitzgerald	35
The Longing	36
Old Woman's Hands	37
Revenge	39
Here for the Long Ride	39
How Do I Say Goodbye	40
Line From a Lost Poem	41
The Breakup	42
Call it an Obsession	43
One-Night Stand	44
Upon Reading His Obituary	45
My Gabor	46
My Mother's Music	47
Evolution of a Tear	48
One More Time	49
Those Lost Babies	50
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>About the Author</b>	<b>59</b>





# Loving a Jazzman



He moved like music, a sweeping chord of brass  
creating a loveliness as he spoke, a deliberateness of sound  
Each word precise and meaningful, a composition of  
clarity making sure I knew his song was not earthbound  
but free to soar and fly as his life would take him

We drank White Port with lemon juice and smoked  
He put his lips to mine, the tenderness of his tongue  
taking my breath away as if I were an instrument  
without melody until he unleashed the music within me  
His eyes locked on mine, tenderly removing my clothes  
Fingers running down my spine, my hips, he kissed my breast

Gently nudging my knees apart to fill my need to know him  
The music that played inside of him, to play inside of me  
Loved me a jazzman then and now, his song forever playing  
within my heart, that memory of love making there on the floor  
when we were young and unencumbered with love's pain  
a riff refusing to end

# Broken



It creaks, cracks, and moans  
Ripped seams, crumbling pieces  
No duct tape, gorilla glue  
Nothing I can say or do  
It's broken, lost in time  
in an empty space  
Since you, since I, since  
goodbye, it will not mend  
Not your job, not your fault  
Who told me to love you  
It's not on you, it's all on me



# The Deepest Cut



The pain began, throbbing dull, yet sweet  
causing my knees to shake, my body weak  
The bleeding below the surface slow to show  
I refused to see, not wanting to know

Little droplets seeped from the gash  
I tried pain killers kept in a stash  
My mind reluctant to get a grip  
failing to stop the garnet drip

Each drop larger than the one before  
Closing my eyes, trying to ignore  
Like a child, interrupted in play  
I attempted to suck the drops away

A salty taste mixed with a tear  
The sight of blood a daily fear  
I watched the gash open wide  
revealing all I had inside

Exposing flesh and whitish bone  
Such pain I had not known  
The heated blood began to flow  
Hot as lava, moving slow

I fashioned a tourniquet, pulling it tight  
A feeble attempt to make things right  
In time the cut began to heal  
Leaving a scar, I longed to feel

I removed the dressing, dull and drab  
Foolishly, I picked at the scab  
The wound drew breath, living again  
I embraced my long-lost friend

# Wrong Way

.....  
Riding in a red MG, top down  
My eyes wet from blowing wind  
Flying down the street going  
To get something to drink, eat  
Or buy a nickel bag of weed  
He was high on acid, mescaline  
Something to erase the smell  
Of napalm and body counts  
In a jungle, where everyone  
Who wasn't USA  
Was named Charlie and could  
Not be trusted ON the OFF ramp  
Of the 110 Freeway, there it was  
The sign, bright red and glaring  
STOP WRONG WAY  
My mind trapped in panic  
A needle hitting the scratched  
Groove on John Coltrane's  
*A Love Supreme*  
A parrot's two-word eulogy  
Echoing in the night  
Displaced by June-bugs  
Morse coding doom  
Wrong Way! Wrong Way!  
Slow motioned butterflies  
Expelling from my lips  
Circling the air until one  
Landed and settled on his head  
Causing him to look at me  
Then U-turn, kiss my cheek  
And laugh, making me happy  
To be with him.

# Wizard of Cool



Eyes liken to a bird of prey  
having seen, what we would  
never see as he blew phenomenal  
madness into the heavens  
taking our breath away

On a level, others tried to perpetrate  
my first time, *Live at the Blackhawk*  
sliding into a groove, swirling into  
a tunnel emanating from the  
Wizard of Cool

Captivating me with his music  
bounding from speakers of an ancient Hi-Fi  
He conjured up Sirens inside his horn  
to enchant, bringing us to the edge  
Trumpet pressed to his crazy lips  
Fingertips manipulating valves like  
a lover's tits.

Speak of him only in revered tones  
His raspy voice never said goodbye  
With brass in hand he took flight  
leaving us with the definition of cool;  
see Miles

# Clark Kent Played the Shrine

Shrine Auditorium most Saturday nights  
She smelled of cologne sold door to door  
by a woman in a pillbox hat wearing  
white gloves, carrying a sample case

I watched her slip into a blue teal dress  
with a fishtail hem and blue teal pumps  
she combed her hair, mascara by Maybelline  
lipstick the color of cherry soda pop riving up  
her girlish face

The air of excitement filled the house  
running up and down the stairs, the  
tail of her dress swishing from side to side

Last week it was Dinah Washington  
turning up the siren, wailing into  
the night, "This Bitter Earth," indeed  
it was, I was too young to wear a fishtail  
dress with matching shoes, I could only  
dream of one day going to the Shrine  
hearing jazz, drinking wine in a smoke  
filled cabaret

That morning on the sofa there he was  
on the cover of the program, smiling  
hair black combed back, those glasses  
He was Superman, Clark Kent  
on leave from the Daily Planet  
His fingers sliding across the  
Ivory keys, pushing out melodies  
smooth as Ford's assembly line  
Superman was Dave Brubeck at  
the Shrine Auditorium that Saturday night

# Will It Ever End



This pain from deep within  
ancient tears that fell when  
he walked away, forty years ago  
my heart left with him

Today a song playing on the radio  
resurfaced, aching, longing for a love  
gone much too long, I grasp my breast  
wipe away tears I did not know I still had

I see his smile, feel the touch  
of his hands Imprinted within  
my being, too much a part of who  
I am, what I have lost

Now, he is dead, will I see him again  
Will this pain finally end

# I Need A Haunting

.....

He has passed to some other place  
wherever he has gone, I long for his embrace  
I can no longer reach out to touch his face  
I need a sign, a caress of breath on my neck  
a whiff of a Camel cigarette, a riff from his cornet  
His unseen hand wiping away these tears  
A gentle voice of loving words only I hear  
I need a haunting to lay me down to sleep  
Sheets that are warm because he is near  
Unseen arms holding me tight, helping me  
get through the night, my slumber no longer  
restless, tossing and turning, but deep  
Feeling his smile when I awake  
I need him to haunt me, what will it take?

## He Wrote a Song for Tina

.....

Monk's first love was "Ruby," McCoy Tyner wrote of "Aisha,"  
Miles, "Back Seat Betty" and he wrote a song for Tina  
the one who broke his heart, led astray only to creep back  
in again with someone else's baby, I nursed his wounds  
gave him all of me, and then some, yet not one song for me  
our embraces in the moonlight, the kiss of our lips, his hands  
on the small of my back moving to my hips, then beyond  
no song about the two babies I lost or his going without  
saying goodbye, why wasn't I eulogized in a melody though  
I never was who I wanted to be, a rhapsody, symphonic memory  
a riff played endlessly on his cornet, in his mind, his heart  
music from his bones, I too wanted a song like Tina

# Thelonious Would Be His Name



Thelonious would be his name  
It rolls off the tongue, conjuring up  
melodies yet to be sung

A name to make you pause, leaving  
a path of *Brilliant Corners* in his wake  
Thelonious, his namesake

He'd groove with the likes of a Miles  
or Trane, performing at Lincoln Center  
and Carnegie fame

At a young age I'd give him  
a piano, making him catch fire  
It would be his heart's desire

He'd never be called Theo  
It Isn't the same, he'd be too cool  
not to use his full name

Perhaps he too would be  
on the cover of Time Magazine  
Thelonious, my son's name  
in my dreams



## Rice Paper Walls Played on Cornet

.....  
Walls like rice paper separated our bedrooms  
I awoke to the thud of her oak headboard  
banging rhythmically against my wall  
intermingled with the creaking of springs  
I lay there, trying to think of anything  
except the empty space beside me  
or the pillow still smelling of Camel cigarettes  
still smelling of an absent cornet player

The sounds through the wall did not arouse me  
and the smell of the pillow did not soothe me  
I tried to think of him playing his cornet  
Notes running up and down the scale  
filling the room with his soft melodies  
or mad riffs of cool jazz buffering the walls  
drowning out my neighbor's fucking sounds

Through the rice paper I could hear her  
quick panting timed to her partner's thrust  
His loud grunts and the sucking of his teeth  
A battle of moans and groans of which I wanted no part  
I pulled the pillow to me and inhaled deeply  
trying only to hear the cornet's melodic reprieve  
singing sweetly within my head as I lay there

Then I heard her partner come, a resounding OH-SHIT!  
and then a deep throated gurgle sound  
followed by her not-quite-finished release  
Through the rice paper wall  
I heard his breathing morph  
into a spent lover's snore  
and the sound of her slippers  
crossing the floor

# Doo-Bopping with Miles



8:00 a.m. grooving to “Chocolate Chip”  
Oh shit! Got me making moves I didn’t  
know still existed inside of this old girl  
rocking to the man, his trumpet transcending  
a wave from my head to my shoulders  
working down my spine, my hips gyrating  
back to a jazzy motherland, working  
it to “Blow,” how low can I go, my  
hand up in the air, like I just don’t  
care, Miles, transferring me into  
“Sonya,” biting my lower lip, ain’t  
this a trip, what galaxy is this  
lost in a “Fantasy,” ain’t no “Mystery”  
Miles done got a hold of me  
With his doo-bop, mystic energy

# Mambomania

.....

When I was 5 she taught me to Mambo  
Shaking my little girl hips with Mambomania  
she and I, dancing around the room  
grooving to Perez Prado's *Cherry Pink  
and Apple Blossom White* until he'd come home  
smelling of liquor and women  
Stopping the music every time  
he walked through the door  
Staggering, stumbling, bumping into furniture  
while cursing and swinging before falling  
against the phonograph knocking the Mambo King  
from his throne, stealing our magic  
that made us dance Mambo, Merengue  
Cha-cha-cha to Afro Cuban drums  
She packed our bags while he was passed out  
on the sofa, his slobber staining the green  
flowered pillows, she carefully put Perez  
into his album cover, slipped him into a suitcase  
then took my hand to walk down Avalon  
to catch the red bus, smiling and humming  
*Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White*  
My mother's music that made magic

# Dizzy Blew Voodoo



He handed me a dish of salted peanuts, a bottle  
of lukewarm beer, left sitting on the sink from  
the night before, still I was charmed by his smile  
his eyes fixed, my breathing shallow  
He asked if I wanted to listen to some tunes  
I demurringly complied, he put Dizzy on the hi-fi  
blowing a melodious hex, putting me in a trance  
He removed my dress, my bra, panties  
My body succumbed as Dizzy blew  
relinquishing all of what I knew  
No cherry had a more bitter taste, a sharp  
lasting refrain, Dizzy blew “Bang-Bang”  
engulfing me in his spell

# Just Play My Music



Never-mind what the preacher has to say  
Play Miles, “Seven Steps to Heaven” on my  
parting day, follow him with Coltrane’s  
In a “Sentimental Way”

Then, Billie’s “Good Morning Heartache”  
and her “Ghost of Yesterday,” to remember  
my broken heart ‘til my dying day  
just play my music, best do what I say

Have Nina Simon do a serenade with  
“Just Say I Love Him,” I want my send-off  
to be one cool-ass jam, include “Mississippi  
Goddamn” and “Sinnerman”

Last song on my itinerary, Brubeck’s “Take Five”  
and please don’t cry, just play my music as my  
goodbye

# Things He Gave Me



He gave me his copy of Charles Lloyd's  
*Forest Flower*, said he knew this Cat in high  
school before he went to Viet Nam, I was  
impressed as we sat on the floor drinking  
White Port and lemon juice, teaching me  
something new, another vibe another groove

There's a shakuhachi flute I never learned to play  
now sits secure in my bedroom, it's bamboo split  
from years of decay having been left discarded in the  
garage because he had gone away, a visual reminder  
that made me cry, some days wanting to die

Three books by Kahlil Gibran, *Thoughts and Meditations*,  
*The Voice of the Master*, *The Broken Wings*, as mine  
when he said goodbye, I've yet to read them, they too  
caused me to cry, now sitting in a drawer, among the  
things he gave to me

Years later he sent a collection of CDs, his own music  
he didn't know I had bought some on my own when  
he still played the cornet, he became a conductor whose  
music I didn't understand, these too treasured away  
the essence of my love for him, perhaps we'll meet again  
he'll give himself to me and he'll be mine

# He Played the Cornet



He was empathic, he played the cornet  
not the trumpet, his daddy said everybody  
plays the trumpet, why not narrow the field  
So, he did, explaining to me trumpets blow  
a piercing tone, cylindrical in sound, the cornet's  
tapered bell, a mellow lyrical song

His cornet case swinging, side to side  
making his way up my street, to my door  
removing it from the case, draining out  
his saliva into my kitchen sink, a smooth  
cloth shining the brass bell, watching him  
smile beneath the bare light bulb swaying  
above our heads

Sitting crossed legged on the floor, placing his  
cornet to his lips, eyes closed, his head slightly  
tilted forward, blowing love notes into the night  
touching me without his hands, drawing me deeper  
into whatever he was

It was only befitting that he played the cornet  
as he was mellow, multi-toned, possessing a  
gentleness, he was endearing, and oh  
so, loved by me

## Trane Is My Favorite Thing



I am a Cali-Girl, no woolen mittens  
Never ate schnitzel with noodles  
No snowflakes on my nose, or  
felt them on my eyelashes  
A tenor sax played by Trane, digging  
the vibe of his Christmas fling  
giving doorbells and sleigh bells  
a groovy zing, Trane, my favorite thing  
“Greensleeves,” “What Child is This,” Elvin Jones  
on the drums, Garrison on bass, McCoy Tyner’s  
fingers on the keys, Christmas Carols I could  
not believe, making Trane, my favorite thing  
*Joyful Jazz*, a Yuletide razz-ma-tazz  
Not when the dog bites  
or the bee stings  
Trane is my favorite thing



# I Got Lena To Sing To Me



Too many miles, far away from  
home, my girl's photo in my pocket  
mine in her gold locket, above  
my bunk, Lena smiling down on  
me, my girl, she don't mind  
she knows I love her; she knows  
she too is fine

Lena, brown skin beauty, voice  
dripping like honey, thinking of  
her belting out *Stormy Weather*  
since my girl and I can't be together  
it's raining artillery all the time.

Lead Belly sang, "We Gonna Tear  
Old Hitler Down," because he took  
the Jews from their home, looks like  
he took me from my home too  
I'm going back soon as this here  
war is through

*Jubilee Radio Show*, bout to be on  
the air, I'm hoping Miss Lena Horne sings  
"Squeeze Me," because I miss my baby  
or "One More for the Road" until I'm home  
I got Lena to sing to me.

# What Billie Sang About



Got that pain in my stomach  
Breathing it out my nose  
Hearing it ring inside my ears  
Sucking at my breast like  
a baby been starved  
Filing my eyes with tears  
Salt in the wound  
This thing taunting  
me at night, wrapping  
Itself around me  
without heat  
I got me a case of what  
Billie sang about, in search  
of that lover man gone much too  
long to miss him still, I feel her  
pain running lucidly through  
my veins

## For the Love Of

.....

Stepdad Jack gifted her with a floor model stereo hi-fi  
the center piece of a sparsely furnished apartment  
he built a bar with his own hands where  
they sat and drank Akadama Plum Wine  
accompanied by Dave Brubeck, Jimmy Smith,  
Art Blakley and the Jazz Messengers, Nat Adderley  
greatest of all Miles Davis, obtained from a mail order  
record club, 10 albums for a dollar then a new one  
every month, she added Dinah Washington, Gloria Lynn  
Nancy Wilson, and the incomparable Sarah Vaughn  
permeating my space, formulating that inner  
part of me lost, digging her music  
Then there was Billie Holiday breaking this young  
girl's heart even before my first crush  
My mother's music became my music  
resonating within, causing me to push aside  
*The Motown Review, Rolling Stones 12 X 5*  
On my 16th birthday I asked for Chico Hamilton's  
*El Chico* a daily repetition of "Conquistadores"  
causing my mother to shake her head and smile  
while leaving me to my special place  
My first true love played the cornet  
was being a jazz musician merely a coincidence  
or was there an aura, a strain bringing us together  
We made love on a mattress on the floor, smoked  
some weed, Miles and Coltrane my nourishment  
until he moved on, his departure my lament  
Still there was the jazz, clinging to my mother's music  
my inamorato gone as I found "Solitude" in Billie Holiday  
desperately longing for that "Lover Man," my *Love Supreme*  
A daily sip of *Bitches Brew*, losing myself within the music  
for the love of

# Chronicle of A Love Supreme



He played the sax, so I acclimated myself  
to John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*  
I was crushing hard, being only sixteen  
He was tall and thin, I thought he was cool  
black shades above his sly grin  
Said I was too innocent to hang with him

At eighteen there was a drummer  
I wasn't into drums, couldn't find  
his groove, he left no melody inside  
of me, no wave for me to ride  
although, I lost my virginity.

Fell hard at nineteen for his best  
friend, soon as I saw him  
He played the cornet,  
graceful, beautiful hands  
a laugh, resonating  
within me, I'd never be  
the same, he too dug Trane

Twenty-five, he was gone  
Japan, Turkey, other lands  
Settled in New York, married,  
had a son, why wasn't it me  
I wandered about from man  
to man missing his body  
all that was he

Found him on the internet at  
fifty-five, a musician of fame  
Bought his music, hide it away  
a treasure, only for me  
I dared to send a birthday greeting

Inside I left my business card  
a brief hello, hoping not to offend  
He called, how could I  
not know that voice

Divorced, living only for his music  
and his son whose face I longed  
to see, did he look like him

We met twice, a concert, a class  
he was teaching, prospect of  
obtaining a fulltime position  
bringing him back to Cali and me

Returning to NY, we collaborated  
via email on his dissertation  
then he drifted away as I  
reached out to him

Soon, an email notification  
he died in a VA hospital  
was he alone, why hadn't I known  
He was only sixty-four, I fifty-nine  
Forever, my love supreme

## A Blues Song



This morning I wrote a Blues song  
trying to convey what was ailing me  
something, only I could feel and be  
I've been wrapped in these blues for  
sometime, my broken heart encased  
in ice, a lasting chill I would forever feel

Once there were warm red, rosy days  
now left only to memories, I wrote a  
song for only me to sing and all the sorrow  
that it brings, I pour a drink of sweet wine  
thinking it will sooth my pain, turn my world  
around to find the joy that leads to a smile  
that once was just for me when a Blues  
song wasn't mine to sing

# It's All in a Lady Day Song



“The Blues are Brewin’”  
Don’t know what I’m doing  
I let the phone just ring  
listening to Lady Day Sing

What am I supposed to say  
Since “My Man” went away  
There’s no “Blue Moon” in my sky  
Most days I want to die

“I Got Those Stormy Blues”  
*It’s not what I choose*  
*No matter how much I try*  
*not to mope around and cry*

“Am I Blue,” ain’t these tears  
In my eyes telling you  
“I’ll Never Be the Same”  
my constant refrain

“I’m Gonna Lock My Heart”  
Not gonna make a new start  
Why did he take “All of Me”  
Nothing here I used to be

I “Don’t Explain,” don’t even lie  
I got the Blues, I can’t deny  
They say, “I’ll Get By,” they’re wrong  
It’s all in a Lady Day song

# I No Longer Have a Man



I don't have a man, no one to say is mine  
My eyes wet, remembering another time  
Put some Nina Simone on the Bose  
Getting drunk, that's how it goes

Once I had a man, good as he could be  
Then one day he decided to leave me  
Not even a good-bye, knowing I'd cry  
pitching a bitch, demanding to know why

I hear Nina singing my backstory song  
I've been listening to it all day long  
"You Don't Know What Love is, unless  
you know the meaning of the Blues"

No man to kiss me goodnight  
No warm arms holding me tight  
I'm lost in an abyss  
over this man I miss



# Was It Me



Packed his clothes, horn, and his favorite LPs  
Pointed to a stack saying you can have these  
To spite him I said no thanks, holding back  
tears as my heart breaks

He put his refused albums in a wooden create  
Sat them at the curb, I loved you, his last words  
He got in his car, drove away out of sight  
I brought his music inside, sat down and cried

He left me Coltrane's *Ole*, I let it play all day  
and into the night, my hands clutched tight,  
staring into space, a refrain off his name  
a needle stuck in place, was I the blame?

# If Only I Had Been His Cornet



It was always kept at his side, no matter  
where he went, even when we went to T.J.  
in search of a chess set, said he never knew  
who might want him to play on a given day

It meant more to him than I, who watched  
with envy as his fingers moved the valves  
of his cornet, music consuming the air  
the same way he consumed me

Unlike his cornet, I was dispensable  
breaking my heart into a thousand  
chords, losing my melody  
because he upped and left me

He was never my man, he belonged to  
his music and his horn, I wasn't in his plans  
He didn't love me the way I loved him  
If only I could have been his cornet

## Blue Beads

.....

In a mason jar propping open  
The wood frame of a window  
Blue beads a trophy on display  
Had I seen them there sparkling  
he asked, as I poured myself  
a drink to cool myself from  
the heat of love making  
I stared at the beads shining  
there in the moon's light  
beads of varying shades of blue  
How appropriate that they be  
a color of sadness and pain  
And still he asked me again  
to be sure I had not missed them  
Like asking me the time of day  
as if a dancer's blue beads  
took prominence over  
my wants and needs  
A heart that was slowing  
cracking from the strain  
of loving a man who  
didn't want or need my love  
I conjured up images of  
this blue bead dancer  
a Salome-like creature  
Hips and pelvis churning  
Eyes enticing and alluring  
Dancing just for him  
and when I had left and she  
returned would he ask her  
if she saw the broken heart  
in the jar there in the window  
given to him by me?

# No Goodbye



My feet were planted in terra ferma  
His seldom touched the ground  
as he moved from place to place  
He was not earthbound

I never knew if he loved me  
He knew without a doubt  
my love would never end  
although he left me without  
a goodbye, adieu, avedisian

I heard from him a time or two  
Saw him once, just long enough  
to hold his hand, press against his chest  
feel the tickle of his beard while  
kissing my waiting lips

He smiled, a twinkle in his eyes  
promising we'd meet again, he didn't  
lie, he died leaving me with memories  
And still with no good-bye

## Spring of 1963



It was the Spring of 1963, being only 13  
I could not join my Mother and Uncle Bob  
to dig the jams of Trane then Miles  
billed at Shelly's Manne Hole on different  
dates, 2 nights each

I was given a full accounting of  
Shelly's cabaret, the varying  
manhole covers on the walls  
the smoke-filled room with dressed  
to impress clientele, silenced when  
Trane took the stage on the nights  
of March 19 and 23, Mama and  
Uncle Bob went to both, how cool  
could these 2 be

I was not fully acclimated to Trane  
The young girl that I was, I thought  
his name was Coal Train, a nickname  
for pushing fuel down railroad tracks,  
bringing warmth, getting the job done  
with his smooth, melodic tones

Mama and Uncle Bob planned 2 more  
outings, April 5 and 14, the incomparable  
Miles, I knew his albums, *Live at Blackhawk*  
*Kinda Blue*, *Sketches of Spain*, they said  
it was an explosion-in-wait when Miles  
took the stage, blowing the joint apart  
Spring '63, an exceptionally good year  
but not for me, I was only 13

# Sojourn



Closing my eyes, breathing deeply through  
smiles and sighs, Miles' *Sketches of Spain*  
a toreador facing a bull's melodic refrain  
and Coltrane's *Ole*, taking me farther away  
from my mundane life

Next stop, Brubeck's *Blue Rondo a la Turk*  
as the ivory keys frantically work moving  
back and forth with pounding melodies

Making my way to Wes Montgomery's  
*Bumping On Sunset*, how cool can it get  
'til Eddie Harris' *Listen Hear*, deep in my ears

I found Hank Mobley and Lee Morgan's  
*Caddy for Daddy* waiting at the curb,  
to bring me back home after spending a  
*Night in Tunisia* with Art Blakey and the  
Jazz Messengers, what a sojourn

# He's Gone



I could feel it in my bones  
I knew he was going  
just wished he would go  
get the suspense of it  
out the door, down the  
street, the concrete  
meeting his feet  
letting go of my breath

I knew I would be alone  
That empty thing where  
I sat at the table drinking  
by the phone, wishing he'd call  
then remembering that it  
was he that left home, dropping  
his key in the mail slot door  
his heart colder than stone

Took my LPs when he left  
Like they were his, not mine  
even the one my mother  
gave me, Nancy Wilson's  
"The Masquerade Is Over"  
With Cannonball Adderley  
There's pain in my heart, tears  
rolling down my cheeks, he's gone

# Love Me Some Miles



His trumpet, that of a pied piper  
only he is the one with the bite  
of a viper, his venom coursing through  
my veins, addicted, I'm forever sprung  
never to succumb to the horn of another  
Miles, my melodic lover, a tattooed  
Valentine, each note a salutation:  
proclaiming, you'll always be mine  
Special deliveries of gifts abound  
No one can replicate his sound  
My teenage crush, now a life  
long, loving devotion to Miles



## Notes from Miss Ella Fitzgerald



Her voice dripped sweet like nectar  
causing me to “Dream a Little Dream”  
in the “Summertime,” “Round Midnight”  
I longed to take a “Stairway to the Stars”  
wondering “How High is the Moon” above  
to find it’s only made of paper

I need “Someone to Watch Over Me”  
“Embraceable You,” “My Funny  
Valentine,” “This Girl’s in Love With You”  
“I Cry a River,” “Every Time You Say Goodbye”  
“Foolishly” thinking “Love Was Here to Stay”

# The Longing



I thought I found him, I was wrong  
It wasn't me he was looking for  
so, I wondered on though my  
longing for him was never gone  
such a sad and lonely song

There were pretenders to his thrown  
but none belonged, I found myself  
wasting away until one day  
A man passed me by, his smile  
caught my eye

We became friends, not in a  
romantic way, but I long for him  
My heart skips a beat with feelings  
I can't deny with a pain that makes  
Me sigh

I want to press him to my breast  
Lay my face against his chest  
Soft words whispered in my ear  
Calling me Sweetheart or Dear  
Perhaps he'll reach for me and  
be the man I've been longing for

# Old Woman's Hands



I look down at an old woman's hands  
that belong to me, I touch my hair  
still soft, but gray that frames a face  
with lines that frown and lips no longer  
kiss the ground he walked, away from me

I see this body now burdened by pounds  
that make me twice the woman I used to be  
He no longer trails my waist with hands so  
strong while in my embrace where he belonged  
I whisper his name in the hush of the night  
knowing he is gone

I walk on feet swollen and pained, no longer aligned  
with his for walks in the rain, his arm locked  
in mine, our eyes lit by moonlight's shine  
on quiet streets perfumed with the scent  
of orange blossoms in bloom

My heart beats with a labored pace as I catch  
my breath climbing the stairs to my lonely room  
to close my eyes, thinking of a long-lost love's  
smiling face, longing to touch him with this  
old woman's hands belonging to me

# Revenge



I hadn't seen or heard from him  
for months, placing me in a state  
of mourning as if he had died  
I drank cheap wine, the sweet kind  
to ease my unfaltering pain, resolved  
that I would never see him again

Then a call, his voice leaving me mute  
until he laughingly repeated himself  
My trembling voice, a cautious hello  
Soon, a knock at the door, his warm  
embrace greeted by my stiffness  
at the quizzical look in his eyes

He told of his adventures, his new life  
Not a word about why he left me  
Without so much as a goodbye  
I nervously talked about my classes  
at the local community college, a drawing  
of me hanging on my living room wall

The artist was once my lover, I needed  
him to know, as I watched a cloud  
of sadness drift across his eyes  
Did you love him he asked, no was  
my reply, the look on his face said  
he thought I lied, this was my revenge

# Here for the Long Ride



I am depression, blossomed from a seed  
feeding off your need, spending the nights  
turning off the lights, a coverlet of pain  
gently, whispering your name, holding  
your head against my chest, beating  
beneath your breast, making you cry  
even when you don't know why  
I'm always deep inside  
Here for the long ride

# How Do I Say Goodbye



How do I say goodbye  
while he is still deep inside  
nestled behind each heart  
beat, the trigger of each cry

How do I say goodbye  
after he took his last breath  
some thousand miles away  
receiving an email that he died

How do I say goodbye  
to memories imbedded in  
who I am, will always be  
His passing didn't set me free  
How do I say goodbye  
Will I ever know

## Line From a Lost Poem



My mother was a complex woman  
married at 17 to a man, the abusive kind  
She was known for her beauty  
getting a new one wasn't hard  
to find

She loved music, art, literature which  
was uncommon for a high school  
drop-out raising 5 kids on welfare  
She enrolled in a program, became  
a nurse

She read poetry and wrote a poem  
of her own, inspired when standing  
at bus stop all alone, she read aloud  
her emotions to a 10-year-old girl  
who didn't understand

Her poem long lost, left one line  
imprinted in my brain," I was  
impervious to the pain" now  
grown, knowing the meaning,  
I feel the same.

# The Breakup



Having enough of his cheating and lies  
I locked him out, his bag of clothes left on  
the back porch, his record collect in a box  
I sat musing with a glass of Chianti wine  
staring at the clock, watching the time

There came a rattling at the knob of the door  
A pounding on the window I tried to ignore  
his slurring words of contempt invading my  
space, envisioning the look of confusion on  
his face that now this was no longer his place

Putting my empty glass in the kitchen sink  
Smiling to myself how long did he think  
his nonsense would go on, how much would  
it take for me to have enough and finally break  
And still, the knob rattled as I turned off the lights



## Call It an Obsession

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I first heard him play before I was a teen  
See, my mother was into the Jazz scene  
When I was 18 some brothers said I looked  
like Frances Davis on the cover of his  
*Live at the Blackhawk*, I failed to see my  
resemblance to his first wife, I was flattered  
it was all they talked about while getting high  
listening to Miles that night

I bought my first Miles, *Get Up With It*  
dedicated to Duke, later *Kinda Blue*  
*Bitches Brew*, *A Tribute to Jack Johnson*, "Tutu"  
I inherited my mother's *Sketches of Spain*, now  
I have my CD and her LP, *Doo Bop*, *On the Corner*  
*Birth of Cool*, Miles' collections and collaborations  
with Trane, Miles and *Monk at Newport*  
I'm far from through

Then there is *Miles, The Autobiography*  
I had 2, gave one to my brother, 2 posters  
on my wall, I've seen every movie or documentary  
Including Frances, Betty, and a book by Cicely  
Miles wasn't very cool to these 3, he was complicated  
one of a kind, a replication of his magical trumpet  
you'll never find, I just got a Jazz magazine dedicated  
to Miles, I must admit he is an obsession of mine

# One-Night Stand



The window was open just enough to let in the cool night air  
She smelled cigarettes on his breath as he played with her hair  
His name was forgotten, they'd only met a few hours before  
Nor did she remember just what was the allure

Loneliness, an aphrodisiac emitting from a broken heart  
Sharing drinks, a dance, then tussles in the dark  
Could he have her number, his lips upon her ear  
His hand caressing her breast, she hadn't made it clear  
the longing in his eyes, how well she knew the signs

She felt nothing for him, this was a one-night stand  
A momentary distraction, she didn't want a steady man  
Staring at the cracks in the ceiling, moonlight through  
the blinds, he couldn't have her number, no plans  
to see him again, turning her back to his face  
waiting for the night to end

# Upon Reading His Obituary



In her inbox, an email from a friend  
each word gnawing silently at her heart  
Was he thinking of her his last days  
He stopped writing, did he know  
he was dying

She thought of the touch of his hands  
caressing her face, puckered lips pressed  
gently on her own, the sweetness of his  
tongue that always took her breath away

Sitting in her kitchen, ignoring a cup of tea  
staring at her knurled shaking hands that  
once ran fingertips through his chest hairs  
Smiling, tears meander down her cheeks

A salty taste on her quivering lips, closing  
her eyes she heard his voice whisper  
her name

# My Gabor

Asked for Chico Hamilton's  
*El Chico* for my 16th birthday  
Digging his Latin groove, dancing  
around the room, a guitar haunting  
touching emotions unknown

"People," the loneliest in the world, me  
"Strange," indeed I was, grooving in my  
self-imposed lonesomeness, "Space"  
my own, it was Gabor Szabo taking  
hold, causing me to put Chico and  
his drums aside

What did I know of Hungarian gypsy guitars  
I knew and loved Gabor, the strum of his fingers  
echoed in my heart, pulling at my being  
with every song until I grew older, my  
interest waned, moving on to something  
new as young people do

Then one day he was gone, 1982, only  
45, me 32, so much unheard over those  
years, my forgotten Gabor, who haunts  
me still

# My Mother's Music



We sat around the record player  
Listening to Ima Sumac, Billie  
Holiday

Then came Perez Prado, *Cherry Pink*  
*And Apple Blossom White*, we'd mambo  
In the night, until my bedtime was near

She taught me to dance to Roy Milton's  
The Hucklebuck and the Camel Walk  
Heel to toe as I'd giggle and glow

Dave Brubeck, Jimmie Smith, of course Miles  
Nina Simone's wailing "Rags and Old Iron"  
Dinah Washington's "This Bitter Earth"  
as it is without her

# Evolution of a Tear



The first time we made love  
tears filled my eyes, rolling  
down my cheeks, not from pain  
but from a place inside me  
that I didn't know existed

Each kiss taking my breath away  
Each thrust causing me to trust  
his every move until he said  
he could no longer stay

Tears still fall, a never-ending  
part of me, how could he leave  
my arms, his chest to no longer  
press against my breast

There were others, none where him  
his smile, his hands, the smell of  
his hair, tobacco, a hint of wine  
I thought he'd always be mine

Tears fall from the loss of him, his face  
forever etched within my heart, his voice  
echoing the onetime he said I love you  
a remembrance forever making me cry

# One More Time



Keep him hidden in a place deep inside  
where memories of gentle words, muscled  
calves laced with mine hide  
The thrust of pelvis, breast to chest  
arms locked moving me back and forth  
like wind through treetops

Sweat trickling down my face creating a  
pool in the place above my collarbone  
His toes finding mine, clinging to his  
shoulders, kissing his lips, giggling  
from the tickle of his beard

Longing for him to hold me, even now  
his embrace letting me feel again  
the warmth of his skin next to mine  
needing the nearness of him

Feeding me with just a touch  
His face against my fallen breast  
asleep in these weathered arms  
one more time

# Those Lost Babies

He was my boyfriend's best friend  
home from Viet Nam, standing  
under the porch light, his laugh  
resonating in the night

He became my best friend,  
holding back what we felt  
until the other thing ended  
and we could be together

His kiss as if my first  
my first orgasm,  
my only orgasms,  
the waking of my body, the uncontrollable  
lost in whatever there was between us

Listening to Coltrane, Miles  
He too was a musician, his cornet  
forever by his side, I'd watch him practice  
sitting on the floor at his feet, mesmerized

Walks on the pier, crab legs beer  
bullshit sessions with his friends  
Talking about the war, jazz  
And me digging it all

I thought I could not conceive,  
never missed a period, no birth control pills,  
no condoms, not even withdrawal  
said he couldn't have children,  
some childhood operation



Then I missed, where was the blood  
how do I explain to this man who couldn't  
or was it his lie

Boarding a bus for the long ride  
to his small house hidden by the trees  
my skin crawling, my head pounding

Sitting on the cold stone porch  
waiting, then his approach  
words slowly, haltingly from my lips  
my eyes wet, whispering I'm pregnant

There beside me, his voice dry  
I'm not going to marry you, I don't love you  
I never thought he did, but just hoped  
as I made the ride home alone

A week later there he was  
telling me to get dressed,  
We were going to his concert  
did this mean he loved me

All the way there he laughed, joked,  
nothing about the baby swelling  
beneath my dress  
nothing about our last words

Introduced me to Black Arthur  
played the sax, some other guy  
wanting to sell my knitted cap  
the ones I had made only for him

Then I saw her,  
high school sweet heart  
couldn't wait for him while  
he was in Viet Nam  
had a kid by some guy now gone  
She fucked up my flow sitting behind me  
Her gaze in his direction

Girls in the front row screaming his name  
Making me feel out of place then  
a horn player left the stage, stopped,  
blew into my face, bobbing and grooving  
could he see the welling in my eyes

Two months later I started to bleed,  
my grandmother drove me to the hospital.  
The pain in my body, my heart  
When it was over I called, he came  
He proclaimed It was my fault,  
I didn't take care of myself.  
I didn't want the baby  
his eyes cold as I tried to explain  
the baby I loved, he would not hear

For months not a word, leaving me  
to grieve alone, then a note left  
on my door, a cryptic list  
of cities, he'd been on tour.

Next day a knock, how ashamed  
and sorry he was, mad at himself  
not at me as his thumb wiped  
away my tears

We were back, but changed  
that spark when he looked  
at me now gone  
missing who we were  
fearing who we had become

Pregnant again, my secret alone  
didn't know how to tell him  
what would he say, leave again  
then the blood flowing down my legs  
He didn't know until it was over

His eyes, his voice hard  
don't do this again, we keep  
fucking up, something is  
wrong, we can't make babies  
so, I didn't, not with him.

Soon after he moved away,  
becoming a concert conductor  
whenever he was here he'd call,  
take me to dinner, sushi, Sapporo beer  
back to my place where smooth brown  
arms encircled and entwined

I didn't see him anymore  
he became famous, heard he married  
divorced, traveled the world conducting  
I moved on to men I could not love  
grieving those lost babies

Saw him 40 years later  
We both had a child, he a boy, me a girl  
When was she born, his eyes fixed on mine  
his hand ever so lightly on my arm  
No, she wasn't his, but she should have been





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## About the Author



Aurora M. Lewis is a Black woman, retired from the Finance Industry. She has been writing since her pre-teens; the first publication was in her junior high school newspaper. She became serious about her writing and in her late fifties, enrolled in UCLA Creative Writing Program, and graduated with Honors. Her poems, short stories, and nonfiction have been accepted by: *The Literary Hatchet*, *Jerry Jazz Musician*, *Gemini Magazine*, *Persimmon Tree Magazine*, *The Blue Nib*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, and other publications including several anthologies. Aurora won two writing contests and was nominated for two Pushcart Prizes and The Best of the Web. In recent years, her love of Jazz, garnered from her mother, manifested into *Jazz Poetry* and is a testament to her mother and the genre.

"I found Aurora's poetry an open highway to how a writer can approach emotions and provoke thoughts of the senses. I feel this book to be mind-blowing, the best by far from this author. Depth and clarity take the reader into the very thought of the subject matter. It is worth all the effort writers should aspire to and allegorically straightforward. All this work of art will inspire emotion for the reader and the reader will feel edified."

Steven P. Howell, Songwriter/ musician  
Burnt Possum Records

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"The poetry of Aurora M. Lewis communicates her rich understanding of love, loss, joy, and heartache, and frequently in the vivacious rhythms of jazz music and the blues. Her charismatic soul connects with her reader in a deeply personal way in virtually every interaction and experience, while also revealing the influence the music and its historic figures have had on her life. Her writing is spirited, provocative, and deeply rewarding. Pull up a chair, put on some Monk, and enter her profound, passionate world!"

Joe Maita, Editor/Publisher  
Jerry Jazz Musician  
[www.jerryjazzmusician.com](http://www.jerryjazzmusician.com)

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"Aurora's love and appreciation for the art form of jazz and its endeared iconic artists are very evident. Her romantic recall of the music, that's taken up residency in Aurora's mind, has morphed into what has become individual picturesque back-stories. Now the music has taken on a new in-depth life of people and places to travel with...a poetic journey."

Rose Mallett, Vocalist, Songwriter, Actress  
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