

**The Sun**  
**By Aliyah Blattner**

He grew up among the rich Georgia clay  
Remembering the way it stained his hands  
Red, and angry, and distinctive.

His toes used to curl around the soft, wet earth  
And the shallow impressions of his soles against the ground,  
Acted as a reminder of how he'd come from *המדה*;  
A byproduct of Adam's rib and God's compassion.

The scent of pine followed him throughout his childhood,  
Loose needles drifting down to get lost in his hair.  
The weathered bark stood steady—like tradition,  
Sap clinging to his fingertips, like fearful children,  
He was afraid to let go.

The sun's rays were punishing.  
He remembered the delicious sting of reddened skin,  
The agonizing heat, that enveloped his entire body;  
—The south set him on fire.  
And he burned, their indifference a lighted match,  
His innocence an eternal wick.

He couldn't have said what came first,  
The chicken or the egg;  
Their animosity or his betrayal.  
Entangled in their jaundice,  
He watched grown men burn to ash and bone,  
Bore witness to the violations of human decency,  
Felt shame at the way his lips, sealed shut;  
Afraid if opened, he'd cry out too.  
The confines of his cage were not erected by their ignorance,  
They were built up around him, and secured by his own self-loathing.  
Under lock and key he became his own warden,  
Restricting himself from loving, from being loved.

The rich Georgia clay now only reminds him of the blood,  
Boys chained to fences left for dead,  
Young adults gunned down in nightclubs,  
Like deserters, they let their bodies rot.  
The sharp bite of pine  
Reminds him of shrivelled-up needles, crunching underfoot  
Much like the way they walked all over him.  
The harsh sun now beams down oppressively;  
It shines light upon the sins of turned backs and averted eyes.  
Left for dead were not the bodies, but the morality of the witnesses.

They never taught him the dangers of loyalty,  
How being part of a community, was much like a diagnosis.  
Symptoms proliferate, like pillars of smoke swirling within the recesses of his eyes,  
And tendrils wind their way through the hollow cavern that once housed his ribs.  
Ensnared within his hatred, is the capacity for love,  
But fear replaces his compassion,  
And soon, his ignorance  
Becomes terminal.

He is the sun,  
And all he does is burn.