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### It's Personal

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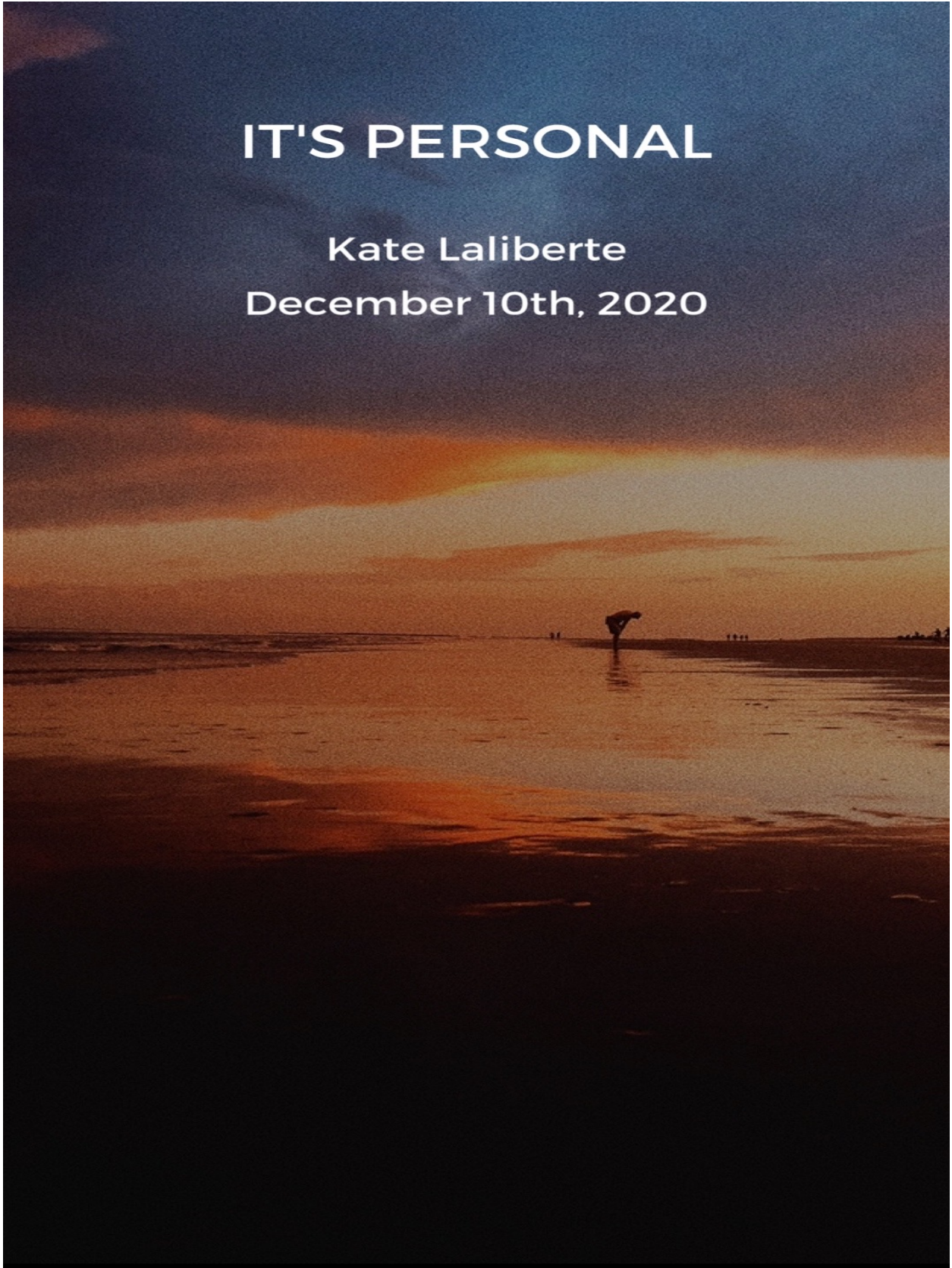
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# IT'S PERSONAL

Kate Laliberte  
December 10th, 2020



I would like to dedicate these pieces to my family who continue to put a smile on my face,  
despite the challenges that come our way.

# Rush

Fake smiles and unwelcoming hugs awaited  
All the girls squealing with excitement  
They have been waiting for this day all their lives

The frilly pink dresses  
The black widow mascara  
The waffs of perfume  
All hit my senses at once

Girls around me looking for their new homes  
Yet I know mine is back in New England  
The Greek letters glare down at me  
Would these be the ones that chose me?

As the pristine white doors opened,  
The expectation of perfection was deafening  
The copy and paste faces began to chant  
Adrenaline shot through my body  
As if it was trying to protect me from a bullet

The hollow embraces did not comfort me  
This was supposed to be my family away from home  
But when the word "Boston" came out of my mouth  
The question that would always follow was  
"Why are you here?"  
"Why come all this way for this?"

Please take me back to New England  
Where if I walked around telling people  
"I'm in AO Pi"  
They would look simply nod in acceptance  
Not throw me a congratulations party

I faked it the best I could  
Knowing this was not the place for me  
Sitting in the clear dollhouse chairs  
trying to answer the perfect way as if my life depended on it  
These fifteen-minutes would determine if I was in or out

The questions came at me like nerf darts  
Fast, and each one sticking to me as the girl tried to move on to the next one  
The question of "why are you here?" stuck especially close to my heart

The chanting struck silence the second the doors closed  
All of the shallow conversations had stopped  
The judging and assessments would now begin

Please take me back to New England

## Unspoken Rule

The anniversary is late June  
It is not the kind you celebrate  
He was the love of her life

It's been over a year  
And the crying has slowed  
But the silent tears still show

There's an unspoken rule  
When an old couple comes on the tv  
When we talk about our relationships

We look  
Don't speak  
We wait

Knowing the exact thoughts that run through her mind  
The woman who built me  
Is scattered all over the floor

I want to place back the pieces  
Complete the puzzle who was once my mother  
But that one corner will always be gone

So we look  
Don't speak  
We wait

It's been over a year  
Since I picked up the phone  
And heard the words that paused my whole world

It's been over a year  
Since she rushed down to Falmouth  
We didn't see her for a week

It's been over a year  
Since the man that my father couldn't be  
Stopped breathing for no reason

It's been over a year  
And his jackets still hang in the small corner of her closet  
His cologne rests by her bedside

It's been over year  
She pushes through her days  
But the silent tears still show

## Embers

*Trees burning in each other's dreams*  
Our minds switched off for the night  
Yet you are still so present in mine

Hundreds of miles apart  
But my feelings in your song  
Still play the same tune

In the same key  
With the same rhythm  
The same sense of comfort whenever I hear it

Not knowing when we will see each other again  
Or when our world that seems to be up in flames  
Embers of sickness, hate and injustice  
Will subside

We rely on the familiar beats in our chests  
The same tempo we have felt since thirteen  
That will always be there  
No matter the distance

In the dark black days  
When my head is too heavy to pick up by myself  
I see flecks of the embers  
From the trees burning in each other's dreams

Each ember a memory  
Falling in front of me

Your wavy brown hair now looking red  
In your big brown eyes is my reflection  
With boastering flames behind me

I'm reminded why you are the one  
Who sleepwalks in my head  
Pushing the dark thoughts out  
When both of our minds are switched off for the night

## 125 Craigie Circle

“Where are you from?” Is a question that I find difficult to answer. Technically I’m from Boston, but if people from Dorchester heard me say that they would be appalled. Actually, I’m from a small suburb thirty minutes outside of Boston that not a single soul has heard of. Where I grew up on a circle in between small swamps. Where I rode my bike so many times I began to feel dizzy. Where the peepers came out right as the sun began to set and the humidity started to clutch to my skin like saran wrap. “Can’t you just say that’s where you’re from?” Well no. Since that’s not where I went to high school. See, I still lived in the town where the local newspaper was called *The Mosquito*, but because it was so small we combined with the town over. The town with all the historical sights such as the Old North Bridge. Where the famous Revolutionary War was fought. And now you know where I am talking about. But that was not *my* town. Yes it was close and we continued to grow up with kids in their community, but they would ask us if we rode our tractors and cows to school. “So why can’t you say the town where you grew up?” well because I no longer live there.

I’m not in the house that I see as the last place we were all together. I’m not where we were before they fell out of love. Before my brothers became “too cool” to use me as their goalie in mini hockey just because I was too small to fill the net. Before we stopped measuring heights as a competition on the side of my bedroom door. Before every weekend I was hopping between two houses trying to please each parent. “So you’re not from that house?” No, I am, but who wants to admit that the place that built them was also the place where the most damage was done.

## Celly

Tap... Tap... Tap... Tap... “Chris can you please stop?” Lauren hollered down at her older brother who was in the basement directly under her room, taking slap shots to the wall. She knew exactly what he was trying to do. Lauren just wanted to sit in her shoebox room and play with all of her stuffed animals. — Her favorite being Fudge, a bulldog that looked exactly like the family dog. Even though Chris had said Fudge was nowhere near as cute as Bella. “Make me!” Chris threatened back. Lauren knew what she was getting herself into as she started to walk down the stairs draped in the wine-red carpet. He did this every Friday before his hockey games.

Growing up, Lauren was dragged along to every one. She had been in a hockey rink at two weeks old and since then every Friday and Saturday were spent in the sweat-ridden rinks. Although this was not the ideal place to spend her weekends, Lauren always had a favorite rink. It was what she liked to call the red rink, otherwise known as The New England Sports Center. The name came from the old grungy carpet that was that same wine red that cascaded down the stairs at home; the rinks’ was nowhere near as nice. Her mother would be mortified to know Lauren compared the dingy rink to her home. She would watch all the games and picture herself out on the ice with her brothers. She had always wanted to play hockey, but mom always said it was too dangerous. She would do anything to skate circles around Chris and Sean.

Lauren continued to make her way down the stairs and as she turned the corner she saw Chris kneeling with the mini hockey stick and the navy foam ball. He weaved it back and forth on the stick before winding back and taking a snapshot to the wall, “Absolute snipe” he exclaimed. Here we go, Lauren thought to herself. “Wanna play goalie?” He asked this every time. Seeing the hesitation in her face Chris tried to persuade her “I’ll let you have the Bruins stick,” knowing that was her favorite. “Fine.” Lauren agreed even though she wanted to be offense for once. She knew that the chances of winning were slight but this time she wanted it to be different. Lauren knew the only reason he usually wins is that she is too small to fill the goal. The net covered her like she was trying on one of dad's shirts. “You aren't allowed to move past this line or else you have to go to the sin bin,” Chris said, drawing the imaginary line in front of her. There was no way she was going to let him win this time.

Chris started with a few easy shots, nothing that she couldn't handle. She blocked a few and let some slip behind her. With each of those small goals, he would throw out a celly like he was in the NHL. He only needed one more to win. Chris began to stickhandle the foam ball as if he were Wayne Gretzky, Lauren stretched out her arms and legs to fill all the four corners of the net trying to fill all the gaps. He winded up his shot with all the power he had and... “Mom! Chris hit me in the nose!” Lauren began to wail. She saw the blood drain from his face knowing that he was going to be in huge trouble. Victory.



## Green Guilt

Walking home from school all Cassie could hear behind her was Morgan Fisher and her two best friends bragging about how many girl scout cookies they had already sold this year. Cassie despised Morgan for her prim and proper life filled with every single thing she could ask for, and everything Cassie wanted. “Hey Cassie!” Morgan hollered, “how many have you sold?” she snickered and giggled to tweedle dee and tweedle dumb beside her. Morgan knew Cassie was not in girl scouts but had always wanted to be. She always watched the girls flaunt their prizes for most sold cookies and wear the green sash she would kill to have. Cassie’s mom was a nurse and worked long hard hours, her dad had left when she was only three years old. Her mom didn’t have time or help to let Cassie be a girl scout which Cassie had yet come to understand. She continued to walk along with her eyes glued to the cement, careful not to step on any cracks.

When Cassie got home she could not get the echo of Morgan's taunting voice out of her head. Maybe she could be a girl scout... just not with selling cookies. Cassie dashed towards her snack drawer and took out everything she could find, she shoved the Fritos, Smartfood, and Chips Ahoy into her backpack and made a plan. She would walk around her neighborhood before her mom got home from work pretending she was raising money for the girl scouts and just keep the money for herself! Cassie could finally get herself her own prize, something much bigger than Morgan has won. “Mom can’t know,” she muttered to herself, knowing that if she did, she would never be able to leave the house again.

Cassie first decided to go to her neighbor Tom’s house, knowing that he would be more than willing to buy some of her snacks. She was right. Tom took out his wallet and handed Cassie a twenty, “Oh they're only a dollar each,” she tried to explain as the bill dangled in front of her. “I know but you are raising money,” Tom explained, “consider it an honorable donation”. Cassie took the twenty and slowly walked down the driveway, and felt her stomach starting to churn. She decided that Tom would be the only neighbor she visited today. And ever. This didn’t feel right, she knew this is not what Morgan felt when she sold a box of cookies. Cassie placed the twenty-dollar bill on her white nightstand and stared at it not knowing what to do next. “I’ll just keep it this time and never do this again,” Cassie said to herself, “but mom still can’t know.” She shoved the green misconduct into the top drawer.

Cassie knew her mom would be getting home very soon and the guilt inside her was about to boil over. *Should I tell her? She is going to be so mad. What if I go to jail? What if Morgan finds out?* “Hi sweetie, how was your day?” Cassie’s mom sat on her bed and glanced over at the emerald green two zero sticking out of the top drawer, “where did you get that?” Cassie’s cheeks flushed and the tears welled up in her eyes. “I just wanted to be a girl scout.”





Kate Laliberte is twenty years old and grew up in Carlisle, Massachusetts. She is a sophomore at Providence College and is a psychology major. She hopes to be a child life specialist, striving towards making the hospital a less scary place for families. She enjoys quality time with family and friends, but most importantly her two dogs, Koda and Blue.

*"In her poetry and prose, it is clear that Laliberte is a natural and gifted story-teller. This collection of her work is aptly named: each piece is incredibly personal, poignant, and powerful. Laliberte writes with such strength and emotion and she effortlessly draws readers into the world of her writing."*

— Madison Gilmore

*"Kate Laliberte's works are filled with the perfect balance of vulnerability, relatability, and satire. I am always waiting for the next turn in events, and her stories and poetry flows perfectly leaving the reader satisfied while simultaneously wanting more!"*

— Maeve Conway