

# "Afterlife"

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## Afterlife

here the body opens into morning,  
the sound of traffic  
and the garbage truck backing up  
fill up a city horizon  
she sometimes names "home"  
even if no one will name her body home  
no children  
no lover  
no kin  
just estrogen,  
the weary ledger of recognition,  
a few poems  
in need of edits.  
she thinks  
we come from something and disappear into nothing  
while the shower scrubs away  
last night's failures from her hips,  
the lie between her legs  
washed clean of hope.  
they want you to be inspirational  
or wise,  
representative  
or proxy,  
icon saint  
or feminist whore.  
she tries explaining how the light makes her bones cry  
but they refuse to listen  
to anything but  
her make believe  
courage.

can she say how the memory of a boy's hand on her cheek  
makes her buckle into a long fall  
called despair,  
without being called sentimental  
or cliché?  
how mourning is a form of love  
how theory is useless without the possibility  
of joy,  
how she goes on  
against every indication,  
asking can she live  
knowing he will never touch her again,  
tasting of salt and drug store lotion  
mixed with grief,  
knowing diaspora is not a word  
you can build a bridge over,  
knowing the world ends and begins  
in other people's bodies  
knowing the light flickering  
in between the winter birches  
says winter will be deep  
and long  
and cold.  
knowing by the lines around her eyes,  
that time is past  
and second chances wither  
in this unimagined future.

somewhere a cis woman is waking up  
inside a warm house

and somewhere another version of her  
is free  
but it's not here.

here there is only the body  
the morning  
her ghosts  
and a gender  
not even she  
"home".  
a city skyline  
no one  
will call