

**In retribution, a clock never loses its balance**

Time skip—a making of clockwork putty in your hands—bless the hand that feeds or kiss the hand that kills: a failure to commit is the first and last breath. They hold me like a gun, cocked to aim, wrapped up in corded metal—time shifts: I’m trying to peer through the mask I don & see what I’ve hidden underneath. I make friends with people who hate themselves & I am left more than alone again & again.

“Do they ever ask about me?”

I knew the answer.

“No,” my friend said—

Button up your secrets, envision them sinking under the skin of a lamb & devour dripping meat, bore your hands, come back bloody. A declination of bone marrow & missteps haunt—tip toe on creaking wooden boards as I slink between receding shadows, a bracken-light crumbling at my feet—dark air is liminal, it’s airports & night buses & bold winter winds—I’ll meet you three quarters of the way & maybe we will be equals in the end.

“I’m sorry,” my friend said.

I knew the answer.

“It’s okay—”

Would anyone notice if tonight I walk down the lane of open-ended bridges—of tube lines lined with rails failing? I said time skip, but when I landed—and there was land, wasn’t there? Or was it only an all-consuming dream peddling wares of Bic lighters & kitchen knives—I snapped my shirt in place, smoothed the wrinkles imbedded in impounded headaches. I’ll dumb it down for me: there’s a problem with my story, with the ink stains on my palms, cheeks, and chest—there’s not enough and too much death to explain consequences tricked into my eyes.

“It’s like wet paint in your mouth.”

I knew the answer.

“The gun,” they said.

**Falling from Milkweed in a Green Cocoon**

Compare my being to a butterfly—but if  
we're straying from lies, I'm stranded by moths,  
a holy church of wings metamorphosized with  
fucked-up-greied-out caterpillar cocoons; I  
linger, pace back and forth—trapped alongside  
my slime-slick shoulder blades—hunting for  
color to limn, to lime green & jaded purple;  
I'll jaw my own limbs apart to shave off bits of  
femininity, of curves & hip: a jackdaw croons  
at me, shivering the petal-thick walls—I'm not  
finished, I've yet to metamorphosized my thighs,  
stomach & pig-step nose—to slip out of 23  
years' worth of body & polish my caricature: turn-  
arounds take a great deal of time & outsiders like to  
claw apart both of our histories & pin us to parlor walls



## Lucky Strikes Will Wilt Your Bones

### I.

I dance alongside the dead today / limbs akimbo with all sorts of joy / slapping against my chest / I'm centered in rooms of Mary Jane / & John Doe keeps hitting on me / & I don't mind little prayers he sends / after all we're everywhere at once / like some deity on lunch break / reaping buffets of streaked flesh / jackhammered progress / harvesting graduates / back where skeletons / lumbering love / beckon weary travelers / proceed to fall into lullaby / saccharine pitfalls bless my feet | I said dance with your dead / harvest generations of *cæruleus* / captured from Rome / donate your lungs to a real-life broker failing to breathe back home / breathe like the dead things we are / rotating on a merry-go-round carousel with peeling *cereus*-painted wine / inhale in your friends Lucky Strike lipstick / kiss side to side / you don't require romanticism / no 1871 gold digger / found much prize / called it a lucky strike / when pressed with expectations / I'm no cigarette butt left scattered in snow piles / all dirtied with bones / this unknown caricature of me

*cæruleus* : blue — sunken deadened skies  
*cereus* : waxen, of wax, to torch fingertips

### II.

I cart you past red districts / settle your meat down by dancing dead things / a cannibalization of your bones / a transition facilitated / trans: Latin: means / across / I've crossed this social boundary / social made us uncomfortable our whole lives / some call us a crime of passion / but it's a crime of criminalization of the whole being / my dead friends / live hand in hand with their cut-open bodies | my [REDACTED] couldn't be me / in the now / sits frozen in my past / a conglomeration of epiphanies rotting in my core at last / discomfort speaking about love / I didn't ask to be / sum / es / est / harangued & haggard by my own fear / quench it in Luckies / breed nicotine — addiction — into my hollow veins / ink my skin in scars / buoyancy bleeding between my teeth / what kind of love / singles out me from *egō* / repeat singularities / finding beacons to store away my black hole husbandry

*trans* : across, cross body modification  
*sum, es, est* : to be, as in I am More  
& you are fated in flesh  
& he-she-they-it is encompassing  
*egō* : I—not you, not anymore

### III.

I've stripped the dancing dead's clothes / puffer sleeves ripped oblique / a man in lace corsets twirls with cockeyed calves / he produces more unbalance / than spider-legged-anorexia-ridden bodies | heave your sex out of the bedroom / bunch up your legs with Shape of You beats / his *puella* isn't feminine / a he-she-they-it can go by any label / or less than perception / misconstrued misconstruction of bodies / highlights my dishabille-curtained-off-blessed-self-portrait / a mixed up wrong end turned round / sheath of skin / I chop off what's not mine / unsheathe my reality / I hope your transphilic / sunken lips down to mine / can you imagine how many bridges / we've had to cross / to get here is our domain / bless my broken bones / wane underneath obsidian towers / my fluctuation shimmying into kaleidoscope mirrors / I'll have you between confident thighs / a scene I'm bound to circle back again / consider yourself lucky to lie backwards / no sextant will find me sitting on datelines / *effugereit nusquam iterum* / *cēlēbrāre meī* / & you'll have to run to catch up with my certainty / beast / I am not [REDACTED] / from hells or heavens / climb & clamber / cross-fleshed bastards / a winning-pot-of-gold abandoned in the fish market close / close your eyes & pray / pray to me / a deity returned / body full to burst

*puella* : girl before womanhood, before transformation  
*effugereit nusquam iterum* : I will have run back to nowhere  
*cēlēbrāre meī* : to celebrate the rite of me

**today, red onions become my tissues**

this is the strategy I use to ensure I remain:  
keep backing away until I hit concrete  
let my knees sink into each other &  
hope you'll pick your way across the  
minefield. The water is frigid—lapping

at my ankles. I hesitate, stutter out our  
relation—I label who we are to each  
other when I disintegrate & I pike my  
body into hillsides, drag my feet in sand  
to carve wobbling, tenuous lines of

friendship. You sound unsure of my  
stubbornness: eye-contact & sharp-cliff-edged  
voice staring me down. I could never stand up  
against your hard edges without breaking my  
wrists on the wall, flashes of pitiful bone

puncturing my habits—I wrap a cord around my neck  
so you don't have to & I cut red onions to hide  
my emotions: pickpocket my uncertainty, lap up blood  
slipping between my fingers. You're not willing  
to break open your body & fester next to me