

PIANO

“The casket is a ladder,” says the preacher.
I remember the ring you gave me,
how I smashed it into pieces trying to decide
if it was real.

What note could you have left
for your mother’s favorite black dress
worn here?

For your brother outside the window
in the suit he wore to prom
smoking his heart into hatchet?

For your father refusing to take a tissue,
embarrassing the men with the nervous coughs?

For the car your cousin keeps calling a limo?
For your baby sister asking
why they are calling it a wake?

Last night I tore the feathers from my pillow
searching for the songs of the birds.

Morning came silent
as your bones,
and now your face, here
in this empty box,
resting like a piano on fire.

Is this the place
you wanted to go
the night I swallowed your cock like an opera
and your makeup melted from your cheekbones
onto the whiskey spilled dirt?

When you walked me home
the earth was still
between my teeth.
My lungs were an attic full of dust.

You kept flipping through
the photographs on my breath.
Everything inside me
was overexposed,
the glitter in my tough,
the slur in my family tree.

When I asked you to stay
my jaw was not a hinge.
There was nothing open in the question.

We all have bullets beneath our skin
we pray our lovers won't flinch at when they find.
We all have sirens in our light.

But if you think this is a eulogy
you haven't seen my nail beds.

I've already built too many wind chimes
from covered tailpipes
to lay anyone down that clean,

to write your release
with a pretty pen
to the pitch of your mother's scream.

The only word
I have to give you
is good-bye.

If the casket is a ladder,

climb.

WHEN THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE LEAVES YOU

Bake a wedding cake.
Step on it.

Frost the living room floor
with your dancing feet.

Lock the front door.
Close the blinds.

Lick the floorboards.

TWO BIRDS

“Love is the only war worth dying for.” — Derrick Brown

When you ran for the border
I spent three months calling your name
'til I watched your feet leave our country
and I bunkered down in your cheerleader pajamas
to stare at our photograph
of the two birds.

Two birds.

Give me one stone,
or a rifle.

I'll collect the feathers from the ground
to make pens
to write poems about Obama.

Remember how we fucked
in the bathroom stall
during his inauguration
at Invesco Field?

Later in our seats
you held my hand and said,
“Look at Michelle. She is so in love.”

There were so many snipers in the stands
when the fireworks startled us in the stairwell
I thought for sure we were being bombed.

For five minutes we sprinted
frantic through the tunnel.

I kept saying, “I love you, I love you, I love...”

I thought for certain I would turn to dust
in your arms.

Dear Love,

I hope your new home is beautiful.
I hope you rise to your feet
every time she sings her anthem.
I hope your hand is forever on your heart.
I hope your heart is forever safe.

Here at home
they are saying Obama is not the saint
we had hoped he would be.

I wonder if you'd notice
that Michelle is still in love.