"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
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
    a city skyline
and a gender
    no one
not even she
will call
"home".