

Elegy:: Missing the Trigger of Winter Now Triggers You

*For Q*

What started growing in my skull?  
A landscape of yesterday's winter. All the years  
I spent cursing the frostbite disappeared  
into something  
melting.

Is this marsh? Or oasis? Either way, always a little  
damp, my face watching my face in a bar's bathroom mirror  
as over the sink my hands strangle each other in yearn to erase  
all palm lines–

Does every blank page really mean starting anew?

My throat falls  
to where it is most

lonely.

My forehead, my cheek, my neck  
lonely.

My tone, my pitch, my ability

to learn more language

lonely.

I had assumed  
no winter  
meant no remembrance.

So I said goodbye and, without a flock, with just my shadow,  
dove south–

My dear sister

I am an hourglass  
of your cremated body–

I mean

every speck of ash was once a bone  
dancing at a college party  
where friction birthed fire  
to a skin still a seed  
that never ever got the chance to rupture  
into seedling.

What kind of tree could you have been?

In my throat, oak.

In my lungs, fir.

In my nails, grass.

Above our nose,

snow.

Outside our doors,  
a beginning  
of another door

where our knuckles broke into more splits.

Bleeding profusely.

Now, in the south  
of Vietnam, the rain  
that waters your grave everyday  
is the same rain  
I now carry  
in my stomach

ulcers, bawling like an animal  
on highways and bodegas  
and hospital beds, holding onto  
toilet rims of stranger's houses,  
someone always calling  
someone else to give me body  
or breath, every phone camera  
on my face, every photograph  
captured holding cement  
to build memory or evident  
shame, on the phone, always on  
the phone, somewhere on the  
phone, your words no longer  
arrive—

Of course.  
I have places to be.

Look.

I am packing my own bags. Aging against witnesses.

Clocking pulses.

I make my bones kiss a landscape

foreign to what winter ever could be.

This December

in Miami

I will take you,

Saigon,

to the beach.