

# for ryan thoresen carson

Jess Rizkallah

Poetry

death makes a person mythic. every myth has cracks.  
 that's where the grief leaks thru when you remember  
 the beautiful ordinariness of a person. then you lose them all over again. myth is easier. the  
 mundane fades each time you recall it. a rose loses its scent each time you return to it  
 to steal another moment. each moment a broadcast into the ether. a game of telephone btwn you  
 and eternity.  
 until the gps leads you into the forest and suddenly you can't breathe. to which tree do you nail  
 the memory for safekeeping?  
 hard to choose. do you look into the bare face, warm and blemished or the one contoured by the  
 silent cinema of night, its retraction  
 of sunlight so that everything is shadow containing depths i feel  
 but can't prove. why can't i hold you  
 the way a watch holds a scent  
 the way sun cleans a stone  
 or warms a ring around my finger—  
 metal tightening and my blood  
 rushing to meet it.  
 your voice is in everything i hear. the same way  
 each raspberry print on the lip of a coffee cup holds an iris staring back at me. your eyes bore thru  
 everything i say  
 and pigment fading the more i keep saying. until your eyes  
 are inoculated by poetry. until your eyes from inside a dream  
 stare back into mine from the face of an eagle talons tight around my wrist  
 and i'm shaken awake— i know what to do. it's laughable i ever didn't. catholicism made us walk  
 til our feet bled, evoked in our phantom  
 limbs the compulsion of nails into wood to make a memory eternal.  
 tens of thousands martyred in palestine. just like jesus.  
 phantoms separated from their limbs but their eyes eternal warmth on our backs as we step out  
 into the harsh light  
 of day which clarifies and calcifies the mission  
 and i'm reminded flesh melts away but bones hold  
 their carvings. a set of instructions. you are written inside  
 of me as long as i keep moving. i'm sorry i tried to implicate you in a poem abt trees when there

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are cops among them  
and shit to burn down.

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Jess Rizkallah is a Lebanese writer and visual artist. Her book the magic my body becomes won the Etel Adnan Poetry Prize as awarded by the Radius of Arab American Writers. Her zines include IF LUV IS A CHEMICAL SO WHAT WHO CARES, and ANYWAY.

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