



# the aftermath

Brooke Kenney

The body remembers before you do.

you hear that sound of a body breaking, when you step into a pile of leaves, when you crack an egg at breakfast. you hear gunshots when you cook bacon in the morning and feel the oil burn your skin.

my feet still try to run when someone makes popcorn in the kitchen. each kernel explodes like a firecracker; nowhere to run.

I look for escape routes everywhere I go, for I still see the gun within that fist. I still hear his screams when I walk by a playground and I still see his face when I close my eyes.

have you ever heard the planet hold its breath before a storm? there is a second of silence before the bullet is released where you only have time to accept.

accept that the air is split in half and anything along the hot wind's path will fall into the cracks.

adrenaline. the worst high of my life. running but not feeling the ground, my heart beating for two.

bodies don't grow back after fires like trees and they don't explode into a light show like stars do at death. they crumple like a paper ball in a fire and they wilt like flowers before winter.

although I try to forget the memory chokes me awake at night with the image of his face against the pavement, his eyes seeing without his soul

and the blood: it is forever woven into my clothes