

EVERYTHING  
SAVED

*poems by*  
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WILL BE LAST



*everything saved will be last* is for Jamie, who wasn't and never will be.

Dangerous thing, a name. Someone  
might catch hold of you by it.

—*Richard Adams*

We were brave before memory.

—*Toi Derricotte*

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Today's lesson is to complete today's lesson

a life without  
regret is a life

spent without  
desire there is no room for

small talk when cracking  
open an amethyst or you  
will almost never find a butterfly

my friend Kota never talks about New Orleans

It's best to say her story began under plastic glow-in-the-dark stars making constellations along old water creases where the glue that holds your home together once strained but didn't buckle. It's best not to say the neighborhood that didn't used to be underwater disintegrated into so many paper towns. It's best to explain how the children are not gone but made into doughy pulp how recycled paper used to be a novelty luxury how the earth didn't fall out from under her but the other way around. How paint is just pretty glue.

## imbrute

I knew I was black when I was  
seven-years-old and only knew

because before seven I knew  
I was white. You are still

fitting in the spaces  
you are and are not

allowed and your mother,  
she is sadder than mine;

we are both pigeonholes  
written over the top

of historical bodies, excesses  
washing out our pigment

and other bruises [ I've known  
I been good; why do I need

to remember I've been black ]  
I could run from tomorrow, but

we are more than mere endurance,  
a controlled insertion of bodies

seamlessly inserted into this other-  
wise you-less life where days seem

to end as they began, entirely  
imaginary, making them

not any less real, just  
gently waiting bright

and lucent as you  
always imagined I could be.

## The future was better before

For talking about problems  
of the body, the word  
cannot forget where it's been:

[ How does it hurt  
when you see me  
running

so hard to decide  
on a face in the dark ]

Emmett's still the battered flag for our enduring  
regime of truth, playing

with the language we were  
not allowed, for nature  
and law, safe-

guarding the old secrets.

When are we gonna get tired  
becoming genre and cower

into the helpless terror  
of being just one person

[ All my life, I've wanted skin  
like that ]

how sweet—to slip  
inside of whiteness

To feel nothing &  
To still get full

Credit for being alive.

## on my blue eyes in a hall of mirrors

*every generation confronts the task  
of choosing its past.*

—*Saidiya Hartman*

condemned & exalted; tumult &  
art; horizon & dancefloor; arrested  
& passing; conjured & static; static  
& static; static & unmagic; static &; static &  
locomotion; static & arrested; static & refusal;  
refusal & adjacent; & next door; & stacked  
one on top of the other; no architecture  
ever kept us closer & dancefloor; & beams;  
beams & beams; beams & abundance; beams  
above & the u-shaped hull; beams & oceans  
not seen; beams & branches & beams  
from branches; & being; & being  
extinguished upwind; & beaten down-  
stream from the extinguished; & beams;  
& matchsticks; static & sulfur; measured  
& traded; brilliance & seduction; & future  
waiting in the wings; breathe & concrete;  
scene & subjection; future & comedown;  
cast & backstage; made-up & spot-  
light; détente & searchlight; static &  
blanching; static & suspect; scattered &  
wretched; uplift & betrayal; & coal  
from diamonds; & passing; & salvage;  
martyr & scapegoat; martyr & shoulders; martyr  
as survival & static; coerced &

confession; & boundary; & witness; condemned  
& exalted; to dream & impossible; unbroken  
& captured; unwritten & un-written &  
static; drowning in horizon & dancefloor  
as tumult & art & canvas, collision