

Fun with Dying

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The year you died was gala festive. Didn't I party dress for monthly plane flights from my lake to your ocean? Each time you gauntly greeted, your skin poked carbon blue where needles entered, the strange

shunt dangle from its temporary home, you St. Sebastian and your arrows. Your girl and I ate out and brought you cheese. We tooled Seattle like tourists, its single rainless winter we sequined, brought you

accordioned nosegays. You seemed to like hospital sleeping, fluttering nurses to morphine drip. Sometimes we restauranted sans you. You loved to see us glow and we obliged. Layers peeled you papery,

trapeze-artist light, your fingernails gone to skin. The drugs took your hair and left you seal-smooth; carved chin to chisel, lashless eyes, the shell melting and your warm core soaking sheets, turning toward the grisly plants

we windowsilled. We shopped that city, found expensive knits, boutique sweaters with slate buttons. We bought eyeliner by the tub. Your girl, she held my hand while yours skeletoned. *Nothing* you said when we asked

what gifts. I zipped my knee-high boots, she fastened her trench. Breezed out, we always smelled of apricot scrub, avocado. Why would someone stay bedside, listen to a rattle? Rattles come from coughs and lead to comas.

We weren't the knitting type, we had exhausted crosswords. It was you who urged us *go*, a day not circumscribe our wantings. We wished you well again and burly but turned your sick ghoulish. The doc and residents predicted

nine more months—a long time in my short life. *Let's go, he wants us to*, I told her and we left you again, bright things to be bought, a turquoise scarf my neck needed, crème brûlée I loved to its caramel end. You laid

thirty-nine mixed years quilted on your rotten body: thought things through.
Set the pillows, rode the angles, fresh from your sponge bath. You
knew the shift change rhythm like a poker hand. Nightcap nurse

took your vitals and we dropped off a confection. When months ticked through
to April, we all agreed it had been a beautiful year and a fine one for dying in.
No one could say when a starless Washington winter had glimmered so.

