

POEMS FROM “WHAT COMES AFTER”

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About the Author

Eliza Victoria graduated with a degree in Journalism from the University of the Philippines - Diliman in 2007. Her books include the short story collection *A Bottle of Storm Clouds* (Visprint, 2012) and the science fiction novel *Project 17* (Visprint, 2013). Her latest novel, *Dwellers*, was released in July 2014. Her fiction and poetry have appeared in several online and print publications, and have won prizes in the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature and the Philippines Free Press Literary Awards. For more information, please visit her online home <http://elizavictoria.com>.

Morning

She waved but the child
did not turn her head.
The only time she did not
say goodbye.

The sunlight as searing
as premonition.

You don't use the word
gunned-down with *daughter*.

Use *want*, then. Use *want*.

Morning

She folds the sheets and thinks
her life is a collection of things
she can throw into a fire
and every day is a burning flame.
In an ideal world, the moth
is not a moth but her grandfather.
It flies into the kitchen
like a black cloud,
and she remembers the dishes, wonders
what comes after.
She scrubs the skillet
and tells herself, Be cold. Be cold
and hard. There are only two
worthy emotions in this life
– despair and gratitude –
and over and over she has felt
alive, and that is enough.

Note to –

The terrifying thing about this is
no one wakes up and realizes,
*I will be killed by a bus falling
from the overpass or by a man
with a sniper rifle hiding in the trees*
and yet – and time is rarely kind
to details and names and numbers
are easily lost and before long
the only important thing
about the death that happened
is that it happened.

Note to –

You will reach across the distance and grasp
whatever is left
 not a body
 or an answer
and it will walk with you home
sleep in your bed
and one day
in the marketplace or at church
you will reach back
and there will be nothing there
or at least nothing that at all resembles
what you need, like peace

Certainty

as when the first blades of grass grow on the battlefield
as when you stop suddenly in front of an empty room
as when the recurring dream figure says *listen to me*
as when your fingers touch cloth, then rain, then varnished wood
as when your tears fall, hand on the cold sepulcher
as when someone asks *what does this mean*
and you can't define it, not with words again, and how do you say *you need to live it first*