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## **Carbon Chains**

This is our graphite anniversary  
Because we'll never really meet.  
We are two sheets of the same substance  
Rubbing past each other, clinging  
Together with the fakest of efforts:  
Small talk, casual jokes, mutual friends.  
We're so close but neither  
Of us could bend one inch to  
turn around, connect our hands  
And feet and be diamond.

I want you to see that if you rolled us up  
And scratched us against paper,  
You'd have a pencil, you'd have  
Something I could write with.  
Do you know how covered in gray I am?  
There are smudges all over my hands  
From this graphite, which means that  
I've worked so hard and  
I'm still just a mess.

This isn't one year from anything at all.  
If a diamond marks longevity  
Well, graphite is the opposite.  
Maybe I could try to touch you, but  
My hand would slide right by.  
So time can't count us.  
We are gray stains, flaws that,  
Put in the right order,  
Tell me who I'm not.

## **Skin**

I burnt my forearm on a light bulb.  
It was one of those black light bulbs  
That make your teeth white.  
I reached up to adjust  
The line it hung on  
And all of a sudden I was burnt.

The burn was big and wide,  
A perfect, round, red dime.  
It looked like the type of burn  
Boys get when they hold cigars  
To their skin and grit their teeth.  
But it wasn't like that.  
It was an accident.

Watch yourself heal some time.  
The burn will start out white,  
With little red dots.  
But the dime crater grows skin,  
Layer by layer.  
And the layers looked different:  
Shiny, matte, brittle.  
Until finally you grow this little  
Patch of blush that never fades.

Watch yourself heal.  
You won't believe it until you try it.  
Watch your diamond bones assemble,  
Your steel skin stretch across stone muscles.  
I want to open up like a textbook diagram.  
I want to see all the parts of me  
That I'm told are there, but have never found.

A burn like that one on my arm,  
It hurts for a while.  
You're concerned about infections,  
And other pain that lasts.  
But I've seen this skin tie knots,  
So I'm pretty sure it can take a beating.  
I've heard my lungs catch up and my heart  
Calm down.  
And they did all that without me even asking.  
It seems like I can handle it.  
So don't feel bad,  
Burn me.

