

## what the dead know by heart

lately, when asked how are you, i  
respond with a name no longer living

Rekia, Jamar, Sandra

i am alive by luck at this point. i wonder  
often: if the gun that will unmake me  
is yet made, what white birth

will bury me, how many bullets, like a  
flock of blue jays, will come carry my black  
to its final bed, which photo will be used

to water down my blood. today i did  
not die and there is no god or law to  
thank. the bullet missed my head

and landed in another. today, i passed  
a mirror and did not see a body, instead  
a suggestion, a debate, a blank

post-it note there looking back. i  
haven't enough room to both rage and  
weep. i go to cry and each tear turns

to steam. I say *I matter* and a ghost  
white hand appears over my mouth

### **Credit:**

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Donte Collins is the winner of the 2016 [Aliko Perroti and Seth Frank Most Promising Young Poet Award](#) for his poem “what the dead know by heart.”

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