

By Layli Long Soldier

my first try I made a hit it dropped from morning gray the smallest shadow both wings slipped inward mid-flight the man barked *Now* I shot again and again a third time with each arrow through the target I thought was it luck or was it skill luck or skill as the last one fell

its awkward shape made me run there pulsing on the ground I was astounded by its size a gangly white goose throbbled heaved its head my eyes dropped blood flowers opened in the snow of its neck behind my shoulder stepping down from a yellow bus

child made their way across the field I shot once more to end it quickly close range its death did I do this to spare the bird from suffering or to spare the children the sight my motives in humid cold yes my knuckles in the cold steamed bright red

because on my stomach in grass in rubber boots pockets and vests I slid along with that hunter I did as he directed from quiver my draw my black lashes in steely eyed release it felt good there it felt strong my breath in autumn was an animal there I thought did I really do this did / really yet what difference is muscle is an arrow powered upward or any flight to center when I did not hear it though I clearly mouthed *poor thing poor thing poor thing*

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