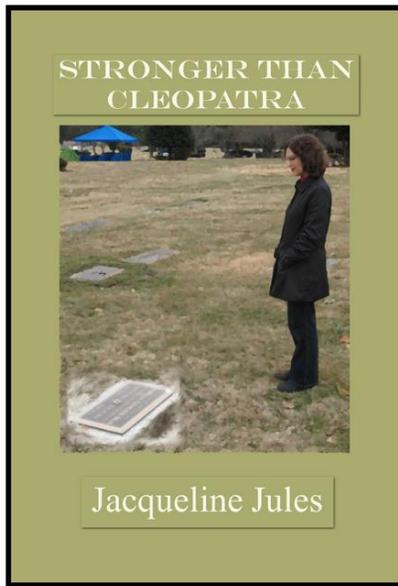


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STRONGER THAN CLEOPATRA**

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“If half of all marriages end in widowhood, *Stronger Than Cleopatra* is a manual for how to go on.” —Pamela Ehrenberg, author of *Ethan*, *Suspended* and *Tillmon County Fire*

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**FOUR DAYS AFTER YOUR FUNERAL**

Thunder wakes me.  
It is Sunday morning. 3 a.m.  
The sound is a giant stamping his foot,  
pulling trees out of the ground,  
ripping rocks from a mountainside.  
It is clearly a temper tantrum, clearly you,  
and I sit up in bed to listen.  
Your anger explodes over the roof,  
fuels the wind, banging  
on the window, blowing out the lights.  
I hug my knees in the dark as you howl  
and howl  
until my own rage rises  
to the sky beside you. Together,  
we hurl stones at the earth below—  
a team of two-year-olds  
demanding repair of a toy  
irreparably broken.  
But it feels good,  
one last time,  
to cry together.

**WINGS FROM A CHRYSALIS**

I still find things when I clean closets,  
like the speckled tan tie you wore to our wedding.  
It has a stain. Champagne, perhaps?  
We drank that day—like all young couples—  
to a future we didn't expect to spill  
after seventeen years  
on a rose-colored carpet in the middle of June.

Who would I be had I not buried you?  
The question itches sometimes  
like a coarse spot on otherwise smooth skin  
as I snuggle with your replacement  
in a bed bigger than the one we shared. . . .

Your death reduced me to larva.  
But time inside a chrysalis  
gave me wings I would not give back.  
I loved my old body,  
but this one suits me, too,  
and some creatures are destined  
to live their lives in stages,  
each one distinct and beautiful  
while it lasts.



**Jacqueline Jules** is the author of the poetry chapbook *Field Trip to the Museum*, published by Finishing Line Press, and two dozen books for young readers including the *Zapato Power* series and *Never Say a Mean Word Again*. An award-winning poet, her work has appeared in over 100 publications. Visit her online at [www.jacquelinejules.com](http://www.jacquelinejules.com)

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