

“Small Poems for Big” by [Chinaka Hodge](#)

Twenty-four haiku, for each year he lived

when you die, i’m told
they only use given names
christopher wallace

no notorious
neither b.i.g. nor smalls
just voletta’s son

brooklyn resident
hustler for loose change, loosies
and a lil loose kim

let me tell you this
the west coast didn’t get you
illest flow or nah

had our loyalties
no need to discuss that now
that your weight is dust

that your tongue is air
and your mother is coping
as only she can

i will also say
that i have seen bed-stuy since
b.k. misses you

her walk has changed some
the rest of the borough flails
weak about itself

middle school students
not yet whispers in nine sev
know the lyrics rote

you: a manual
a mural, pressed rock, icon,
fightin word or curse

course of history
most often noted, quoted
deconstructed sung

hung by a bullet
prepped to die: *gunsmoke gunsmoke*
one hell of a hunch

here you lie a boy
twelve gauge to your brain you can't
have what you want be

what you want you black
and ugly heartthrob ever
conflicted emcee

respected lately
premier king of the casket
pauper of first life

til puff blew you up
gave you a champagne diet
plus cheese eggs, welch's

you laid the blueprint
gave us word for word for naught
can't fault the hustle

knockoff messiah
slanged cracked commandments, saw no
honey, more problems

a still black borough
recoiled, mourned true genius slain
the ease of your laugh

the cut of your jib
unique command of the room
truthfully biggie

what about you's small
no not legend not stature
real talk just lifespan

yo, who shot ya kid
n.y.p.d. stopped searching
shrugged off negro death

well, we scour the sky
we mourn tough, recite harder
chant you live again

of all the lyrics
the realest premonition
rings true: you're dead. wrong