

## The Year I Limped

steeple bells rang  
out of time. A single pigeon  
would visit my bench

before I moved on  
with a stranger's gait.

I knew my difference  
mattered only to me:  
the sun slanted  
in its usual way, the moon  
pushed and pulled the waters,

but a hesitancy  
I had not known  
squatted in me  
and refused to say  
when it would leave.

I held on  
to whatever  
was within reach, focused  
on finding slight improvements,  
monitoring my walk  
as if it were something I could console,

a tired animal, mending.  
Every time a car approached  
or a staircase loomed,

the earth would tilt.  
My mouth, my inner workings  
were set ajar. I considered  
the shifts of glaciers,  
the stumblings of sea creatures  
as they escaped those prehistoric lakes.

Swinging my awkwardness  
ahead of me, I made my way.

## Brats

You have to take what comes, what choice  
in a dingy field, sudden storm, burned-out bulb  
in the tall streetlamp,

riot of crisscross and stumbling,  
dry rot and blossom rot and berries  
not to be plucked but bending

behind a leaf, as we were  
all those years, daydreaming in rows  
with our bug bites and our bodies

ripening. We opened our history books  
and watched the pages yellow  
before we could understand them.

We went to the docks when the ships  
brought our fathers home. Their arrivals  
made front-page news, but they sat numb

in their recliners while the sun  
set fire to the blinds and the dust motes  
swirled and fell. Even the knife

that has done its bleeding  
speaks to what it cuts,  
says, *your turn*.

## Glow

Luciferin  
lights their abdomens.

Their smell  
stays on your fingers.

It's like catching  
bells  
with the shells of your ears,

like sex,  
though you don't know  
what sex is.

Your mother calls you  
and your brother  
in for a bath.

Oxygen  
in the water, oxygen  
in the air.

The bugs  
pulse  
in the jar.

No one thinks about stars,  
but stars appear.

## Raccoon

I understand you more or less  
lost all respect for me  
when I didn't understand  
the raccoon metaphor  
in that poem you sent.

Because we're good friends, you haven't  
said as much to me, though the weight of it  
visits me at vulnerable times—  
when I'm making up my bed  
or pumping gas in a non-home state.

I'm dense in my own cocoon,  
you know that too well.  
What you don't see is your own  
mummy bag, the way it cramps your style. Wait,

here comes another raccoon.  
Let's see if I can trap this one  
in one of my expertly tucked sheets  
or swooning in the fumes of my filled-up tank.

No, he's gone, his improbable tail  
following the wake of his walk  
like a lie detector following a lie.

They say it takes two people  
to make the truth: one to say it  
and one to hear. You,  
could you take a moment  
and make this true?