Of-of-Step

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OUT-OF-STEP

Let me stroke that hurt leg.
My grandmother had one too.
And your grandfather and mine
met in a foreign land
and predicted that someday
we'd walk side-by-side.
The cat who always circles me
has been waiting in the wings
while our arms have been entwined
and this cat is mewing
at a hawk who is screaming
and flying over your grandmother
on the day she was born.
Where the road leads cursed and charmed
we're running side-by-side.
Your words have taken on my color.
The bells of your breath
are filled with my breathing.
The cat mews.
In the fields our grandparents are screaming.

But there are other years too.
Our legs can't keep on walking.
Yours was injured in the eye of a storm
on a day pressed into my memory
when our child was waving in my womb.
The girl in the phone booth
whom you didn't know
had pressed herself against you
and allowed you to kiss her.
The cat had curled at her side,
the hawk had screamed above her
like a wicked blessing,
screamed until she walked out-of-step beside you.
Where the road spreads itself open in alarm
I stumble towards an alley.
When will I hear our pet dove coo?
In her shallow grave
my grandmother is rocking and rocking.
Please soothe my hurt leg,
she croons and she coos.
And overhead the sky closes in.