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Elegy 2

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ELEGY 2

You encourage like a cadaver, like a spur,
like a heartworm at work in the heart;

you're a beautiful chewer, a terrible want,
the shadow stalled on a meadow.

You make the crickets speak to you,
so I speak— o birch tree peeling,

o truculent finch, o lecher,
o rusty can, o holder of things apart,

o briar bush pushed through my veins,
o seraphic wind— you pass to the left,

to the, right, all the way through,
o worn spot on my knee—

inside and all over.

I walk through the city pinching violets;

I spread oil on my eyes.

I open a manhole; you're inside,

feasting with the forgotten,
laurels in your hair and the smell of gin

on your lips. On both sides of the street,
the world is on fire.

A freighter rests
on the burning stairs.

I greet you with the sound of a knife
through lettuce, with seagulls on an ebullient bay,

with a quiet kiss in a quiet house.
We were migrants on a flatbed—

I was the wheelless cart you had to pull,
the bird with a broken wing

that hobbled towards you
across the first divide. Now, I'm a child,

swung up by both arms,
high enough to fear the gap

between my tongue and the ground.