

## The Trembling

I.  
In the garden the bees, sputtering  
for the lattice flowers,  
graze my son's fingers  
as he pinches the petals  
and opens his mouth for a taste.  
He doesn't know bees. I know  
sublime pain  
and their throbbing flight up close.  
In my chest, a sting: my son  
long gone, swollen  
and unhinged.

II.  
Since the dead can't see color,  
my dead friend came to me  
  
with one gray and one dusty white wing.  
He told me there is no love

to redden the pine and blue the birch.  
Clipping flowers for his grave,

I told him I could not see for the sun  
and asked what he learned at war.

In a black and white voice he replied  
*I shot a young girl.*

III.  
Summer's end: a heaving breath from the Gulf.  
My son wakes yelling for me.  
Mosquitoes have bitten his face.  
The dead one hasn't spoken again,  
has sent birds and insects inland  
as emissaries. My boy swipes  
at them. Falling face first,  
he shouts fly, fly, fly . . . crying  
into the screeches of starlings  
as they lift from the trees  
in one swift wave.

IV.  
Halloween: all the masks  
hide my dead friend,  
his eyes and lips looming  
beneath vampires and superheroes.

Dressed like a wolf,  
my son bobs for apples.  
When he rises from the water  
his teeth grip the fruit hard.

He shakes his head  
and holds on. Sitting at a distance  
on rough golden leaves,  
I am the wall he runs into.

What would he do  
in the future, gun in hand  
and locked  
in his own trembling?

V.

I walk through the cemetery, an invader  
battered by the sun; my friend,

the soldier who last wrote me from barracks  
built as quickly as a trick,

now sinks into the edge  
of daylight, the land's distant ray,

a glistening  
bell, collateral . . .

VI.

I bear my son like a field pack.  
As I trudge through the snow,  
he warns me of deep puddles  
in the lawns. Skirting them,  
I walk serpentine and tire quickly.  
He is eating red wet cherries.  
There is juice on my neck and shoulders  
fresh from his lips.

When we arrive, I hunch over the gray  
stone my friend has become.  
Underneath us waits every color:  
asters and blazing stars,  
oleanders and the tremors  
of dark waters.