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Fracture

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Fracture · *Lisel Mueller*

Hard way of learning
legbone connected to the kneebone
et cetera, up the spinal ladder
and out past the shoulder hinges
to the delicate crowns of the wrists,
removed, like monarchs in exile,
from the revolt of the bones.
Even they ring small bells of pain.

The burly shin bone that started it
is incarcerated in plaster.
Mend your ways, the doctor says.
Meanwhile it strikes me with what he calls
dependent pain, as I slide into
a wheelchair, my infant's gown
with its stamps of blue flowers
tied behind my back.
This is a hospital by the Pacific,
two thousand miles from home.
I depend on strangers, wheels turning,
your nightly phone call.

This morning I rode to the sun-room.
The gold sky folded flat
to glaze the water, sweep
the heads of seals in their brush with air.
I was holding a pink sweet pea,
a Sunday gift from the kitchen.
The straight, elegant legs
of fir trees floated toward the sawmill
unhurriedly, orderly. One of them
will turn itself into crutches
for me to lean on when I depart
this month of Sundays on my own two feet.