1985

Pain

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PAIN

for Armando Valladares

We all expected to see you lame. Some wanted to see you lame. When you walked toward us we imagined you crawling. It was like waiting for a train that suddenly turns into a wolf: it howls as it runs into the station, its eyes blind you like headlights, you step into its mouth as if it were a car, you think of tunnels and the next stop as you’re being devoured: you expected a train and can’t imagine anything else. We waited with a wheelchair for a man who could’ve used a new pair of shoes. We asked the obvious questions: if half a life of torture really softens the bones until the body falls like a ruined shack, if rebuilding the shack is worth the trouble. And when someone mentioned pain, the word rising from its metaphors, you tried to laugh.

Your mouth opened like a small wound.