

G A B R I E L L A R . T A L L M A D G E

Suffering Says

The driver turns the engine
and the bus sounds like morning

clearing its throat. In this noise,
all of me is left to splinter.

What was the last thing Justin said to me?
Hush. Wrap this moment in tissue.

His face was among the ones
pressed up against the bus windows.

Marines' shaven faces moved like shadows
behind tinted glass. I had lost his body

so quickly. Then, through the dark,
a wave flickered between us.

I creased the ear of that memory
to remember the sound suffering makes,

the way it moves. It's how words
whittle to the center of a wound.

Now suffering whispers to me
when I think Justin would like a movie,

when I have feathers in my hat, in the fog.
I remember to remember the voice for when

I'm safely in the future. I'll remember
what suffering said when I was alone.

But suffering can move ahead in time
without us, meet us there and say:

*I've never been closer to you than I am right now.
You dreamt I was behind you, holding tight your waist.
I wasn't there. I've been here, in your safe future, whispering
through the tunnel: I'll wait for you, yes.*

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