The Letters Beneath My Skin

My body has been writing to me
longer than I have known
the language of listening.

It slipped its words beneath my ribs,
pressed its warnings into muscle and bone,
folded whole paragraphs into pain,
and placed them quietly
in drawers I was too frightened to open.

Some letters arrived as whispers—

a tremor traveling through my hands,
a breath caught halfway to becoming,
a heart knocking softly, then urgently,
against the locked door of my chest.

Others came like weather.

A sudden storm of blood.
A spine lit by lightning.
A stomach speaking in fire.
Scars appearing like signatures
beneath agreements
I do not remember making.

For years,
I mistook every message
for an act of betrayal.

I called my body difficult.
Weak.
Unreliable.

The Letters Beneath My Skin

I accused it of building walls
between me
and the life I was trying to reach.

But perhaps
it was never building walls.

Perhaps it was bracing the house.

Perhaps every ache was a lantern
left burning in an upstairs window.

Every scar,
a small stitched map
marking where I had been wounded
and where I had remained.

Every exhausted morning,
another unopened envelope
resting at the threshold
of my attention.

So I am opening the drawers now.

One by one.

Blood,
still carrying the story
of every place I have survived.

Stomach,
keeper of the things
I could not swallow.

The Letters Beneath My Skin

Lungs,
remembering every room
where I forgot to breathe.

Heart,
faithful and frightened,
beating its small fist
against the dark.

Bones,
holding the architecture
of a life that has bent
without disappearing.

And the nervous system—
that tireless night watchman—
still pacing the halls,
still guarding doors
the danger left years ago.

I will read what they carried.

I will sit beside the sentences
I once tried to erase.

I will grieve the warnings
I was taught to ignore
and forgive the body
that never learned
how to speak without hurting.

The Letters Beneath My Skin

And when the final drawer opens—
when the last letter rises
from its bed of dust and lavender,
signed only,

Body,

I hope I will understand
what it has been trying
to tell me all along:

I was never your punishment.

I was the house
trying to keep its light on.

I was the door
refusing to close.

I was writing
because I wanted you
to survive long enough
to finally read me.