

GAIL MARTIN

How One Thing Becomes Another

Dear Husband,

This is the time of crickets, chronic
racket proclaiming change. An end time
which includes regrets—if you're paying
attention. Which you so often are not.

Dear Husband,

It is either the time of crickets or katydids.
When I listen
on YouTube, each convinces me, the way
I'm persuaded in argument by whoever speaks last.
Unless the argument is ours. Last night I said,
I want to stop fighting, and you
held me loosely—as if there were a way
to touch me that didn't involve touching. The truth for me
was closer to the children's note I found:
"I'm sorry if you are."

Dear Husband,

It may be the time of cicada killer wasps,
how they insert their poison, drag their victims
underground. I hear you ravaging that bag
of chips from two rooms away. But anger
is a secondary emotion.

Dear Husband,

What advice do you have on surviving
long marriage? On surviving a fall from 10,000 feet?
I will listen while you explain and explain.
First, be small, like a cricket. Small falls slower.

Dear Husband,

In June, mice built nests in your engine.
I was glad it was your car, not mine, but afraid
they might migrate. Summer kept lying
to us, throwing rain like cold coins. I had given up
on the sun the way I'd given up on other things.

Now in this time
of overrunning and chirping, I visit the mad
gardener next door. She tells me she's afraid
of her brother-in-law because he
kind of looks like Satan. I don't say, *So does your husband*
now that you mention it, clipping his toenails
on the front porch, eyes red with exertion.
How one thing can become another.
Nesting mice begin to seem harmless, like children,
familiar and basic as spark plugs, as crickets.