

Six Poems · *Dionisio D. Martinez*

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.