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## After Four Discectomies

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*2022 Vassar Miller Poetry Award*

**After Four Discectomies  
by Jessica Bowdoin**

Throbbing, I am the drumbeat  
of sciatic nerves where rhythms meet.  
Under the electric thrum of neuropathy, skin  
breathes like lightning. Legs adjust to tension  
like sprung tight guitar strings on repeat.

I rust like bolted locks on unsold acreage left for weeks  
to sit and listen to the cicadas singing in the mesquite  
trees. Four surgeries sway lamina into apprehension.  
Throbbing, I am the drumbeat.

I dance on shaky legs into our narrow street,  
rattle to my car in shifts that shake the jangle of keys,  
like bells. Bitterness at doctor appointments and reprehension  
for this: storm dance of tight hips and spasms within  
the gradation of a bittersweet  
throbbing. I am the drumbeat.