

Two Poems by Victoria Clausi

The Way I've Lived Is the Way I'll Go On Living

I began this party with one rum and coke in a tall glass,
sweating in the summer sun, the pool a dazzling aqua

around which we all meandered, so grotesque
in our gestures toward one another we drank more

and more. Because we wouldn't undo promises we'd made,
you and I, cemented around that baby, then child, now man,

we leaned into each other like blades and learned to grow up.
For years I floated in and out of you, a quarter note, a half note,

a rest. So much coming, going—so much conducting. I loved
your love of the small and the mannered way you turned toward

a room, speaking to everyone at once, remaining upright
in a world exploding from the stars to the faultlines.

When it's time to go, our sleepy minds turning toward
another generation, let's make quiet, make so still

we'll hear our shapes changing. I do love you.
Thing of great beauty. Thing of great pain.

Time we were used to it. Time we stopped
crying for those who knew not or what to love.

Abiding

Watch me, Planck would say, as I watch you
watching me, and remain unchanged; remain

anything of yourself not the desire to watch,
desire that changes itself in its desiring.

Belong to this world. The wren sizes you up;
the kingfisher trusts nothing of your intentions;

the mallard lays her eggs under your porch steps,
and the opossum sucks them dry.

The milkweed worries itself to seed, sap, and pod
all in the same season. And you watch me watching.

I like a world like this, as the knee likes distance
between itself and the floor to disappear.