What I Mean When I Say *Farmhouse*

Time’s going has ebbed the moorings to the memories that make this city-kid part farm-boy. Until a smell close enough to the sweet-musk of horse tunes my ears back to tree frogs blossoming after a country rain. I’m back among snakes like slugs wedged in ankle-high grass, back inside that small eternity spent searching for soft ground, straining not to spill the water-logged heft of a drowned barn cat carried in the shallow scoop of a shovel.

And my brother, large on the stairs, crying. Each shift in the winds of remembering renders me immediate again, like ancient valleys reignited by more lightning. If only I could settle on the porch of waiting and listening, near the big maple bent by children and heat, just before the sweeping threat of summer thunderstorms. We have our places for loneliness — that loaded asking of the body. My mother stands beside the kitchen window, her hands no longer in constant motion. And my father
walks along the tired fence, watching horses

and clouds roll down against the dying light —
I know he wants to become one or the other.

I want to jar the tenderness of seasons,
to crawl deep into the moment. I’ve come

to write less fear into the boy running
through the half-dark. I’ve come for the boy.