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Last Year

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LAST YEAR

**DOUG
RAMSPECK**

Something was slaughtering the chickens,
spiriting them away, so that only
a scattering of feathers was left behind.

At dusk the oracle of grass was damp
beneath the variegated sky,
and there was nothing to remember except

for the mud of the swales in the summer
fields, how the peat in its plastic sacks
stank always both of living and dying.

To be consumed by a kind of quieting,
the heat that clings to the flagstone
before seeping away, the moon that presents

itself in the night's hall. Always the feathers
of the chickens like moths battering
our kitchen windows after dark, bullfrogs

with their desultory cries, a detritus carried
in a chest even when we waded to our
waists in the river, the mud water covering

our bodies. Always the feathers
lay in patterns in the pens, a few

as though you might disappear like that,
the years vanishing and never coming back,
one small white feather cupped in a palm.