

If Lawyers Had Pen Names

James Harmon Clinton

Sandpipers feed in thirsty backwash,
move like ivory keys levering felted
hammers into upper register irony.

I slip, slushing salt water and grit
into my oxfords. The bare darkness
spreads between us, jigsaw-puzzling
at the edges. He tells me he longs
to change his name, to be forgiven,

to be blithely tolerated like an actor
or playwright. An otter in the waves
escapes a retriever's bounding rush.
I am hungry, but something remains
to be said. The mountains shudder,
the whole damn lot of them crying.