

noah's ark

so the difference between coming & going
is just a color. another ambulance with its sirens going red
& the water coming down. another break-in at the zoo last night,
the news latching onto teen degenerates
& broken curfews.

the other side of the country
that Johan's watching: San Diego Panda Cam open on his phone
& us sinking into his shoulders, laughing
at the black & white blobs fluttering on
the green square of light.

so we all broke into jail for the company
because your apartment doesn't allow pets &
Johan keeps killing all the plants. sue me,
he said, laughing, head tipped back
as if to catch the last of the rain before it died;

the water stopped & the stars fragmented
into puddles at our feet. beneath dark clouds,
our carved-out chance at freedom thinned
like sand between glass. like rubber wrappers post-helium,
prostrate by the penguin pond.
Our Great Earth, the poster read
on painted snow. we were trying to forget
what comes before—every flood
light snapping on & door left ajar—waiting
for all the after-hours dark
to bleed in.

the other side of the country
& an astronomer watches another world
die, centuries away
& in front of us—another supernova.

so the difference between before & after
is more than timing: it's a matter of
choice. the lions in a dim cluster
& the zebras still alive. after we'd gone

they'd still be there. before there were walls
there was a world: wings & wind & water.
all the silhouetted statues in
the garden before us: an aftermath

of animals. like ants, humans build
before & after the flood. like every big bang

doesn't come before/after r-
evolution: because the pandas will still get another Asia
-n fusion place named after them
before/after they die.

the redshift blurring the lines
of half-rendered giant cubs through
their camera:
another telescope.
so the future dies faster
when it's farther away

but the dark ages a dream like hope
more than any distance could. every
black hole in this heart was once a part
of heaven, too. & the animals

are good
even if they don't belong here.
& the sirens are blue but
we're still good.

In morning

Some days, mourning is just morning
is just a meal: blueberries
sinking like eyeballs into the oatmeal.

It's the thought of how one night,
ready for the morning
you closed your eyes

for the last time, smile on
your still-life face: an angel
in the snow. The afterimage

of joy.

April 30th, 2023—

My mother sends me watercolors
on a rainy day. In the car, my father tells me
what I should do once they have
passed—the insurance,
 the interment,
 the inevitable
everything—and I think
about what it means to die.

(I ask my father if he can't
tell my brother this.
No, he says—
later, when he's twenty,
maybe. I don't think
I can make it to 20.
Okay, I say.)

My dad talks. I crunch on a
cookie—loud—and pretend
to listen: busy myself instead
with imagining my life
never happened. It's
a four hour drive to my
place—we call my mom
an hour in, she picks up
saying, *you're this bored*
already?, and the call
ends in us laughing,
me included, as if I'm not
still looking for a way
out.

April 28th, 2022—

it's the same car ride but
the other direction going
home with my mother
in the front seat
she is praying
for me she says as if
that summer i won't
take up prayer
again just to ask
god to kill

me already and i
don't think i can
make it to next
year anyway so it's impossibly

April again—the rain is past
now. We skid on dry asphalt,
and the seatbelt—taut—str-
etches a sore mark into my
right collarbone. I can feel
the indentation pressing
deep even as we smooth it
out, jerking the swerve back
into a calmer standstill.

(I am calm now.
So calm I have to
remind myself to breathe.
So calm I can't
remember why I have to.

You have to, my father says, if they die. Call my uncle—
—talk about insurance
—take care of their interment
—tuck the inevitable
between my teeth, and bite down
hard.)

My mother sends me the picture—the courtyard
view from their living room
in vivid paints, spring colors splashed
across the stippled paper.

I was feeling lazy so kept it to 10 minute sketching on a rainy day—[3:43pm]

Very pretty, I text back, heart still
racing in the aftermath. My dad's hands
grip the wheel, knuckles white
while we sit there still
alive.

(I sit in the car
& stare at the sky
& think about everything
I want—)

Another ten minutes.
Another spring.
Another mark across

my collarbone; I can

do it—keep alive.