

### *Setting*

The aural chronicle of this town is written  
in jukebox codes and corn miles, the wind  
shifting with the harvest and in the bar back  
entrance. Everyone here is young in a way,  
proud of their coldness in another, and even  
so, fixed into the deer bush with the shoes  
we chose upon arrival. We were warned  
and still we are convinced of our status

as inventors and as casualties. So many  
of us left cities for this, bringing all  
  
our versions of shakshuka (mine florid,  
too dense). Our language is an interim one  
  
of copays, porch swings, and the deadening  
issue, by which, despite our fear of mortality,  
  
we hope not to eventually relax into a lack  
of feeling to wane the chasm. So we pay  
  
tips we cannot afford, and acknowledge  
that veterinarians are contracted by owners  
  
of animals, not animals. A place that takes  
crawling, transcribing, while the music, fire  
  
pit seem to run all night. People here choose  
this every day, knowing that in planned  
  
suburbs and merciful cities, they gossip  
less but read less also. We aim toward  
  
the pleas of our childhood, to one day live  
in a drawn house: big, crowded, ours for  
  
the year. When we arrive, it will be earlier  
in the morning than we ever woke all the years  
  
here and we will concede then our self-  
serving arguments, these griefs, were illusions.

## *Composition of a Raft*

Elsewhere they carried out  
in the earth to pause the wildfires—  
stretching time, wandering past  
the myths we kept like keys  
born of attachment

They counted hundreds of  
sea turtles, touching like  
we were caging and  
comparisons tend to stifle  
so we leaned not leaped—  
to want anything that much

It was the longest loss  
in the century that summer—  
putting everyone back  
and avoiding spectacle,  
spectator, resisting  
in pieces

That summer we learned  
that exile is always story—  
remembering to call back or  
supply, despite our knowing  
like panic

planned explosions of clay  
that summer we were  
the blockades, telling  
and studying loyalty  
not alignment

washed up dead  
lovers that summer—  
sifting because  
both things  
we didn't want

of the moonview  
we spent the dream  
in their places  
by refusing to play  
the humiliation

to bargain with gods,  
we were never  
predicting the water  
—how much relief is  
in promise

*Patch*

I know how the bats get  
in the house and I know

catharsis is not the ideal.  
Before this I only knew

the city, so poor in iron  
and trains but was called

flat-faced by a stranger  
and I was planting yes

I was panting. I wanted  
to be the close of desire,

to be an object of some  
verb. Heard the instant

of a punch's bloom and  
found it soundless, then

refused to learn dances  
with names. The canal

I walked past mornings  
on an all-ledge bridge

(must have in evenings,  
then, too) held the milky

swans who seemed to be  
sleeping as they tended

to the soft bellies of their  
wings. Swanhood is not

greedy, once apart from  
the herd they do grieve.

Bats can yell, too, eyes  
narrowing, yellowing—

it ends when they can  
explain the beginning.

I know how the bats get  
and how I feel I know

about birds and before  
this I only knew the city.

*The Red Axioms*

The bar closes a half hour past  
the regular time and grace is not  
sovereign, don't skid yourself.

I heard, too, your stance gives in  
no thing; the shard is made of ants.  
When the scene has been stolen,

and when the copyright has run  
out, I want—what did I say? I  
haunted. The house is divorcing

from its walls to prove the myth  
of collapse cured, to refuse contact.  
Long is the last aria and holy

a shared audition. I go back  
to the contract, give it a crude  
read. I give you a crude read.