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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.