

Still Life

My brother with his mouth open mugging for the camera, my sister smiling in a plaid school skirt, a cousin in a highchair crying, a streak of dog, two eyes

of someone looking out from under the kitchen table; he just walked home from school with the new girl in class; he has many excited questions about the future.

Now I'm in that future, in which all my writing agonies and joint pains must seem to that young boy quaint, small, and a bit of a sell-out given the problems of the world

and the huge list of everything I could one day do with my life—on which sitting at a desk and writing all day does not even appear. The world is just as broken and pasted together,

the same tree in front of the same childhood home, the same voices of all those people who have watched and judged me my entire life but now, due to age and experience,

are not as prominent except for the voice of that young boy looking out from under the table saying to me, "An entire life lived and you're still without a path?"

School Day

The seventy-five-square-foot room, a bed, and vents circulating fresh air every four minutes—what was once unheard of is now the world trembling in its routine change of seasons.

I feel sorry for the kids who must wait for the morning bus regardless of how they feel, what the weather is, or who's president. It's getting cold.

Democracy's in critical condition, pushing an IV stand, trying not to fall. Cars each with their own sad microclimates pass the children without a look. The century staggers forward.

Meanwhile, bones fly out of school windows and onto fields of lung-red spotted flowers that call to the pollen-laden bees and butterflies fleeing the devastation.

Naming Moon

Moonlight falls on the city like a name,
on a woman waiting for the bus. You don't
know much about her. You don't know
the sorrow she's feeling, her cold feet and hands.

Revealing the neighborhood, there is
the woman, the street, a few cars, a boy
with his dog, someone walking fast,
a man collecting metal in the alley.

The End

A petting zoo llama slips out a break
in the fence. Unhinged love spills out

across the Great Plain—nothing left
to contain it. A parakeet escapes

through a cracked-open window,
the present moment follows

close behind. What remains
dismantles any notion of an afterlife.

The preacher admonishes his congregation.
“Sinners, do you want the good news

or the bad news?” Nothing responds
except the inevitable halt of the text

at the end of the poem.