On Cowardice, the mother of cruelty

There is a story I tell myself

to explain why I never told her *I see its trace*

*every day— a spiral of your vomit in the toilet.*

The story deemphasizes our ease of sex, and my knowledge

that blood and fat no longer renew

her uterus – it recreates

her lightness and solitary will, our silence, until everything cracks, splays

as the prism stranded on the ceiling, wavering across

stucco

until an imperfection, and the complexity loses

elegance

and grows: outward in distortion

—all claws and belly and blur.

There is a story I tell myself to explain

how our human drama could not possibly be a kind of

cult, obscuring

sight until it is impolite to capitalize Earth. Impolite

to say *so what, who cares* about your kitten—and my babygirl—

who are nothing

if we have no cuttlefish, no bees, no elephants.

*We do not* go: *we are borne along like things that float.* Comforted

that we cannot choose the qualities of the light in which we are

exposed.

On Prayer

I want to say I hear it whispered

everywhere, as a tattered cloud dissolves into what comes after

such heaviness

—given a chance to fall into minerals, crush

into pigments

painted as the rooster advertised on the refugee death-truck

that rumbles through Hungary, the rooster saying

*I taste so good because they feed me so well.*

This is our dome and its reflection of us.

This is our Prisoner’s Dilemma: whether to believe your counterpart won’t

sing,

whether you will damn one another with your small raft

of knowledge,

whether you will do nothing until

*That’s the last male of a species singing for a female who will never come.*

All this time what was I pleading to?

I could have been sending postcards to old flames

as if they were the war buddies I never had,

or pleading to senators who replies read as rejection letters,

or inquiring to the horse-groom in Sussex

whether grandma’s horses have hay or will starve again

this winter, munching through the stable’s oak posts and

roof.

That summer we touched their sides—their ribs

rippling—

neither of us ready to ride. Only the billowing grass

to save us. *What is there between the master and the servant*

*when both have fulfilled* *their doom?*

I want more for us, I want to say.

I would package myself inside a thought to you, I would,

melting into air.