Five Poems

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PASTORAL CITY

Waves collapse – coral batten down.  
Clouds appear on the cliffs by noon.

Driving to a diner – hearsay lowers  
clearings in the stands of silence

facing off – unfaltering  
news a never-ending ladder –

a chameleon turns to stone – a cat hisses –  
ants deliver – roaches devour.

Rivers return storms flown inland –  
waters rise – towns swept away.

Banyan trees dangle receding roots  
thickening as they touch down

stirring mud – roadside, the sun circling.  
A little boy stalking the grass says

“I won’t hurt you pretty kitty.”

JUST ANOTHER NAY-SAYER

In my day they stood by the idea of setting food out  
despite what neighbor said of neighbors  
letting cats fend for themselves in fields gone to seed.

Elsewhere, chickens hung themselves,  
packed in parks, another tourist attraction.
It was downright Oedipal, the way today is
divvied into edible and gluten-free

so the body digests the world more gently
you could say, given the old bachelor routine
all seemed more in order than before.

You just don’t want to get it
is the thing I’m partial to, and it’s hard
to play catch-up in between.

Imitation is one thing, but once a hair out of place
or those shoes, whose sad shoes, pointing
halfway—whose big idea? It’s about time,

but caught in it doesn’t mean leaving
your ruler on the library shelf forever.

Hey you, winner. What on earth
did you marry into we’d ask ourselves at coffee.

No one I know escapes slipping through.
Your only recourse ran away,

leaving yourself washing your hands
until all the towels reek and you do another load.

I didn’t want to bring up anything off color,
it just comes out wrong. I am wrong, though like you,

I only did beer. Yet filth comes out of the lost,
dusting the world in spangled colors.
At least the talkers feel better about it.

AT THE ANTHROPOCENE COLLECTION

Simmer down, I tell myself. It’s only a game
of lampposts and leashes.

The big firms
can’t hold their end, too slick
and so we’re moving out
in circles, or why bother the soil?
Hand me that trowel.

Taters under burlap, sprouts cut in furrows.
Where’d that calf go?

Husbandry no longer ties us to turning the plot
and how we manage seed sets

spread in the dark to work first
under the loft,
if not cutting corners
on branding, leaving beaks and tails,

dumping leftovers in troughs
before hitting the hay early.

Sympathy guiding us
overseeing the land
closer to the animal.

Mornings pick up twigs into piles for bonfires
before heat sets hazards and fines.

HUSBANDRY

state animals climb
rotting pine planks
planting the gate

after dusk
whistles dictate perimeters

sad protocol assemblies against the past
happy the riots on ice

sad the hesitation
for more happy a prototype

sad a fly hemmed in by spiders
happy the rainbow braiding a pole
nasty the dentist with bell
happy corn in decay

sad the blood pact
happy the analogy and break
or nested monarch

a measured sector
happy enables sad takes back

sad the continuum happy the arc
happy turns in unawares

under the wren
happy is a handful

sad in waves is boiling
happy antique

sad a concerto of footnotes
vermilions fudging physics

happy the faith through bedrooms
sad a brass experiment star incognito

happy the actor presumed prose
happy southerly

sad struggles syndicated
acquired pulse

EDENIC CUL-DE-SAC

Felt need gave way to firewalls,
the sweep of radar
taking many a pulpit
and wallflower neither of us had time for.

While the open garden makes open rebellion futile,
for every maiden lost there’s a boy who’s nubile.

As chains went, not a bad start.
Given the overhead
we didn’t deserve it, I mean a precarious fleet
blessed with undersea undertakings
joked censors.

While half up river
salmon jump the perimeter
islands lost to global warming gave way
to airstrips and more Starbucks foaming
while we say

what we’ve done to our earth is shoddy
and go on sewing echoes to empty bodies.