

## Reckoning

This is the year the asters never left.  
All winter they held on, bulls-eye suns  
spoked by lavender sparks—something in the air,  
something changed, that has icebergs drifting  
the seas like ghost ships. I look up to see  
the first snow of my son's life falling—  
limning each blade of grass, each corner  
& crease outside, the way grease used to line  
each whorl & wrinkle on my daddy's fingers  
& palms, after a shift at the plant.  
And this, this is the year his daddy gave up  
his ghost. We were both a long ways away—  
how many rivers, how many borders  
or days, neither of us knows or wants to guess.  
Neither of us have the language for this.  
I like to think my Pake met his bride at the end  
of a long dark aisle, a little light  
in her eyes to guide his path. Then stepped through  
to another side. I hope the wounds still  
somehow sing in that world, as they give way  
in this one to green shoots, to bud & bloom.  
I know this is the year that children pan water  
with potato sacks for cobalt, so our phones  
might live. I know this is the year boats disappear  
into the Mediterranean. The western black rhino  
walked its last. This is the year of the never-ending  
church service: as long as it lasted, the migrants  
sheltered there would not be arrested.  
This the year my son discovered his tongue—  
sticks it out at me every chance he gets,  
tongue the size of starfish fingers, the ones they drop  
to the ocean floor, before collapsing  
in on themselves, like stars. I know this is every year.  
Hour between morning & night, asters  
otherworldly, noctilucent in streetlight—  
how did they get here? What feathers were buried  
here, what bones, to give way to such as this?  
Planted with the ashes of organ grinders, maybe.  
With the ashes of dogs & monkeys returned  
from space. Planted by a doge who tried to sail a cello  
down a canal. Someone who gave up a crown.  
A drunken opera singer. An angel who buried the last  
of its memories of God. Petals like these falling  
flakes, like the confetti that rained down  
from the terraces of the Guggenheim, a blizzard

of prescription-size slips, to protest the money  
behind the museum, money made from the 200  
dead a day, 200 overdoses. Almost like a blessing  
upon the air. I would beg it from anyone,  
from this winter, though I only have the hem  
of its cloak, this snow on my palm. I would ask it  
for my son, daughter. For refugee boats sailing  
this night, for those crossing a border.  
It might sound like a vowel I've never heard,  
heaven-sent, almost like an answer. A reckoning.  
A word returned from the dark. Might sound  
like *hallelujah*. Might be too soft to hear.