

I would like to ask Eurydice

Where did you go?
 The viper bite of illness and then
 I am afraid to sleep
 you told me most evenings
 until, one morning, proving your own premonition
 you didn't wake up
 We kissed your face and fed you water
 intravenously
 pressed our mouths to your ear
 not asking the gods to give you back
 but singing
 wanting to fill your journey
 with something other
 than silence

Ovid got it wrong, I think
 On the way out of the underworld
 when Orpheus looks back
 at his wife, Eurydice,
 he's not disobeying the gods
 He is, for the first time
 asking her *what*
 and his anguish, for her, isn't enough
 or at least not the right reason
 So many times I also want to know
 if you could, my friend,
 would you return
 after seeing whatever it is—
 that river soundlessly running
 with the same unfathomable throb
 we all must hear
 before being born

I imagine an answer
 but once in a while
 I still sing

Pandemic, ending with a promise

We will have much to say to one another
when this plague ends
but right now, it's a night of potholes
and car crashes, watching someone steal
frozen meat from a market, dollars
from the tip jar, and blame and blame for things
I did and didn't do, mostly

for not saving Curtis, for giving up
on another friend who drove
eight hundred miles to my mother's funeral
and three years later, I forgot her name, the man
I left without telling him why

Isolation papers

even this ten-foot-wide picture
window dark with regret

Tonight, I recognized one big difference
between the early European masters
and the painters and sculptors of my time might be
that those old guys
had an everyday consciousness
of death—polio, tuberculosis, smallpox,
and cholera

Francisco Goya had eight children
and all but one died

before he or she learned to read

Caravaggio lost two sisters

as well as his parents
to one of those fevers, and it must be why
Michelangelo could so realistically fresco
the entire Sistine Chapel ceiling

not just with god's creation

but with the inescapability of wrath
wiping out what appears

an entire earth of his people

More than a year ago, I was supposed
to be in Madrid, Spain, where I and the man I love
would have seen Goya's painting *Saturn*
Devouring His Son

That trip was postponed
But here's what I wanted to tell you:

this plague will end
and we will again speak

We will, no doubt, stand shoulder to shoulder
in Madrid's Museo del Prado
but we will never,
and of this I am equally certain,
see Michelangelo, see Goya again
in the same light

Salvage

Today there may be, in the middle of spring,
several days of sleet when it seems
winter's return and the squirrels unburying
the just-planted seedlings, bird nests
newly sewn
and still holding
tiny blue eggs, littering the grass. Today
there may be a hole
in the last clean sweater
and the dog, refusing to go out, pees
in the same corner three times
in the same day. There may be a cat,
half-dead,
one of its eyes oozing.

Arriving home from work where you're
the only one working, you bring me flowers
stolen from the company garden,
common-
place tulips and daffodils, yellow daisies.
It's then that I find the cat
who turns her frost-tipped face to one side
too injured to run or perhaps wanting
an end
to whatever it is that she's seen
When we lift her limp body
into a small box
she's so close to death
that we check twice to make sure she's breathing

At the veterinarian's, a woman comes out to the car
and takes the box in gloved hands into the building.
The cat is not ours
The cat, perhaps, is not even someone's
Still, you tell the vet that of course we'll pay
It seems we may have a cat, you smile. Today
there may be in the middle of spring

some thing
that seems too much, when it seems
that the white hoar wings
of last season
will never lift. But then you get to choose
to save whatever you can