

**provisions, these**

provisions, these. expired  
as they are, they remain,  
a tattered blanket over  
icy toes: better than  
nothing. a can of tomato  
soup, rusty at the rim,  
admired and retired  
to its place of honor:  
the back bottom shelf  
abutting the water  
heater. how many  
false prophets it lived  
through, it deserves  
to outlive one more.  
preserve this historical  
monument, simply too  
good to eat, aged to  
perfection since reagan,  
yes, a useful reminder  
to rotate our stock.

**maybe someday we'll  
fill these tunnels in**

this is the passage where  
I tunneled out from my dread,  
never believing it wouldn't  
collapse. *this is where I  
learned my fingernails  
aren't strong but brittle*, I say,  
as I lift the bottom of your  
shirt and touch my calloused  
nubs to that soft skin you  
never show the sun.

I don't know if I met you  
down here in the catacombs  
or if it was when I emerged  
under the star-specked sky  
that I first saw you standing  
right where I needed you  
to be, but we come here  
sometimes to remember  
what it was like before.

I say, *look, this is the alcove  
where I stopped digging,  
rolled myself into the fetal  
position and slept for weeks.*  
you say, *see, this is where  
I sat staring at my own knees  
until I heard thunder above  
me, and then I cried  
thinking of all that mud.*

what a privilege it is now  
to be a visitor, to go home  
together, with you fitting  
perfectly into the crook  
of my arm, soft and warm

**repurposed**

she knows what it is to make a pantry  
out of a storm cellar or declare a bomb  
shelter nothing more than a hole

this is somewhere her fears wanted  
her to be, and she was so focused  
on winning against them she forgot

they were built for real dangers

**It was the left, though, wasn't it**

*And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out,  
and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for  
thee that one of thy members should perish, and  
not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

-Matthew 5:29

You stood with us, rosebush adjacent,  
crooked head, nothing if not asymmetrical.  
Parts of you were absolutely missing, I  
couldn't fail to notice, your connection  
to us: tenuous. Their mouths said I  
could trust you, their eyes were not  
so sure. Your eye: alone and lonely.

Did you merely get born again or exorcise  
the part of your brain that made you  
a guy who'd beat his wife nigh to death?  
I knew: grandfathers were supposed  
to have workshops, farms, apple orchards,  
were meant to give presents beyond  
Bible verses. They should have something  
to offer besides a heavy sense of unease.