Alone, Now

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Alone, Now

Alexandra Sophia Terlesky
Introduction

If I have learned anything from writing this book, it would be, quite simply, the fierce inevitability of change. And with that, the humbling reality that no one is ever fully prepared for it.

About a year ago, around this time, the email that goes out to all us senior Creative Writing majors to remind us that, yes, we do actually have to begin thinking about our projects and, yes, we will actually have to start writing, arrived in my mailbox. I was sitting at an unbalanced table in the little café attached to my school in Aix-en-Provence, France. After re-reading the email a couple of times, I sat back in my chair. I most certainly did not know how it would happen, but in that moment, I knew that a year later I would have finished (or nearly so) a collection of poems of my own and would be walking across the stage at my graduation within the next few weeks.

Well, I was wrong in the one regard, the regard I thought totally unquestionable until only a few months ago. Before I continue: I don’t mean for this ‘Introduction’ to become another facet to express how I feel about life reconstructed around COVID-19. Everyone has lost to this virus; a graduation ceremony is not a home, is not a livelihood, is not a relative or a friend. I bring this up more so because it was only one of the changes during this past year that I was (you guessed it) completely unprepared for.

To start from the beginning…

This project was originally intended for proving to the world that my passion for horses and riding was not to be written off as a pervasive, childhood obsession. Looking back, I see within myself a drive almost like anger pushing my fingers across the keyboard into the explanation I emailed back within an hour of receiving that first email. But, evidently, having started this paragraph with a word like ‘originally,’ you know that this is not where my project ended up. And, if ‘horses have taught me anything in life, it’s that reality hardly ever shapes up into what you want it to be. You expect one thing, and get something else entirely. More often than not, it turns out to be something you hadn’t even thought would happen.

The desire to share something with the world that has inspired me for so much of my life was, I now realize, only the initial step in writing this book. The first poems came forth easily. I wrote about the early days of learning how to ride, moving to the incredibly formative years with my high school trainer, and then ending with the death of my mare, Lula. I was stubborn, unwavering; people who did not recognize the beauty of this sport would see it through my words. I would show them.

But then, other things started emerging, other parts of my life that I hadn’t even considered looking at. The first semester of my junior year was, to say the least, a confusing time. Without going into too much detail (mostly out of selfishness, I want the details for myself), I fell in love with someone I wasn’t expecting to. I went abroad during my second semester, but throughout the time I was in France and then throughout that following summer, I
thought about our reunion in the fall with an eagerness I couldn’t remember ever having felt. At the same time, I was also going through the disorienting experience one has while living abroad, filled with frustrations and self-doubt, and, afterwards, the process of returning home. The third part of my book deals with the pressures and anxieties I had during this period.

Fall came, and with that, the person I had been counting down the days for. When we saw each other again, it felt like, as Anne Carson wrote in *Autobiography of Red*, “the kingdoms of [my] life all shifted down a few notches.” And what did I do? Refuse to write about it. Stick to the original plan, I told myself. Horses, that’s your story to tell. And so, I forced out clunky poem after clunky poem about my passion for riding from a part of myself now in the shadows of something else entirely. Until finally, one day, I started writing about it. About the girl I had left behind and returned to. And the poems came forth easily. This is the fourth part of my book.

The second part of the book deals with the part of me that could never be completely overshadowed: horses. The creatures I can’t live without, for reasons I will never exactly be able to articulate in words, despite my many efforts. Horses have shaped me in more ways than I know, and run forth from my sketchbook, my memories, and my dreams at times when I’m least expecting them. They inspire me, remind me what life has the potential of being. If I am lost, I look to them. They are more than just a childhood fascination; for me, at least, they arrive whenever I need them the most. And they have yet to fail me.

Childhood arrives in the first part of this book. I’m blessed to be one of the people who looks back on childhood fondly, and categorizes it as an innocent time that provided me with hope and joy. Though I’m sure there were growing pains I’ve since blocked out, moments of ugliness that I’ve forgotten, and times of hardship that have faded from my mind, I present my memories in the light I remember them in. They remind me of a time when I didn’t look towards the mountains in the distance with longing.

Could I have ever predicted that life would take me here, home but totally uprooted? No. I’m dealing with that now, and in the final section of my poems. Having lived for a little while in what we could label as ‘interesting times,’ I’ll admit that I don’t particularly enjoy it. But what I do enjoy is words and how they can be used to connect us. If we take the time to see beauty in the works of other poets, writers, and artists alike, we involve ourselves. We remind ourselves that we are not alone. Yes, change is inevitable, but we are all going through it.

Now… shall we? Here is my collection of poems about moments that have surprised me, moments that have taught me, moments that have softened me. Enjoy.
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“Then repeat to yourself the most comforting of all words: ‘This too shall pass.’”

-- Ann Landers
Below the horizon

Night mixes all colors together
into a dark blue, knowing life begins
with absence. In the quiet,
Time whispers itself into existence
with Past and Future as siblings would,
painting the world to sleep and,
each morning, erasing everything
back into existence.
Orbits

A sun and a moon. One
that burns with the task
of growing up first, and the other
that guides with the subtle glow
of being younger. My sister
outside with me searching
for satellites. They glide across the cold,
dim but steady. I point out
each one to her, and she looks,
kinetic, at every one. I’m looking
for the next movement when I hear
There! There!
Beside me, my sister’s face;
a beam of light.
Hide and seek

Each night, the moon gets to choose how brightly she shines while she sucks the water and salt to mix together across dry sand. Higher and higher does she pull the waves until they realize they could never reach the one who teases us on a summer night, leaving just enough light on the branches to see them, gleaming, as they shift.
Intruder

I almost wanted to be a bird
until a goldfinch flew into the window
behind the dining room table
and I saw it twitch and soften
into the brick patio.

After that, I wasn’t so sure.
This morning, a coyote padded across our lawn
like a curious child, unafraid.
Mom announced him and told us
we couldn’t let the cat out.

When I headed downstairs
to the barn, I thought I saw his eyes from the bushes.
Make yourself as big as possible,
be loud and assertive is what Dad
told us to do if we ever ran into one.

They weren’t his eyes, though,
just light hitting the dew. He must’ve slipped out
the gate into the pasture behind the barn.
It’s filled with mustard flowers
that grow taller after each rain.
Ghosts

Our house came with a barn,
but we never got any horses.
I always ask if we can get some,
if only to fill the empty space.
Cage

Each spring,
   drinking nectar from the clouds,
the land becomes green as it pushes the hollow bones
   of tall grasses below
   the mustard seed
which brushes against itself fighting for room above
   holes so numerous they will never be filled

   even if we caught all the rabbits,
like when Dad and I caught one and it threw itself
   against the metal grid as we loaded it into the car
and took it to the fields
   right outside our neighborhood
and even walked the trap out into the middle
where the stalks grow so tall that no hawk
could end freedom

   with talons sinking into a lung
and the rabbit ran out the minute we stepped back
only to speed across the dirt and back into our neighborhood

   where it hopped
through the syrupy green lawn of a house
   just inside the chain-link fence

   separating wilderness from the road.
Throughout this garden

I would like to hold
a small bird in my hands.

It would be purple
with a song like amber,

thick syrup notes.
Why is the color of envy green?

Green is growth, birth,
moving forward.

Gold is sticky like jealousy
over something

of less importance
than a blooming flower.
For some reason, we were always orphans

It’s a miracle my cousins and I ever survived, chronic bare feet clambering everywhere labeled with a parent’s warning. Rusty metal didn’t look like Tetanus, and danger didn’t look familiar to us. Unless we were running away from Bad Men circling above us in helicopters. Whenever we heard one,

one of us would cry out and we’d run down the hill held together by deteriorating steel mesh, desperate to escape the clutches of Evil, never looking down at the ground.
On my ninth birthday, our eucalyptus out front fell across the road. Only days before, my cousin and I had climbed up into its leaves where a perfect perch engulfed us from the world. She talked about Spanish, and how she could hold a conversation with the gardener below if she really wanted to.

Piper grew up faster than any of us. Maybe it was the divorce that did it,

or maybe she knew it was the only way she could run after adventures all over any continent other than this one.

During our last phone call, she was loving India. I know she would’ve stayed nestled in the shadows of a Sagon tree if the world hadn’t gotten the wind knocked out of it and sent everyone home.
Summer

California is known for its big, red trees, but the image of sunlight flickering through the branches of our pepper trees’ brand new leaves hanging heavy with their pinkish beads has always seemed more like home to me. So, while walking next to her, I again continue:

Yes, California is known for its big, red trees, yet I promise you, love, that once you’ve seen a sunset behind branches pushed up softly into the air, barely stirring the peppercorn seeds, you will understand why I don’t completely agree with California being known for its big, red trees.
Wax can’t drip without a flame,
and she will still grow older
even as I stay the same.

Wild horses in her veins
now make it hard to hold her:
wax can’t drip without a flame

and even if the fire’s tame
I cannot control her
even as I stay the same.

Why can’t she just remain
right up here on my shoulders?
Wax can’t drip without a flame,

and the horses call her name
and they will not run slower,
even as I stay the same.

So now, as she grabs their mane,
I know my time is over;
wax can’t drip without a flame,
even as I stay the same.
**Counting strides**

Debbie had the standards in the jump ring repainted since I left. The paint tatters in certain places and I slowly recognize them.

Jumping the brighter colors doesn’t feel any different. My heels stay down and I count my strides so I don’t forget to breathe.

When I had jump lessons every Wednesday, Debbie always had to tell me to look forward. She still says, “Don’t look at the ground or that’s where you’ll end up.” I’m not riding Lula anymore, but landing after a jump on any horse feels like a jolt against time.
Angel

Angel had one eye
and limped eight days
out of seven.
But when you were on her right side
and couldn’t see the hollow
where her left eye should’ve been,
it wasn’t so hard
to imagine that you were going
out to win the Grand Prix.

Eventually, a girl in the neighborhood
bought Angel. Angel was joined
shortly after by
a little buckskin
who could jump much higher
and who was much younger.

I left this barn
before Angel died, but
I sometimes wonder whether
there was a vet who slipped
a silver needle into Angel’s neck,
like they did for Lula,
or if Angel laid down one day
on her left side
and closed her final eye.
Tempo

Everything has a beat.
Music, rain.
A canter goes like this:
1 23, 1 23, 1 23…
almost like a heart does.
Listen

The skin closest to the fetlock is thin as a butterfly’s wing.

When the vet showed me the x-rays, there was no hint of any flesh at all. Just a glowing abscess in each front hoof. A shift in breath.

Try to hand-walk her for fifteen minutes a day. Any questions?

--

Do you hear them? my mom asked me as I ran out to the driveway and knew I had been right. Coming into view, two, overlapping.

The sound of horse-shoes against the road carries like a monarch’s grace.
El Sueño

When I take horses out to the cross-ties, the chains feel cold and hard in my hands.

The other ties’ clamps twinkle like stars as they land against their metal posts,
a constellation of *clinks*.
Above the western tip of the Big Dipper’s ladle

flickers the North Star;
I can’t see it right now, during the day,

though it could guide me through the dark like a horse’s nicker.
Poetry

Words thrown across the arena:
More leg, less seat, soft elbows!

Upon falling into place,
(There you go, that’s it, perfection!)

two bodies combining.
Reminders

Leather rubbing between fingers will give them bumps right where the reins are held.

I have some of my own. Look; see each top knuckle on my two ring fingers?

The side closest to my pinkies never will be unmarked.
Right now: a frame. On the left, a type of pine. The branches look as if they dried wrong, all curled up into themselves. One twists headlong into the leaves on the right like twine,

and trunks stick up through each leafy pileus like needles. The landscape just beyond where I am, with clouds merging, murmurs along behind the frame, a sort of stillness

in the ribbon of trees lining the bottom. There’s a church steeple, too, splitting up from the band of green, insisting and abrupt. I don’t go to church (well, not often)

since I learned unleavened bread is someone’s flesh. Instead, I taste the blood on my tongue when Deb yells put your heels down, use your lungs and keep your head up. But, nonetheless,

just moments ago: the dressage arena. To the left, the leaves on three small oaks were brushed by a slight breeze. The sun broke across the ground, streaming beneath a

horizon made of clouds. In the dimming light, Lula and I stepping, dancing, to the right.
To the woman who carved me:

For all the things you told me I couldn’t do,
I thank you now, I’m no longer scared of you.
Unspoken

You’re not listening to me,
I say,
why won’t you listen to me?

If I at first do not understand,
replied the mare,
it is you who must rephrase the question.
Collic

Lula in the back of her stall,
sweating.
As she pawed the shavings,
discomfort clouding her eyes,
Deb came over.
I didn’t look at her,
I didn’t have to.
The show vet did what he could,
and we went home.
Moving on

It wasn’t as if
I didn’t want comfort
when Lula died,
but I most certainly did not
want cupcakes.

Those sticky artifacts,
a 1 and an 8
stuck in the middle two.
I gave half to a friend.

When I woke up one morning,
two years later,
I knew
to call losing a horse
a severing of hemispheres,
a split in consciousness.
"Coffins"

When I left, Debbie gave me a tin box shaped like a heart. Inside, there were pieces of each horses’ mane braided together.
   So you don’t forget us.

On my drive back home, I remembered a phrase she told us riders before one cross-country course: Now if you feel them back off,
   Just spur ‘em through the heart.
III
Tailwinds

Flying up to where weather is made
has the reverse effect
of using a magnifying glass.
When all the roads below
become thin as veins, I take out
my earphones. Behind me,
I hear teenage voices traveling
the length of the plane.

How does gossip about a “James”
made me feel this old? Why?
The stories about another “him”
carried across the halls

of my high school; with every second,
the elevation grows
and distance moves faster than the clouds.
Gold on the horizon.
Impressionism

A train of thought here,
a train of thought there,
follow my process along each canvas.
When I like a stroke of color,
the piece untangles.

Leaning in with fingertips;
can I feel myself in these blues?

John tells us
the best artwork comes
from leaving yourself behind.
I see only white
as I try to describe a tree.
What glory
comes from burning?
I’m not sure yet, but I know
to feed the flame

and not try to hide from it.
Les jumelles

On one of the last days in March, our class went on a walk to see the overlooked pieces of our jigsaw city.
At 11h00 in the doorway of Saint Sauveur, the lady with swollen cheeks framed by her black shawl extended a cup in both her hands and said,
    S’il vous plait, madame
or
    monsieur
as we listened to John’s lecture about the twin spirals.

--

The first is slightly askew; carefully look to see the gentle tip from curve to curve. The second, to the right, is longer, flatter. I can’t understand exactly why I don’t like this one. John made us guess which was the original. The left, I said.
    Yes, sometime between 1655 and 1678 an architect by the name of Pavillon carved these sentential spirals at each side of every window sill. After the Revolution, a renovation was ordered for spirals too damaged to remain untouched. Who sees the difference?
How many saw the difference?
I look at the renovated twin and then at the mold on the left.
Oh, the considered, focused edges of a first born…
Here

I don’t want to go to Budapest,
   no, not this week, no, not next.
   I don’t want to go to Budapest,
   no really, I’d rather get some rest.

I want to stay right here,
   what could I say to make this more clear?
   Yes, really, I want to stay right here,
   so please go on without me, dear.

But if I had to choose a place to go,
   you’d find me in the studio.
   Because of all the places that I’ll go,
   it’s where I always feel at home.
Escaping Seminar

Watching seconds blow by in
the pollen leaking from the trees,

I run and catch up with the breeze.
Promises aren't phone calls

Tie around my wrist
a bracelet and call it friendship.
I wish I wasn’t worried,
    but we talk less
    and I forget to call.
Tell me what happens
    when the world restarts
us miles apart.
Token

If I ever give up on you,
throw the night I crumbled into your arms
and you told me
         I will always be there for you
into my hands. Tell me to dig its grave
myself.

If you ever give up on me, well…
accept this empty sketchbook
for when the pages of your other one fill up
with four-leaf clovers;
         I’ve never seen anyone find them like you do.
If I asked

Do you believe in birdsong,
or does your mother
    drive you mad?
Does the rain wash away the tears
you thought
    you’d never have?
When I dream,

    it’s of an orchard
    filled with oranges.
Come closer;
    do you hear the bees
burying their secrets
    in the blooms?
    I must tread lightly
    around the caterpillars,
for when I dance,

    it’s only to sing.
    When I sing,
I don’t want the world
    to listen, but do you want to know
a thing about my dream?
    Where the wind
    swept up a seed
and carried it
    to a far off land
    where I buried myself

in the dirt.
Subconscious

When I approached him,  
I knew he was there to kill me.  
So I asked him:  
    Are you going to kill me?  
Lips spreading apart like sleepy eyelids,  
curling up to reveal his teeth.  
    Yes.  
I swung a bat of nails and glass  
and hit him on the side of the head.  
His skin was made of diamonds.  
I turned  
and ran.

--

When she approached me,  
she could sense my hunger. I knew  
what she meant was:  
    I’ve walked into your teeth.  
Panic seeping through her body  
like food coloring crawls through water.  
    Yes.  
It’s difficult to scratch a fragment,  
and my bones grew stronger with her fear.  
But please, my dear,  
run  
all you’d like.
Sabotage

Within myself,
sharp words cut my veins.
The blood runs thick and strong.
Before long,
the shards seem to pulse
on their own.

Quiet.

There are pieces
of glass in my throat.
My sister called me last night, trembling. I listened and cradled her with my voice. This morning, I wish I told her that a rose escapes from its bud only to grow ever more radiant, and ‘sublime’ is defined by some sort of vastness.

I wish I told her that if the scale weighed her kindness against her photographs, which effortlessly pose mountains against the sky, the Earth would shake when she woke each morning, stretching her arms above a body I worry might shatter if embraced too tightly.
Women

Running wolves out for blood. They smell it. Personification doesn’t understand the ways stars alight on their fur; it’s different than the way it glitters on their fangs. There is my reflection in the moon: I call to it.
IV
Belonging

My dinner consisted of dark chocolate and someone else becoming an orphan. Then “Another One Bites the Dust” came on, soft in the background.

Before I could explain my convulsion, the room grew quiet enough for my friend to hear the chorus, too. If laughter can’t belong to sadness,

than neither can we.
Wearing new Seraphin’s

As we walked
down the stairs,

she suddenly staggered
into my waist
after missing a step.

Three hours later
and my ribs
still feel her

arms wrapped only
seconds around me.
Before

Silence, but suddenly
a drum beating within my body

    an echo
of her voice.
Hidden from the light

If not a heartbeat,
a rhythm that melts the bones
when pressed against skin.
Autumnal

We’re sitting beneath the leaves
as kisses of honey sunlight
drip across our blanket.
Next to me, her breathing
lifts into the branches and rests
against the bark. Pages
of her readings break
from one another in the breeze.
Her hair brushes my arm. I look down;
asleep, her book as a makeshift pillow.
Sketch

She asked me to draw her.
   You won’t like it,
I argue.
   Don’t show me, then.
Marginal

Below the printed words, in pencil:
I always see you writing,
and I wonder who it’s for.
A speculation:
You?

Yes, for myself

is folded up paragraphs of her.
I should go

When my voice lifts,
I’m not saying
what I’m really thinking.
Pitch emphasizes thoughts
like parentheses.

(Tell me to stay.)
Fusion

She crawled into bed beside me, barely getting down into the sheets before I wrapped my arms around her.

    You ok?
    Yeah.

In the documentary I chose, a woman in grey began explaining black holes. Intense enough to rip through the fabric of space, a black hole is gravity laying invisible in its own theory.

Black holes entirely consume stars larger than our sun. Their destruction proves more about them than their existence.

    Let’s go to bed.
    Ok.

One scientist showed a galaxy’s spiral without a black hole at its center. The cluster flung itself apart, stars pulled into the heaviest objects around them where they sank into orbits like marbles.

Two Decembers ago, we danced in the rain. Her eyes grabbed mine, but I started shivering. She pulled me under her arm.

    You ok?
    Yes.

If two black holes come close enough together, they merge. Energy whips out across the universe. Three billion light years away, Hanford’s lab records a collision’s chirp by accident.
As she laid

Against my chest, her breathing
as soft as a hummingbird is light

enough

to drown out any darkness
with her wings incessantly beating.
2:04 am

Her information,
in the form of skin,
extending further
than my fingertips.

If tracing her lips
reminds me to breathe,
I’m on the verge of
a sort of purging.
Innocent

My heart has settled with her,

for with her
I am

stained feet from the ink of olives

and my desire
comes forth

within the belly of my bones,

longing oozing like
sins do.
Repeat

My lover is gentle with my spirit.
She doesn’t intend to break it,
but last night
she asked about the future like he once did
after explaining how guitar
kept tearing his fingers apart.

My lover is gentle, so I told her
what I needed her to hear:
my voice,
as loud as autumn and as sure as spring,
over a song he once called ours,
until her face softens like the dawn.
Picnic

My hands are muddy from handstands, 
and your feet are grass-stained from soccer.

As I lean closer to you on the blanket, 
you dig your toes into the cool green.

If I had known the end would come so soon, 
I would grab the ball from under your arm

and sprint away until you caught me, 
bringing me to the ground, victorious, when you did.
Unprepared

And suddenly, the space between us now exists in a measurement of six.
Warm

My match lights
the untouched wick;

her yellow jacket
aflame beside the pillar
in the airport. Past security,
my throat catches and
scorches itself.

Words pressed into page
after page, the wick crumbling;

she didn’t stop smiling
even as I dropped my hand
and forced myself
into the terminal, my cheeks
turning to ash.
**Alone, now**

I can hear the plane, a bursting sound,  
carrying itself across the sky.  
It’s a believable sound, almost unquestionable,  
until I remember

stuffing my pillows on top of what I crammed into cardboard boxes  
to prevent anything from breaking in transport  
while my phone rings  
and I pick up to Mom’s voice  
on the other end, and when I hang up  
I explain  
that I can’t stay the extra week, I have to go home.  

You’re always welcome.

--

Once the plane landed  
and I walked through airless hallways the morning after  
I was in her arms,  
strangers stared because they knew  
I wouldn’t see them.

Only looking straight ahead at the carousel and now carrying  
my two suitcases and loaded duffel  
to curbside-pickup,  
where my dad pulls around and gathers me and all my baggage  
into the truck,  
after which he wipes down his steering wheel  
and passes me the hand sanitizer.

Welcome home, honey.
Stay

I stopped for a minute
on my walk this early afternoon
in order to listen to the wind.
No, it wasn’t much of a wind,
but more a gentle breeze
that decided to pass me
on my left shoulder. Down
through the world above,
a hawk dove as I listened
and decided to reach out
to the yellow hills before me,
knowing it wouldn’t be long
before I had to head home.
Migration

Every March,
my mom sadly announces
that the orioles will not be coming back this year.

I don’t know why she always says that,
because they always do.
This year, we spotted a male,
brilliant and orb-like,

waiting on the pool fence
next to where the feeders usually hang.
My mom ran to the back room,
where they rest in a box
covered in antique birds
during the months our orioles are in Mexico.
She whips out the faded plastic,

and I start mixing the sugar water.
She’s out the door with the jelly and a glass dish
before she checks
if my ratio
(2:1)
is correct.

Each year,
my mom convinces us into an almost acceptance
of the fact she’s just a day or two too late
this time.
But her orioles never forget her,
and always stay much longer
than anyone else’s do.

When they do leave, in late September,
it’s without warning.

One day, we all notice there are no more
fuzzy-feathered adolescents
dancing in the trees,
and the shots of yellow across the sky
are just the goldfinches.
The difficulty in understanding
the past and the present
can be illustrated through a photograph
and a pencil.

The past begins and ends
with the snap of the shutter.
The present is your pencil
suddenly turning into just a stub
of lead and eraser
without warning.

Perhaps a better example:
on the back of the picture
we took together before I flew home,
she wrote the date
and returned the pencil
to its tangled drawer.
Days and days on end, nothing shifts except for the clouds and sometimes the leaves. I watch them as if I’ve never noticed them before, like how their colors flicker in the wind and how the bees visit the eucalyptus just as much as they did our bottle brush trees. Those trees got so old they had to be taken away when I was still afraid of bee stings, but not of falling branches.
Spring’s end

As I sit here eating tortellini,
I count how many times the wind starts to blow.
It’s 90° and climbing

up the tree two squirrels
desperate to escape one another and into the sky
once they reach the end
of the branches

Mom tells me she walked past
two fledglings who never met the sky, only
the ground they landed on

I pass her my leftovers.
She’s across from me, reading about the unknown
sneaking through cracks,
disrupting the lives of everyone.
A world within an acre

I.

The exploration of our backyard took many years. Together, my sister and I found and traced its map within our limbs.

I don’t believe in ‘shrinking,’ unless it’s a rabbit upon hearing your approach. You see, the back pasture is just as big as it ever was, and the room we’ve shared for our whole lives still holds us both. The mountains in the distance, from the beginning? have never collapsed,

but, then again, neither has the sky.
And long before
you'd reach those distant peaks,
just past the tip of your reach, a hill; round
and dark with trees,
a trail curving down from its crest
like a fingernail
left clipped and dangling.

But it was only after
I dreamed of seeing myself
from that hill’s summit, standing here, and then
after that, thought about how long it would take
to get there by running
over the fences and houses between;
it was after all of this

when I started noticing the mountains.