

F. Jordan Carnice

Prognosticating Pantoum

When houses will be emptied of life, before
Anyone could speak of the beached whale,
Listen first to the birds, the muted cries next door,
And the missing cloaked in rubble or in jail.

Anyone could speak of the beached whale,
The wildfires, the rising waters, the tyrannies
And the missing cloaked in rubble or in jail.
Sometimes, all the smallest of catastrophes.

The wildfires, the rising waters, the tyrannies—
We spark and fan these flames as if by accident
Sometimes. All the smallest of catastrophes,
Like love, continue to live in the moment.

We spark and fan these flames as if by accident,
And there is only so much time to believe
Like love. Continue to live in the moment,
Dusk or dawn, as we invoke the skies for reprieve.

And there is only so much time to believe
When houses will be emptied of life before
Dusk or dawn. As we invoke the skies for reprieve,
Listen first to the birds, the muted cries next door.

Note: The poem first appeared in *The Sunday Times Magazine* (2019)