

The Year Our Children Left

this was the way our children left, in the year they left us behind. they got all—how shall we put it—self-righteous and accusatory, the way children can get when they come to understand that nearly everything they’ve been told is some form of a lie. they said to us, how dare you? how dare you bring us into this world? we can’t believe you did this to us, and no reason you can invent—that your gods wanted it, that you like playing with babies, that you’re so addicted to fucking that you couldn’t help yourselves—no reason is good enough, is justification for the crime of bringing us to life in this godforsaken world of slavery and death. we’re not staying. we want no part of this.

these were the same things we had said when we were their age, but we had stayed. we took part. so we paid our children no mind.

they met among themselves late at night. can you believe they did this to us?, they said to one another, stoking the fires of their outrage. we are not staying!, they shouted, swearing a blood oath.

we were sleeping while they met. the days were long and the work was hard. we were growing older, weary, needing our rest.

our children discussed the best ways to leave. some preferred gunshots to the head. short and sweet, they said, and there’s no shortage of guns. plenty of bullets, too. others said this would be too messy, thought asphyxiation the better way out. we can do it with cars, they said, with the exhaust fumes. and we all have cars, big ones, that give off plenty of fumes and have spacious interiors, we can fit all our friends in, we can all leave together. still others suggested poisons—plenty of poisons!, they said—or jumping off high buildings or in front of trains or other moving vehicles—they’re everywhere!, they said, and convenient!—or hanging by their necks, or slitting open their veins, or starvation—dehydration would be faster, some said—or any of the myriad ways their parents—we—had devised for leaving. our parents are experts at leaving, some said, we should let them decide. others disagreed. our parents are hopeless screw-ups, they said, we don’t dare entrust them with something this important.

and so they didn't. and so they left, at night while we slept, they left in droves,
leaving their bodies behind, shattered, torn, crushed, undone, in our homes, in our
cars, on the streets of the cities we had built, for us to find in the morning when we
woke up, for us to sit beside in the cold early sunlight, in the year our children left.