She sees catastrophe in every crow,
in every knocked-down clothesline—mostly
volcanoes and floods but sometimes scourges,
blue tongues, waves that forget their place
and storm into cities. Her mind stops at flesh peeling
back from the bone until it’s white as milk,
the kind that makes grown men grow breasts,
and they think that this is a catastrophe, but it’s not.
Once when men were automobiles, the roads were slick
with sweat. They gleamed. Days were lost
to spectatorship, making bets on which color would rise up
out of the dark. Our girl made twenty dollars
on violet, but someone stole it. Who knows who?
It was hard to tell one chrome from another.
You couldn’t cross for fear of getting hit, a parade
of reds and browns. And maybe the afterlife is a bookshop,
and she’s been good, so she’ll get to loiter
by Pop Culture/Crime instead of Business/Money.
From her perch, she’ll count personality types. The schizotypals
will never object when she fondles their frontal lobes,
that gray, dirty satin. Elbow-deep in it. Her epigraph will remain unwritten because there’s no one left to scrawl platitudes:

For every pain, there is a duck with your name on it.  
But there aren’t any. Ducks. At ponds worldwide, they ate each other when no small hands tossed crumbs and shooed away the geese that strike as if their bodies are lit fuses.

When cities were coal mines, the children played color games, too, but it was too hard to determine a winner.

Lola knew a man there who didn’t balk at anything, could stare down whatever slime-bellied beast approached their home.

She can’t recall his name, but it could have been Roger.  
They had books, too, mostly Cultural Studies.

“Maybe I’m not alone,” she thinks. “Maybe the devil stalks me right this minute, wants me to run, make it more exciting.”

Lola sits down on the nearest ledge. “Ha,” she thinks. “Haha.” She doesn’t notice the fissure at first. It sneaks between floorboards, and when she pries them apart, her fingertips bleed in protest. They drip onto the bleach-white worms that catch fire in the light. And then the floor collapses and then the world.

The survivors are called hostages or will be if any are met. Hostages in pines, hostages in barns, hostages in the great wide-open that makes them feel slit, wrist to armpit, in littleness.