

KATE CAYLEY

## **RED FOOT TORTOISE, SCIENCE CENTRE**

My daughter is led to believe in this rain forest:

a few feet of water and trees, yellow light

calibrated with shadow. It rains

on cue. She dampens in designed heat,

experiences marvels as expected,

a designated path the children run, into prosthetic

caves, the stone yields to their hands, a delight

of fear that holds no harm, wilderness

cut down to permissible size. Nothing here

more significant than themselves. Tortoise, glass-boxed,

heaves slowly from corner to corner, blinks

eye to my eye, chews. Nothing, for either of us,

is indigestible. As if the earth were nothing

more than this. As if we could be forgiven.

## PLANETARIUM

Lie back, she says. Flashes  
the pointer over us, the darkened skyscreen  
rent red. I lie back mutely, ear-straining  
for my sons muttering down in the front. My daughter

breathing heavy beside me, watching the pointer  
as it holds still: you are here. The dome  
revolts into stars. Earth's gone,

we falling. Some gasp, as if they'd never  
seen the stars. She pushes buttons, brightens  
the North Star. City people,

humbled by our virtuous virtual awe,  
recalling the forgotten sky  
though if I'm honest I'm used to lightbleed,  
comforted by groupings of electrified houses

even as I anticipate collapse, cave-in, leaving  
people like me befuddled by their uselessness,  
except as fodder, or food. The guide, speaking slowly, tells us  
how the Milky Way and Andromeda galaxies  
are moving towards one another, will

merge. In three billion years, give or take,  
there will be two suns in the sky, give or take  
a supposition or two, given that nothing  
we recognize as consciousness will see it,  
given that this place will be a lump  
of blackened rock and dried rivers

or something else, something that cannot  
be imagined until it is. I find, amazed,  
the thought of this movement removes,  
nearly, my fear. In the fullness of time, so full  
that there are no more days, two suns.

Days later, I overhear my older son  
telling his friend that there will be two suns  
and they wish they could see it. They would live  
forever if they could, eyes  
trained to the promising sky.