

ROSE KELLEHER

Not Our Dog

We tried for years, haphazardly at first,
and then got serious; we bought some books,
journals with checkboxes, thermometers
and little strips I stained with minus signs.
Technology was offered; we declined.

Plan B is now Plan A, and none too soon.
I've got paint swatches for the middle room,
various things to whitewash, or scrub clean,
no time for news. *The Globe* sits rolled, unread.

But trouble spies on us behind the blinds,
a giant dog that's caught our scent. At night,
its eyewhite glows between the slats, its breath
fogs the windowpane; and while we hide
at home, the mangy world of war, disease
and famine hunkers down to wait for us.

One day my future daughter will ask why
her arms are so much tawnier than mine.
I'll answer, you were chosen, your first mother
nobly gave her baby up; but how
does one defend the boundaries of love —
“Too bad about your mum, but life is tough”?

Outside, the cold and darkness settle in
on snug suburban rooftops; and the dog
growls low in its throat, and bares its teeth at me
while I choose curtains for the nursery.