

Nonprison

Grace Angell

Where I am is not a prison but a privilege
They tell me not to forget

Where I am is not a prison but a privilege
But how can I remember

When the walls are closing in
And I'm choking on my own breath

Where I am is not a prison but a privilege
But they cut my wings and tell me that
I am free

Free to what exactly?
Free to sit in my glass house and watch

Watch as the smoke drowns out the sun
Watch as the child scrounges in the dirt for something to eat
Watch as the mother looks her child in the eyes with the knowing that he will die and she cannot
save him

They try to close the blinds around me
Swaddle me in safety
And tell me that I am lucky
Lucky for this glass house and luckier still for the blinds

But my glass house is getting smaller
And pretty soon there will be no room to breath

I scream out

I flail my arms
And I try with all my might to break the glass

I cut up my hands and tear my blinds
And ruin my pretty smile

Crazy

They call it
For wanting to hear the screams

Crazy
For not being content in my glass prison
There are pills for that
They tell me
There are pills for everything

Where I am is not a prison but a privilege
I sit in my nonprison and I am free

I am free to draw my blinds
To close my eyes
To plug my ears
I am free to claim ignorance

But the child cries out
It cries to its mother because surely she can save him
And the mother cries too
Because no amount of motherly love can grant her this one wish

And the earth cries too
Because it knows

And can I not cry too?
Can I not cry for the mother and her child?
Or for the smoke in the sky and the earth and its pain?

We do not cry in nonprison
They tell me

So put on a smile

Throw on your very best headphones

And be free

Exchange pleasantries and paper bills

And when it all becomes too much

Take a swig of whiskey

Come on,

Be free

Just whatever you do

Don't look around.