Matthea Harvey

How to Love a Landscape

I don't know who I'm writing to—the child of
a child of a child of a friend's child? A patch
of algal phosphorescence inching towards
eye-hood? Whatever you are, I know you
know we didn't try hard enough. Perhaps
you found the bell jars labeled "Original
Atmosphere," secreted away inside caves,
though surely a stalactite speared them long ago
and the precious gases slipped away. Perhaps
you found the ruins of the seed bank and scraped
at it with your claws? Wings? Fins? Paws?
I'm incapable of imagining you. We were not good
at imagining anything. We were busy putting money
in our pockets, locks and more locks on our doors,
building taller and taller walls, recording our
accomplishments on our c.v.'s (a list of why you
should be given more money to put in your pocket).
The moss tried in its mossy way, plumping up between
pavers. The sloths kept carrying little landscapes
on their backs as the forests burned, and a few things
caught on with us humans: a video game called
Eco-Scenario, a tequila called Glacier Savior,
which was regrettably served with glacial ice.
If you've found the libraries—I hope you've found
the libraries—you'll know we loved to read "How To"
books, but no one ever read or wrote the right one.

Matthea Harvey is the author of five books of poetry —If the Tabloids are True What Are You?; Of Lamb (an illustrated erasure with images by Amy Jean Porter); Modern Life (a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and a New York Rimes Notable Book); Sad Little Breathing Machine; and Pity the Bathtub Its Forced Embrace of the Human Form. She has also published two children's books, Cecil the Pet Glacier, illustrated by Giselle Potter, and The Little General and the Giant Snowflake, illustrated by Elizabeth Zechel. She teaches poetry at Sarah Lawrence and lives in Brooklyn.