

Doomsday Dog

Two minutes till midnight on the Doomsday Clock
said the morning scientists on the nuclear news,
the closest the planet has come to Apocalypse
since we played chicken with Khrushchev in Cuba.

To hike along the Potomac, I drove my daughter
and our dog through a world frozen hard, the sun only
a rumor of itself, but Bingo's tail whipping the backseat.
If the world lasted that long, soon I'd be leaving again

for the work that took me away most of the year.
We were listening to some of Rachel's music—
I think "King and Lionheart"—and Bingo, a lion-
hearted beast resembling a large white wolf, kept

reaching up to lick our faces, making us laugh with
breath like a rotting carcass. The more we laughed
the more he licked until we were stuck in a loop
of licking and laughter, faces and guts hurting,

and I flooded with joy so immense it seemed to come
from somewhere else. I knew I couldn't keep that afternoon,
and who could say anything had changed? The clock
was ticking. The river was frozen. But I cupped my hands

and drank and drank.