Field Guide to Gentleness

A man sits the last four years outside the gorilla cage watching the eldest male swing between branches of pale, uprooted trees.

The gorilla sits with his back to the man who sits with his back to me, every day on his folding chair, every day the roar of tourist voices reverberating off cinder walls, every day his friend behind bars.

When the ape dies in early summer, and the man stops coming to the zoo, he explains for the radio:

now I am the one in the cage.

How he is able to wake each morning when even the trees are holding their breath, remains a secret I will never know.

Like all great loves, this one ends in death.

Charlotte Matthews