



Genghis Khan in Chicago

I'm at the AWP conference in Chicago.
This morning I was headed for a fiction panel. I didn't go.

I went to the Field Museum to see the exhibition on Genghis Khan.
The museum is geared toward families with children.

I knew what to expect—photos of contemporary Mongols eating yoghurt
beside the opening to an actual, collapsible yurt

that kids walked through with their parents.
A children's history of Mongol warfare. Not murder. Not rape. It makes sense.

To this day babies are born in eastern Europe with a blue smear
at the tip of their spines, like ink spreading on blotting paper.

It's a recessive trait that goes back to those Mongols.
My niece, who's adopted from southern Russia, has it, so I know.

The bar stools are filled with young MFA students out having fun.
I'm at a table in Kitty O'Sheas eating shepherd's pie, and telling this to no one.