

Retreat

Mount Angel Abbey, October 2017

1

In this bare room with a crucifix
I'm not sure what to pray for, or how.

The trees, at least, bowed all day
in the wind, renouncing gold like monks.

A holy ghost haunts my cracked window
trailing in the rain scent and sounds

of vespers, faint as if from some distant place.
I read Rilke's *Book of Hours* by lamplight.

He says the dark embraces everything,
shapes and shadows just as they are.

I switch off the light and it's true —
my body baptized by nightfall becomes

part of that silence like the bell at rest
or the new moon hidden in the sky.

2

Morning sketches the room back into detail:
Bible, chair, a writing desk.

I'm tired of borrowed things, homesick
in a house of faith that isn't mine.

I remake the bed as asked, gather an armful
of sheets like scattered papers.

The fresh linens provided unfold like books,
their white pages blue at this early hour.

I tuck and smooth, a kind of blessing
for the next to lie here, before closing the door.

3

I drive away in a downpour, rain washing
leaves off the windshield, blurring the abbey

in the rearview. I navigate by reversing
the way I came, checking for signs:

a white farmhouse kneeling by a field,
twelve pines like apostles in a circle.

Later, a dead deer on the roadside, limbs taut,
the rest gone slack, antlers crowning his head—

Christ conjured but not resurrected.
Just the sad animal of his body lifted from the cross.

In My Dream We Were in Eden

I was Adam and you
 every animal's name
sudden on my tongue
 antelope bowerbird cuttlefish

You were Eve and I
 the ache in your body
a question a hunger

 I was the wasps' paper nest
fragile home to your humming

 You were blackberries
their crushed dark
 on my fingertips

I was the wind and you
 the archangel's soft wing

 You were the wind and I
a canyon a field

I was Eve's ear and you
 the serpent whisper

You were Adam's hand and I
 the smooth stone
 thrown
 across a pond
rippling our world to pieces

 Somehow it healed
whole again

We paradised we fell together
 human every time

We were naked
 we were *everything*
and not ashamed

You and I were a garden
 and every kiss was green