

Late Summer, Early Morning, After Rain

Shrouded, the abbey and all things
 on that far hill—I know the crucifix
on that domed structure dwarfed
 by the electrical tower. I went there once. I was hungry, saw
robed men inside moving in circles, some boys
 sat in the corner, reading. On the path

the river can be seen
 from various angles. A leaf on the bank
lifts as the current rises, then
 a cluster. I observe the blue
heron before me as it alights, repeatedly. In childhood
 I couldn't bear the feeling of rain, rain and grass—

the many points of contact. Once I asked
 my mother about the qualities of God and after
a brief pause she said "God is in everything,"
 in the same way that she shrugs.
I'd imagine a field of grass with little white
 Jesus faces on each blade and

it wasn't enough—I don't care much
 now for music but today the rain desires
to fall and it does—the noise
 it makes pleases. Sometimes
I feel more like a doorknob or a chair than
 a person. I mean, the life inside

a doorknob—that's the life I have
 inside me. Most of the time I mean
about thirty percent of what I say.
 In the news a nurse kills
seven infants in her care, injecting air
 into their bodies, feeding them

milk. The behavior resembled
a compulsion. I understand. I have also wanted
to put my dark inside the beautiful
thing because I envied it, its presumed purity,
and not because of God's absence. Okay,
what I mean to say is that I can't stop

thinking about that night last fall
when Marie came for dinner.
There was rain. Elizabeth was dressing
the greens at the kitchen counter.
We were setting the table when
Mary said "I'm starving," and Marie said

"The rain, the earth, the world."
Then Mary said "What?" and Marie said
"You said 'I'm starving.' I said
'The rain, the earth, the world.'"

"Oh," Mary said, handing me a glass
of water. "I'm starving.
The rain, the earth, the world,"
Marie said again, quietly and to herself.

Poesten Kill

I close my eyes glass forms like hands.
The green leaves themselves. I want

to give birth to my baby with my white
shirt, my glass bottle, by the waterfall.

A bottle of water appears, I must
drink it. Don't forget. Don't forget. I wear

my clean white shirt. I do it every
day. I don't make enough sounds. I must write

it down. Some ink is all a page needs.
These are my materials: glass bottle,

white shirt, baby. I compose a poem.
On another page, the word "blood," written

in small letters. & the moment of death,
what could prepare us? A novel? A play?

The narrow passages of nakedness?
To be naked is to be cold. That was

how I felt, those yearning arcs, like the dream
of clear water moving down the cliff face.

I go to the waterfall, try to give
birth to a baby, am split in half

against a tree. I give birth to a glass
bottle, name the bottle "Waterfall"

& I love her—the way she glistens as
I rock her in my arms—I never had

a chance grasping
at the world's body—roots, stones.

Many sparrows stirred atop the mountain—
I said, "Thank you God for my bleeding hands."

Caesura 2

Before Gabriela arrived I was on a call
with operations. The gallery door needed
to be unlocked. I had to give
the officer my identification, prove
I belonged there. In the atrium
Lucia hid her face behind a large frond. "This
is Sparrow," Gabriela said, "she's going to be
helping me for a while." Lucia dropped the leaf,
"Your name means bird," she exclaimed.
"Yes," Gabriela said, "and yours means light."

Inside Gabriela showed me her materials,
the dissolving paper, the jar of mist,
the many categories of flowers. She calls
the new works "*Leaves*." "I think of it
like a record or map," she explained,
painting with adhesive a thin line
down the edge of a piece of paper, seaming
it with another. Lucia interrupted

to give me an invisible triangular cookie
she made on her magnetic drawing board.
"That's delicious," I said, "Can I try
a square cookie?" She blinked at me once,
bent down to the board, grasped at the square,
and brought her pinched fingertips to my open
palm. Gabriela scattered the materials
on the floor, nail, orange peel, flower,

dropping them from such a height that
they arrange themselves. Then, the seamed
paper, laid out as a sheet on a bed. "It's like printing, or
photography," she said, staring into the paper
turning gray under the jar's continual
stream, yielding. "I understand. In terms
of what it does to the moment," I said.
"What?" She asked, pulled from her focus,
a few drops of water spilling from the nozzle.
"The moment?" I repeated. "Right," she said,

“the moment,” turning her gaze back to the paper.

At the worktable, I rubbed the image
of leaves onto paper with a graphite stick,
cutting out the shapes, feeling
the outline of the folded
poem in my pocket. Lucia stood too close
to the piece her red rain boots stamped
its wet border. I watched Gabriela place
the leaves I cut, mending gaps. I want
to have the world’s life inside me
but I can’t, not like that.