

## **In a Dream Where I'm with an Estranged Relative**

Jacob Nantz

### I.

He arrives to a field & summons me  
with a wave, affectionately  
as if I wandered here to wait for him.

The field is familiar, still & barren  
of bloom, just scarce patches  
of straw-like stems rising from the earth like graves,

small monuments for small things  
that never should have grown  
but forced themselves upward.

### II.

All around me is the bloodless color  
of a season's end. We are dressed for the comfort  
& coolness of autumn, in boots impervious to the stinging

of sharp stones, built to withstand dirt & journey.

I gently place my hand on his shoulder,  
as if I'd been meaning to say something,

& he smiles. *There is something we must do.*

### III.

We pull ourselves up a hillside,  
offering a hand to the other  
after each big step. This effort sways our bodies

back & forth like sea-tossed ships.

We work our way over the cliffs  
into a clearing where the world flattens.

It feels like an arrival, a place we've been  
before. Nothing is moving, not the clouds  
nor wind, not even the pulses in our skin:

only the eagles pacing the grounds  
    & watching us from leafless trees. They surround us.  
Golden eagles, their gilded feathers shimmering  
  
through black coats like budding foliage.  
    Some hover in the air above our heads  
as if old friends saying hello.

IV.

We sit among them & remove our boots,  
    & there is blood. Blisters on heels & cuts  
underneath our toes. What we've held inside oozes  
  
from wounds, paints the dirt red.  
    This world is restored in our color,  
& because I am dreaming we feel no pain—  
  
only the pull of blind faith in healing,  
    in knowing that blemishes are to be expected.  
So we are left with nothing  
  
to do but admire this magnificent site  
    until it dims into wakening:  
life flourishing in a long-neglected place.  
  
Revisiting our desertions is a silent way to reconcile,  
    & so I vow, even after my sleep, to return  
to you, to find what I've been missing—something so rare,  
  
so reviving & pure in abundance,  
    as such things should always be.

Jacob Nantz holds an MA in Poetry from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, and his work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Evansville Review*, *Sinking City*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Gigantic Sequins*, *Sou'wester*, and elsewhere. Born and raised in the Chicago area, he currently lives and writes near Washington DC.