



A Monk After Dark

One boot sags like him in his cubicle's corner.
He drops the other to the floor with a grimace.
He's still devout. If his face contorts,
It's from pain in both his shoulders. A nuisance,

Not metaphor. It's the fruit of labor—
A day-long springtime dig in the garden:
Parsnips enough for the brothers, heaped pale
In the wheelbarrow, damnably old-fashioned.

He shouldn't complain, but concedes he's bored.
In a club a jazz man's trombone rumbles,
A point guard throws a tricky pass
In a game, flesh flickers onscreen. For example.

Owls outside. Does he envy night-birds?
How might they profit him? He's no psalmist.
He took his vows far later than most.
There were too many gawkers today on visits:

As they dawdled, he thought of a schoolmate's smile,
Her "peasant" skirt, the glint of her teeth.
He kissed her once as they walked across
A late-autumn field of winter wheat.

For instance. Their words? He can't remember.
Where might that decent girl be now?
He dreams of *her* as a visitor here:
In unsuitable shoes, she'd wend through rows

Of beets and splendid heads of cabbage.
She'd study the bees with a less studied eye,
The way they bob in morning's first sun,
Their perfect bodies reflecting its light.

How strange, their tiny white larvae in May.
But to him, all this is completely familiar,
And familiar feels sometimes like an affront.
Tonight, as they do each night, owls yammer,

Over and over and over and over.

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