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Arrival, the City of Bethames; So Still You Feel the Trembling

Forrest Hamer

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FORREST HAMER

Arrival, the city of Bethames

And in the middle time of traveling,
he came upon a man doubting
and he lingered with him for several nights,
feeding on rain. He found himself
sinking into the underearth, his body eager
to let go. Sliding through the slick,
he began again to see way past dark.
I shall lose my way, he thought,
journey no longer worth minding,
but the rain which had seeped easy
into his mouth turned a furious ocean.
He would dream only of crossing it.

FORREST HAMER

So still you feel the trembling

The songs the elders sang
before the organist arrived
sounded like the blues to me.

Cousin Telitha's alto
clarified the difference,
did more if you could stand it:

preach of profoundness
in trembling, make you give up
childish ways. She cried wild

and with a laugh
that might fool you
if you didn't know better.

I usually did not want
to know, particularly since I was impatient
for church to end

so that I could change
clothes, eat Sunday dinner, and listen
to the music I would dance to

when it was no longer Sunday.
Trembling the way my cousin did
suffered me too close--

I was too young
to be that still, and deaf
to be that still.