

## i.

he sees the things when he closes his eyes, red mouths dripping,  
 & he clutches his rosary so hard it hurts  
 dogs snarl & bite behind the corn stalks  
 he has never liked dogs very much but his lover invests in a big one  
 at night he curls up with his face buried in his pillow  
 trying to drown out the growls as the dog prowls the rows.

his dreams are full of teeth  
 human & canine & monster alike, none of them white  
 when he wakes he is shaking & his shirt is soaked through  
 he pulls the bible down  
 reads it until his eyes don't recognize the shapes anymore  
 his lover wakes at dawn to find him hunched over the kitchen table.

## ii.

'give my love to rose' plays on the cassette player  
 his lover is stretched out on the couch,  
 thinking of a sister lost to the corn  
 he picks up their rifle before he goes to the fields with the dog  
 when he returns as dusk falls the same notes float through the house  
 his lover is red-eyed & unspeaking.

a woman visits some days, never smiling  
 she carries a hunting knife in her pocket at all times  
 she walks the corn rows fearlessly because the monsters took her once  
 they never strike the same place twice  
 usually they don't have to,  
 but the woman is unusually strong.

## iii.

'we could leave here,' he murmured to his lover once,  
 but his lover shook his head, honey-gilded hair falling in his eyes  
 'they'll follow us anywhere.'  
 'they stay in the corn.'  
 'do they?' his lover asked,  
 & he thought about how one came to his door wearing his father's skin.

the dog snarls in the darkness until one day it doesn't  
 they run outside, ax & rifle in hand,  
 to find the dog standing proudly beside a fallen monster  
 he stares  
 he has never seen a dead one before.  
 'good boy' his lover tells the dog  
 in the morning they bury the thing & burn a fire over it.

## iv.

his mother asks about a child & he clutches his rosary again  
 'too dangerous out here' he says,  
 'besides it isn't possible'  
 she smiles her tired smile & he thinks about the monster  
 the ghosts in the woods scared it off  
 but it wore his father all the same & his mother was so scared.

he & his lover sit on the porch with the dog & the rifle  
 necessary precautions; dusk is falling  
 the corn rustles & he turns the cassette player up louder  
 it's johnny cash, it's always johnny cash  
 classic country songs scare the monsters for some reason  
 he closes his eyes & tilts his head against the rocking chair.

## v.

'let's go up to cleveland' he tells his lover  
 'get jobs working on the lake'  
 his lover shakes his head sadly. 'who will watch the corn?'  
 he feels his shoulders fall, & his lover sweeps him up  
 outside the dog is howling at the rain  
 the monsters lie dormant for now.

winter comes to kill the crops  
 he pulls his scarf over his mouth & says prayers through the rows  
 the dog pads at his side dutifully  
 the our fathers & glory bes & hail marys run together in his mouth  
 part of him hopes that the monsters stay dead come spring,  
 but the rest of him knows even God can't save ohio.