

Forerunner

*As Isaiah foretold,
you will be the voice of one
crying in the wilderness:
Clear a path for the Lord!
Level a highway through this wasteland!*

That is what the angel said to me
as I lay by my sheep in the field.

I had gazed long into heaven
absorbed by God's operations,
scarcely noticing as stars began to gather
and join in one brilliant blaze
like frozen lightning.

Don't be afraid.

Father had often told how he fell by the altar,
but I never understood
till my own heart leapt
like a goat at a sudden roar.
The messenger spoke his piece untroubled,
told me who I would become.

But who am I?
Not one anointed,
not great like Isaiah or Elijah,
not a worker of miracles.
I have not so much as raised a single lamb
from death.

I am only a boy of the desert
who throws loud shouts across the emptiness
like stones from David's sling,
warning of snakes and wolves,
looming storms,
wildfires in the underbrush.

—Merrijane Rice

This poem won honorable mention in the 2019
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