

K. A. HAYS

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*Isaac in the Mosaic at San Vitale*

I have been kneeling these years on a stone, a boy  
in a tunic the color of dirt. I have been looking past  
my father, who wears white and palms my head,  
raising a knife with a long blade. This hour,  
as with all hours, the sky's glue stays,  
a searing pink stippled over. We have been set  
in a meadow of red poppies and leafless limbs.

I can see the cuff of God's black shirt sleeve.  
His severed hand points to us but does not touch.  
I confess to you this meadow is broken.  
For fourteen hundred years I have believed  
God's hand is a prop, an excuse tacked up  
in the sky. Turn away. My face is in shards.  
Even the knife appears as fragments now.