

THE FOUND SHEEP

after a painting by Julia Stankova

The way Jesus looks at us
having found the lost sheep
and cradled it in his arms. The way
his feet are red with earth, enormous.
He has trod its circumference
too many times for shoes to matter.

This sheep is not from two thousand years ago
but a modern sheep who stares at us
inquisitively, wonders if we know
what it thinks we think we are thinking.
Wonders whether it is postmodern enough
and ponders the encroachments of digital media
into our everyday lives. It worries
about government surveillance and life's hidden purposes
and why it has strayed, and why it has taken so long
to hear the shepherd's feet
the shepherd's coo and whistle.

It is glad to be in these arms.
It is home, comforted
and when it sets its feet to earth again
it will play with all the freedom of birth.
In these arms it wishes only the original pattern:
play, nibble, love, mourn, give thanks
and nothing more is needed.

Jesus, after two thousand years of this
looks a bit weary, like a man too long
in the desert. Sand has blasted the color
from his cheekbones and forehead
and elsewhere left his skin pitted. He feels the sheep
squirm in his arms, ready to be set down again
to love life this time and not hunger
for any more than its share.

When the sheep's feet touch the earth
Jesus scans the horizon.
One more sheep, he says.
One more sheep. One more sheep.
Not finding it yet but walking toward it
to the rhythm of his own words and breath.

