

At the Inn

Wild asters and speedwells
in a terra cotta bowl on
white linen whose thick shine
rivals the river light
flowing to our right
under the window. The water
soaks up autumn colour;
asterisks of gold float on the water.
Gold flakes have been falling
on the day. It is too much.
Spiced apricots, jellied ham,
an aspic and the artichokes.
Well-being floods, upsetting as
catastrophe, pervasive
as are tears. Already I'm
beginning to forget, as you
open and spread your serviette,
the days thin-claviced,
all elbows, the scrawny times
we've muscled through together,
whistling in the dark
with too few candles,
reminding ourselves
that all things end,
because the kitchen door
is opening with a solid clunk.
A waiter smiles toward us
holding high a tray
of steaming silver cups
filled to the brim.

— *Audrey Conard*