

To Make the Attempt

I retired to the woods to make the attempt.
—Joseph Smith

Fall, not spring.
Idaho, not New York.
Dusk, not dawn.
Still, a prayer.

Yes, a fourteen-year-old child—a girl.
But a potato field, not a grove.
Shady shelter? No. Exposure.
Father did not appear.

Her knees were cold in the soil.
There were no angels or fire,
except for the flame horizon
and a burning heart.

Thick darkness gathers around her.
The feeling fades.
The last pillars of light slide
behind the mountains.

The girl (her name is Faith)
can barely see the handlebars
that she clasps with cold fingers
to ride the rocky tractor path
headed for home.

—Isaac James Richards

This poem won second place in the 2023 BYU
Studies poetry contest.