

There was a place that required vows of obedience at the age of eighteen. When in the throes of this year, silence was best, and wistful interrogative looks were the only form of allowed communication. Acolytes sometimes embraced this with fervor, sometimes with a troubled hesitancy. When they shuffled through the towns in their robes, they moved as in a dusk, slow, bright, a bit blurred, shedding lateral light as they went. She had lived a lusty life and, in the rainbow of pleasant comforts, had experienced the full spectrum. She dared to challenge the order. She was given a choice to comply or to suffer the loss of her tongue. What a choice, she thought, condemning her to silence either way. She did not let her hot and anxious heart betray her head and took the vows. Each night for a year, she huddled near the slumbering embers of the fire and pretended to sleep, dreaming of all the things her mouth would do once free.