Rendezvous at Auvers, 1873

Floyd Skloot
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Cezanne alone among the stone huts longs
for light to hold still. He hears the river
and wind within the chestnut trees as songs
in discordant keys that come together

with the rustle of distant wheat and all
he wants to do now is curse high heaven.
Color swirls before his eyes, thick, a brawl
of values. He has wandered for seven

hours waiting for Pissarro to arrive
from Paris, soil blackening, air turning
ocher, the landscape no longer alive
along its sage folds. He has been learning

green and gold, the use of blue, softer strokes
like the caught breath of vision. But he needs
Pissarro to calm him before rage chokes
the last hope of brightness. Cezanne concedes

nothing to the sudden cold front or shift
in shadows, slathering paint in layers
to approximate morning’s sullen drift
toward blue. Then, like an answer to his prayers,

footsteps through the hillside grasses, the clink
of wine bottles, a murmur of leather
easel straps loosened and long sighs like zinc
white skies the moment they are together.