Mosquitoes persist. The rooster
never learns three o’clock from five.

Everything we think will stop happening
keeps happening. We weigh ourselves
in the bathroom, converting kilograms
into how much rice and dal and dysentery
have slimmed our hips. Ten pounds lost,
and it’s still not time to go home yet.

We’ve made a habit of cutting our braids
by flashlight, leaving toothbrushes
where dragonflies land on them,
unpacking our jeans only to fold
them up again, to let them be taken
by mold. When we emerge in the hot
morning, when the monastery is all silence,
we only touch our bare necks
and imagine our hair falling in the dirt.
Village children run after us
holding out hands, saying sister, saying
money because it’s the only English