

# Kate Lebo

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## *Narcissus*

To distinguish between beauty and translation mattered.

I was performing what I knew of the subject on the phone, in public.

A mall, I think.

They put me

what I was saying

on an intercom.

I could hear myself speaking over myself speaking.

Which shut me right up.

*Deeeeeeeeeeeeer*

That I've given them names doesn't mean  
they can't live without me  
or that they'll live long.

From the window I can watch their feast  
but not their flailing, which erupts  
offstage, where I planted no grass,  
drama for the elderberry or the road.

Death won't even need a wolf,  
which do not yet live here  
and also have trouble with cars.

Already I see pink weeping  
in the doe's side, a mark made  
by the god that hides inside each  
sentence that does not name god.

Must I describe her twin?

He is not a goat.

Though he does have horns  
that scrape our trees to bone.

(Please—antlers. Enough now  
with the bones.)

Were he a goat, he'd appear at sunrise  
exactly where the field becomes lawn,  
having walked away from a tale  
my father told me.

He would know things.

By not speaking, he would bring me comfort,  
or whatever it is he's got in his mouth—  
the one thing on Earth a goat won't swallow.

As my son wails for everything  
but milk and everything  
but sleep, he would watch me

through the window,  
this goat beyond property,  
and cut the gauze of morning  
like a spared spruce.

## *Too Small to Keep, Too Small to Throw Away*

What else calls itself awake when it is already awake?

In an office lit by snow,  
gridded with windows that do not open,  
ivy finds the light between blinds.

My paperwork will not die with me.  
Neither will my name.  
Neither will any part that repeats itself.

Elsewhere, garlic attempts a stalk  
amongst peas the frost killed,  
and the butchered hen's eggs grow smaller  
the deeper they spin inside her,  
shelled near her surface,  
then naked.

I could ease them from her carcass  
on the pads of my fingers,  
then lay each yolk the bird won't hatch  
in a bed of salt to cure.