

Teresa Ballard

I AM THINKING OF MY FIRST DEER

A doe, her legs spread open
in the back of my father's truck,
her body a brown map near blue sky.
My father turns her over, she is the color of earth.
She's warm and my fingers smell of sage
and blood. I piece her together in my mind
as my brothers remove her skin.
I give her back her body, the same way
I was promised Jesus would return to us on earth.
I am thinking of my first deer
because you are sleeping
and underneath your lids, your eyes are open.
My fingers smell slightly of things broken
and I realize you are always afraid
of the way I open myself,
how I must swallow up every sadness.
I wonder if somehow I've always known you.
If you have returned in another form
leaving behind the fur of your death.

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