

Jenny Mueller

## from *Postcards*

“Cabin Town,” Gorham, N.H.  
(1967, 5.5 x 3.5 horizontal)

small, you are best  
at seeing what threads the needle.  
how the surfaces all  
bore up a crawling—as your fist  
held still while plucked grass  
crept & itched in your palm, as your skin  
learned its scribble of hair. high up  
in corners, moths staked & tented,  
then unresistingly tumbled. longlegs  
touched out from the wall:  
eight sticks hoisting a red intelligence  
round as a sumac berry. this contraption  
self paraded, conveyed along the floor.  
then coyly pulled down, through a crack.

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a drumbrush of mice skid in walls.  
grassclung bodies  
pulsed counts in the yard.  
small, you could pull the grass  
over your head, go under canopy,  
sound leaping out every level.  
like running away  
to join a toy orchestra.

Your parents  
were growing you all as one thing, while you  
felt the house convulse on its faults.  
One night you see that the air  
is a fraying net swarming—you  
must crawl on it like a fly; surfaces  
unglue behind it. Later  
you’ll have to assemble, to shape, to convey.



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## To Read Ashbery

while, behind you at the spigot, a child  
 draws some water for goats, answering  
 somebody's questions. Between stanzas  
 you learn that "Daniel is hunting" and this seems to mean  
 he's gone for many days and nights.  
 Last year, Daniel got an elk

and a deer. This year he *almost* got a deer,  
 grabbing for his bow (!) on the truck seat  
 too late, only one day before . . .  
 something; it's about tags. I suppose  
 it's the end of archery season? No,  
 her dad will not stay in a yurt  
 on the land that her mom just sold him,  
 but maybe a tent, while he builds a house there  
 so next year she can ride her bike  
 between her mom and dad.  
 I wonder what's the ratio of elks

to little girls in Ashbery: 2 to 1? I guess  
 there's *Girls on the Run*, which must have some archers  
 if not wild American  
 seasonal game. His poem in my hands  
 already holds a *milk pail* and an *arroyo*. The girl  
 totes her water off, to real goats she'll milk.  
 Somebody gone away hunting, Ashbery  
 could run with that, it sounds lonely.  
 It sounds fine—eating elk the winter through  
 with Mom and Daniel. And when the snow's  
 not bad, pedaling down to Dad (by now  
 at least into a trailer), entertaining  
 Dad's weakly mustered questions, telling him all  
 about the elk.

Meanwhile there've been kids weeping  
at the youth camp next door. Someone's husky puppy  
loped upon them in the field, then overdid its part  
in capture the flag. Well, don't *you* nip  
when you play? But some kids were shaken,  
though you know at least one child loved it all—  
he will *never* stop playing before everyone goes home  
with incredibly minor injuries,  
then bam! comes his shunning and shaming.  
Years from now, he'll be lucky  
to state his own confession.  
But now he's hungry, and the camp will eat outside, lots later  
than at home, and with stories before bed  
around a fire! After that, he wants  
to go back in the field, and eat and tear into  
a real massacre of stars.

Jenny Mueller is the author of *State Park* and *Bonneville*, both from Elixir Press. She edited *Moonie*, a posthumous ebook of poetry by Brian Young (Fence Digital, 2017). She is currently archiving unpublished work by the poet Lisel Mueller. Jenny lives in St. Louis and teaches at nearby McKendree University.