

# New Poetry: "Layla's first buck" by Denise Jarrott



her father said it was his favorite thing about her, that she was a hunter, like he is.

she holds its head up for the picture. she wears an orange

hat. now the deer  
unfolds from itself like the fortune telling paper folded and  
labeled with  
possible outcomes. the deer's eyes dark and its body flat. I  
was not so calm

at death as she. she is twelve now. I remember when I was  
twelve, when I began  
to take notice of men, thought if I was pure enough they could  
never  
touch me, that I'd float away on quiet feet if they got too  
close. I'd just go upward,  
and utterly silent. some animals piss on themselves to deter

predators, I didn't brush my hair, I wore ugly underwear my  
mother purchased  
for me in plastic bulk, I focused my gaze upward with my heart  
hot in my throat.

Layla, it is around this time you discover the existence of  
horrible people,  
men with gray lips with spit foaming at the edge of their  
mouths,

the looks on the faces of girls you know that will feel like  
acid, their laughter  
will eat at you the same way acid does and they are casual  
with it. You will begin to recognize the wedge-faced boys with  
big teeth and a sour smell, like sweat and milk,  
you will learn that everything you do feeds their hunger.

I wonder if you will want to be far away, just somewhere else  
on the other side of the world, or perhaps in a forest where  
you  
wake in a tent or in a shelter of branches. I wonder if you  
will

want to be in a city, in an all-white apartment of your own,  
those

apartments that I know don't exist that look like the netsuke  
one sees  
now and again in museums, those little curls of bone. I wonder  
if you will  
want to wake in your blue bedroom with a glass of water next  
to you, full of still

bubbles where the air got in. Layla, I will not tell you to  
freeze yourself as you are, to preserve time for anyone to  
spoon out your youth into a jar and graze against time with  
your feet. You will grow, you will come to know your own  
capabilities as some people come to know the positions of  
stars, or how to speak another language.

It is not for me to whisper to you across this divide.

**Photo Credit: Smithsonian Society**