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Amoebae

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REBECCA LEHMANN

Amoebae

This is a poem about telling the truth.
Don't look for love here. You won't find it.
You'll find the night, crusted with galaxies,
hitching above the unturned chevrons of my house.
You'll find a mouse curled in a ball in the wall
next to an unchewed electrical wire.
The mouse is not playful. When I talk,
nobody listens. I walk through the dark
of the house breathing out moist vowels.
Upstairs, my son pretends at sleep in his crib.
His baby teeth calcify into lumps in his jaw,
push against the insides of his gums.
His thumb, slippery with spit beside his mouth,
twitches only once. Meanwhile, slugs
ravage the garden. The last of the pumpkin
blossoms fold in on themselves, unsexed
and heavy with powdery mildew.
In the artificial light of the dining room,
I cut pictures of the baby into circles
and stars, paste them onto the nautically themed
pages of his keepsake book. Each snip
of the scissors punctuates the unleavened night.
Say the night is loneliness. It's not.
It's the thoughtless night. Nor am I white-
hearted Atropos. In the basement,
the cistern crackles with spiderwebs and dust.
I do not place ten pennies there
and return to find a pitcher full of ocean water.
Inside the water, only amoebae and unrehearsed light.