

Dear Kate

Do you remember when we went to the zoo?

I'll never forget your face when that walrus cut you

in line for snacks. It was never like you
to be so patriotic, yet here you are, flag in one hand,

croquet mallet in the other. I'm just a three-headed
dog of myth, too much mouth for one gut.

I'm sorry for the time I left you at the mall.
You survived for three weeks on gumballs and Orange

Juliuses, and when they finally found you
in the closet of an H&M, you were so feral even the dogs

hid their tails. I'm sorry I keep changing my story,
that for every dead-end alleyway you find me in

there's a part of the past that chased me down there.

I sold the lawnmower so there's nothing to be scared of.

Something big is happening, Kate, and lately the magnitude
has been catching up with me in every gravel lot

and pint night. I've become the last man on earth
without the vaccine, infected entirely.

Find me at the public park wearing nothing
but cashmere and track pants. Behind the tire swing we can try

to get this back on track. Kate, Kate, we have become
such anesthesiologists, terrified of the smallest error.

What do you say? I'll roll up my sleeve and you can
jab the needle in. On the way out the door, stop

in the waiting room and collect my things.

My bag's the one labeled "Not for Human Consumption,"

and I know that warning is another you'll test.
Each train of thought a caboose on fire.

Dear Kate

I admit: that night your dogs were stolen
I was so liquored that I prayed through
every traffic light and downed sycamore
until your driveway pulled up. Lucky
those thieves had no guts, dropped
the collars the second the hounds
bared their gums. When I found you
on the back steps smoking a Marlboro,
vodka tonic blurring your eyes, you
swore then that you were going
to start calling my sponsor. I never found
your Christmas-light bedroom
safe, I never left a single index card
love note on your windshield,
and not once did I gobble the cheese board
you smeared over the ottoman —
my memory is so hole-punched
I'm not sure what's true. I'm sorry
you found me needle-deep in the kitchen
while the band played out back,
for that time in bed I gave you a bloody
nose. It didn't bother me when you took

her hand up your dress behind the pool table.

I could never be the workhorse muddied

in your field, nosing through rut after rut
of Sunday gray. Please give my sweater back.

Light paper lanterns in your barn, hope these months
apart will act as kindling. I was the lip balm

on your nightstand, the shattered porcelain
doll you glued to the shelf. Once

in a movie theater as I stumbled up
the loud dark, I saw you move seats.

Light faded to black and the hero wept.
You turned your head and looked for the door.