

About the Goat

by Michael Alan Brich

I'm sitting under a dead tree
eating a peach I stole from a fruit stand
down on eighth.
The tree is made of charcoal. The sky is gray with twilight.
I'm thinking about how rare
healthy goats are these days.
A girl stumbles up. She's drunk on kerosene.
She's got those raving death circus eyes.
She wants to go to California. She says she's got the cigarettes
to do it.
Someone was asked to put the goat in their car.
Not an easy task. Hooves and car doors and
seat belts.
The peach drips yellow on my chin
and the girl says
What about Pittsburgh?
Everyone always asks that.
What about Pittsburgh?
There's a tunnel there and a hat
but so what.
There are a lot of hats. Hats are not hard to find.
It's the healthy goats that are rare.
She says she wants to have a horrible child with me.
I'm not so interested in a horrible child
this evening.
The peach and the thoughts of the goat are enough.
She says she's found a way out.
She starts tying her arms around herself
like bandages.
This is her way out.
She puts one of her feet up against the side of her head.
like an oblong flesh phone.
I think it's gone too far now. She presses her toes with her fingertips
trying to get a dial tone.
I don't want to watch this anymore. I tell her I'm leaving.
I'm leaving I say.
I put the peach seed wrinkled and brown on the dirt in front of her.
It is the closest thing to a horrible child
we will have together.
I walk away through the rubble following hoof prints in the ash.
I can hear her months behind me
screaming into the sole of her foot
Operator. Operator.
Connect me to Pittsburgh.
I don't believe in the goat.