

Christmas, 2003
by Elliott Carter

i.

For my elder sister:

a wooden cherry box,

little ponies dancing atop,

singing silver teardrops.

Dad said he hoped it would be important to her someday.

Does she still have it on her bureau?

Did it ever quiet her nightmares?

I would know for myself if it could,
but he never gave me anything beautiful.

I tried being my father's son,
played with the new rifle outside.

Did he hope it would someday kill something?

ii.

I dream my sister opens the music box
and endless bullet shells spill out.

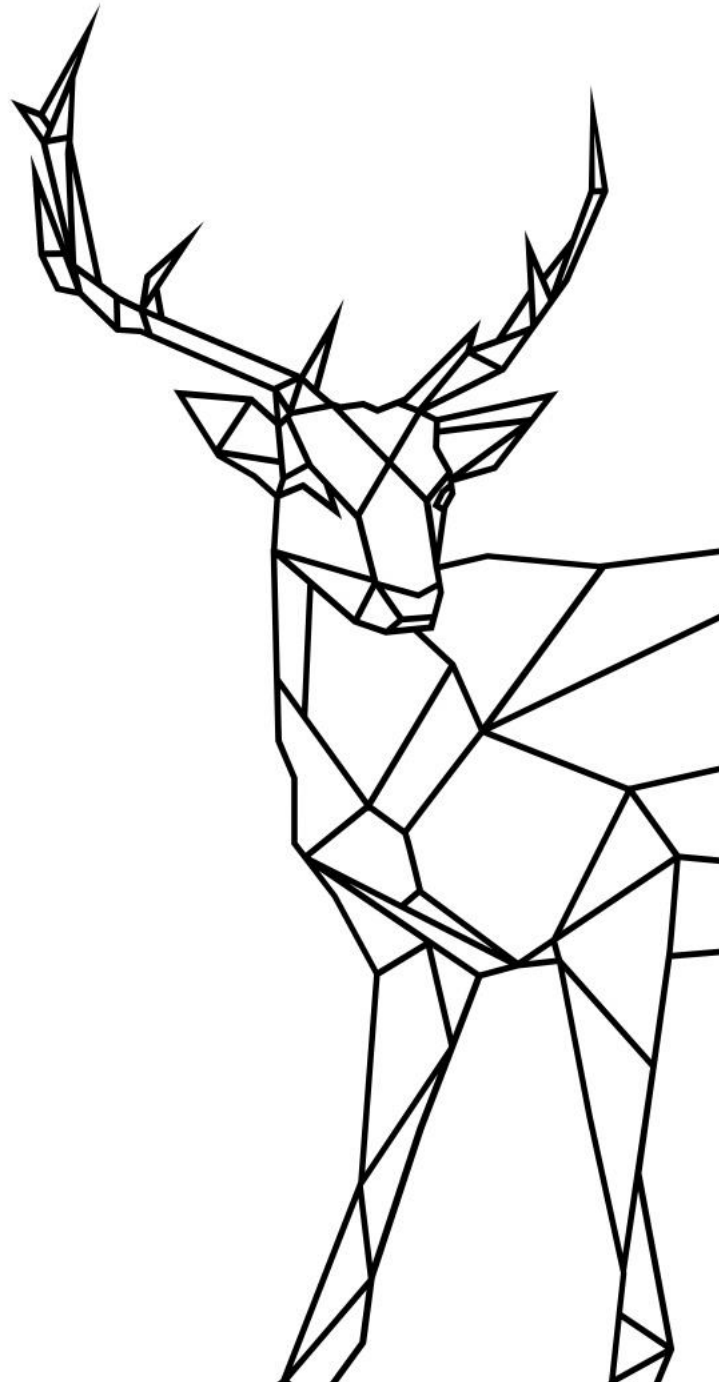
iii.

I dream wooden ponies are running
across our family farm's pastures.

iv.

I dream ponies grunting a lullaby
are trampling my body.

v.



I dream the rifle fires
and ejects a brass girl.

vi.

I dream I gun down a forest
worth of doe.

vii.

My dad and I wake way before
anyone else to sneak past the barn.

ix.

He is over my shoulder.
A gun slides into my hands.

x.

I aim at the deer.
Antlers shrink back into its skull.

