

DIANE LEBLANC

How to Keep from Keeping

Caring was an embarrassment.
The less we wanted, the more
determined we were to secure
the garden once occupied
without loneliness and longing.

We did not mourn. Our feelings
were salved by clipping wings,
securing a stay-at-home body,
giving room to the would-be,
extracting honey from starved hives.

Winter losses brushed the old
upon the threshold of the new.
We practiced when to divide
and decrease, furnished enough
with done, a wish without before.

ABOUT THE POEM & AUTHOR

Diane LeBlanc created “How to Keep from Keeping” from *How to Keep Bees* by Anna Botsford Comstock (1905). About the poem and the process of composing it, Diane writes:

This poem is an extraction of words and phrases in the order and form they appear in Chapter VII: “How to Keep from Keeping Too Many Bees.” Extraction interests me because it reveals themes or stories not explicit in the text but accessible through the language. To begin, I printed the chapter and highlighted interesting phrases. I then read the emerging redaction out loud again and again, cutting and reinserting language as tensions between less and more, old and new, emerged. When I committed to writing in complete sentences, I faced the additional challenge of finding verbs in correct tenses, articles, and other words the poem needed for clarity. My goal was to blend my voice with Comstock’s voice for a truly collaborative poem. I discovered that I read this handbook through the lens of the current global pandemic, thinking about the complex social orders of a hive as both home and place of work.

Diane LeBlanc is the author of *Sudden Geography* (Finishing Line Press 2014), *This Space for Message* (Seven Kitchens Press 2017), and *The Feast Delayed* (Terrapin Books 2021). Her work has also appeared in *The Briar Cliff Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Sweet*, and elsewhere. She lives in Northfield, Minnesota, where she teaches local poetry classes, mentors writers of all ages, and has served as a judge for the Northfield Annual Sidewalk Poetry Contest. She can be found online at dianeleblancwriter.com.

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