

The Feral One

I bite, I snarl, I beat my head
against the walls. Nature
doesn't want me here. Wild,
untamed, savage, regressive.
I hiss and spit. I bark and scratch.
I piss in the corner, crap in the closet.
Anxiety and hot fill my chest.
I have to get Out. Nature
wants me back.

At lunchtime, I hide in the coat
closet. The closed space breathes
better than the tight classroom.
The chairs and desks menace.
The other little beasts taunt.
There's too many of everything.

Where is my roofless space?
I know running in the woods,
bare feet on moss, nothing
between my skin and leaves.
Twigs my fingers, sticks, my bones.

You can cram me into clothes,
drop me at the school, unceremoniously,
but that doesn't mean this will work.
What the school said:
Doesn't play well with others.
Has trouble sharing. Poor
understanding of boundaries.

Feral: *living in the wild but descended from
domesticated individuals...* Mother,
with her own sharp teeth, wild eyes,
warned me about this. Dirt in
my nails, fleas on my arms, brambles
in my hair, I love: rolling in dust,
pond wallowing, mud, and oaks.

I fear: speakers, schedules, sitting
still, shut windows, closed doors.
How am I supposed to breathe?
The axis of the world has shifted.
My mama instructs me: the exits

are few, and far between. Park
yourself next to one. Wait
for your chance, and then,
run, darling,
run.

In the Land that Forgot Apprehension

Here, in the land of manure and plenty,
everything's lovely as a CG film.
The grasses so green, they pop.
The corn so thick, you could
climb it. The air so fresh.
You get the idea.

But what if we are too much?
Squint. There in the afternoon
sparkle, beside a giant bag of chips,
under the extra large pickle jars,
do you see the misty
shimmer of doubt? Sniff.

There's a pungent odor,
the fruit right before it sours,
goes south. Too much ease--
flip flopping down the aisles.
It's everywhere. Like a fatted pig.
Like a great, flapping belly.

No one's peering over their shoulder,
watching for the neon warning:
your luck is running out. No one's prepping
the escape route, the rutted, worn one
with the hoof prints right down the middle.
(Every good cow knows her way out.)

How's this for an invite to the obliteration?
For the murderer coming through
the unlocked door, the shooter
in your living room. The virus, the bomb,
the bullet. The moment before
the fall, the tumble into what have we done.

Oh, we must worry more,
we must double check the door.
Nothing is this easy. Watch the horizon,
there is movement there,
always. Let it not come as
a surprise.

Foster

She cocks her head with its long brown
hair, and talks down to me.
She's like an ice queen, a princess.
In my house.

The world revolves around her.
I am humbled by my new
insignificance. My minor role
in this tale.

I provide shelter, food,
I provide something to ignore.
While wolves didn't leave her
at my door, they might as well

have for all the affinity she has
for me. The mammal smell I emit is faintly
musky. We both scent female.
We both use our mouth to eat.

Here the similarities end. She's
in this story because she has to be.
Until she finds her exit
which she's steadily sniffing for.

I didn't bring her into this world,
but I still feel guilt. She
doesn't care how she got here,
what it took. What she would like

is Out. And my middle aged body
is so blocking the way. She'll
study me, she'll watch how
I maneuver. And then she'll

mimic my words, my tone,
my clothes, my gifts.
She's a brilliant impostor.
All survivors are.

Like me. When they brought me in,
I was bloodied and torn.
I might be her mother.
Or the hag with the apple.

I might be the body in the well.
Endings are notoriously
difficult. They can get you
before you have a chance.

Tips on Napping

When napping, it is best
to not fall down the rabbit hole.
Black holes, too, should be avoided.
One wants to dodge the unending
tumble into the dark
thicket of your dreams.

If you should feel yourself
leaving, when napping,
grab onto something. Socks
are always good. When your soul slips,
a pillow out of its case, pause.
Do not go easy or unguarded.

You have to do this to retrieve
what you need. But, know
it is a vulnerable maneuver.
When your guard's
dropped, that's when
the beasts can get you.

Then it's here come the nightmares,
banging through all your pretties
like a mad tin drum. Watch
out, they'll pin you to the bed.
They'll have their way with you.
So nap on your left side,

fists pulled up, ready.
These little rests are tricky--
like poetry. Crafty as the latch on
a vault door. Careful what you open,
let the words out with caution.
The forbidden allots

only so much. Bring back
just one bloody lovely at a time.
Precious heart beating,
paper thin, veined and fluttering.
Breathe life into it.
Breathe love.

