

Animals

Balled up, her shaven head and spine visible through her skin, the wolfgirl was a singular presence.

-Bhanu Kapil, Humanimal

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vi. xvii. There is a home in New York where my mother, at six, walked in on her own mother slitting her throat. There, eleven years later, she hangs linens on a musty clothesline before the car moves up and stops, and her mother screams and she knows that her sister is dead.

xx. There is a forest in Massachusetts, and one tree in particular, I'm not sure which kind, where my aunt, at twenty, took the rope to tie twice; once around the rugged trunk, once around her throat. She must have jumped quick into the broad awake dark, because a nameless peer walking through the raw trees saw a pale swaying stiffness drooping coldly from the black branch the next day.

o. What sound does a throat make when it purrs to its child? When wind is heaved out by bullet or cable. Does it differ from brute to being? How does it sound when it is being slit by a kitchen knife? By a swift sever to finish off the beast? Does it look different to a crawling girl at six who runs or walks to eat or sleep with milk in her cave or belly or climb a tree, laughing or grunting for pleasure or purpose or none at all. What sound does a throat make down the dark through the trees?

Breathless

~

Coming down quiet in the morning,
I know I had caught her: scuttled squeaking and
rustling, the little gray crook chewing through
the dry bags of my food while I slept. Breathless
and tiptoed, I open the cabinet, find her hunched
over soft quivering completely
still, eyes sharp fixed wide quiet,
quiet, one pink skinny-fingered foot stuck to the
sticky pad of the trap. I choke as she starts to pull
with all her living might, her paw yanking her back
with each heave, yelping high and rash, back, back
to the crypted snare. I snatch the entirety of her life
up into a plastic bag, wonder if both our heart beats
are synced to the hurried sound of my shorn feet
hitting the ground, or my windy-hollowed breathing,
or to the blink of my eyes as I look at my hands
quivering in midair like the ones I saw in the video of the
Florida school shooting that has been giving me nightmares.

Breathless & others

Does death live in you?

~

It must,
its white mouth
reaching up
from your stomach
to clamp
over your brain,
leaving a slight
buzzing
of streets and
doorways
that never mind
the by
and
by
of your empty body
passing it all.

Breathless & others

Two of most things

~

Ash comes into my bed this morning. 6:20.

Our blue room we split at dawn, two beds,
two sets of feet now at the foot of mine.

She has a dry cough I haven't caught yet,
but we share it all. Rooms. Genes.

Heeds. Three years ago it came, that
dark thing teeming, our bodies akin
to the bathroom mirror, her mind winding,
mine wavering. In our room, we are
not very much the same.

Different beds. Other days.

Other ways not the same;
the bump in my nose,
round in her cheek. My birthmark.

Her dark — a bleak mental thing,
a difference. A colder way of saying it,
a fainter way of seeing. Three years now at last,
dimming.

She coughs again. I don't
mind this time, her body breathing.
She is sleeping. Still haven't caught it
so I'll cut my half, offer it. Share everything.
Our breached room, my breath. Gleaming.