

BESTIARY



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White Buffalo:

Have you been eating the snow?
Or all alone
Have you been rushing with phantoms thru dust
Sighing long & longingly
O where is my best bird-friend

The last little girl left to talk to
In her snowshoes, or ice-skating
Nameless winter games
O Buffalo gone pale in the songless night,
Vapors too faint to smell.

Lavender Camel:

I know what you've been doing (everyone does)
My Daddy even saw you from his plane
Down there a-harnessing desert-glimmer snake-rings
For your own embellished back.

Give us a break, Camel. Cut the film-star crap.
Your desert has been done with games for a while now
& your sack-of-glitter smirk does not reassure.

I have long dry roads of my own
I will have to, he will have to, traverse some day, soon,
& your nonchalance obfuscates to say the least
Any faint near-clearness of good direction.
I will follow the soul to the ancient rock, you know,
& the sandstone skull waiting in the cave
He left for me, not you.

Rosy Lynx:

Thank Sweet Mary in Heaven
She is here with her lemon balm trees, full of tea,
& the stories Great-Aunt told in the sunroom
Of the Races she was six years old.

She knows all about the taper-holders, knows how to work the wick,
She has experience with dust-floral-curtained escapades
Through the soft dark of inner midnight, behind a white door,
Working so quiet like a jar in the basement
& letting the flame grow the glow
All by itself. Who can do that?

Rosy Lynx with paw of half-soft metal,
Claws of indefinable lukewarm material,
Toes the precipice of barely any weight, royal dangle,
& shielded by nothing at that.
Just her quiet focus. Time
Spread over her face like an egg,
In a cave or out in the open, speckled amber,
But with no other friend to speak of.

Rusted Pigeon:

Suddenly thinks: I could throw this railroad tie at the window
& break it. He frightens even himself.

Later he pecks beignet crumbs off the concrete,

Later dwells in the peanut factory

Abandoned, coos,

A child in the bunk bed,

Stuck at the beginnings of wondering.

It's the top bunk but the flood's still coming.

Too late to rush to our friends in the field. Remember cows?

Three cows makes a perfect photo, or was it four?

That kind of information could kill you.

It has. Look at him: How long has it been?

He has thirteen feet of leeway from the roof

& fourteen teeth left (that's not a lot)

& considering all these old, bored, half-formal people he has to talk to

If he wants to put any barely in his beak next week,

It's a hard-pinned paper to the wall

In an ice elementary school. It's a long route home.

Across a bridge of only wood pilings.

How is he breaking open the twilight? Will he really twinkle intact?

It's his bird's own world – How?

Adventure to the ends of the earth,

Nineteen-sixties living room now.

Anyone else would just stare at their shell on the mantle.

Somehow he's still towards the horizon.

Leaf-Green Lion:

Roams among the baobabs as please
& warm-cool frond-likes fondle her sleeves.

She is quite full of the day. He is done with the lake.
They must enter the underbrush, agreed,
Together, spurred by the snapping at their tails.

The volume starts low:
Their ears are maladjusted to the sunlit swarm.
But when it grows it becomes a mouth
& speaks in one unending word,
No, vowel:
Lion, violent, violet
Eyelet of the virile night.

*

Leaf-Green Lion pays no attention
To the husks leftover
From hyena's frantic feast

As if all Earth remained in a single carcass
& you only had a jar-full to take.

Lion pick.

Lion has no problems with selectivity
In her paws. Lion standards
For parties & *people*. Lion rolls

Well-lit shoulders to the tea-tree,
Vagrant honey, familiar wings.

Lion picks.

*

The Leaf Left does well.
Plants will survive if you let them, he said. Left them.

*

Lion eludes, has her own green.
Shows face in fragment, & seldom
Fan-wide & moon-bright in the teeming.

Keeps mosquitoes at bay with a glistening dish
But mostly with her confidence.

Vermilion Whale:

Boulder of verdant rising from the sea
Oyster shell opening again
& the world is different from before:
New shops, new songs,
O Whale of electricity moving snow from the sky
Cloud-worshipping, kelp-worshipping,
Singer of harp-written melodies
& the pink castle wall beaten by the tide
Cut by the crags
Is crumbled a little more each time
She rises
& the girl a little older.

Now you see her strolling along the sand.
What happened to her other parasol?
She is with a black-haired boy, she is casting different spells
With different words, & she isn't looking at the sand.

Orphic Rabbit:

Touched by the black-white liquid rock
Behind the ears at the softest spot
The gateway is on the rug.
Eyes open in eternal sight.
Infernal undertaking of the Rabbit.

In the cabbage patch, brushing the cat,
It all ends up underground
Beneath snow-frozen hands, or hot mulberry buds,
The tongues of winter & summer alike are black
& bunny knows no forgetfulness.

He is shadowed glass himself, tarnished silver lyric
Just out of sight of the wind
Looking, looking,
Did you know a Rabbit never closes his eyes
Even though he has eyelids?

Grey crepe-myrtle over the fence
He will take us all underground
Just by looking in his pools, vaults,
Or expressionless I-Have-Seen-A-Certain-God
& this is all you need to know. See it.
This is everything you could ever want to know.

Fuchsia Sparrow:

In brown tapestry Saturday park
Woven all over with gold
Or just flown out the old lady's hair
As she was on her way to the fruitstand
To buy tomatoes & alligator pears
& tickle the man – I mean the cats – in the side-yard.

Fuchsia Sparrow doesn't light on egret island
Or the peristyle's promenade of lions.
She stays in the aviary made of leaves
Reeds, with half of its woodwork fallen in
Or never built in the first place.

Sesame crackers, fingernails, beams, & pebbles.
Ladies rubbing men on their beards.
She has a champagne glass for a brain
But it's not necessarily filled to the brim.
What does that mean?

She has incense & handmade hats for her nest, all colors,
Because fuchsia is every color in one.
It doesn't take an artist to see the long-skirted wonder,
Amateur grammarian, active trash-picker-upper, social worker,
Working all hours in a room with one window, her favorite,
For absolutely no God. Come leaflets of Spring
Or rare snow. Come Rosemary tea. Jars on the sill still singing
& only prayers from the hat-pin, unthought-of.

Sagging Chickadee:

Lagging Chick barely clutches the branches of wind
Or are you slacking responsibilities as a beast?
Winter, Chick. Don't you feel the pall on your breast?
Makes you rise like a church, the steeple in your brain
Suddenly remembers who God is.

Black legs, a whole day it's been since you dressed for the party.
A month since you called your mother.
Has it? Your accountant, at least, is at a loss for words.
You barely cling to the billows of the frozen forest-sea
That ride in with the folksongs at night,
With the packets of orchard-sweet scents,
The glare of the dark orchid's face,

& you languid caretaker of the wind in the trees, shame on you.
The flamingo could do a better job in his sleep.
But it is you who are wearing the starkest scarf
& over prairies, farmlands, woodlands turned desert by frost,
You alone reach the woman inside baking gingersnaps.
All she really has is you.
All anyone really has is you.

Up-Early Elephant:

What would you do with your youngest hours
If you had a giantess to feed?

Understanding all languages, religions,
Yet selectively worshipping alone at dawn

Prayers across the calmest water, cool & asleep,
The spirit of a for-now-purple leaf

*

Elephants have been done since Rome.
The tightrope was dismissible. Queen Elephant realized
How it promoted the species aesthetics, the hovering blubber
Like a whale on a ribbon of wind
& an albeit cheap alliance could suit
The soirées of both races, together after hours
Could be made the working day for all.

Other stunts were funny: the Elephant watched himself
In contact with the frilly tarps
& bearing kings in robes through cities
Made a funny trumpet-march.
Then that was it. Poor Elephant.

*

The white-toothed young Elephant, face blunted
& kept from his spiritual haunts,
The Elephant hunts, a ghost in a corridor,
All the textbooks & shopfronts,

Drifts to join the hippocamp
& dragon in a field of dew,
The God of the Elephant
Can never be angry

You throw the knife at the policeman's feet & are done with it.
Who's angry? The intercourse is easy, stupid,
But no one trembles like they do between roads,
In the middle of the desert, the chasm between man & his production.