

ANIMALS IN THE NEWS

First it was Montecore, the Siberian Tiger
 who, as Roy the Magician was spangling
and prestidigitating all over the Las Vegas Mirage,
 took—Da DA!—Roy's head in his mouth as a child

takes a chocolate bunny, and dragged him off
 the stage into retirement and intensive care.
Next, it was the lion some lunatic raised
 in his Manhattan flat, and planned to use in re-

creating Eden until, with one swipe of its paw,
 the beast unzipped his thigh from hip to knee.
A day later, as my kids (safe in our house
 where forest used to grow) watched TV shows

starring benevolent dragons and a bison wise
 as Socrates, I read about a man from Malibu
who lived with Alaskan grizzlies, wrote books
 and sold videos about his furry bros, and even

brought a woman-friend to live with them.
 But when the bush pilot came to fly them home,
all he found were bloody chunks. And when two bears
 declined to let three forest rangers commandeer

what they had hunted fair and square, the rangers shot
 the bears: not unlike the fate of Brad and Daisy Tang
when they balked at letting Crips hijack their car,
 which had stopped, like a grazing herbivore,

on the very spot where, eons before, an allosaurus
 killed a parasaurolophus whose bones would
have been found if, instead of blowing herself up
 in a bus-full of kids fresh from *Winnie the Pooh*

in Hebrew, a young Palestinian who, at one time, hoped
 to be a paleontologist, had come to school in the U.S.,
torn up the concrete where 56th meets Bellevue Boulevard,
 and dug.

BUILDING A TURTLE

The fiberglass that veterinarians use to patch
real turtles hit by cars, dropped
off cliffs, or cracked by hammer-swinging boys,
molds into a strong shell. With enough skill,
you can carve a shell from wood, or sculpt one
out of stone. Papier-mâché will spare the turtle
heavy lifting, but dissolves in rain.
Paint the shell as you see fit. Incise it
with stars, diamonds, jailhouse tattoos . . .
it's *your* turtle. Use braided wire, jointed
dowels, or rubber for the legs and tail. Glued-on
sunflower seeds make first-rate scales;
or try sequins, for a country-western feel.
Goose-neck-lamp metal works for turtles, too.
The tube holds batteries to light the eyes—
brown for female, orange for male. The head
can be wood, metal, or plastic, as long
as the beak takes an edge, and the jaw moves.
Screw or super-glue the head into the neck.
(A pink eraser-slice makes a fine tongue.)
Fill the shell with something light—crumpled
newsprint, spun fiberglass—held in by soft
leather or plastic that mimics wrinkled skin.
Instilling life is trickier. Turtles struck
by lightning may “go Frankenstein.”
Jesus succeeded by commanding, “Crawl!”
(Try it yourself. You never know . . .)
Your best bet is: submerge your turtle
in water spiked with the chemicals
that slosed in ancient seas. Cover with a dome
that lets in sun, cosmic rays, and the infrequent
meteor. Wait in a comfortable spot.

GRATITUDE FOR DARK ENERGY

Why did I love my baseball glove
the first time I slid it on: the soft cow-hide;
the thong that joined the fingers in a team;
the pocket, baited with enough Neatsfoot oil
to catch the most skittish hardball?

Why, when I saw my bobber's red nipple
yanked under Gull Lake's scummy
green, and lifting my cane-pole,
felt the bluegill battling to swim away,
did I want to feel the same thing every day?

Why, way back in first grade, did Sandi
Sanders make my heart thunder
like rows of tympani, while Mary
Mason—just as blonde, pony-tailed,
and giggling—caused barely a thud?

Now that we know our dreams aren't
sent by deities—now that we can chart
the paths of galaxies, and calculate
a star's weight, chemistry, and the power
in its vast-but-not-infinite light—

thanks be to God-who-isn't-there
for dark energy that commands
the cosmos, "Expand endlessly,"
and leaves us hope for things we'll never
understand.