

WILD LIFE

after Jim Harrison

Woke up full of rabbits. It didn't hurt
but with them burrowing
& flashing quick like they do all within me I was restless
in meetings & had an alertness & inner trembling
but also could feel how the natural world
had a hook in me & tugged at me & I saw my colleagues
for the giant primates they are. You know,
not too long ago humans were running barefoot
on the savannas & smashing the skulls
of rabbits & each other with rocks & communicating
only with grunts & gestures & casual violence
& with these gentle herbivores swimming
all around in me I can smell the adrenaline
rising in Michael & Tim when Sam the Java developer
refuses yet again to alter any of his code
to make things work a little more smoothly
for them but no matter how hardheaded your colleague
is, the shareholders need us to not murder
each other for the sake of meeting our quarterly
growth targets plus death is a bit of a harsh sentence
for being stubborn or possibly lazy
& Sam has his redeeming qualities
though with all these rabbits inside me I can't sniff
out what they might be but I do smell
everyone's wishes as if I were the stepchild
of a forgotten god. They sing like tinnitus
in the satiny long ears of every rabbit zooming
around my bones; even certain lies
are really prayers & those ring in my nose
too, people wanting raises or for insurance
to cover whatever will cure their joint pain
or their spouse to finally say what's bothering
them or to wake up with a better president

or Michael & Tim just wanting Sam to be helpful
for once. They all commingle
& merge like the scent of a great meal
or the afternoon spring wind caroming
off the chop of the Hudson & also the racing
of birds from power lines to tree to window ledge
& yes leafy greens & buried root vegetables.
Let us go now, & work them out of earth
& feast on them until we are so full we sleep a sugary sleep.

AN INVOCATION

At first, I tried. Waited, in church, during the hymns
& the praying, for even a small taste. I would have settled
for the tickle of God's vestment against my skin
or the wind filling the air as the Holy Ghost
passed by. But nothing. I thought it must be me.
I prayed for forgiveness, I lay in bed awake hating
myself, begging for the stubbornness to be removed,
pleading for relief, a sign. But it was not me,
there was no great fracture in me to mend,
no ragged wound to suture. Fact is, the sanctuaries
contained only humans & insects, bacteria, lamplight, dust.
God was not even in the music.

Like the tale of the prophet exiled to a cave
where he learns God is not in the thunder or the lightning
or the storm itself. Then he hears a small voice. That was me,
that was my youth, except there was also no small voice,
only the relentless machinery of the world. Nothing
ever spoke to me. No angel bit into me or cauterized
my lips with a red ember. There was no epiphany.
No door, nothing knocking
to be let in. No greater, larger, eternal heart
in the darkness against which to hold my heart.

CARESSED BY THE INVISIBLE HAND

Money follows money
like how the pigeons fly in unison
& money becomes money
like a virus copying copies of copies
of itself. Money swallows money
& spits out money-shaped money.
Money changes money
until money's not money
but rather money. Money prays money
preys on anything that doesn't have money.
Money tightens the belt. Money
works the room. Money hears
what you're saying, sees
where you're coming from & wants
you to know you too one day
will do money's will
even if you don't want to
but also you'll want to
because nobody wants money
to shut the door as they approach
half-smiling with a tilt of the head
as they get a glimpse
of the party they'll be missing
where money rubs elbows with money
& greases the wheels for money
while money laughs into the shoulder of money
& money locks eyes with money
moving toward each other from across the room
& they don't even need an introduction.
Money has always known money's name.

CHARMS

There's the brass Ganesh reading a book
maybe a half inch tall I carry
with me everywhere anytime my love
is out of town even though I didn't grow up
talking to this god & he has never
answered me but that makes him no different
than the bloody God I did grow up with
except carrying a tiny cross
in my pocket would be like wearing an electric
chair around my neck
& I'm against the death penalty.
I wonder what he's reading?
I suppose a devout follower
would assume some scripture
but maybe he's like me & has another book
hidden behind the cover of the sacred text
which is how I coped with all the droning
hours of church when I was a kid.
Back then I had a rock
I carried all the time, red & smooth
& always cool even after being pocketed
all day long & even then I didn't really believe
in luck. I think I loved it because it was beautiful,
the way it showed how light was, the fact
that something so lovely & perfect
just happened, no one designed or built it
but rather the ruthless
forces of time & geology
happened to it & then there was beauty
which is sort of the opposite
of gods, who have no faces or names
on their own. I held on to that rock
for years, kept it in a cigar box

& when I was lonesome or sad
I'd hold it in my little hand
& either I'd pretend it was warm
& humming with a spirit inside
or it actually happened, it was warm, the rock,
it was humming with a spirit inside.