

Whoso List to Hunt

Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
But as for me, *helas*, I may no more.
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
I am of them that farthest cometh behind.
Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore
Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore,
Sithens in a net I seek to hold the wind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
As well as I may spend his time in vain.
And graven with diamonds in letters plain
There is written, her fair neck round about:
Noli me tangere, for Caesar's I am,
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.

—Thomas Wyatt

Two Look At Two

Love and forgetting might have carried them
A little further up the mountain side
With night so near, but not much further up.
They must have halted soon in any case
With thoughts of a path back, how rough it was
With rock and washout, and unsafe in darkness;
When they were halted by a tumbled wall
With barbed-wire binding. They stood facing this,
Spending what onward impulse they still had
In one last look the way they must not go,
On up the failing path, where, if a stone
Or earthslide moved at night, it moved itself;
No footstep moved it. 'This is all,' they sighed,
'Good-night to woods.' But not so; there was more.
A doe from round a spruce stood looking at them
Across the wall, as near the wall as they.
She saw them in their field, they her in hers.
The difficulty of seeing what stood still,
Like some up-ended boulder split in two,
Was in her clouded eyes; they saw no fear there.
She seemed to think that two thus they were safe.
Then, as if they were something that, though strange,
She could not trouble her mind with too long,
She sighed and passed unscared along the wall.
'*This*, then, is all. What more is there to ask?'
But no, not yet. A snort to bid them wait.
A buck from round the spruce stood looking at them
Across the wall as near the wall as they.
This was an antlered buck of lusty nostril,
Not the same doe come back into her place.
He viewed them quizzically with jerks of head,
As if to ask, 'Why don't you make some motion?
Or give some sign of life? Because you can't.
I doubt if you're as living as you look.'
Thus till he had them almost feeling dared
To stretch a proffering hand and a spell-breaking.
Then he too passed unscared along the wall.
Two had seen two, whichever side you spoke from.
'This *must* be all.' It was all. Still they stood,
A great wave from it going over them,
As if the earth in one unlooked-for favor
Had made them certain earth returned their love.

—Robert Frost

Psalm

Veritas sequitur . . .

In the small beauty of the forest
The wild deer bedding down—
That they are there!

 Their eyes
Effortless, the soft lips
Nuzzle and the alien small teeth
Tear at the grass

 The roots of it
Dangle from their mouths
Scattering earth in the strange woods.
They who are there.

 Their paths
Nibbled thru the fields, the leaves that shade them
Hang in the distances
Of sun

 The small nouns
Crying faith
In this in which the wild deer
Startle, and stare out.

—George Oppen

Roe-deer

In the dawn-dirty light, in the biggest snow of the year,
Two blue-dark deer stood in the road, alerted.

They had happened into my dimension
The moment I was arriving just there.

They planted their two or three years of secret deerhood
Clear on my snow-screen vision of the abnormal

And hesitated in the all-way disintegration
And stared at me. And so for some lasting seconds

I could think the deer were waiting for me
To remember the password and sign

That the curtain had blown aside for a moment
And there where the trees were no longer trees, nor the road a road

The deer had come for me.

Then they ducked through the hedge, and upright they rode their legs
Away downhill over a snow-lonely field

Towards tree dark—finally
Seeming to eddy and glide and fly away up

Into the boil of big flakes.
The snow took them and soon their nearby hoofprints as well

Revising its dawn inspiration
Back to the ordinary.

—Ted Hughes

Deer

To lure a single swivel ear,
one tentative twig of a leg,
or a nervous tail here,
is to mark this place as the emperor's park,
rife, I say rife, with deer.
For if one leaf against the littered floor
be cleft with the true arc,
all this lost ground, and more,
becomes a park. Everywhere
the nearest deer signals the nearest dark.
A buck looks up: the touch of his rack
against wet bark whispers a syllable
singular to deer; the next one hears
and shifts; the next head stops
and lifts; deeper and deeper into the park.

—Kay Ryan

Full Moon

Good God!
What did I dream last night?
I dreamt I was the moon.
I woke and found myself still asleep.

It was like this: my face misted up from inside
And I came and went at will through a little peephole.
I had no voice, no mouth, nothing to express my trouble,
except my shadows leaning downhill, not quite parallel.

Something needs to be said to describe my moonlight.
Almost frost but softer, almost ash but wholer.
Made almost of water, which has strictly speaking
No feature, but a kind of counter-light, call it insight.

Like in woods, when they jostle their hooded shapes,
Their heads congealed together, having murdered each other,
There are moon-beings, sound-beings, such as deer and half-deer
Passing through there, whose eyes can pierce through things.

I was like that: visible invisible visible invisible.
There's no material as variable as moonlight.
I was climbing, clinging to the underneath of my bones, thinking:
Good God! Who have I been last night?

—Alice Oswald