

*Steady*

By Rhianna Searle, November 2022

I slide into womanhood  
like a glove  
trying on different sizes  
testing the waters.  
Most girls bloom,  
are written in poems as flowers,  
green metaphors.  
I wonder if most of those poems are written by men.  
I am the knot of roots beneath the soil.

As time's waters roll  
women are the river stones  
shifting but standing firm.  
My own mother smells of muscle balm  
and quinoa. She sounds like summertime.  
Women are strong like wintering trees.  
Stop calling their beauty ephemeral like cherry blossoms.  
Womanhood is also private  
fitting in the crevices between stonework and sheets  
fingers tracing Georgia O'Keeffe patterns;  
Like cacti in deserts, women hold their own water.

## animalistic natures

### **crows**

dad will continue to pray to god,  
as the sun sets and the moon brings the night-  
i will always be seen as something odd.

the boy that i adore sits outside and weeps,  
he's learned that what we are isn't right,  
dad will continue to pray to god.

the idea that we are just some evil freaks,  
"those two young boys bring shame rather than light",  
i will always be seen as something odd.

he caught my hands tenderly grazing his cheeks,  
he wasn't supposed to find out tonight,  
dad will continue to pray to god.

he looks at us like we've grown wings and beaks,  
by god, i wish i could; spread wings and take flight,  
i will always be seen as something odd.

two souls that death would not dare to reap,  
his eyes glaring, like a dog ready to bite,  
dad will continue to pray to god,  
i will always be seen as something odd.

### **teeth**

every morning, i pull at my lips and cheeks,  
clenching and unclenching my jaw,  
examining the teeth inside my mouth.

one by one i'll check them,  
incisors, canines, molars.  
incisors, canines, molars.  
i dont do it to make sure they are all there,

(although i do  
have dreams, the kind  
where all your teeth  
fall out  
and you wake up in a panic,  
feeling around your mouth  
with your tongue  
before falling back  
asleep).

i want to see how they interlock with my gums,  
i want to drag my fingers over the small ridges,  
i want to glance at the molars, filled with some material created by humans to fix imperfections,  
i want to press my tongue against the too sharp ones, and remind myself of being a creature.

of being an animal.

i wonder what it would be like,  
to sprout wings from my back,  
or grow talons on my fingers,  
to be treated like nothing, just as creatures always are.

i like to tell myself,  
humans are simply creatures that are able to understand perfection.  
we are only so different than them.

once i reach this thought,  
i have to draw my eyes away from my teeth,  
or i will become animal.

## **bugs**

my home is infested with bugs,  
lasius niger, culicidae, halyomorpha halys, even anthophila.  
every day i must kill them,  
sometimes i am wildly scared.

when i kill one, crunching its exoskeleton under my fingers,  
does a part of my soul leave with its?  
or is it too small to have one?

too inconsequential?

when young boys sit on the hard pavement, squashing ants under their palms, or even-  
when they hold a magnifying glass to create a laser-beam,  
like the ones they see in films their mothers tell them not to watch,  
scorching and squishing the small black dots on the pavement,  
do they still go to heaven?  
even after they've killed one of god's creatures?  
are they god's creatures?

am i, god's creature?

no.

i am infested with bugs.  
bugs of spite and shame,  
of fear and fury,  
all crawling and festering in me as if i am some carcass,  
gnawing away at my soul.

i am a shell of a man,  
i am the bug's carcass,  
i am a feeding ground for their misery.  
am i inconsequential?

yes.

no.

yes.

no.

buzz.

yes.

a carcass, sounds right.