

Peter the Wild Boy Thinks About His Humans

In 1724 a boy was found walking on his hands and feet and climbing trees like a squirrel in a wood near Hamelin. He never became articulate and eventually lived with a farmer who equipped him with a brass collar inscribed 'Peter the Wild Boy, Broadway Farm, Berkhamsted.'

—Ebenezer Cobham Brewer, *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*

Weasel words swarm the face of sense.
I use them not, except to myself. And I believe
only what I see.

The farmer and his wife
have special nerve endings in their lips for each other.
They put their mouths like two delicious animals
pressed together. I have no wife to hand
so kiss the cat's liver-smelling fangs.
Farmer laughs and says, *Peter, if you must kiss someone,*
let it be human,
and don't take her by the throat.
But how could I know, who shared honeycomb
with a rip-toothed wolf, all thick muscles and yellow eyes,
and slammed my forehead against her hairy forehead
and nailed her dead in her wild eye with my hungry eye
when she tried to take my half.

They think me odd?
The farmer's wife stores her baby apart
in a cold shell of ash wood
as though she had no arms to carry.
She croons her mammal song from afar.
Any milk-dripper in the wood could teach her better.
Or the way the farmer will drink and bellow
Hamelin Forest, where the demons dwell,
Where the banshees live, and they do live well!
All a lie, I lived there and I know.

Farmer hears somewhere that stutterers
can speak to animals.
Kindly urges me to address the cow.
She and I face each other like peaceful pals,
she wafting her breath of grassy mash at me.

