

PAOLA BRUNI

Cat

Don't wonder where she goes
once she leaves the silk cover of your pillow, pushes her feral crown through
the open window.
Don't wonder about her jangling tags and flattened ears,
the two-inch pink scar across her thigh that remains hairless, the dewclaw
yanked, incisor broken.
Don't wonder about the trash in the neighbor's yard, her papery tongue lapping
up fish blood and liver, eviscerating the porous raw heart of a chicken.
Don't wonder if she'll kill a mouse—crunch its marrow bones, suck its doomed
remains, revel in the borrowed tang of death that follows all living things.
Don't imagine the barn owls and hawks, their silent descent and fetid feathers.
And don't imagine the coyote,
its glittering hunger, sunken shoulders, and embossed ribs.
Don't concern yourself with the old shepherd that moved in across the street,
its lunging maw and blind, opalescent eye.
Don't imagine your neighbor's faceted voice yelling damn cat, the pop and whirl
of his pellet gun felling jays and finches from the almond trees next door.
And especially, don't imagine the sleek Mercedes, its gray, clouded windows,
oversized tires.
Above all, don't wonder about the day you'll call her name,
clink the teaspoon against the can of Fancy Feast, and you'll wait, the silence
a wedge of emptiness,
and your heart—all its arteries and ventricles—
will know you can't save her, how there's no holding life in your hands.

Paola Bruni is an aspiring creative writer whose poetry has been published in *Porter Gulch Review*, the *Comstock Review*, and *Mudfish*. She is the 2017 winner of the Muriel Craft Bailey Poetry Contest. Bruni is also coauthor of the nonfiction book *Let God Love You Up* (Maria Press, 2015). She lives in Aptos, California, with her husband of twenty-three years, Kip Allert.

PETER VAN DYCK

Cotton Street at Night, 2013
Oil on linen, 24 x 30 in



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