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The Animal Bride

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The Animal Bride: Variations on a Theme

By Abby Current

1.

Maybe you were a beast of thorns and thick, drowning blossoms.
I, caught in cold castle chains, cannot be bought
With luxury and fineness, poetry or downturned eyes.
Demanding love will fail — no, coax me with your dying breath.
Persuade me, trick me, whatever it takes
To scrape away fangs and coarse fur, to reach
The prince who bows to me beneath your thick skin.

2.

Maybe I was a swan maiden, all white and feathered down.
You sang such a sweetness that I crooned, throat-deep,
And you trembled at the tremor of the sound.
We sang back and forth and all I know
Is that I will leave you still. All vows will I lay aside,
And still I lure you closer and closer
To my hollow heart of pinions and feathers and softness.

3.

Maybe we were selkies both, creatures of will and wild.
We fumbled through fishermen and wept into the sea
But we kept going back to our own traps,
To the poisoned bait, to the sleeping draughts,
Dreaming all the while that somehow we truly loved.