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The Beasthood
By Dawn Cunningham

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This story was inspired by Max Ernst’s *Une Semaine De Bonte [A Week of Kindness]*.

Acknowledgements: “the dog barks madly my way” first appeared online in *Shuf Poetry*.

“Dreams, in fact, are essential for survival. [...] If deprived of dreams, these animals would often die faster than they would by starvation, because such deprivation severely disrupts their metabolism.”

Michio Kaku
The Beasthood

by

Dawn Cunningham
Prelude

I am the prosecutor who has brought this story to the attention of the public, who will give you the physical evidence to prove the truth of the Beasthood, who will have you see the thing beyond the media’s perception as something science fiction. Let the press mock the story and give the exposure, I will give another view to allow people to decide for themselves. This story begins in a court room on June 21, 2010, where girls have come forth to expose the Beasts. The press has entitled the scandal, “To All Beast, We’re Aware of You,” with these wondrous lines attached:

In the course of defending Beasthood, the defense fails in proving the beast is tame. The letters smelled out causes for more to rise up against the beast and his rule. Letters mature into a coffin, suggesting neither can live without the other while killing each other. Those automatic writings and sketches by pencil or crayon etch out what a beast could never have. Coincidence confides in the hand, and at times the feet: a stirring heats from sole to soul, or from toes to dendrites. That one tear that falls is all it takes for the jury to weave their necks around the trunks so heavily planted by the defense (of course they were barren—everything is always black and white). Don’t be confused by the edged-coloring. “The beast is tame,” denies the prosecutor; “Watch the girl scrawl against the bottle beating in her chest.” Who can hear the child climbing out into bodily change that the mind cannot keep up with? “Let the Beast out!” the girl cries, but the
wood absorbs her words.

Beast is tame in the past and in the future, the defense would have us believe. But, to what beast does the defense contribute tameness? Words unwritten on black lines unbinding the social construct of dialogue, or history and science untying skirt laces to make future? These are the questions we must ask; or is there still a question floating airlessly beyond the tongue tip because too many are afraid to equate it? Such as, what does one eye see that the other doesn’t or can the left hand actually do without the other knowing? Or, what mind is in control? Yes, these are questions to be asked as well, and the last question that cannot be forbidden: does color give clarity or blur the now distant reality?

I’ve forgotten to show you that the jury, in their snail-gnawed shine and loose jaws, is wobbling to swallow without tongue or fluid. What does this trial search for among the buried? Not a single dead can speak to discourse of confusion made by a trap. Occasionally, there’s a crack in the cage, and a little of what can’t be spoken awakes with a pencil and a blank sheet. But the blood can’t be forgotten; it isn’t all gone, not yet. If it doesn’t run through walking flesh, it runs through wormed-soil and clubbed-feet snaking down to the source. The dead have broken the code without lead in hand.

The defense, though shaken by that tear, gives notice to the dead that all of us carry a beast; such as the male Beast that he has us stare at. He notes: “Notice the Beast in his search for the mate so needed, and yet so distant. What possession does the mate have over the Beast and why is the mate unwilling to possess the possessive?”

The by-product of believing the Beast is tame is the unconscious searching for the coincident and
the release of automation to squeeze tighter the logic with the senseless, the smell to the object, the vision to virtual reality walked in, slept in, and eaten in. How many spleens and intestines must be pulled out to see the lie engraved on the word Beast; on the word tame? Does either have meaning in birth or death? We are born beast and die tame, I’ve heard it said; but it also can be said that we are born tame and die beast because we are separate from nature by our own nature to tame the Beast. In doing so, we bury part of us.

The defense goes back to those letters to show the tame ways, but the prosecutor asks, “When letters are read by those not intended, or written to the dead, what is the difference?” I have an answer for the defense (for this isn’t what he’ll agree to but should): Both have fallen upon no understanding, and gain knowledge without an apple core so needed to plant deep in the soil mulched by beetles and paws and noses.

But we as the viewer cannot forget to ask about the witness’s involvement with Beast and tameness. She has concealed her own true nature, snaring many in her timeless life. Is she a product of herself or of others—namely male? Does she service the female or the males by sitting on the white line that divides the crevice in steepness? Is she a woman, a Beast, or neither? She is more than the lion or tiger in wait. She is part of us and not of us, she is there and not there, she exists and doesn’t exist, she encompasses everything that all wisdom fails to find; she is past, present, and future in the now. But aren’t we all?

I’m unable to directly answer all the questions I have asked—I don’t know you, and know you all too well to even suggest an answer for you. There will always be a part known only to the heavens (the cosmos, the stars, the planets, the gaseous bulbous fluid balled into
itself). It’s funny, that girl with the tear knows more than you and me!

I’ve given you the facts as they are in this court about whether the beast is tame. I can suggest (so you may answer the questions I’ve left unanswered) that you view your dog or cat, your horse or cow, yourself and mate against bookends, and sketch the unknown. It may define whether the beast is tame; and if it doesn’t, don’t worry about it, all of this doesn’t mean a thing; nor the colors protruding (or escaping) focus. ~ Deloris Jaguer

After Ms Jaguer’s wonderful view of this scandal, I enlisted her to follow along and to investigate. These are the findings brought to the courtroom, posted on Ms Jaguer’s blog, or published in the local newspaper.
The Evidence...

Exhibit 1a: Cisci Loop Bed & Breakfast Contract, April 20, 1828:

This is one contract of many signed by every woman who entered the bed and breakfast, which indicates women signed their signature in blood. A bloody thumb print (slightly faded due to the many years of exposure) lies within the area between the tenant’s signature and the part of the contract in red. The portion of the contract that appears in red is slightly faded, as well, compared to the upper portion of the contract written in black; chemical testing has shown human proteins exists within these letters.

Cisci Loop Bed and Breakfast Contract Welcome. *Please respect the rights of all boarders when visiting or staying.*

Cisci Loop is the owner of the Bed and Breakfast. Cisci Loop calls herself ‘a’ product for women’s use. I, Cisci Loop, acquire from you, the tenant, the utmost secrecy of what you see and hear here, for yourself and others, and require that no man enters upon these grounds without prior written permission from me, Cisci Loop, for the sole protection of self and others that live and visit here. Within the written permission, you will find the path that will be taken to and from your apartment for the gentleman caller, as well as the food and drink
allowed for the day of visit. You will also abide by leaving your door open when a male caller is present, once again, for your protection and others.

Signature: ______ Adorra Rose ______
Date: ______ April 20, 1828 ______

With the above said, and upon your signature on this formal contract, along with a blood print of your thumb, further instructions for the function of your room will appear and be discussed.

Welcome to Cisci Loop’s Bed and Breakfast, where I will help you thwart the Beast lurking at your heels, where I will teach you how to survive and hide from the long claws they grow to ensnare those of you who have come to me in hope of escaping the wild romance of promise, of pleasure and ecstasy, and the want of protected danger promised by such beast, or to be taught how to handle such activity, allowing complete survival and independency; thus, you in control, not the Beast, who lusts after feminine wiles needing guidance as a child. As it is in the Animal Kingdom for the Queen, the dam, the female rules the house, deciding upon all that shall be done. To be hunted is glorious, glamorous, exhilarating for the woman who is found worthy by the Beast. However, for the woman who is found worthy comes great loss of self if not prepared, if not taught the way, if not strong enough to keep the self intact as change occurs.

Your room is personally made for you, to protect you by desensitizing the effect of the male (the Beast) visitor and any item that the Beast may send to you. I remind you, the Beast in chase is unlike any male
you have encountered. Do not ask how the room is personalized to your needs, nor ask how the room can desensitize the Beast or any item from the Beast, only know that no harm can come to you while within these walls. Also, remember, there will always be an “escort” within the Bed and Breakfast at all times, an “escort” to ensure the Beast leaves upon your command, an escort to do as you please to the Beast if the Beast feels a need to be excessively “affectionate.” What can be done will be discussed in time, as well as taught to you, with the aid of an “escort.” The “escort” is always on call, and will be at your side with one simple word: “BEAST.”

Any violation of the rules here laid out within these walls will result in your immediate departure. Mind you, safety is my, Cisci Loop’s, utmost thought and responsibility for those who find themselves on these premises. Those activities you do outside of these premises are not my concern, nor shall I question these activities, with the exception of sharing knowledge of fellow tenants whereabouts and what takes place within these walls. You may guide any woman to me that appears to be in need, but remember, you must not be specific to how I can help and protect.

The first rule, and most exclusive rule, to be abided by is the absence of sharing information with callers, and those outside of the house who inquire of roomers. If asked where a housemate rooms, other than to say the Bed and Breakfast, no information is to be given. This is knowledge not to be given under any circumstances; send those individuals to me.

If you can keep the first rule, the other rules will not cause problems for you. When you are prepared to lose yourself to the Beast, arrangements will be made to finalize the transformation. If you wish to complete such act without my assistance, pack immediately: no
notification is needed. If you feel the need and know you are not prepared, wishing to protect yourself, call for an “escort.” An “escort” will assist you in fighting off the want or need if you are yet prepared to deal with the fall, if you are yet prepared to be the Master Mistress of the relationship. You are in control here.

You may return at any time after leaving the premises. The room is always yours until the final contract is fulfilled: Total absence of the Beast upon your well-being or the decision to be forever with the Beast.

Best Wishes on the Journey before You

Cisci Loop,
Manager of Bed & Breakfast,
Womanhood of Humanity & High Priestess.

Cisci Loop, April 20, 1828
Exhibit 6: Journal of Winter Woods, October 08, 1833 through unknown date

A part of a journal written by Winter Woods who occupied Apartment A. This journal was found among a vast array of several papers, on the homestead of the Bed & Breakfast. On the journal was written “belongs to the occupant of apartment A” followed by her name. October 08, 1833

My words cannot spell a creation fallen from the sky. The rain drains into my eyes leaving them dry. I cannot touch my heart to cease the pain. I cannot write my brain into ceasing the thought of being a universe of him. HIM. Such an insignificant word for the creature who calls out for my blood to mingle with.... The left hand is a remote coast of a summer’s first pudding. My right hand traces lava flow entering the mouth of... where wheat fields are depleted and plundered continuously, like the seasons done in one day.

November 30, 1833

Time no longer exists. I’m not here. Within this room are only shards of papers with letters scattered. Dates mean nothing. I cannot make sense of what happens some days. I put the lounge in the northeast corner to find myself misplaced in time, far back, long before the pilgrims visit. The southwest corner is where people
who visit know me, I know them, and we are strangely dressed, but it is not me. The corner I enjoy the most moves quickly. I hide in this corner for several days, visiting distant places I’ve only dreamed about, traveling to them in the briefest of time. Huge birds that do not flap, huge birds made of metal, like our knives and guns. It is my imagination. I have asked Cisci about this. She only answers, “Anything is possible.” What I don’t understand are her words: “When you are ready, choose your space, choose where you belong. Here or there is your decision.” Always the same words.

January 16, 1834

The creature that hungers for me has called upon me. Cisci says I am strong. That is why he pursues. There is something intriguing about him. I read my first entry. I still sense all the confusion and passion, and the ‘want’ he brings out in me. I dislike this affect.

Tea cup sea side in my head doesn’t swallow a pheasant whole. Feathers have no tickle in my heart. I can see Paris in black. Black. HIM. He is the black of the black.

What is the date? My walls look like Christmas

It will not be long before I can leave here. Cisci says I’m the strongest of all her tenants. I must agree. The screams I hear coming from some of the apartments, and not always female, not always human.

Today, the creature called again. I faced it. I didn’t linger. When he refused to leave, I called for the escort.

Why are my walls...? Nothing I’ve added since early December appears; where is... where are... damn, I can’t remember what it is called; all those articles and
photographs of... gone! And letters I opened and threw away are on my desk unopened?

I can’t be sure of any date now.

The only use for the BEAST is in my beautiful majestic words that spill forth when he is near. I will keep a part of this feeling to warn others in my writing. Cisci said more will hunt me but my writing wards off the smell. I will keep writing and teach others.

My favorite corner is where I will go. I have come across a Beast there, a Beast who is pursuing a young woman whom has potential outside of ‘breeding.’ I have figured out what these Beast want. Breeding is only part of it.

Why does my friend Adorra wish to stay? She visits her apartment little. I’ve warned her of the young one who lurks about. I do wish to bid her goodbye and safety before my departure.
Exhibit 2a: Letter to Adorra from Cherrish, September 11, 1834

The first of letters in a series written to Adorra Rose, a onetime tenant at Cisci Loop’s Bed and Breakfast. These letters were found among other papers of Cisci Loop’s. It is not understood why Cisci Loop would have these letters; nonetheless, they were found gathered by a tied ribbon.

September 11, 1834
Dear Sister,

You must come home. Mr. Cougar has been asking for you. He is very ill, and the doctor believes your presence will do him good. I never did understand why you left. He loves you very much, and I thought you loved him. He speaks of you often. Last night he held a dinner party in your honor, to your return. It took much out of him, and his face, his eyes, were very down trodden. I didn’t think he would be able to entertain. Many women advanced on him. He warded them off, thinking only of you. We talk often, but he will not tell me what it was that made you run. Please come home, just to brighten those eyes of his. It is sad to see him this way. When he hears your name he brightens, only to sink back into the deepest depression. This party brightened the house, for the curtains were pulled back, and still are—this gives me hope.

I’m writing this letter against his judgment. He
says you must come to him of your own free will.

Love,

Your Darling Sister Cherrish

XOXO I miss you!
The series of letters from nephew to uncle were found in the home that Adorra Rose was to inherit in Boston, Massachusetts. The exact location is not available for the courtroom or jury.

December 07, 1834

Dear Uncle,

This day is the day I begin to share, slowly, the secrets of the house, the secret she has sensed since the moment she has arrived. I promise you, Uncle Cougar, that I wouldn’t keep My Lady in the dark for long, not as you did to Your Lady, for it may make the situation more stressful than it will be already (like yours)—if only My Lady was not the daughter of you. Unlike others of our kind, I searched wisely, and was patient, waiting for the right lady of the house to expose herself to me: My Lady. Uncle, her mother concealed her well, and her sister as well, deep in the timbers where the wild beasts are, where the scents are unclear, blended, unless one has kept thyself well trained in the hunt. Not many of us are trained anymore, in the wild—you know that, that is why you forced me to become skilled in the ‘true’ hunt; so many of us have stepped into the modernization, forgetting where we have come from, forgetting what we are. You are right, someday our kind will be gone if we continue in this way.

Your Dear Nephew Vlad Lyion
Exhibit 5a: Manifesto: Warning! Dancing Girl of Apartment G, December 30, 1767

This document was found between the pages of a young lady’s diary, where she mentioned she found the long paper posted on the fencing to the Bed & Breakfast. The name of the young lady is faded, leaving only a few letters of identifications: o, uti, Pop, se.

December 30, 1767 Warning! Dancing Girl of Apartment G

I don’t know where to begin this story of my visit with Miss Waters; it happened so quickly, so quietly, before I knew what was happening... and vaboom! there she was! standing in the naked flesh of sin before my eyes, dancing, bowing before me, throwing flowers from a basket.

I don’t know how. I don’t know why. She was just there. I slapped my face, thinking I was dreaming, closed my eyes, rubbed them till I thought they would fall out!

“Come with me,” she repeated, until that was the only words I heard.

I had been in a bar that night, I think, at least I think we had gone to a bar that night, it looked like a bar I entered before... before it all started. I don’t remember putting no more than one shot of vodka to my lips, I’m sure of it, and I definitely don’t remember walking, crawling, or being carried out.
The stool was still under me, and the shot glass was still in my hand and somehow, someway, it was always full, never emptying as I drank more and more and more. My eyes never faded, never dried, my words were never slurred, the liquid tasting as mulberry one time, Scotch the next, and a delightful flavor I can’t name; I’ve never tasted such a substance as this. Rich, smooth, a hint of rum, and a bitterness that somewhat resembled a tangerine—just a nip of it.

When I tasted this exotic flavor, the girl moved quicker, gyrating, twirling, feathering the petals from her fingers to enclose her body in a perfect circle, a perfect circle! I couldn’t touch her, and I tried to move from the stool as she kept saying, “Come with me.” Never once did I touch her. With each turn her face changed, the feature more slim or full, her hair plum, red, auburn, black, brunette, dishwater blonde, strawberry blonde, platinum blonde, her eyes deep as the sea, black as an onyx, greener than a pine, golden brown, a copper, hazel of hazels, a blue so blue they were violet, her cheeks high, low, large, hidden, her chin defined as a witch or smooth as a baby’s bottom, cleft, flat, her nose a ski slope or flat against a window, upturned or hooked, ridged, humped, wide or thin, each face circulating like a casino slot machine, never the same face twice.

I know this isn’t a believable story, and I still don’t believe it myself.

You’ve seen those movies with rooms full of pillows and scarves, psychedelic colors, black lights dimming and brightening slowly, much slower than the music, of which had a beat to match the flavors I drank; and did I tell you each drink smelled as it tasted? The room and the music had its own smell as well and each time the woman approached me it
swelled up and enveloped me in a thin bellow fog, clear fog, a fog I could feel, so clear it was like watching pin-sized ice crystals dance and shatter, driving into my flesh—without pain; my naked body!

As I realized my nakedness, a fat bearded man thundered in as an elephant, “Enough,” clapping his hands twice, stepping at me with fingers pointed up, palms out toward me, covering my eyes.

I found myself, when I opened my eyes again, sitting on the bar stool, still holding a full shot glass, leaning on the bar, staring into a mirror that had colors fading slowly, disappearing; my clothes—I could feel it!—growing from my skin, reality growing with my clothes to see myself in the room of Blossom Waters of Apartment G, staring into my eyes!

She’s a witch, a gypsy, a prowler... do not mingle!

Trey Panthaur
February 24, 1835
Dear Sister,
    I was exuberant in seeing you, as was mother, after your last visit two years before. Your return made her alive; but you left so abruptly that day. What was wrong? Won’t you speak to me? Mr. Cougar expects your return any day again, and waits. I think he wants to marry you. Miss Tossil has tried to catch his eye. I overheard her speaking to him, making snide remarks about the way you have treated him. I must agree on one thing, your actions leave things open for gossip. Anyhow, Mr. Cougar thwarted her advancements, detouring her thoughts into starting a shelter for widows—or more less, made Miss. Tossil think it was her idea. The Old Hill place, the one left abandoned, that will be renovated.

    Love,
    Your Darling Sister Cherrish
    P.S. My friend in Indy visited today. He said something very odd. You don’t live at this address. The resident acted as if my friend had lost his mind. Why would they lie? Or have you moved? Let me know.
March 16, 1835
Dear Uncle,

Your love for the instinct detected what was ahead: My Lady’s mother being of the blood as you, as me—I can see why you persuaded me to search her out, to bring her back to Boston. She is beautiful: her eyes aqua green, a glow that our kind can’t resist; her skin a hint of gold; her hair dark clay and curled down her long neck. Your daughter, Darling, is much like Your Lady, except for those steadfast sapphire eyes. But, I’m sorry to say, I can’t persuade Your Lady to return again, and definitely not with your daughters. If Your Lady knew about Darling and me? Still I write, if only for the record of my work. She named them well, Darling and Precious. I found, in Darling, a perfect mate, one who can partake of the feast, for her skin rises to the far off cry of instinct—though she does not understand all yet, as when Your Lady, Adorra, began to feel it, began to change. How did she escape you? How did she escape the same fate as the others? I will not let My Lady escape!

Your Dear Nephew Vlad Lyion
April 13, 1835
Dear Uncle,

I am at Your Lady’s mercy. I may have to protect the second of your children from others like us. Why did you make me keep this promise with your blood, to do as she says? It is such a great responsibility I should have never taken. What a curse that promise has become.

Your Dear Nephew Vlad Lyion
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Dawn Cunningham writes to explore herself, a situation, others ideas, and to find truth. Her writing comes out of the joy of oral storytelling taught to her by Gran’ma Ginny through the Native American tradition. Writing is her sanity. Recent publications are *Confluence, Healing Words: A Journey Through the Ladder UPP*, and *Poetry Quarterly*. 
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Deloris Jaguer is assigned to investigate The Beasthood which many women declare exist. In her search—through various evidence presented—to find the truth, she discovers more about herself and the literal meaning of The Beasthood.