

Jennie VerSteeg

Perfect Milk

There is a herd of cattle in Wisconsin, owned by Carnation, that provides bull semen for many of the cows on dairy farms throughout the Midwest. The majority of the calves born today are products of artificial insemination, producing the better beef or milk.

She has been in standing heat
since just after dinner on Tuesday.
Does she quiver?
Have they told her all they know about him?
The good calves he's thrown,
that his mother fairly gave cream?
She has been to the fence; does she
pray? Some maiden rosary, her eyes
of meat turned soft.

And how is he? The men without the women,
lonely but together,
like a logging camp or prisonyard
in God's country: apples, beer
and cheese.
Do they meet in the cools of the evenings there,
shrugging and squinting, slugging, leaning,
staring hotly south?

A grim labor of love, eyes averted,
spilling his seed for her. She is chaste,
after a fashion;
every conception is spotless,
Immaculate-
but for the man who brings the stuff,
soothing, patting,
Shooting.

My god, the young bull is on fire:
hot fat, a fine skullful,
set on the woman, these women interred
like Hiroshima maidens, hooved
and nudging, ready for love.

*Do you ever dream of beef
or orchids, of opium
and hoof jelly? Can you see
her perfection and what lies beneath
the hide.*