

Become the bear
by Ruth Duffy

not the massive rootless carnivore
that salmon-mouthed wader
rolling over rock and water
nor the honey-beared Pooh
not Yogi or Boo-boo snitching a snack
evading rangers with tranquilizing guns
and packing crates for
relocation

neither be the bear adrift on the blue
cover of National Geographic's
Special Issue on Climate Change
with dire predictions for your demise
be not dancing with brass through the nose
nor caged in a zoo in the Bronx
this is not a Russian novel
you are not a city bear

be the bear dreaming in a cave
long past digestion
living off your own fat
murmuring of summer berries
plump grubs in the wood
smaller than your predecessor
more compact
less easily lent to extinction

give birth in this dark alley
in your sleep
nursing without knowing
conducting heat for
posterity
for the blind mice rooting
in thick rank fur for a nipple
for a promise you have yet to give

wake
so lean as effortlessly you rise
as if transformed to bird
instinct tells you go
green shoots are calling
spring rivers sharp

and you are thirsty
for fresh air novel terrain

and hungry, so hungry