

The USU Writing Center
and Logan Library Present

Silverback

by Isaac Timm

Under my feet, though I've known nothing but cages,
I know mountains- feel thunder, the vibration of rain
on broad leaves, the smell of termites underground.
Sometimes I can feel the mist.

They slap the glass, show their flat teeth,
even through three inches of glass I smell their reek,
carbonated, sugar-infused sacks of meat.
I show my teeth, great canines, bite power to puncture steel.
I rise up, drum my chest, and roar until the room shakes.

When I was five I stood up in my tiny cage
head inches from the roof, lunged against the bars.
The vet with the neat, prim coat said I was spirited.
If the bars had given way, I'd have shown him.

I rush up the branches hand-over-hand, until I'm eye level.
They bow their legs, shorts ballooning out, clap their hands,
again show their teeth. I shake the tree, play the anchor cables
like a harp, roar with my lips rolled back, cover the glass with spit.
They slap the glass again, laugh.

They brought me a female but like me she had a head full of half memories,
never been the top female, never hid the troop as I foraged. I did not win her,
her mother, her sister, or her aunts. I did not charge a great gray ape,
throw him down, show my teeth. She was never mine-
But they watch as if she were-
wanting more gorillas from half gorillas.

I pound my chest, the faux trunk swings; plaster falls from the ceiling,
They do not step back. I launch myself against the glass rattling the wall.
I leave a smear of blood in front of their faces.

As I fall twenty feet, hit the cement, I hear them laughing.
But before the impact they shrank back stinking of fear-

O' if the glass had given, they would get but one scream!
Then I'd run into the sun light leaving bloody hand prints.
Mothers would knock over their strollers, fathers would freeze,
camera phones half-up.

I would show them a silverback in his prime.

They would scream, bleed, die, until the men came,
not the tan clad keepers with their red hornets, the sleepy nausea,
but the men in blue would come in flak-jackets, with rifles
And they would shoot me-
shoot me,
shoot me,
shoot me,
but I would not fall- I would show my teeth!
Roar the blood from my lungs,
see mountains.

Helicon West invites you to open mic nights, 7:00 PM at the Logan City Library Bridger Room, 255
N Main, every second and fourth Thursday during USU semesters. For more information contact
star.coulbrooke@usu.edu or go to writing.usu.edu.

Artwork by Kelsey Schwanke. Broadside edited and designed by Lisa Crandall and Maria Williams.

Helicon West

Ode to Reprieve

by Felicia Rose

Sometimes the suffering comes
 slowly
A child, once stable and spry, descends
 into pools
of despair.

Other times it occurs with shocking speed
a boat
a storm
the death of a chum.

Still other times it erupts
 within
a geyser beneath
a placid mien.

Amidst it all, you lean in to kiss
my lips
and for this moment, at least,
a gentle rain
cleanses the world
of grief.

