

2022

Calf

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Recommended Citation

Wright, Amy (2022) "Calf," *Birmingham Poetry Review*. Vol. 49, Article 71.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/bpr/vol49/iss2022/71>

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Amy Wright

Calf

Big as a Doberman,
dead,

black hoof to snout.

His dam nudged his jaw. Vultures
dove
the waft.

She had not let them
at him or eaten,
to stand guard.

All night and day
beneath a canopy of ice,

we left her to mourn.

A scarlet garland
swung from her
as she paced.

Not worth the risk, J worried
on the drive, but I unchained the gate,
a recent escapee

escorted from the sward
where an incensed
Number Ninety-Eight
had hidden
her newborn.

Number Twenty was not ready

to relinquish

sentinel when R forced her back
with the truck. He circled the grove
until she gave enough
ground.

He leapt out.

J stood by the wheel
with a cane she brought.

The calf's
head
lolloped
when R raised
his chest.

The cow piqued and rankled
with discontent.

I helped lift the lithe body

into the bed.

We drove out of sight,

lay the calf in hay
behind our house,

to give his mother rest,
if not peace.

Let the buzzards,
unseen, eat.

Where my brother—

nineteen years gone—

picked blackberries with me as a kid,

I knelt

and washed my gloves

against each other

with snow.