



Axon: Creative Explorations, Vol 10, No 2, December 2020

A WILD BOOK

Elizabeth Smither

A wild book

for Antigone Kefala, who rescued me after a disastrous argument with a publisher and has since become a dear friend

After a day of dreadful disorder
you offered me a bed and a meal
and afterwards an art book.

The bed your mother had slept in
that held her body's curve
like a large cat in the quilt

the meal: chicken with a whole lemon
filling the cavity and vanishing
into disorder's canyons. Later

after the dishes were cleared and washed
in your lounge's two matching armchairs
you laid on my lap a large art book.

Night was falling but the day's darkness
was countered by a shield, this heavy book
whose pages I turned, reverently

(thinking of the chicken, the hospitality, the bed)
hardly registering the art at first but careful
to correctly turn the pages. What wonder

that the covers could support such culture
that it did not burst out and spill
all over the carpet. What wild shadows

trapped in interiors and gardens
(under the lilies), what masks, what portents
in a jug, a flower. What was the book saying?

Before I reached the end — slices of life cut through
by each now knife-edged page — a calm
(it might have the page of 'The Scream')

dissolved the bed and the chicken, your fine
conversation which calmed everything, and the book
on my lap was reverently shut again

while outside, when darkness fell and stars
like the numbered pages came to glow
the peace of a wild book descends.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Smither

Elizabeth Smither has published 18 collections of poetry, as well as novels and short stories. Her most recent publications are *Night Horse* (Auckland University Press, 2017) and a novel, *Loving Sylvie* (Allen & Unwin, 2019). A new collection of stories, *The Piano Girls*, will be published in 2021.

URL: <https://www.axonjournal.com.au/issue-vol-10-no-2-dec-2020/wild-book>

[Privacy policy](#) [Copyright](#)

Published by
The Centre for Creative & Cultural Research
University of Canberra
Canberra, Australia
ISSN: 1838-8973