

Grace and the Abandoned

JOHN GREY

Grace walks to the lake
and her critters follow.
The three cats of course,
and the dog
but also the raccoon
with a bandage around its leg,
and the deer,
still a yearling,
and Grace, the only mother
it's ever known.

It's a joyous walk
but solemn also,
for the trail's been trod
by other rescue tabbies,
a German Shepherd
found freezing in an alley,
a heron with broken wing,
a possum injured in a fight
All are gone now.
Each new entry to her brood
has the spoor of ghosts
to negotiate.

Once, they reach the water,
some leap in,
others keep their distance
as if the lake is one more stranger.
The raccoon scratches about
in the shallows for food.
He will be released eventually.
Best that he knows
exactly what he is,
how to survive when the door is closed
and his dish is empty.

Grace hears the whispers -
no friends, no man, no child of her own,
the bare minimum of social skills.
Sounds just like something
she'd take in.