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Well of Despair

Sarah Brown Weitzman

Abstract

As a follow up to that classic

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Well of Despair

by Sarah Brown Weitzman

As a follow up to that classic
experiment done in the 60's
on young primates fed by wire

figures, how they always rushed
right after to snuggle
with some padded forms

though those never fed them
anything nor ever hugged them
back. What hunger

that softness satisfied
science wanted to know.
So now to have the facts

on this early lack of mother,
a modern steel-lined crib
for infant rhesus monkeys

without the former cotton
clutter, each in its own
cylinder, sealed.

(The scientist had quite a bent
for lab language
who named that place



"a well of despair.") Forty-five days
and forty-five nights
of maternal deprivation.

While it lasts
each babe gives science its best
moments, watching through one-way glass

persistent spindly arms
trying to cuddle the smooth steel
sides of those metal mothers.