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Senior Projects Spring 2023

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

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Spring 2023

## Tender Creatures

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*Bard College*

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Tender Creatures

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of the Arts  
of Bard College

by  
Chloe Raizner

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
May 2023

Chloe Raizner

*Tender Creatures- Artist Statement*

*Tender Creatures* is a manifestation of my childhood. I was never quite like my peers. I lived in an abusive household, and had undiagnosed ADHD, OCD, and overall crushing anxiety. I struggled to understand people. Animals, on the other hand, captivated me. I felt like I must have been an animal myself. Some sort of creature that knew only fight, flight, or stare intently. The creatures depicted in my artwork can be interpreted in some cases as a representation of me, and in other cases a representation of my abusers, and sometimes even both. After all, we can be our own worst critics.

I had many stuffed animal toys and animal-based trinkets to play with as a child. They were more than toys to me. I, being the only one who could protect them from the harsh outside world, took it upon myself to care for them in ways that actually ended up driving me to panic. I would tuck them in before bed, and if it turned out I had missed one, I would agonize over the poor thing and how it probably felt bad for being excluded from my compassion. It kept me up at night. Of course, this was probably due to my undiagnosed anxieties, but back then I truly did believe I was being neglectful to these inanimate objects. That I was abusing them, as was the reality of my own situation. I often wish I could go back and tell my younger self that no, it's not abuse to drop your teddy bear because you have small, clumsy hands, and yes, it's ok to leave them inside while you go play, as any kid should. Stuffed toys are a major element of *Tender Creatures*, but they have been warped in ways that might represent how trauma in my own mind has made me feel like a sort of monster. They too have been turned into monsters.

Other types of creatures show up in my artwork, and these creatures have been inspired by stories and picture books. *Aesop's Fables* were very inspiring to me from a young age, and I have incorporated anthropomorphism into much of my artwork for years. Anthropomorphic animals in stories often represent different identities. Wolves are violent and cruel, while foxes are mischievous and cunning. Sheep are rather innocent and weak. I am fascinated by the concept of predator and prey, and how at times throughout my life I have felt like both. On one hand, I've been small and meek, prey to my abusers, and on the other hand, I've been prone to anger and outbursts, looking in the mirror and feeling guilt at the mere sight of myself. It's important to me that viewers choose to interpret the creatures of my artwork in any way they choose, as many have a duality that complicates the implicit biases we may have regarding

certain animal representations. A lion may have a terrifying roar, but perhaps there is a thorn stuck in his paw, and he is merely crying at a frequency that humans do not understand as sadness. I have played upon this idea in certain pieces.

I hope to create an environment with *Tender Creatures* that facilitates nostalgia, regression, and even discomfort. I myself have had to come to terms with many truths about my childhood while putting the show together, and overall I have found it to be a therapeutic experience.

chloe raizner presents

# TENDER CREATURES

an exploration of animals, monsters, and innocence



april 29th - may 3rd



show opening april 29th at  
6 pm



Lobby of fisher studio arts



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