

Black Angus

by Madeleine Crouse

The sheriff calls—cows are out—ousted
 from bed we pull on sweaters, jeans, boots.
 State highways, cars mean nothing

to wandering cows. With flashlights we head
 to the barn. Corn shaken in buckets
 attracts the most recalcitrant cow. If

the leader follows the rest will too, unless
 the calves spook and run wild. Good mothers,
 you know, follow their young. Remember

the toddler at the airport who ran up
 the down escalator, her mother lunging
 in pursuit. Under a good moon,

about a half mile beyond the creek
 on another farm, thirty-seven cows (ours)
 feast in a grove of trees,

their grazing: a rhythmic whispering
 sound. Undoubtedly, cow number
 seventeen, Aunt Rose, always

coveting what's behind someone
 else's front door, has pressed her heft
 against a weakness in the fence,

trampled an opening, a pass to fresh
 grass. As we rattle the feed above
 our heads these plodding animals

follow us through the creek, across
 Route 50, slowly we heave
 our bodies toward boundary.