

8 beats to a line . unstressed then stressed, key words like stalks and prowls are stressed  
stalking rhythm, inescapable.  
Breaks at haggard . referring to self . lacks his composure.

## Pursuit

Dans le fond des forêts votre image me suit,  
RACINE

There is a panther stalks me down:  
One day I have my death of him;  
His greed has set the woods aflame,  
He prowls more lordly than the sun.  
Most soft, most suavely glides that step,  
Advancing always at my back;  
From gaunt hemlock, rooks croak havoc:  
The hunt is on, and sprung the trap.  
Flayed by thorns I trek the rocks,  
Haggard through the hot white noon.  
Along red network of his veins  
What fires run, what craving wake ?

Insatiate, he ransacks the land  
Condemned by our ancestral fault,  
Crying: blood, let blood be spilt;  
Meat must glut his mouth's raw wound.  
Keen the rending teeth and sweet  
The singeing fury of his fur;  
His kisses parc, each paw's a briar,  
Doom consummates that appetite.  
In the wake of this fierce cat,  
Kindled like torches for his joy,  
Charred and ravened women lie,  
Become his starving body's bait.

Now hills hatch menace, spawning shade;  
Midnight cloaks the sultry grove;  
The black marauder, hauled by love  
On fluent haunches, keeps my speed.  
Behind snarled thickets of my eyes  
Lurks the lithe one; in dreams' ambush  
Bright those claws that mar the flesh  
And hungry, hungry, those taut thighs.  
His ardor snares me, lights the trees,  
And I run flaring in my skin;  
What lull, what cool can lap me in  
When burns and brands that yellow gaze?

I hurl my hear to halt his pace,  
To quench his thirst I squander blood;  
He eats, and still his need seeks food,  
Compels a total sacrifice.  
His voice waylays me, spells a trance,  
The gutted forest falls to ash;  
Appalled by secret wan, I rush  
From such assault of radiance.  
Entering the tower of my fears,  
I shut my doors on that dark guilt,  
I bolt the door, each door I bolt.  
Blood quickens, gonging in my ears:

The panther's tread is on the stairs,  
Coming up and up the stairs.

**Comment [K1]:** Obvious images of hunting suggesting male aggressors and female prey throughout ó also linked clearly with images of death and destruction. In some ways the free female is destroyed through submission to the male

**Comment [K2]:** In the í .. of the forests your image follows me!

**Comment [K3]:** French playwright based on a tragic Greek play. Queen Phaedra and King Theseus are married but she loves her step son, Hippolytus while he loves someone else. They think the king is dead ó she goes to tell son in law to be king and tells him she loves him. Theseus isn't dead ó Phaedra's maid fears her mistress will be destroyed if Theseus finds out about her love for his son, so she says Hippolytus tried to seduce Phaedra and Theseus has him killed. Phaedra tries to stop this but doesn't when she realises that Hippolytus loves someone else ó the devastating and destructive effects of love and also the inevitability of fate ó Plath perhaps thought this was inevitable ó like her death of himø

**Comment [K4]:** Sensuous, feline, strong, sexual

**Comment [K5]:** Pronouns indicate that this is a competition ó there is never union

**Comment [K6]:** Sibilance ó soft, sensuous, feline ó also threatening

**Comment [K7]:** Long vowel sounds create a sense of threatening elegance rather than harsh, brutal violence

**Comment [K8]:** Images of power, agility, arrogance - graceful and dangerous

**Comment [K9]:** Threatening, foreboding images

**Comment [K10]:** Health, vitality, lust

**Comment [K11]:** Irresistible passion and force to this man

**Comment [K12]:** The passion is inextricably linked to his destructiveness

**Comment [K13]:** Possible reference to Adam & Eve ó again the idea of inevitability

**Comment [K14]:** This powerful passion is attractive ó holds a deadly fascination for her ó hence this is emphasised by being placed at the end of the line

**Comment [K15]:** Confusion of the man, the animal and vicious plants ó he is all of these things

**Comment [K16]:** Rather than quenching his kiss take away, they leave a hunger for more ó passion and desire

**Comment [K17]:** As if she even dreams about him

**Comment [K18]:** Questions suggest a hopelessness ó what can cool me when he is gaze is burning me ó again sense of inevitability, inescapability

**Comment [K19]:** Almost a sacrifice ó again the rhythm emphasise the key words

**Comment [K20]:** Partly this is sexual desire ó but the idea of submission also reflects the dominant ideology of women submitting to men

**Comment [K21]:** She feels this passion and ardour too

**Comment [K22]:** Odd juxtaposition of assault (negative) and radiance (positive) ó as if she realises the danger in this passion, or perhaps also the danger of submission and how she, as an aspiring independent female poet on the verge of the women's liberation movement is in danger of reverting to stereotype

**Comment [K23]:** Odd ó dark guiltø suggests that she is worried ó about what? Passion? Seems to simple ó although this would be the 50s. Submission to a man ó maybe, especially considering the relationship with her father, (hence the mal symbol tower) but there's little other indication of that

**Comment [K24]:** Repetition and final rhyming couplet does not suggest escape but in fact a closing in