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The Forbearance of Animals

James Den Boer

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We stare, as the rushing
settles; we are not deaf,
there are no other sounds.
High clouds, thick, white, absorb
all except the necessary signing
of ourselves: breathing,
boot scuff, the whisper of denim
and my leather sleeve,
the beginning of her hiss or scream.

We are so close to each other,
we are not cut off, we are connected.
We are the only ones left
to say anything—

I shout,
and we disappear into
the rushing of the world,
the wind rising in the sycamores
and laurels. A stone clatters
down the cut bank.

The Forbearance of Animals / James Den Boer

Without understanding, they exist
with only the poetry of their bodies,
not saying Rise Up but rising up
on their thin tendoned legs. They are
forever unsaved and never damned;
they think only about themselves.

Under pressure, they break without guilt,
and are happy to save their skins.

Without a literature, they taste
the green alfalfa or lick muzzles
streaked with blood, nervy and serious.

Not art, they freeze like statues

and blend colors. Without patience,
they wait. They do not blame,
but they have no forgiveness.

Enduring as evolution, they never worship.
They do not pray, or bless us;
they do not know their mercy toward us.