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Wintering the Animals

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Wintering the Animals / Paul Nelson

Shove the big door on its greased track
shutting in the dark for winter. It isn't easy.
The barn sags, south eaves braced for ice.

Next April, the place seems smaller, leaning from the sun
toward the meadow. The north posts sink through frost;
bald trees bare the hill.

We are the first ones down this season
and we know the earth is dying.

Look at the door. Imagine the animals,
blind and rocking in their stalls, pawing the double floor.
Can you hear the dry grind of their jaws? Go on,
unhook the stiff latch. If you can with your lax arms
shove it the other way. The animals steam by, out
of the dead air into the sunlight,
then down across the meadow.

Beyond the broken fence they pause, looking back.
Summer person, you have emptied the barn again.
Not what you wanted.

The Biplane / Steve Orlen

Sometimes the night is not enough. I rise remembering
And the dream is no longer a quaint story
In another's life, but my own grown more real.
Last night a biplane landed in my neighbor's field.
I watched, from my window seat, the canvas wings
Graze the rows of corn and come to rest.

Afternoons

Seem always time between the crests of dream. There is
An oak outside my window so stunted, its limbs
Elbowing this way and that, it seems it had made
A decision not to grow beyond its needs. In spring