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The Biplane

Steve Orlen

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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

The leaves appear, in fall they yellow and curl,
And I know the constant change in direction is a
Ruse to make it seem more humble.

Again last night

The biplane landed in my neighbor's field.
It caught fire, but when the wind finally blew
It out, I felt like the child who snuffs a match
In a closet and finds himself alone and bodiless.
Just think: I forgot the dream today. I woke
And drank my coffee, washed, put on my clothes;
On the way to work, I stopped and turned back,

But couldn't think what it was I had forgotten.
It was like the biplane from World War I, my father's.
Beyond the window, the tree was waving its arms.
A pilot from long ago, wearing my father's cap
And goggles, was waving his arms. Now I remember.
It was my father's dream, told to me as a child,
Put on like a coat that one day fits. I rise from
My window seat. Remember the child who wanted never
To grow up? The child has gone and found his way.

Sitting in the VD Clinic / Ross Talarico

In the VD clinic
The poet waited his turn, trying
To work out a metaphor for the new blossom:
The red sore on his penis,
Blood flower on the severed root . . .
He considered the possibilities,
Children without limbs singing his poems
Under the blue sky;
Himself, growing blind, seer, prophet,
Putting together the black pieces of a puzzle
Until he blotted out the light
And the glimpses of her sweet face
Into which he moaned his deadly lyrics.