

Animals in Spring

Hard Winter, the grey squirrels lived it up
in the scrub oaks outside our window,
training us to feed them on schedule —
hunks of bread, matzohs, unsalted peanuts.
Whatever we gave them, they took away,
back up the tree where they turned it
feverishly in their hands, scarfing it down.
If breakfast didn't come on demand,
they chattered and flicked their tails,
childish, irritated beyond clear reason.
Now the snow has fallen into itself,
yesterday the last loaf of it dying
by the stone wall. I could have wept for it.
This morning, where are the squirrels gone,
the ones we loved for their small fury?
I lay in bed with my wife while we talked
about the winter animals, how they came
morning and night to look in on us
lost behind glass, in our overheated world —
muskrat, deer, raccoon, the shadow tails,
staring at us as if we were shameless aliens.
While my wife and I lay arm in arm
in late waking, I whispered that I could feel
the snowy branches sway inside me.
"I'd like to go to the Minnesota Zoo," I said.
"Well," my wife said, "apply."