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Donkey

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Ralph: Donkey

DONKEY

Brett Eugene Ralph

I used to see you out in the field
conducting insects with your ears.
Sun slowly sharpened
the stripe across your shoulders
and you swallowed sleep through your eyeholes.

Shifting weight to your forelegs
you lifted your head from the tender grass
and thrust it forward, long neck bulging
as a series of sharp, moist, muscular spasms,
lip-sprung, ruptured the air.

Underlying all that violence, there
seemed to be a kind of laughter—it wasn't
malicious, it wasn't apologetic.
I closed my eyes and leaned my arms
against the fence and listened.

Your voice did not disturb me then.
It was something that had to happen:
Heavy limbs loosed
at last from the trunk. Ice
unfreezing all at once.

I hear it different in the city,
mingled with the spit of helicopters,
the giggle of broken glass.
It's like somebody choking on a car horn
or something metal being born.