

Animals in the Sky

by Jason Lee Norman

So I decided to start a rumor. I guess you could have called it a lie because it was about me. You can't start rumors about yourself because the person that the rumor is about is not supposed to be aware of it. I told them I could talk to animals.

They brought me dogs and chickens. I said not dogs and chickens, animals that live in the sky I told them. Like crows and flying squirrels?

No, like stars and planets. I observe their behavior and sometimes they tell me secrets. They took away my bus pass for that.

When the great comet passed over, everyone was at my door with pitch forks and rifles with extra long bayonets. Don't kill it yet; I want to study its habits. I went to the top of the tallest hill and sat there with my listening shoes and my observation hat. The townspeople came to me every day at noon and again at six to ask questions about the animal in the sky. Some of them brought me tea and cookies, and once, a bacon sandwich.

How long will it stay?

Another day or so. I told them this every day. Only another day or so.

One day at noon I slurped my tea extra loud. The animal does not like our smell. Our chimneys smell like smoke. Could we not burn mint, maybe some young pines? How about marshmallow leaf? At six I had Chablis with cubes of spiced cheese. The animal has tremendous hearing but all that it hears is the stomping of feet and the squeaking of wheels. Would it kill us to whistle? What about humming?

One morning it was cool and I went down for a sweater. They had their arrows and guns aimed high in the air. The animal has a thick hide, I said. Worthless. Its milk is the real delicacy.

The animal wonders why we don't have more fountains. A nice fixture could increase property values. We could throw coins into them.

The animal left around nine one evening. The air was a fog of thin mint smoke. Why did it leave, they asked.

It learned as much from us as we did from it, I said. And because of racism. It left because of racism.

Will it ever come back?

Another year or so. Another year or so.

