

# The Heaven of Animals

By James L. Dickey

Here they are. The soft eyes open.  
If they have lived in a wood  
It is a wood.  
If they have lived on plains  
It is grass rolling  
Under their feet forever.

Having no souls, they have come,  
Anyway, beyond their knowing.  
Their instincts wholly bloom  
And they rise.  
The soft eyes open.

To match them, the landscape flowers,  
Outdoing, desperately  
Outdoing what is required:  
The richest wood,  
The deepest field.

For some of these,  
It could not be the place  
It is, without blood.  
These hunt, as they have done,  
But with claws and teeth grown perfect,

More deadly than they can believe.  
They stalk more silently,  
And crouch on the limbs of trees,  
And their descent  
Upon the bright backs of their prey

May take years  
In a sovereign floating of joy.  
And those that are hunted  
Know this as their life,  
Their reward: to walk

Under such trees in full knowledge  
Of what is in glory above them,  
And to feel no fear,  
But acceptance, compliance.  
Fulfilling themselves without pain

At the cycle's center,  
They tremble, they walk  
Under the tree,  
They fall, they are torn,  
They rise, they walk again.

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