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Slander

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Slander

Of your rumor animal
I know: its coat of wool

and searing bloat-speak
of summer, when words

wear looser, talk more limber.
In winter, with haunches

stiffer—the noise cold
and sober—your animal

recites our names better:
sister, lover, pupil, scour.

Spoken thus, shaken from
sumac by the throat of your

beast, we fall, grabby
as starfish eager for extension,

for elaboration. We are your
animal's violent instinct

to speech, dusky titles
of season, the inherited habit

of slander. Our names
bristle its fur, open its mouth.

Your pet, sir, is speaking.