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Trying to Explain Who I Am

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Trying to Explain Who I Am

by Fredrick Zydek

Up among the cross beams and rafters,
families and tribes live out their lives
without us. Barn owls and spiders,
swallows, hives of bees, beam-strolling
mice, tree squirrels and occasional lizards

pursue the meaning of their existence
with no more interest in what we do below
than tree nesters show for the busy lives
of wolves, rabbits, and bears who journey
far below the safety of their airy abodes.

Perhaps we are to them what lobsters
are to dolphins: bottom creatures not worth
much notice in the grand total of things.
We conduct the carryings-on of the world
they seldom view with even vague curiosity.

We are ants tending our cows and little
green gardens, creatures who stir up dust
and flies, dry grass savers, manure pushers,
hoarders of corn and silage, a civilization
of creatures that can grow neither fur

nor feathers. Sometimes I sing to them.
I want those who enjoy loft-living to know
there is music in our speech as well.
Once in a while I give long speeches explaining
who I am. All the creatures but one ignore

me. I might as well be a Jehovah's Witness
trying to account for the rash of earthquakes
the world has seen in the last ten years.
Only the owl refuses to snub me. He doubts
what I claim and continues to ask, "Who?"