

we bought the house and looks out past the fence. I look out too, as I'm prone to do. She asks me what the animals were like because she knows I've seen them. The question isn't new, and I answer qualitatively, going through the usual cats and dogs and horses, furs and scales and flippers. I describe everything in comparison to cows: there are still plenty of those.

She tells me she knows what they looked like and that there are pictures and descriptions of what they ate, where they lived, and how they raised their young. What she really wanted to know was how they were. How did they move through the world? What was it like to see one in real life? Jenny slides open the back door, signaling that the house is fair game again and that we best head inside soon. It's getting cool, and it's hard to see in the rising night.

I say that most animals were like people, only plainer: some were dangerous and some were benign and some were good and some were bad. You could tell by looking them in the eyes. But some of them wore masks, and you never knew what they were going to do until they'd done it.

We head inside.

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BRIAN ROUNDS

Cloudscape, 2017
Oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in



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