

Ode to a Crow

by AMTL

I.

You watchers of the predawn,
warming tree branches in late fall,
calling outside my window,
"Come and see.
Come see the moment of gray
both dark and light forgot,
the morning's dizzying breath
that rolls over us like mist,
the purposeful howling of sirens,
car tires treading damp streets.
Come see the world we prey
upon from red-shingled church tops
with silent bells —
they too sleep,
but to you awake,
come."

II.

Winter turned my sheets cold
fogged my windows
slammed my wind chimes against my house,
scattering their music
to pieces of shell and rope.
Summer's flame
smoldered beneath a pile of ash
then hissed
as though shocked
the rain was frozen.

III.

All day the crows circle the city,
collecting its whispers
in their shiny black backs,
wings spread like feathered parachutes.
I tiptoe outside,
careful not to make a sound.
I don't slam the door,
but the foundation of my house
trembles.
The crow,
into whose otherworldly eye
I cannot stare,
caws without invitation.

IV.

There are ghosts inside my chest,
stuffed in there like a closet.
They rattle my ribs like prison bars;
their breath is a flutter at my throat.
Sometimes they leak out in tears
or escape in a gasp.
Drown them drown them drown them
in rum, flood them out
at three in the morning
to ashen glass-eyed faces.
Circling, the crows
swooping, the crows
pluck pieces of my ghosts
like silver thread
and swallow them,
their bellies swelling.
I think they might burst.

V.

We walk in silence.

We water our plants.
We don't eat as well as we should.
We try to love.
We try to forget.
When someone looks us in the eye,
we glance away.

VI.

The crow's cry bends
like a tree branch cased in ice
down to touch the earth.
The crow knows —
he rattles
it from rooftops.

