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BUZZARD

Rachel Contreni Flynn

Buzzard is over-stuffed.
He's eaten too many hearts.

Now it's time to hunker elsewhere,
satisfied and away.

We will grow hungry again
and find each other.



When Buzzard was young, he was beautiful. Eyes and muscle and hair. I loved all that rough sweetness. But even then it was wrong, even when there was no one else. Wrong because he only loved the motion of us. The circling. The ascent and plummet.



The boy I loved when we were children was quickly nicknamed Buzzard. It stuck. Like a finger in cotton panties. Stuck like the t-shirts against our teenaged bodies standing in the back of a red pickup, racing the Amtrak. Buzzard ate too many hearts, mine first. I meet him now in the old house, in the ice. I kiss his neck—

the taste of home and blood. He roosts in my body like a twin that vanished before it became anything. We hear of tiny body parts extracted from the living, telling us our loneliness is for a reason. There used to be a child in the child, and now there's something stuck that grows and hurts and must be dug out.



If I've been tracking Buzzard,
it's because he won't ever,
and that's the old equation:

to crave changing the craving
as well as the nature of the creature.
He was never, but always, inside me,

gouging, asking, refusing—
talons crusted thickly
with the death of others.



Buzzard lives outside an old house outside
the town that started us. He scans the snow
for scent and entrails. I'm frozen there,

and buried. Buzzard doesn't care.
He plugs my ears with feathers. He glides
down my body—the fields, the ice, the pick-up—

until he's started a thaw and a cadaver, both.



Sad Buzzard. Never sleeps. Wants to be a man at rest
in an expensive bed, woken by the wine-breath of a woman
who never lies still but always leaves, blessedly. And in the quiet,
he wants to bash around her house, wrecking the fine things, cawing,
feeling somewhat bad about it all, but still dropping crap on marble,
granite, silks, the bone china place settings on the long shining table.



We started and will end
here. A town

off the highway where
childhood names

stick like snow and gravestones.
Buzzard

was early and so changed everything.
His brother

spied us, close-to-naked in the ramshackle house:
slapping screens, the heat

of kerosene. We started too young
and must now

repent. The brother tells us to pray
for ourselves,

but we are still ignorant and now lonely,
both buzzards.



Buzzard wants
to wear clothing,
to stop buzzing
harvested fields
for rodents pulled
under. Buzzard

wants.
It's his best
job. He wants

my life, here
in the house
where I pass

my hands over
precious things.
Child things.
Buzzard never
thinks but only

wants
to snag them.
I will let him
rob me of what

I love.
He means no
harm, and I
will let him

take
what he will.



Buzzard returns, and I've grown old.
I ought to lock him out
for I've been happy these years
without him. Without him, I have

had these years of happiness, if not
ascension. His lanky body has grown
soft, and mine, softer. Still, he pecks
at the door and airs his gorgeous wings.

The dark shimmer is not happiness.
It is heat on the highway making a mirage
like water, or a ghost that rises
into a winter sky full of fog.