

tea

she is steeping in her anger
like an old tea bag
the water swirling darker
and darker brown around her
rings are being left on the mug

she is walking to the corner bakery
where fresh bread and coffee
are made every minute
but she asks for day old
french bread, and tears it
with teeth like fangs

she is passing your house
as she does on occasion
on the way home
staring up at the window you share
and wishing that it would
shatter inward, that she could
make the glass
slice you to pieces

she is going home to wait
to sit and steep and mold
until her anger solidifies
into a disgusting congealed whole

she is staying there
because you made her the tea bag
and you poured her the water
and you asked her to wait for you,
as you left for a minute
and you never came back

-Jenny Kokai

The Meaningless Encounter

The crow caws incessantly in the leafless oak beside the barn. I think he is scolding me for sitting in the shade of the run-down building when the sun has generously shed its shyness and graced the earth with a rare appearance in January. His discordant voice screams down to me and I glare into the naked branches where his shiny black body shimmers as if sheathed in oil. I stand up and he quiets for a moment regarding me curiously with beady black eyes that I cannot see but I can feel pricking my skin. Taking a step toward him, I see he gets nervous and screeches louder with a flutter of his wing feathers. He knows that if I continue toward him, I could reach up and pluck an inky feather from his tail. I take another step. The proximity greatly disturbs him and in a swoop of feathers brushing the barren branches, he rises higher into the sunlight. Chiding me from the air, he circles my head. I jump at him and scream with a quivering voice. Damn bird, don't you sass me. Wish I had my .22. The sunlight is perfect this morning to catch the glimmer of each of his feathers as they dart away from his form and calm themselves as they buoy to the pasture below.

-Christina Smith