

# A MURDER OF CROWS

by Matt Guerrero

Our brains are built to recognize faces. This once helped us determine whether the eyes staring back at us in the firelight were those of a member of our own tribe or a saber tooth tiger. This is also why we see faces in the rocks on Mars.

But I've never seen this woman before, my father's new wife, the one he insisted that I meet, and she moves in such fluid, jittery motion that my brain can't keep up. No matter how long her bloodshot eyes stare into mine, I can't make sense of her face

She's talking about Jeopardy. *Do you remember, Edward?* She's asking my father this. *Do you remember the other night we were watching and they had the most interesting category? Names of groups of animals.*

Imagine my father next to this woman on the couch. Every night Wheel and Jeopardy and ceaseless commentary. Never visited by his son or his brothers. Only her friends, their "friends", a collection of howling drunks, barking their way through the endless night of late middle age. Faces melting with wrinkles. Every morning a clattering of bottles in the trash.

**WE GET THE LIFE WE CHOOSE.  
WE GET THE LIFE WE THINK WE DESERVE.**

*You'll never guess, she says, what a group of crows is called. I couldn't believe it—Edward, you remember how surprised I was—you'll never guess in a million years what they're called.*

*A murder, I say, before I can stop myself. It's a murder, right?*

My father's fingers tighten around the steering wheel.

*That's right, she says. That's, wow, that's ... Edward, can you believe that?*

His eyes meet mine in the rear view.

*How'd you get so smart, my father asks, but it's not a question, or a compliment.*

