

DEAD CROW, BAD LUCK

by: Melanie Page

On a twisted path through the desert, I follow my mother's lingering scent. Each grain of sand feels like a year of life aborted, piled up in this region where I walk and walk, my cheeks swollen with salt, soft to the touch, puffy. I think my body will dehydrate until all that's left are crystals of sodium. The crows will rip the skin and meat and crystal jewels from my body until pieces of me are flying in all different directions through the desert in the bellies of creatures with wide wings and dark eyes.

Like all those who are lost in the last moment of life, I want my mother. In my dreams she pulls me to this moment. I reach up and pretend that I can catch the birds leaving with pieces of me simply because they are far and my perspective is wrong. I pinch my fingers in front of my face like a lobster, catching tiny birds in the sky. If I catch enough birds, I can exchange them for an hour of her time. It's a system of bartering that she developed when I was a little girl and dead crows were deemed bad luck. One crashed into our window, and she tried to save it. My mother put wet bread into its beak and set the injured bird in a cardboard box. She rocked the bird and burped it and gave it medicine for its cough. When she let the bird go, she said a prayer and watched the bird jump into the back of a pick-up truck where it lay with two dogs.



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