



Vantablack Blues

Salvatore Difalco

Two blackbirds modeled their moods after mine, flapping querulously in the pear tree of my mother's garden. "You don't know anything," I said to them. They listened with tilted heads, then continued cawing as if in response. "We refuse to be happy today," they seemed to say. "We hate the world and everything in it except the worms." I stared at them, half-believing they'd actually uttered those words, and laughed for the first time since I could remember. Yes, I laughed aloud, slapped my thigh, held my sides. The blackbirds fell silent and studied me. "Hey boys," I said, "I'm mighty grateful for the brief respite from my grief—so don't hate me for laughing." My mother had died three days ago. The funeral had been held that morning. Not enough time had passed for me to process her death or to properly mourn it. I'd left on the black suit I wore to the funeral. Perhaps the blackbirds felt an association with me. They cawed in unison. And when I spoke, they listened. And when I laughed, they encouraged it. And they stayed with me until sunset, when I heard the echo of my mother calling me inside.

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