

A D R I E K U S S E R O W

The Crow

I saw a crow once,
pecking at the wild ferment of our compost,
a frenzy of black wing and beak, squawk and relish,
bouncing across the soggy geography.
It looked up, a little guilty,
as it gulped down something orange and nubile.
Nectar flecked across its throat,
it kept pumping its brittle wings, nervous but euphoric
dancing almost, over the ripe warm pile,
digging its claws into the juicy terrain.
And suddenly I knew how war
must feel on the earth's beleaguered back,
the constant pecking,
the restless itching armies,
the wince and smart, gush and heave of old arguments dug up
as the earth lunges through blue space,
overripe tomatoes seeping down its back
as it holds its place in the orbit,
hoping someday to shake it all off, like a dog after a swim,
the humans spackling like droplets into the galaxy,
evolution a bit surprised,
but adjusting itself politely
and beginning the long haul once more.

The Country of Your Garden

Despite everything,
the land mines, skull trees, splayed carcasses of rusted jeeps,
there you are again,
deep in the humid thighs of July,
propagating Eden, little by little,
as you walk, regal and measured,
lip curled, hands clasped behind your back,
through the hay strewn paths between raised beds,
the blazing democracy of your garden flourishing beyond
all expectation, orange flags crawling up its borders,
butterflies, deer, children, dogs, crows,
all clamor to be inside its gates, with you,
your fingers combing threads of cosmos,
scabiosa, marigold, hosta
rubbing the furry brown abdomens of Echinacea,
soft and eerie as fontanel.
Huge mopped puppets of sunflowers
bob in the wind
as you mercilessly tear the juicy weeds
from what they know is good and sweet
smoothing the soil back again,
as if you are putting a child
back to sleep in a hurry.

I'm waiving from the window,
but you can't see me. There's still time
for me to cross the border,
slip under the fence
and lie beneath you
flooded with your rough, blond, soiled hands.

Come, after all these years, prune me.

I promise I could still rise up to you
 like the sunflower, wild haired, glad and naïve

but hurry, you know our children won't sleep
 for much longer, gummy lips pouting as they follow
the rugged terrain of a scary dream's plot,

and before the morning steam burns off
 in another humid, hilly country
too close to South Sudan

another war is brewing,
 for now, the machetes silently glistening
like stones in the river,
 the toddlers waddling with their pumpkin bellies,
the farmers, methodically
 turning their dried beds of resentment
over and over. This country you have tried so earnestly to understand,
 soon to be dug up again with the claws of war,
the wild blood beds of the harvest,
 the fetid human compost strewn everywhere.

Hurry.

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