

Copulations

by Marjorie Thomsen



Image: “Shadowplay” by Megan Merchant. “Copulations” was written by Marjorie Thomsen for *Rattle’s* Ekphrastic Challenge, May 2020, and selected as the Artist’s Choice.

The woman from the zoo said a bird often sneaks copulations
with the next-door neighbor bird
while her male is off getting nesting material.
A man I know collects milligrams
of potassium, ugly yams and containers
of coconut water, near obsession
when basic staples are needed for the pantry. Another gathers
nothing, his body so flagrant with indifference
who can blame mother bird?
I’ve sought my neighbor
for ham sandwiches, conversation,
her male off accumulating knowledge
and roughage when all she wants is her name
bouncing about his mouth. I will tell my son
when he’s older to keep
it simple—bright throws for a home’s sofa,
scraps of paper for handwritten messages,
maybe farm honey and a grooved
wooden dipper. My grandfather often arrived with an earnest
purchase: egg cups in pairs for his collection, each small
round emptiness anticipating the planet’s most perfect food.
He brought home songs with moons doing things,
sang refrains about give and take
while my grandmother happily flapped
her rugs against the porch door to his birdsong.