Copulations

by Marjorie Thomsen

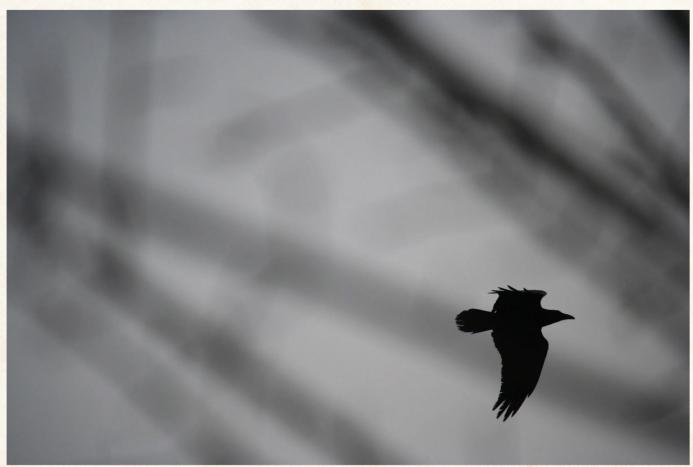


Image: "Shadowplay" by Megan Merchant. "Copulations" was written by Marjorie Thomsen for *Rattle*'s Ekphrastic Challenge, May 2020, and selected as the Artist's Choice.

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.

