There are Two of Us

by Vasvi Kejriwal

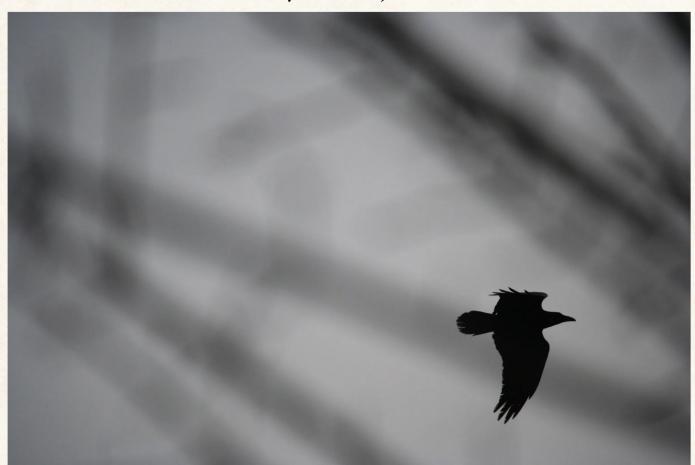


Image: "Shadowplay" by Megan Merchant. "There Are Two of Us" was written by Vasvi Kejriwal for $J \setminus \hat{I}/\mathbb{Z}$ s Ekphrastic Challenge, May 2020, and selected as the Editor's Choice.

Two faces pressed against the heat of a smoky, burner stove sky. They stared outside each other. One spoke, "My husband's last word was morphine." The faded canary of her dress reeked of tiredness and wine. To this, the other said, "The war goes on. Like the river beyond this north wall does not forget to flow." He reclined, bare-chested, like a pumiced wooden doll. She countered, "sometimes, we forget whether we are animals or Gods." Against the night-black morning, the pearls on her throat were a bloodless white. He smoked away his conscience with his pipe, with the air of an immortal as if to fuel an entire sun in his chest, and declared, "The river does not care that we kill or we love. You cannot step on it twice." His lips then froze where they slightly parted like edges of a still lake. They sat in quiet, their faces ablaze, and listened to the flap of a blackbird's broken wings. One thought of its feathers. The other thought of its flight.

