

The Roosting Heron Turns Her Head to See Me, Too

Today, a heron flew
low over the man-made
pond in Elizabeth Park:
his plummy feathers,
his long, sleek body,
his apology to the wind
for leaving it behind.
My hair is turning over
into grey, silver, really,
weaving through the dark
like tinsel or the light
early morning off the water
we chose to place here.
I believe myself hardened
to this world until I see
flowers growing askance,
bowed by the weight
of their own wilderness,
dew pearled on their faces
reaching up to the sun.
The wet of the grass
has soaked me through,
lying here to try to
remember what it is
to be sated, listening
to the hush of petals
whispering their way
through the sky as pale
pink snow, as white hairs
grow in thicker, like
fishing line, as a reminder
as why and how
to stay alive.
I remember reading
a story about a fig thief
punished, his head
chopped off in
yellow-brown sand.
No jury, no trial,
no one to stand up
for him or mourn him
and that's just the way
the world was. Is. Still.
I know how he felt,

some days, to hunger like
that, to simply want
something against your
mouth, tongue, inside
your body where all
the pain is hiding,
the inside of the fig
as blood and tissue
fading out to the color
of the—last look—
the sand. Almost casually,
I watch the heron huddle
in the reeds, maybe she,
maybe warming a clutch
of eggs. The earth's
crust shivers delighted
and I try to sleep, just
until spring is done
trying to become.

Which is Now

In the interim (which is now,)
I will leave my cravings
undefined and simply recognize
the myriad hunger. I will
remember terror is a word
meant to describe angels.
I will be as dust on an
orchard apple's skin
is called a bloom.
I will herald in an era
of being kinder to myself.

The Word

I have no words today, so I try
to let the world provide them.
I listen. I learn that nothing out
here is monotonous, is vacant.
Everything is alive and breathing,
lungs of the wind rustling the petals
of the peony, the dog's fur in furrows
down his back. The sky is getting
ready for rain, its mouth closing
ruthlessly, all colors chased off
for the steely grey I can almost see
my reflection in. I don't know when
I realized how much of my life
feels like waiting, like I'm hoarding
up the time where I'm living and
the rest renounces itself, retreats,
holds its own knees against its own
chest. A hawk cries out, high above
me, louder than a human, blue murder,
but hawks don't have words like that,
rituals like that, cowards like that.
You can't be a coward if all you're
trying to do is survive. I wonder if
the beets are ready to be dug from
the ground like dirty hearts or if they
need more time to become. The pears
are already falling, making soft, wet
collisions with the ground and the air
smells like cider. We could call this
misadventure: it isn't going how I need
it to, I needed answers or something
like them, I needed help. The tines of
the trees reach up into grey and the first
drops of rain kick up dust, make new
hieroglyphs I can't read as they move
the fresh green of the leaves. I have no
words today so I asked the world to give
them to me. The world said, *I'll give you
one, the rest you'll need to gather yourself.*
What is the word? Come closer, I'll
whisper it. The word is simple, the word
is nothing but: *listen*. I'll be quiet now.
I'll be waiting. I'll do it world, I'll
listen.

Tupelo and Honey

I wanted to be good.
I never wanted to go
to anyone on my knees.

But to know joy is
to know all aspects
of living—even, especially,
the painstaking ones.

I don't know what
I think of ideas like
god God god, but I do
know this:

My worship, near silent
and shuffling its way
through the Pine and
Sweet Gum Tupelo
rings out in the still
air of August,

paws at the ground
and the sky as if
to say *I am sorry*
for ever believing
I didn't owe this world
anything, when the truth
is more complicated.

I owe it simply
my whole, beautiful
life lived on my knees
because I am joyful
and praising
and unafraid.

The Long Year

Woke up
into the flickering
of the sun's
unbrightness—
day blotted out
into a red gloaming
by whatever new disaster
this year has decided
to unleash.

I sat down
among the fireweed's
incandescence
in the field
and remembered
how to pray.

It's only
two words,
if you want
to learn.

Ready?

Just say:
thank you.

Just say
thank you
and then
do the work
of learning

how to mean it.