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Ravens at Island in the Sky Canyonlands, Utah

Dixie Partridge

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Ravens at Island in the Sky Canyonlands, Utah

Some mornings I don't want
to be the planner anymore, to pack the water,
the cameras and binoculars, to read the maps.
I want to stand in one high spot
and be comfortable in mystery
as the unstained figures that rise
for miles—temples with worshippers
cast in reddened stone.

We can't be sure whether what we sense here
is part of desire or fear.
Maybe what we haven't known is that it's all right
to be part of an apparent emptiness—
the unseen landscape between us and the extremes
of horizon, or between this gnarled piñon
and the bottom of the deepest canyons
we have ever seen. What vanishings
would prompt our dreams
if we stayed the night on this ground,
the Milky Way a slush path
above the high, sheer dark?

On the trail back, two ravens startle out
from cedars, their synchronized wingspan so large
we shrink in our tracks
as they sweep into canyon depth
and disappear, literally, into the thin air.
And it feels right to say the word
eternal, to wonder what comes next
on the plain road to Moab.

—Dixie Partridge