

*Rosemarie Dombrowski*

**The Audubon Guide to Relationships,  
Plate No. 62**

*(The Passenger Pigeon)*

With a hawk on your tail,  
you form a vertical column,  
a coiling serpent,  
a surrealist dream trapped in a frontier agenda.

When you feed, you insert your beak into his.  
He cranes like a swan, orange-breasted and grateful.  
Your necks form the shape of a human heart.

But there's no escaping the sport of violence—  
the capture, the caging,  
the eventual extinction in the Cincinnati zoo.

When they shoot you from the sky,  
you litter the ground like a plague-in-migration.  
They ingest you for weeks,  
learning nothing about the wildness of the body  
or the impractical acts that lead us nowhere.

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**The Audubon Guide to Relationships,  
Plate No. 116**

*(Ferruginous Thrush)*

This is like the story of Hades:  
his fingers coiling around  
the ankle of Persephone  
as Demeter violently protests.  
This is what a defiant act of love looks like:  
the strangling blackness,  
the crooked branch,  
the forked tongue almost entering her mouth.

Her body is speckled, pregnant with maternity,  
her neck broken, head lolling,  
the eggs stolen by demons from the nest.  
His fuckability is curious.  
He lists savagery as his favorite ritual.

This is why you prefer Kentucky,  
those low, languid flights along the river,  
the girthy leaves of the sumac  
where you make guttural noises  
as you suck on figs  
drizzled with pear juice,  
reminisce about the broken eggshells,  
how you thrashed them against the ground  
until you had no more suffering inside you.

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**The Audubon Guide to Relationships,  
Plate No. 146**

*(Fish Crow)*

You are a bloodsucker,  
an arm-twister,  
a choker with a fan of corrugated fish  
pressed against my throat.

I am gabbing in the live oak.  
I am noisy, prone to eating garbage,  
robbing the salt-water of its muddy syllables.

We walk into a Charleston forest,  
seeds of a tallow-tree slickening our steps,  
protracted glares in our direction.  
We tell them we're not disagreeable.  
We tell them we're not common  
as we sing the tyrannical crows  
into submission.