

The Girl and the Jackdaw Tree

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JACKDAWS SWIM IN THE SKY THE SKY IS THEIR SEA

The jackdaws live in the big trees at the railway station, in the tops of the trees. I stand quietly under the trees to not frighten them away. I look up the whole time—the birds are swaying high up. Amidst all the green they look like black balls.

Mommy is buying train tickets from the station ticket office. We're going on the train to a place far away I have never been before.

Mommy thinks the jackdaws have to be seen early in the morning, when the light is still dim and the sky is dark. Mommy stood under the same jackdaw trees when she was a child.

When the first jackdaw takes flight, the rest follow. The trees swish and the branches jump, and everything around is drowned in the sounds of the birds. I crouch down smaller for a moment, and when I look up it feels like I'm looking for the sounds more than the birds.

As if the birds were swimming spirals in the sky. Swimming in big arcs away from the trees. The jackdaws are swimming in the sky—the sky is their sea.

How long does one jackdaw live? I should ask Mommy. And what happens if a jackdaw dies when it's flying? Will it fall to the ground, perhaps at my feet? And what would I do with the dead bird? I would probably take it on the train and bury it when we arrived.

The dead jackdaw would burn a black mark on my hand, and on the train I would have to tell Mommy where the black on my palm came from. Then I would have to show the dead bird; perhaps it would fit in my coat pocket. Jackdaws are burning hot birds, or at least they look like it.



That tree over there is rusted. Its surface left rust-colored dirt on my fingers. The tree should be washed like out boat, but people don't wash trees, the rain does. But now it isn't raining proper rain, just a little snowy sleet. Mommy calls the sleet autumn rain.

