

A Corvidae Contest

Once again, a daily sport
the blue jays run a relay on the wing:
feeder
tree
feeder
tree
a race of greed
a race to see who can gather up the peanuts
that my mother scatters like Easter eggs every morning

But, as I watch, a new challenger
a new name comes to interrupt the game
my favorite competitor of them all

He lights down
dark like a shadow, sleek like a fighter jet
but no, not a fighter
(not that I've seen yet)
a coward most days, in fact
but today— just hungry

The jays whiz past
they whine from the trees
once wheedling for more peanuts
now warning the newcomer who eyes their prize

He takes it all in, stately like a statue
not shaken by his distant cousins' empty jeering
and in timely fashion flicks his wings, content with his descent
and waddles
bumbles, stumbles around on the uneven grass
like a debutant's first time in stilettos
making a round about the feeder
a wide berth
needing to get a grasp on the stakes before making his play

There on the ground, fumbled by someone
one large and lonely peanut
lost in the race of the relay on the wing
the jays move too fast to see it
but his eyes are keen
keen to see the nut, the jays
(me, behind the window's screen)
a clever strategist
or a coward weighing his odds
it's all the same

No contest from the jays
(and certainly not from me)
he knows
goes forward with that waddling strut
picks up the nut
watches his cousins and me, the spectators
and gives another flick of the wing—
too humble a crow to be crowing over his victory
yet still pleased with his performance—
and takes off to interrupt someone else's backyard contest

Only a moment passes before the race resumes
a brief admiration
before the jays return to their relay on the wing
and I return to my busy morning
reminded to pause for breakfast
and the little things I often miss by racing too fast.