

Vanishing Point · *David Rigsbee*

This morning the slush-runnels lie slack and dry,
grooves where the year went like the child's globe
we moved from house to house to house
losing first the wobbly skullcap base,
then the metal cowl showing the latitudes
that it once swiveled in, until finally
it was just a ball of junk rolling
to simplicity: seven continents, seven seas
kicked under the last bed.

Stephen, let's not die too soon.
Everything has happened, but the promises
still let us go on this way. Today
is the first day there is no white snow—
only little patches of cinder-gray
shriveling at the feet of elms,
and some delta-winged birds I don't know
are gliding over with their heads hung
to see the ground slipping and slipping by.

It's this vanishing that makes me think
of you, it's the fir tree teeming
with blackbirds, and northbound summer still
lingering in some remote island off Panama.
If I barely can connect the main dots
of your short life, it's because each station
where your slow heart finally warmed a room
is a distance I must move in, the way
outer space follows us to our work.

In our story, two blackbirds made a pie:
our poverty was rich with denials,
and our father, like a frugal king, wore
his negativity like sable, and took to drink.
But now we have other, less homemade royalty.
Why else would these fidgety, wind-bitten
blackbirds dominate the window if not
to set off the spring queen as she begins passing
beneath on her way to the business of death

now that the carapace of ice has split open
with the frozen children liberated beneath it.
Already they are scattering, and I wish
you were here to tell me what it means
when they dart into the shadow. I think
the crickets will play something sweet into each
of their ears, just as the scrubbed stars wink
when the storm passes, and space bends lower
like the hard-of-hearing, though no one said a thing.