

Patricia Thrushart

Gifts

I want the crows to bring me gifts.
Their graveled cries,
their ink-dipped wings,
their careening and wheeling,
their roosting, their chattering —
these are not enough reward

for my roasted peanuts and jeweled corn.
No, I want them to drop little bleached skulls
of animals long dead, leave
shiny baubles fished from cold
campfires, a river-smoothed
pebble, a hunter's spent shell.

I want them to scold me
when I'm late
or when a drab day makes me
forget them altogether,
pulled away by life's mundanity.

I want them to care
whether I come or not.

And when I'm dead
I want them to mourn me
the way they do their own —
circling in a squawking,
screaming seance
to warn away the spirits.

That's not too much to ask
for some peanuts and corn,
for the daily ritual at the feeding altar,
brushing away old husks
as light as papyrus,

looking up for their dark wings,
their lacy fingertips against the skulking sky,
their beaks open,
carrying
my gifts.

Poet and writer **Patricia Thrushart** has published four books, *Little Girl Against The Wall*, *Yin and Yang*, *Sanctity: Poems from Northern Appalachia* and *Inspired By Their Voices: Poems from Underground Railroad Testimonies*. Her work appears regularly in *The Watershed Journal*, a regional literary magazine of Northwestern Pennsylvania, and on the websites *Dark Horse Appalachia* and *North/South Appalachia*. Her poems have been published in *Tiny Seed*, Clarion University's *Tobeco*, *The Avocet*, *Still Point Arts Quarterly*, *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, *Feminine Collective*, *Curating Alexandria*, *High Shelf Press*, *The Northern Appalachia Review* and The Pennsylvania Poetry Society's Magazine *PENNESSENCE*. Her narrative nonfiction book, *Cursed: The Life and Tragic Death of Marion Alsobrook Stahlman*, was published in December, 2021, by Adelaide Books of New York.