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THE LANGUAGE OF BIRDS

Missy-Marie Montgomery

The owls in my mind gaze over their shoulders
and lift off, intent on something. It's so early
I had not expected them to be awake
and hunting. They return with a shoelace
and all day I ponder the meaning.
It's not until evening
that a person comes into focus.
This is the way with birds, bringing us
news. Admit it: the crows overhead
have recently had something to say
and you pretended not to understand.
That bird has something to tell us, I say to my son
who is walking with me in the woods.
I am walking because I am angry. My son
is walking with me because he is kind,
though he's not a believer in the language of birds.
It's something they paint in you, I say.
It's time to go back, something has changed.
And later, while sitting with unexpected guests in the yard,
two bald eagles circled down
to take a look at us. I felt a shift in me then—
grace. Relief. Willingness to keep going.
Later I heard my son describe to a friend
in great detail the markings of the younger bird.