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L.S. McKee

Alva and the Mockingbird

Crow song and squirrel jabber
he doubles back over every cracked song
he's stolen. Inside, it's 3 AM. The sky withholds
too much dark. Neither she nor the bird can sleep
off the past, though they try. Whirring through
each song, each image to render it threadbare,
to mark it for oblivion. Forgetting is an Atlantis
they'll never reach. For the sleepless are bound
to the water's roiling surface: to break against
land, to recoil and repeat. Somehow,
Alva hears in his catalogue of obsessions her own
disposessions. A cardinal caught in rain.
A man surveying the underbelly of a leaf.
She knows the stuttering of nothing left
to say from the bird's apoplectic chorus, half a whippoorwill's
refrain unfurls and recedes, and the rain on the window,
and the empty bed repeats. Her mind lit up by whatever
it touches—this and this and this and again,
fragments of voices in the plagiarizing sea.