

## RAVEN HEART

by Janet Ruth

The raven perches, tilts his head,  
ponders with corvid brain  
the puzzles of existence,  
or at least the test before him—  
a piece of meat  
dangling from a string.  
Reaching down, he grasps  
the knotted rope of mystery,  
pulls it up,  
clasps it beneath his feet,  
reaches again, grasps and pulls,  
until he attains the prize.  
Watching him, I wonder  
if only . . .

. . . if only I could fly with the raven,  
I would raise my hands,  
watch glistening midnight feathers  
spring from my arms. I would  
leap from this terrestrial life,  
fling myself into the wind.

My companion,  
a gleam in his bright eye,  
croaks and folds his wings,  
leads me in a barrel roll.  
We double-twist,  
plummet toward earth only to  
flare our wings and  
slingshot  
back into the heavens.  
We are of the sky,  
of feathers and fire.  
We love our lives,  
know our enemies—  
great horned owl, red-tailed hawk.  
We plunge raucous,  
mock their power.

Worries diminish  
like my human life below.  
Sun blazes on my ebony back,

wind rustles my feathers,  
lifts my wings.  
I open my mouth to  
laugh but a joyous jumble,  
gargles and knocks, tumbles  
from the black hatchet of my beak.

The knotted rope is unraveled.  
Now I know how to live with  
my human hands  
and my raven heart.

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