

THE VULTURES TAKE A ROADSIDE MEAL

These black-winged angels
have come down
to resurrect the dead:
a pair of beavers
who did not make the highway crossing.

The vultures wait for a pause in traffic.
One roosts in a broken-topped alder,
wings half-spread to warm its breast in the rising sun.
One circles low.
Another perches on the guardrail.
And another, heeding the far-flung call, flies into sight.
They wait,
and then, without prayer,
when the cars have cleared,
they descend,
tear open the bodies,
gorge on fresh flesh.
In a few hours they are gone,
the thick-skinned tails are too tough
for even their beaks
and are left to smaller angels.
The crows move in and pick the bones.
In a few days all that's left
are two tire-tanned pelts.
The vultures off circling, soaring, waiting,
sharp eyes seeking the next sacrament.

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