

CHICKADEES

When you hear what sounds like collective whimpering,
you stare up at a pine tree and wonder if
the clusters of cones are keening. Or is it
the needles themselves lamenting their prickliness?
Something is always at odds with something else.
But then you gaze deeper, that drill impersonation
you do so well, and spot the chickadees,
two or more to a branch, bobbing there
whistling a choir of blues. It might be you
whom they pity, your trunk-like legs, those pinned-
back wings in your chest. Or the way the always
dusty air has turned their tongues a pale grey.
Or simple lack of love, suet in the shape of bells.
You scrimmage in your jacket pocket
for non-existent crumbs, whistling back
an apology that's shrill enough to be mistaken
for a threat. A few flit to the back of the tree,
while the others raise the temperature with a shaky
warble. You may be even less than a witness here.
Try loving that, surrendering all your special effects,
confessing that the moment has only included you as
scenery. The chickadees are whimpering so far beyond you
that the garden hasn't even happened yet. You're just
a swirl of dust, a sign that another day of creation
is about to burst. Move on, drag those legs of yours
like trails leading nowhere. Leave the tiny griefs alone.
Once upon a time the planet was all bird, a beautiful flurry
of chaos when even the trees were made of air.