

Ursula K. Le Guin

West Nile at Cannon Beach

Crow on the broken tree, cawing.
Nobody answers. A meaningless
mineral noise from the ocean
crashing and hissing, half rhythmic, unceasing.
But not the characteristic indignant
croak, or the rattle they make when they're courting.
Anthracite-shining, solid of body,
firm on the ground, heavy aloft.
Sociable creatures, gossipy. Excellent parents.
Crows do not migrate. Crows hang around.
We brought the virus, we tourists, highflyers,
over from Egypt, over the oceans
crashing and hissing the way they were doing
ages before anyone cawed, anyone courted,
anyone heard, and the way they'll be doing
after we've all gone back into silence
and nobody answers. Never a word.

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Red Alders in March

A bronze gong struck once
hums so long your ear
can follow the tone on
into out of hearing.

When the trees stand close
first hung with catkins,
that is how the color
of alders is: a ghost of light,
a rust-rose pallor, tone
so soft you catch it,
lose it, follow it almost
into out of sight.