

## **For Emily Whenever We May Find Her**

If hope is a thing with feathers, then when we've been ten years clear, our girl Erica—  
she's the Half Pint Tattooer—will carve a blackbird in our shoulder blade.  
We'll prop a chin on the back of our hands and chat with the fox she's mounted on the wall.  
She calls him Ferdinand. We'll sit and smell the flowers. But he's no bull, and this art, it ain't  
taxidermy.

If hope is a thing with feathers, then our blackbird, we'll call her Emily, will sing in the dead  
of night, though we'll need a mirror to find her. She'll needle us with her honey beak when we quit  
moving, remind us the nettle that made her left a beautiful souvenir—black ink under  
skin, no Red Devil in our veins. She's sharp, and we must stay patient and still—a lesson  
from another session.

If hope is a thing with feathers, the canvas of our flesh will curl under her wing year by year.  
We'll lather her up before she sees the sun, and her home will redden and brown—our body a  
Japanese maple with leaves that drip like blood. Our blood will thicken, slow its travels and, one  
day, stop its flow, but we know for now this heart beats, this bird sings, no Red Devil in our  
veins—not today.

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