

New Poetry by Celeste Schueler: “In Oklahoma, Another Air Force Spouse Tells Me Starlings Are An Invasive Species” and “I First Compared You To A Blue Jay”



THE STARLINGS SWOOP / image by Amalie Flynn

In Oklahoma City, Another Air Force Spouse Tells Me Starlings Are an Invasive Species

The starlings swoop and
Fly in a union

To land on red dirt and
Daddy told me blackbirds

Carry disease and the images
Of my turbulent mood swings

Are blackbirds swelling
Their feathers in my chest

And I read that *Females are
more likely to experience rapid*

cycling and mixed states and
How come my disease does

Not swoop and fly in unison
But movements breaking my brain

Yet the starlings land like an
Electric current and a therapist friend

Tells me that ECT is different
Than *The Bell Jar* but the

Only sacrifices I'm willing to
Make are swallowing pills every-

Day and therapy twice a week
And according to the DSM-5

*30% show severe impairment
in work role function* and is

That why every job I've ever had
Gave me panic attacks and I

Watch the starlings fly
In a beautiful drove and I write

An essay about my moodiness as
Birds and another military spouse

Tells me that Pacific Northwest
Corvids are the smartest and

I wonder if the crow playing
With a yellow tennis ball

Is stability and the flock of
Starlings is what my pilot husband

Tells the passengers is
Rough air and if my

Brain will always be in
Flight when all I want is

To root in dark clay along the
Banks of the Mississippi and

Bury these moods in the swamp
And Carson McCullers wrote *A most
mediocre person can be the object
of a love which is wild, extravagant
and beautiful as the poison lilies
of the swamp.* And I realize

The learned love for my brain
Is growing like the annual

Peonies in the backyard and this
Brokenness is sinking into the Puget Sound.

I First Compared You to a Blue Jay

Three years before we met,
Friends tell me to stop reading
Virginia Woolf after my suicide
Attempt and an ex-boyfriend
Gifts me a burned CD of
The Beatles at Easter—

I delete and block all my exes
But I keep *The Complete Tales and Poems
of Edgar Allan Poe* and the Drew Brees
Jersey and tell my therapist I want to
Be a writer and my psychiatrist still
Won't diagnose me—

In Oklahoma City, you sit quietly in the
DBSA meeting with me and count out
My pills and I keep all the voicemails from
Your deployments and now in this

Future I still question your apologies because
I can't believe you still love me—

I watch crows rifle through an overturned
Garbage can and a woman in a DBSA
Meeting says not to tell anyone your
Diagnosis because they will use it against
You and the ice split parts of the mimosa
Tree in Altus and I tell you I won't be
Going back—

Your hands find mine as the word
Disabled sits between us and the
Invasive bamboo is growing in our flowerbeds
Again and I confess the guilt because I
Need you more than you need me and
I'm reminded of the blue jay diving into
Trees and the lone cardinal is locked inside
Me and you have the keys.