

Redtail

By Russ Winn

I watch the pole, Pacificorp 342703, in the driveway. Wood in the weather, faded from light and rain, squats soft, spotted at the bottom, still tan from water-wear, spirals of morning glory, bits of rusted staple from old missing posters, grounding wire, straight and stiff, leads up to dark creosote patches, steel bolt stigmata, and a predator.

There at the graying top, amidst tangles of shielded coaxial lines, fibers of Telecom cable, wires wound around a dull transformer stove kettle, perched upon an overturned glass insulator teacup, sits a red-tailed hawk, her gaze another black line draping off the pole.

She's been watching rabbits in the neighborhood nudge their way through field and garden, set free from a car on the corner last year. For months they could not be counted in their numbers and shyness, but the hawk on her mast knows the colony. Loves the herd.

She watches me, too, as if to ask how long my stay here will last and how it shall end. Will it be divorce, fierce and sudden bankruptcy and whisked away by lenders, swooping death from the virus, or just the years? Just the years...

Her form ripples, feathers rouse, and she pivots on her steeple as she looks to say, "I think I could love you, if you'd like, instead of any of those other creeping things you fear. I'd make it swift, death from above, torn skin and flayed arteries, then a wet lump in the grass. More honesty than a pandemic. Less uncertainty."

Now, with the sun behind, unseen, she takes her leave, and I squint. Unable to follow.