



THE COMFORT OF CROWS

Hifsa Ashraf and Alan Summers

“*The Comfort of Crows* arrives like a perfect thirty days of November. I find this spare and wind-driven set of poems, in truth, a source of great comfort.”

— **John Stevenson, Managing Editor, *The Heron’s Nest***

“The extraordinary beauty of Hifsa and Alan’s collaborative poetry captures a mystical darkness, where mosaic rain is gently woven into velvet raven shadows. Their poetic path is elegantly crafted and brings together the classic haiku tradition with contemporary aesthetics.”

— **Anna Maris, Member of the Swedish Haiku Society**

“Crows are intelligent, wild birds who will form strong relationships with humans. I admire everything about them. The poems are thought-provoking and elegant, and embrace the different facets of life: illness, loss, death, and the courage and strength to carry on.”

— **Kris Tsujikawa, Crow Journalist**

THE COMFORT OF CROWS



Velvet Dusk Publishing

The Comfort of Crows

Cover art: Hifsa Ashraf and Christine L. Villa

First published in 2019 by Velvet Dusk Publishing
Sacramento, CA

Copyright © 2019 Velvet Dusk Publishing

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Dedicated to

*all those who dare to face their fears
and
the crows who look after Alan*

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the editors of the following journals and publications for previously featuring some of the poems that appear in this collection:

Anam Cara 2019 Haiku Competition, EarthRise Rolling Haiku Collaboration 2019, Experience Japan Festival 10th Anniversary Competition, *Femku*, *Harusame*, *Human/Kind Journal*, *Leaf-fall*, *Otata*, *Presence*, *Prune Juice*, *tinywords*, *Under the Basho*, *weird laburnum*, and *where silence becomes song*.

We wish to thank those who have published our work, and all editors, journals, and presses that support writers around the world.

THE COMFORT OF CROWS

a weaving sky
circumnavigating
into synonyms

fireflies in the deep woods lynching silence

dark veins
rolling a boulder
up to the hilltop

into the day of disappearing corners Vega star

mosaic rain:
the cul de sac
of shadow

(after Sylvia Plath)

blackendrainig

oak and alder
the firecrest weaves
a restless song

Rorschach test—
awakening from hibernation

preliminary diagnosis
the flying crows tattoo
on her back

circus moon its shadows its animals

all fingers and thumbs
the river bends & turns us
into other songs

raven shadow all I have to surrender

dark news
the comfort
of crows

midnight blue the contrail circling London

rain on the river—
when does white become
its darkest colour

crows cawing in the forest 5th generation warfare

sigh of Helios—
some dark echoes meander
through the grassland

a dreaming forest busy as Hitchcock

constellations
my consternation
in morse

black lace elderberry overshadowing my demons

Land's End
I see my voice
in the sea

Perseids weaving dreams out of the blue

an hour of silence
two tides paint
the stygian horizon

blue hour songs as if Shakespeare in Klingon

an owl's moon
watering the black
between stars

falling leaves my way out of disillusionment

jackdaws in snow
thumbing through
all our dreams

river fog the narrative that needs an impression

fifth kind encounter
humans replace crows
as an idiom of murder

every goodbye falls differently last snow



Hifsa Ashraf is from Pakistan. She is an award-winning poet, story writer, and the co-editor of *Haiku Commentary*. A multilingual poet, she writes in English, Urdu, and Punjabi. Her work has been widely published in various international poetry journals, anthologies, and magazines. Hifsa is currently working on a tanka collection of real stories about the refugees who migrated to Pakistan.

Alan Summers is co-founder of Call of the Page:
www.callofthepage.org