

Liz Hutchinson

MURMURATION

1

The tree lights up with little bodies. They spend the morning playing telephone. Their appearance is a sign of. They become a ragged cloud, mimic children, the woods, the long winter. The tree echoes their glossy black quiver.

The cloud mimics a wave, the wind, a wrong answer. Little cloud of wing and sound. Their appearance is a sign of. The tree stays in the winter, never leaves.

The cloud is a cloud of bodies. A little sky talk. A little wing swerve. Undulating darlings.

The tree lights up with little bodies, goes dark again. The tree is dead. Old birdhouse, bid farewell. Their appearance is a sign of. The cloud settles, mimics twilight.

Their appearance is a sign flying back and forth. What's next, what's next? The dead tree mimics a dead tree. The branches light up with rustling.

2

The cloud shakes the sky, tries to throw us off our axes. Their little bodies punch holes in the light. Swerve west, mimic the sun. Tight together, make a fist. The dead tree is still dead, still mimicking itself. The tree is pretty much nailing it. Is a tree still a tree after it dies?

The cloud whirls over a parking lot, more neurons than birds. This way, this way. Electrical impulses mimic a wheel, turning. We all fall down.

Birds talk more to the sky than to each other. The cloud splits in two, seams back together. Mimics a mother, mimics any human dwelling. Mimics the feel of. Stretches itself out over the field, the woods, the long winter.

The cloud bombs the parking lot. Look out, parking lot.

3

Little bodies blanket the sky. Their appearance is a sign of.

The tree mimics the rain, only very slowly. Sometimes a twig drops to the ground. Sometimes more than a twig.

The tree is falling. Someday it will fall. The tree doesn't mind. The tree doesn't care about anything. Say goodnight, birdhouse.

4

The cloud perches in a dead tree. Mimics it. Echoes.

Their appearance is a sign of a long winter. Goodnight.

5

If a tree lights up with little bodies, is it still really dead? Yes, the answer is yes. A dead tree is a dead tree, not that it matters to the cloud.

In the long winter, it can be hard to tell dead trees from the live ones. And yet, and yet. Their appearance is a sign of. This way, this way. They mimic the feeling.

Winter, keep blowing. Tree, go dark again. Ragged cloud, pass overhead.