

Bird Song
by Erin Evans

They say they can hear crackles inside me
when they press the flat cold parts
of their stethoscopes against my back
where they imagine my lungs must be
and tell me to take a deep breath.

But when they used that word for the first time,
when they described what they were hearing as a “crackle”,
what I heard was “grackle” and immediately I thought of Texas
and all those noisy blackish purple birds
that can turn trees into black clouds.

Remember how long we stood in line waiting to buy cupcakes
that were sold from the window of a silver airstream?
My February skin burning under the Texas sun,
but I couldn't stop watching the grackles as they gathered in a tree
calling to each other, or to us, or to no one.

Their squawking chatter that sometimes sounds like the rusty old hinge
of a door so heavy it takes years to open.

I took a picture of them perched or perching in that tree
and now it hangs on the southern wall of my apartment
reminding me, not of those long tailed birds exactly,
but more of what patience tastes like if you hold on long enough.
Something like red velvet, only sweeter and cooler on your lips.

Now, 337 days later I'm sitting in the hospital for the twelfth day,
and somewhere inside me,
in the dark secretive caverns of my lungs
I imagine a door with it's rusty hinges being pushed
ever so slightly with each deep breath that I take
and the nurses and doctors and respiratory therapists
listen carefully every few hours
trying to decipher if the door is being pushed open or slowly shut.

And each time they cock their heads to one side
and seem to be looking through me
I can hear it too,
the grackles, high up in that tree
speaking a language I have yet to learn.