

Games and Crows

It's so quiet that the scratch of squirrel claws up the pine tree across the street is as clear as radio static. The biggest tree in the neighborhood and if ever on this Earth there was born an Ent, this is it—the closely clipped lawn at the base of this tree is a three piece suit on a king-maker. Crows in the tree caw the conversation of emphasis and indifference that comes with cards, the braying and piety damning luck and praising booze that is any game wagers, while these crows are taking the pine cones off the rich man. They are betting too much as tree branches bend with the shuffle and two nasty blue jays circle looking to crash the party. Color conscious, they keep residence in a blue spruce that has always reminded me of an old deck of cards—a deck of cards compliment of some ocean liner or make of car that was scrapped before rock and roll. An old deck of playing cards is more like a well worn hand tool than an old hardback book, slick from years of use and while not ideal for dealing, pleasant on the fingers from those many summers tilling. When the crows don't take the bait the blue jays fly back around the house to chase chick-a-dees, and up the street, the arrival of 1970's station wagon complete with replica wood on the doors and tail means the game of bridge on the screen porch two doors up is four gin and tonics away. Tuesday driving back from the grocery store my daughter and I saw five turkey buzzards on top of the backstop at the town's little league field looking for all the world like they were sizing up life as an opponent, and our people about their games and occasional croquet our children death's team made me caw, my daughter chirped. Out on the front lawn exactly where the Ent's shade and the evening sun meet I'm meeting a beer and playing solitaire with the sky: snapping the this long sunset down like a long run ace to deuce...the neighborhood roils with life but readies, I guess, to play for death and holding a hand of spades and clubs makes even the bullying blue jays life bet and the wonder of living this moment game on. The neighbors laugh and ready to play, birds kibitz, and dealt out all wonder is whether the house of cards holds together, these nests in trees, these houses.