Registry

Jiaan Powers

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Down the Hall
Joan Reese

Snapshot Outside the Ladies Room
A checkered hijab shields her head, a student kneels, back to this hall, bare feet expose themselves to all the women who must pass by here. Her soles’ skin leathered as she tilts toward carpet tiles whose corners meet her lowered forehead, angled east. The land she seeks is far from us but still its twin’s the Texas dust that’s tamed today by Texas rain. She bows, then lifts, then bows again, recites her faith in words so thin they slip right through both windowed wings framing this hall, and no one listens as she prays except a pair of carrion crows who roost upon a concrete ledge, their shimmering capes smoothed rainfall wet, their skulls a naked, wounded red.

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I forget your name.
I remember your face.
That afternoon in class
We had to be fingerprinted.

We were astonished.
Outside the world was
All rumble and rain.
Inside my world fell to dust.
God? Where are you?
We were herded out
Into the city storm.
I remember, too
Looking back at the windows.
And then we were gone
Into the mountains
Deep into China
I and the poets.
Who could have known
Those sunsets there
Would stay the lights in our eyes
And open doors for our words
To tend our mystic selves,
And see beyond into
The realms of God.