

birds

I hear it on the border of our clamor—
the dawn-soaked promise
of chirping birds
above unbroken crusts of snow.

Just as the frozen earth
begins to glow with morning,
they carry on conversing
over interrupted matters.

I only catch snippets
from my nest of wood and stone,
but I'm old enough to know
what it means: renewal.

A second chance. The quiet
reemergence of stems and leaves
and all discarded hopes of
just what we could be

last year. The future is
here now. Are you who you

wanted to be, now? Have you
conquered that fear, now?

Did you seek adventure,
the way that introverted,
little heart of yours
desired?

Did you set fire to obsession,
let it burn in the branches
of a wintered tree—an effigy
of whom we've finished being?

Did you find love
in the arms of a stranger,
turn him (or her)
into a fellow pioneer?

Have you gone anywhere
but here? Or have you stayed,
where the devils are familiar,
request the same drinks every day?

It's not a failure
if you haven't. We all
want to grow but
have no idea what that

looks like. How we go
about cleaving off
unhelpful parts of us
like stone hiding sculpture.

They never told us
how to live without
being miserable. It was
just assumed we'd find our way.

So it's okay if,
at your springtime table,
you find you're barely
able to face yourself,

if resolutions to be
someone else seem hollow.

You don't need another

self or life or past.

You can grow despite
all the chaos that
consumes you. Growth
is just resuming

being you.

And they'll see it.

And they'll love you, too,
the way they always have.

Birds never feel bad
for starting over.

The sun doesn't curse
his habit track.

We ebb and flow like
solemn, fearsome oceans.
And we demand to live
the time we won't get back.

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By Alina Martel