Where the Tiny Things Are: Feathered Essays

Nicole Walker

Published by Punctum Books

Walker, Nicole.
Where the Tiny Things Are: Feathered Essays.
Micro Prairie Dogs &
Micro Turkey Vultures

Seventy days it hasn’t rained. It’s a record but when I turn on my
tap, the water still runs. On the drive home from Kayenta, horses were
licking the side of the road, hoping whatever had spilled from that Ford
F-150 ahead spilled something lappable.

Nearer to my house, the prairie dogs run into the road. My daughter
Zoe screams when she sees them on the yellow lines. They pile upon
the stripes, for some reason. Perhaps they think, as I do, that massing
together brings rain. Maybe they’re trying to cover up the yellow that
is obviously preventing the black monsoon clouds from letting go their
water. Maybe they are trying to get to the other side, where the houses
have hoses. The yellow lines bar them from access.

I should bring a bowl of water to them, although that may be
somewhat like littering—big pink bowl in the middle of the prairie dog
town. And I’m no scientist. I shouldn’t interfere with their ecosystem.
And yet, I already am sucking up all their water through my pipes. I water
the daisies with them. Daisies from Mt. Shasta who somehow think this
desert-living isn’t so bad, as long as you have a Nicole to tend to you.

I still might take the water to the prairie dogs just like I still might
take the chicken drumsticks that have gone bad in my refrigerator out
into the woods. I worry that the vultures might get salmonella but I’m
pretty sure they’re stomachs are prepared for rotten chicken. I worry more that they may become reliant on my chicken delivery service and next week will start amassing on the fence. I’ll try to go running through the gate with my dog and they, sensing no chicken, will find Nicole meat tasty enough. Or they’ll at least look at me with their turkey necks. Chicken-loving cannibals. So instead I throw the chicken in the garbage. Five chickens died for those ten legs. And now the vultures are hungry and the prairie dogs are thirsty, so I have a glass of wine, turn away from the forest, turn away from the prairie dog town, look at the sunset, look out to sea, and save some water.