

## **The Cormorant**

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One night, our dock receives a visitor.  
Of the avian variety.  
He is not a loon, though one can see the resemblance.  
Not a heron, though he is endowed with the same grace.  
His feathers are the color of ink.  
His beak hooked, with an arrogant orient.  
His feet are short and squat and sturdy.  
His eyebrows bushy and white, reminiscent of my grandfather's.  
Is his tail an afterthought?  
It's like the fringe of a cape,  
Like a flat, pragmatic paddle.  
Such a creature sounds as if it would be comical—  
Yet somehow, he is elegant.  
He holds his wings in the air to dry,  
Stretches them wide in full glory.  
He knows he is royalty;  
He knows he is a rarity in this place.  
Not everyone can name him, but those who can say it with wonder:  
"A cormorant has graced us with his presence!"  
He is the subject of a nature lesson one day,  
The subject of a sermon illustration the next.  
And one day we try to get close.  
He's remarkably calm when approached,  
But the look in his eyes is one of vigilance.  
He anticipates our every move.  
Then with an expiration of patience, he lifts his wings  
And shapes air for his convenience.

It harkens his commands,  
And he soars with deliberate intention low across the water,  
Then turns.

*I will grant you one last look.*

Our eyes trace his movements,  
Our bodies turn in circles to watch  
As he neatly circumnavigates us,  
Almost within arm's reach.

Another circle, and another,  
As he harnesses greater height,  
And then he's gone.

Leaving us breathless from our encounter with a King.