CHELSEA DINGMAN

As if Whatever is Leaving / Is the Prayer We’ve Been Meaning to Come to

It might be that I’ve been wrong
about the crow & that power
line that wears it now. That gone child
in the pink feathers of a magnolia
tree, discovered after a party by the lake
last night. The particular loneliness
I’ve become accustomed to calling
prayer—the last room one enters
not to leave, perhaps. The edge of some dream
one will carry to the end of a life
but not be able to enter. The sky, another
unbearable thing. How long
must we look for what will outlast us
when the sky is above, a single
mistaken flame? Like that child. I keep
coming back to the child
when my heart is aimless. When there is little
to do but hunt my own
ruin in grasses that shatter at the base
of the willow tree that grows
into the lake. I remember being young & how
I loved someone. That love
has become something else now. Its tenderness
broken. Its brokenness, tender.
Wherein, there are feathers fleeing the sky
tonight. Thieving this dark
from memory. I’ve mistaken beauty for direction
from this acre of unknowing. Might
we move toward each other, rather
than away. Even in death. Might
any movement mean this night & the next
are the only afterlife. I can’t help
but think that I am arriving at myself
whenever I wake.