

## Black Paws

Andante ♩ = 76 - 84

Death ft. Ms. Raven  
(2010-2024)

You've heard this song before.  
This chorus of death.  
And while *this* melody may feel new, you have memorized the steps this song leads you through.

Death lifts Her baton, signalling Her orchestra's attention.  
This song begins its overture one Wednesday afternoon in February.

Death, She is all our friend, for She saves us from eternal suffering, but ooo Her song is swift and it stings.

As you hear her song, your nails dig into your palms.  
You watch *her*, the muse of Death's song, fur flecked with grey, eyes blue with age.  
Raven lays unmoving, the panting and tremors finally over.  
She is at peace, but where is your peace?

You noted the exact moment when that disputed thing known as the soul left her.  
For in its absence nothing was left.  
Death leaves nothing behind, for Her song is absolute.  
She chews and sucks at the marrow claiming every fragment of your being.

You gather around to hold what is left of her.  
The unnatural stillness feels wrong against your palms.  
The cold creeping in is anathema to your warmth.  
You can't help but think how much Raven hated to be still and even more so to be alone.  
How she would lean against you to ward away her fears, feeling safe in the surety of your warmth.

Death's song begins to mix with Raven's, her sound the echo of weary black paws.  
And the result clatters against your ears.

But with each passing moment, her steps become less pained, more youthful than the last.  
And begrudgingly, you are grateful.  
She will live out the eternal happiness all good dogs deserve.  
But that will irrevocably take something of you.  
Sending you back into the world a shred less of who you were.

And yet, this moment of pain is proof of a lifetime shared with another soul.  
Who spoke a language different from your own.  
Who viewed the world in ways you will never understand.  
But yet was loved and loved you too.

[Khadijah Jabari-Bent]