

# The Murder of Crows

*by* David James

**The one-legged crow was back in the yard again. It was there yesterday and maybe before, but yesterday was the first time I noticed it. I've been using my binoculars lately. It is interesting to me...to bring things closer. And it's not just birds, but other things like the mailman fumbling to insert bills, and occasional letters in our mailbox at the curb. Yesterday, I saw two squirrels fucking — or doing something that looked like fucking.**

**With binoculars, I could see the crow's stump at a place just below what my kids would call his drumstick. Anyway his left foot was missing. Yesterday, I considered it a novelty. Today though, the second sighting caused me to wonder how this crippled bird would alight in a tree, or on a wire. I wanted to see the crow land on the grass to feed on insects grubs or whatever crows eat in my yard...every sunny day.**

**The other crows didn't seem concerned about their crow brother's disability. They ate together and didn't seem to notice or care about the "missing foot". The one-legged crow, my one-legged crow, was comfortable, not seeking favors. He couldn't walk, but he certainly taught himself to hop.**

**These iridescent and beautiful black birds, contrasted with the green grass, were not the same creatures I remember. In youth, crows were for shooting. They were wily and always seemed to have a lookout crow companion that alerted them when there was danger. "A human! Fly, fly, fly your asses off." While I hunted them often, I rarely killed one.**

**Looking at these birds in my yard, I felt ashamed of my youthful crow hunting. Back then, it was easy to justify hunting crows and killing them. Why they robbed the nests of other birds—for Christ's sake. They broke and ate the eggs. They ate the babies and the fledglings of helpless, smaller**

**birds. To a twelve year old with a new pellet rifle, it seemed my duty to protect the smaller birds from their mortal enemies, the crows. Now, for the first time it hit me. When I was around ten years old, I used to shoot smaller birds. I did it because they were good targets for my BB gun. I did it because it was boring to shoot tin cans and bottles, things that did not move to make the shots more "sporting". I did it because you don't hunt tin cans and you don't hunt bottles. Today, I realize that when I was ten, I too, was a mortal enemy of the smaller birds.**

