

Tale of a Titmouse

By Holly Dunlea

A Jay hops
from one branch
to another
then flies off.

A tufted titmouse
follows in his wake, first one,
then her mate,
then a cluster, six and more,
add to the foliage of white breasts,
peaked crowns and observant eyes.

So restless,
as they peck and search and listen for food,
for predators.

They chatter boisterously,
laughing at each other's antics,
exclaiming at their own successes,
jitterbugging to their own jive
in the tree that sits outside my window.
The Cape breeze rustles the tree's fern-like leaves,
encouraging a group shimmy,
and lichen tickles their breasts.

A branch stretches an arm toward my window,
pointing at me,
encouraging me to leave my shelter
and seek serendipity under its embrace.

One titmouse advances along that branch
with swank in his hop,
displaying his balancing skills.
Bravado fills his exploration of the tree,
venturing closer to the end
of his Marco Polo excursion.
He cocks his head from side to side,
my presence in his world a conundrum.
He prattles his hello
and fluffs his feathers,
boasting as he sings and chortles.

Then my dog barks,
and the tree bursts with life escaping.