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Portent

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Portent

Waxwings, four on a branch,
passing berries to each other,
their gray-brown bodies hard in the sun,
the blood-bright berries.

Around the birds are thorns,
white-spiked, red-tipped.
It is 1969 again, in the garden
of the Shah of Iran—

eyes black-masked,
a globe of blood in each mouth,
and I'm being told they are
not known for their singing.