

## And Then There Were Three

First there were four yellow goslings  
Shepherded by four adult Canada geese  
Through tall grasses around the pond,  
Twice the usual parental protection.

One morning after we mowed the grass,  
Wild goose honking shattered the quiet.  
A battle of wings, shrieks, feathers flying,  
A dark shape lifted up from the fray,  
A knot of yellow feathers in its talons.  
An Eagle, no way to stop it.  
Then there were three yellow goslings.

The Eagle had come before,  
When my father died.  
Lifted him up, he said,  
Pointing to the ceiling from his death bed,  
"They'll take the whole shebang."  
We could only watch,  
Holding his withered hands,  
The Eagle took him,  
No way to stop it.

The Eagle came again,  
A few years after, in the lofty Himalayas,  
Lifting my brother from a trail,  
On invisible wings, he was taken  
Into thin air, a magician with oil and canvas,  
Who would never paint again.  
Dropped a thousand feet  
To a wild river gorge below,  
No way to catch him.

Many years later, when we were not watching,  
Our mother floated upwards one evening,  
In the feathered arms of the Eagle.

She wanted to fly to Tulsa,  
To find my father where they had met,  
Married, and started our family.  
Her mind left in pieces,  
Pieces of the past that broke away,  
Like ice calving into seawater,  
Things remembered that did not happen.  
Things forgotten that did.  
On silent night wings, she left us,  
No way to stop her.

As I watched the three remaining goslings,  
Small golden cockles on the pond,  
An Eagle broke from a fir tree  
Spooked by the door I opened.  
Then, lightening fast and silently furious,  
A black speck dove at the Eagle,  
A tiny machine gun,  
The Red-Winged Blackbird, defying death,  
Strafed the Eagle again and again,  
Driving it beyond the tree line,  
Away from its nest.  
No stopping that Blackbird.

In the reeds around the pond,  
The golden goslings graze.  
I watch life as it unfolds,  
In this present moment,  
And find a glimmer of joy  
In the Blackbird's song.