

Nestling

Michael R. Collings

They hatched today. Last night
when I peeked among the apples
they were eggs, four, end to end
among twigs and scraps and a twitch
of white yarn looped up and around,
an inadvertent infinity.

*Jamie called
last night to say he was doing well
and for her not to worry.*

This afternoon I stood on tiptoes
at the patio's edge and saw her tail
upright, white striped with charcoal gray,
upright and alert. I backed away and
moved to the other side of the concrete
slab to finish the barbecue.

*Jamie was going to come by for dinner
but did not. His mother thinks his car
broke down again, but I don't think
that was the reason.*

After dinner, while we were cleaning up,
I glanced at the nest once more. She was
perched above my head on the power line,
and this time when I leaned into the apples
she shrilled at me—and then I saw four tiny
bits of grayish fluff, four sharp orange throats
stretched taut and expectant. It startled me.
She shrilled again, and I stepped back
into the shade.

*Tonight Jamie called but would
not speak to me. His mother cried. I waited,
but he would not speak through
the static and the silence of
the telephone.*

Sitting in my office, I can hear them, subtle
chirrup just beneath the Mozart concerto
playing on the tape to ward away the silence
and the memories.

Their infant song hangs softly,
fragile on the air, underneath the mellow horns.
I shall leave the window open for a moment more,
then slide it shut, shut out their nascent song.