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“Girl, 7, Seeking U.S. Flight Record, Dies in Crash”

Headline from April 12, 1996 *New York Times*

There are things you can put a sound to:
the air's rush through aluminium vents, the catch
of flaps on the wing, ticks of hail, the dead hum
of a magnetic needle pressed past
zero, and in those moments you remember

California, a green alphabet
spilling over Half Moon Bay,
circles of topography, a cloud
in the shape of a hand. In these moments

a woman is typing at her desk, a grandmother
recites a baroque prayer in Spanish,
a teenager refines his second-ever kiss, a man
lights a cigarette in gridlock traffic, and they are

like you, at ordinary ages, practicing
the routine of a blue sky in bad weather,
circling the edge of a century
and trying to stay even. You are seven,

attempting a U.S. flight record, close
to birth, and diving into the earth
like a woman already
forgotten, a girl asking her mother,
Do you hear the rain?

The Birds

As Sunday dusks, my cold lawn
turns into a school of voices: pitch
and crack, their voices like a boy's adolescence
laid out in the grass, no absence

to be found in their huddle of black bodies.
Mean-eyed, they pick and pick
at the pale roots of grass and hire
unnamable insects into white air.

There is nothing subtle about this.
They exact them like parcels, gulp them down.
And on with the flailing chords
that inflame and edge towards

the dying of the sun. Tree to tree,
their black cords of voices hang,
paired like old socks on the line and as loose.
They can not speak to where they are going to.

Tender, these strings rend
clans from one another,
give them names like grackle
and finch. They are fickle,

they argue and hiss, they grow weary
of their directions farther South.
They land, pick, take, take off.
They want nothing of the roof

that intrudes, stark and Hitchcockian,
into their view. They do not give a damn
about the human. But I imagine
they do. I make their wings engines

wildling against a lady's hair,
their viciousness in the lawn
an attempt at flesh or murder in wait.
I suppose, after all, that our cognates

are fear and food. But this is nonsense.
Their song points in many directions:
ledges, lawn, house—their arms compasses
that stretch to the edges of Texas.