

tiny spruce & thunderbird eggs

birds whose voices open patterns in the trees
their yellows & greens & red-tipped wings
settling like pollen on the ground
filling the pathways through the trees
with echoes of their songs

last night I dream of three birds, each of them a replica of the next. the first is a small songbird who flies into the house through the open door. the bird is colourful, her feathers a crazy quilt of brilliant yellows & reds, oranges & greens, purples & blues.

grandma joan is in the next room, her fear of birds frozen in her arms. so, though I long to listen longer to the songbird's song, I lead her back out through the open door. no sooner does that songbird leave than in walks a prairie hen looking like she's quilled & quilted with the same splashes of colour, her wings wiggling & her bottom bouncing as she makes her way towards the kitchen – her toes click-clicking on the hardwood floor.

then barb walks in the door. barb, who travelled twice the distance to be with me, her black hair thick & delicate, her round crown circling her perfect tiny head, & her hands the flutter of butterflies, flying through town to announce her birth. brother held her first, his little boy wings brushing, touching her face, her hair, her hands. the look in his eyes – a knowing from the spirit world – reflected into mine as he passed his sister in a breeze so gentle, his scent her sweet protection, for life.

barb's my baby still, now with children of her own. in the dream she tells me,
mom, don't put that bird outside. I saved her from the zoo. but the bird is gone
& framed in the doorway – the sunshine bright against the deepest reaches of
a chinook arch – is my little birdy-girl, my granddaughter jessinia, holding a
small stuffed crazy-quilted bird.

look, nokomis, look, she says. I got her at the zoo. her name is great grandma
joan & she likes tea biscuits & fresh, hot tea. & up comes a wind only the prairie
can bring, sand rushing through the open door like fog over water.

sand in my throat
& songs that coax the ancient ones
to their homeland
& still, after all these years
that moment I looked into barb's eyes
her looking into mine
I knew she knew me too
& jessinia, born eyes wide open
hers looking into mine

we three are
trees inside the rain
each round drop surrounded by the sound
of mother