

# 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.