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Sorrows (A Sestina)

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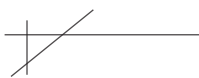
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mary callahan baumstark

SORROWS (A SESTINA)

Erratic flutters the bird trapped inside this heart of mine.
And with the cupboard of my chest exposed, it uses my ribs to nest.
Sorrow makes its bed, sinking home.
My chest is a cold cathedral, a bare bones goodbye.
Water trickles down the eaves when I swallow
and stains the floor like paper.

Like the floor, I am a tea stained piece of paper,
and I'm sinking. This empty body of mine
curls like dog-eared pages, makes it hard to swallow.
This bird made a roost here, to nest,
filled with bits of nothing and letters of goodbyes.
The rib-lined cavern of my chest is becoming home.

It's cozy down there, sorrow is furnishing a home,
hanging pictures from my sternum, walls covered in paper.
Breathing as deep as I can, there's no exhaling a goodbye.
The bird and sorrow are hand in hand, just out of reach of mine.
Their embrace is cold and shivers ripple from their nest.
In this cold cathedral, nests are only made by swallows.

It seems that the dip in flight of the swallow
is the turn of the confused seeking home.
And they have made a place to nest,
between the ribbed walls, and with dark, stained paper.
They seem happy in this wicked chest of mine.
They needed room for an armoire, so my right lung said goodbye.

It was a difficult goodbye,
more difficult than forcing sorrow into a swallow.
As for my chest, I have an armoire, a lung, and sorrow in mine
and my ribs are without the skin they call home.
My breath is as white and crisp as paper
without a lung in which to nest.

Like the intertwining of threads, the nest
is the fabric of this sorrowful, desperate goodbye.
Woven from my tangled hair and the bones of paper,
I look the bezoar in my mouth and swallowed,
like a war-time secret, desperate for home.
These threads, tangled or not, are mine.

Without this tearful nest, I am without what is mine.
Sorrow has made such a home here, it is impossible for goodbyes.
The swallows are content to swoop and dip as they please, and
I am paper thin.

