

Crossing the Double Yellow

by Holly Dunlea

A car slows for the turkey hen and three chicks
that emerge from the dry leaves.
They skitter across the road;
the last chick flaps untested wings
then disappears into the field.
It is too soon for him to fly.

Cruising home from the North,
the silver Grand Am glides low on the road.
He caresses the corners,
hanging on the rim of his tires. Squeals
reverberate off stone walls; dust
flies in his wake. A chipmunk freezes,
then dives into the woods
as the vibration on the road nears.
A crow flies overhead and circles above the trees,
rejecting remnants of a flattened snake
for the safety of the crown.

A van crunches its way down a driveway,
cradling children encumbered
with sleeping bags and CD players.
The van pulls in front of a pickup. The pick-up's driver,
anxious to head north, must slow his truck
until the family gains speed on the down side of the hill.
They pass a pine that has fallen
into the marsh during a storm.
The marsh fills the bottom land with minnows, insects and frogs.
Loons occasionally visit, testing water depth,
rejecting the tangle of litter mixed with weeds.
Ants run beside beer cans buried in the brush
while dragonflies dance along the water's surface.
A frog sits silently in anticipation of a meal.

The Grand Am enters the bottom-land,
challenging the curves along the marsh.
He builds strength and speed for the hill
as he approaches the next bend on two tires.

Red lights reflect off the marsh waters as men in
grey "RESCUE SQUAD" shirts survey the scene.
The driver of the blue pickup
braces himself on his truck bed. He trembles, groans,
then flexes his knees. His truck, undamaged,
rests in the middle of the road.
The children huddle near the ambulance
then wade as a unit
through stuffed animals, car parts and broken headphones,
hovering around a neighbor who escorts them to his home.
The Grand Am is swallowed by the brush,
the front half submerged in the marsh
which lies silent and still, concealing any sign of life.
The passenger airbag has blood on it.
A young man
emerges from his muscle car. He is stoned.
"Where's Karen? Where's Karen?"