

Melody Leming-Wilson

Sirens

A family of quail glide across the road: two adults and several
miniatures—
each bobbing confidently somewhere.
I slam on the brakes, fishtail, consider my mortality . . . theirs.
They drop unceremoniously to the shoulder and go on with their day,
while I consider time.

I had been rushing. To my right the Three Sisters stretch languorously
in the morning sun. Their complexion blends from early summer sky
to innumerable acres of field dotted with cows grazing unperturbed.

This is not my first time past the split-rail fence, always occupied by
one or another vehicle startled into parking, "Take a picture!"
I have wondered, Do the ranchers tire of tourists?
Isn't the picture always the same?
Isn't every mountain beautiful?

The Three Sisters, one slightly aloof, take it all in stride.
Like long-legged women at a street-side café, they beckon
weary travelers: "It's warm and I stretch patiently before you."
"I am infinitely gentle and easily scaled."

For an instant I consider jumping from the car,
hopping the fence and galloping across the field. It would be easy,
clearly. Just a lazy slope down and away from the road
then another up toward the mountain,
which (from where I sit) I can hold in the palm of my hand.
It is a matter of perspective. It is the call of adventure.

But I am not susceptible to quests. I am
unlikely to stake anything on a dream . . . even one
laid brazenly before me, an obvious
rendezvous with geological time. I do not
break cadence. I do not digress.

Reminded of the car behind me, I accelerate with care,
watchful of wildlife
as the distance gradually increases
between myself and the sky.

