

Mark Thalman

## Elegy for a Common Field

Gone are the deer trails and coyote tracks,  
the century-old firs, the giant oak  
with the tree fort.

Gone is the snag the kestrel used for a perch,  
moles forming miniature mountain ranges,  
spiders spinning webs  
across newly plowed furrows,  
so threads resembled thousands of wires  
stretching across America.

Gone is the topsoil  
dumped in the ravine, the wheat  
that flourished every summer,  
the slant of evening light  
turning grain the shade of champagne.

Gone are the goats  
that occasionally wandered over  
from Jones's farm, the milk cow  
who enjoyed walkabouts,  
red-tailed hawks appearing  
after combines harvested  
to eat eviscerated mice.

All because a father dies, and his grown children  
inherit the land, money changes hands,  
a developer threatens to sue  
to get an urban boundary moved,  
and a city council votes  
unanimously for their idea of progress.