

# Failure to Launch

by [Laura Celise Lippman](#) (March 2021)



*Robin*, Joan Lok

**It's chick fledging** time  
and sometimes it's hard to tell  
if the babes have come and gone  
or are just out flying.

Sometimes I swear they play Quidditch,  
when white feather tufts waft down

from the point of the A-frame where  
the barn swallows nest every year.

They roost on the bird-proofing spikes we installed,  
so we gave up on our efforts to banish them forever.  
Now they are like itinerant family,  
back each year for a clutch or two.

This morning while we walked our dog  
there was an almost fledged robinling  
in the middle of the road,  
its brown speckled chest morphing to robin red.

It's easy for it to run and try to launch on  
smooth flat asphalt exposed to hawks and owls;  
the roadside thickets of nettles and brambles  
are hard to navigate with short legs.

We kept the dog away, while  
the chick's parents dive-bombed  
crows on the phone wires and sparrows  
chirped an empathy racket.

Back home the violet-greens flew  
loop-de-loops in front of the nest box  
we placed on the shed,  
ensnaring buzzing creatures we couldn't see.

Their nestlings were still box-bound—  
which meant we didn't cut the grass  
for fear of chasing them from their nest.

Now I dread our evening stroll . . . that tiny robin in the  
road.

[Table of Contents](#)

---

**Laura Celise Lippman's** work has appeared in *Crack the Spine*, *Crosswinds*, *La Presa*, *Mobius: The Journal of Social Change*, *Pontoon Poetry*, *Poydras Review*, *Journal of Family Practice*, and *Sin Fronteras/Writers Without Borders*. Lippman has attended numerous writing conferences, including the Port Townsend Writer's Conference, and Hugo House Workshops. She attended Bryn Mawr College where she studied with Kate Millett and Lila Karp in one of the nation's first women's studies programs. Lippman received her M.D. from the Medical College of Pennsylvania. She practiced medicine for thirty-seven years and raised two children in the Pacific Northwest. She enjoys the outdoors and shares her love of the natural world with her family and friends.

**Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](https://twitter.com/NERIconoclast)**