



Image: "Family" by Gouri Prakash. "Grief" was written by Susan Carroll Jewell for *Rattle's* Ekphrastic Challenge, October 2021, and selected as the Artist's Choice.

# GRIEF

Susan Carroll Jewell

She lands with the others, but now has turned away  
without ruffling this pond. Each feather carries its own

reflection, wings tucked, tails up, self-involved,  
unaware that she is drifting clumsy and tired

into a marshy space. You watch, guessing at the patterns  
beneath the surface, how legs rhythmically punch webs

through water, the complicated currents she cannot navigate.  
Her hollow bones fill with heaviness. The others move on.

She drifts away in the open, abandoned like the egg  
that never hatched, the unfamiliar commonplace of loss.

You want to tell her that nothing lasts forever, show her  
the brilliant colors of this day, but a blind eye cannot see

even if it tries. You want to believe in science, that simple  
observation can affect what happens, that your attention

can make a difference, alter her direction. If this were true,  
we could clear the heavy air. We are so small on this tiny pond.