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A Summer's Grief

One sunny Saturday,
I knelt before the ash door
at the chimney-base,
cleaning the woodstove
for winter.

Inside, I found a downy-breasted
duck mummified, her orange beak,
black, gaping. I carried her with both hands,
scraped a grave beside some marigold plants,
patted the earth smooth.
I thought about her wings' beat,
frantic quacking,
darkness, begun as a spring search
for hollow space
to lay her eggs.

Was it a day when the dogs barked
at nothing? How long
did the mallard circle that flue
before he gave up? While
on the other side of the wall
we sat and played Scrabble.
While the blue wall-clock ticked
and ticked.