

Mourning Dove

by [Paul Willis](#) in the [February 2024](#) issue

Five days after my father died,
I passed a brown mourning dove
perched atop a grade-school fence.

As I ran by, scarcely a foot away
from its tail, it did not move,
it did not flutter. Minutes later,

I returned on that same path,
and the mourning dove was still there.
This time, I put my eye up to its eye,

black and blank, and I'd like
to think we saw each other
through those windows of the soul.

Was it sick, stunned, dying,
or—improbably—already gone
but as yet unfallen, balanced

between this life and the next,
its body arranged for one
last private viewing?

Already that week, I had seen
what I never wished to see again.
So here is what I want to say:

Fly, gentle dove, and leave your mourning.
We don't pretend to know your story;
rest in peace and rise in glory.