

THE OWL AND THE MOUSE

Mark Rhoads

An owl, perched black on the arc of wire
above the road-side field, a sentinel stance
in silhouette on evening's waning fire,
surveys the ground below with practiced glance
for rodent child or mouseling unaware
of wings and claws and death by silent air.

A wary mouse, nosing from a covert hole
secreted beneath the brittle button sage
bordering the road below wire and power pole,
begins the well-rehearsed nocturnal forage
for seed or nut under cover of twilight and brush,
to counterpoise the air-borne talon's crush.

Owl and mouse dislike this nightly dance
but neither knows the way to stop the music
that starts to play as the sun begins its romance
with the round earth's edge. And the terrible arithmetic
of how much food a creature needs to live
numbers the steps but keeps the outcome relative.

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