The Train Problem

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A. The train problem begins
   Almost immediately. Here’s how it happens.
   Or it begins soon after and this
   Is how long it lasts. Suit yourself.
   The train problem begins one morning and ends
   Almost interminably. No one knows how.

B. Here comes the train problem, but not
   All at once. If a train hit
   Your bird dog, that would be all
   At once. No problem there.

C. You can’t imagine the train problem. It used to be called
   Go find the body, or what happens to a canary
   When you cover its cage. You can imagine
   The canary, how it screeches while it happens, like
   Brakes on a train.

D. When you think about the train problem
   What do you think? You sit there by the window
   With your bird dog, thinking
   Canary. Each time you think you notice
   A few more feathers on the muzzle of the beast.
   You don’t think boxcar or railroad. You know your
   capacity.
   You sit in the tunnel of the afternoon hearing
   A whistle, and thinking
   Canary. It’s only the canary.

E. The train problem doesn’t wait. It isn’t hereafter.
   It is not the kind of problem where you
   Whistle when you’re ready. By the time you think
   I’m ready, there’s no problem there.
This must be almost night then in the land
Of the train problem. You begin to think
The last few canaries, but not all at once.
Or a small crowd in red caps waiting at a terminal
For the last load of cagecovers. Suit yourself.
All this and your pale dog, lying on its side there, like
A tunnel that has just
Swallowed a train.