What happens?

A parent remembers a child’s move towards independence.

The main idea

A parent’s love must make room for the child’s independence, even when separation feels painful.

1. “satellite”

Method: Simile

The child moves outward while remaining part of a relationship.

2. “wrenched”

Method: Violent verb

A small separation is felt with disproportionate emotional force.

3. “half-fledged”

Method: Bird imagery

The child’s developing independence is real but incomplete.

4. “letting go”

Method: Final principle

Love becomes an action that accepts separation rather than preventing it.

Form and structure

Four five-line stanzas with recurring ABACA rhyme; reflective first-person address looks back over eighteen years.

Development, voice and tone

School memory — Affectionate and wistful. A child crossing a playing field becomes an image the parent cannot forget.

Images of release — Anxious. Natural comparisons show independence as fragile, necessary growth.

Reflection — Painfully accepting. The parent makes a distinction between loving someone and retaining control of them.

Context

Day-Lewis explores parenthood through a remembered school departure, connecting one small incident to continuing separation.

Comparison links

Mother, any distance: independence. Follower: changing family roles.

Recall question

Why can letting go be presented as an act of love?