

Gluing the Sole Back On

Gluing the rubbery sole back on my thriftstore Nikes
knowing the pungency will likely stay with me
for the long forced run through spring, this March
that would have marked my brother's ninetieth year
if he hadn't shot himself in his seventy-seventh.

Not without reason: quadruple bypass,
family long distance at best, bankruptcy
imminent since his golfing buddy business partner
cleaned out their joint bank account leaving him
in debt to friends he'd rather kill himself than welch on.

But truth to tell, he'd really never been the same
since his daughter OD'd on coke, killing forever
the cocky attitude he'd worn like Sinatra's fedora
since high school, what friends called overcompensation
for elder sibling syndrome, always feeling second best,

his positive thinking public face replaced by hate
for the liberal permissive culture he blamed
for her inclination and opportunity
to shoot up, but even more, self-hate
festering inside for failing her as a father.

But please, let's not talk about death while spring
is busting out all over: peach blossoms
pink as all get out and pear petals
in the breeze white as a bridal gown or shroud,
the new double pane windows all installed

replacing the old single pane sliders,
the difference between single and double pane
maybe making more sense to those who note
on waking that they made it through another night,
take their time getting out of bed,

wobble along on terra very infirma,
steadying hands on furniture and walls
trying to attain and maintain the vertical,
following their bliss or something like that,
through their bathroom-kitchen rituals,

pills first thing on the menu by doctor's orders

but coffee fumes already in their blurry heads
well before the morning brew is brewed,
olfactories stimulated in anticipation
like Pavlov's dogs salivating on cue.

Cockroaches in the kitchen sink
centipedes in the bathtub
dead mouse in the trap by the breadbox
a slim black beauty upside down
in the cupboard, a red fiddle on her belly:

sure signs it's spring again,
birds and bees and kissing bugs
blades of grass and scorpions
diamondbacks out rfrom under
every rock of ages.