

BULBS

It was (I dreamt) years from now.
My father had long since died, and memories
of him, so vivid once, were fading:
the man whose deft touch could rouse
a sluggish fire; whose fingers knew
the inner workings of clocks and watches;
but most, the inveterate sower of seed,
so indulgent he'd let stray lettuces
or spuds flourish in a drill of carrots;
who, even when stooped with age, could still wonder:
Where do all the weeds come out of?
This stubborn man whose gifts I didn't have,
whose paths I wouldn't follow.

So there I was, standing
on a neglected patch of ground,
not knowing why: Instinct? The lengthening
evenings? A bird's lingering notes?
Or my wife's incessant pleading?
And I didn't seem to know what to set:
Flowers? Shrubs? Organic vegetables?

I was just getting down to work,
turning scraws over with the shovel,
when I came on them, snug as landmines: bulbs
he'd planted years before, still waiting there...

Innocent, helpless, strangely eloquent.

Patrick Moran