

The Things That Stick

Dad sits across from me.
His bruised hands hesitate.

Before the tremors
his fingers manipulated pocketknives
and chewing gum wrappers
and drywall tape and mud.

We are waiting for ribs
as he prepares a syringe and insulin.
Rolls the bottle between his hands to warm it
clicking against his wedding band.
He plunges the needle into his stomach.
Quick and practiced like a sniper
assembling a rifle blindfolded.
I was the only one who saw.

It is bearable because he remains
calm as it happens.
We even laugh at how frail he has become.

I don't have to try anymore
to make my voice sound like his
when he says you just plain fall
apart when you get old.

The silence after the laughter dies
is broken by our waitress carrying platters.
The meat so tender
it slides right off the bones.

Whatever else happens
is happening to us all the time.

Tony Brewer