

Sole makers

Russell Moorehead

I wonder if I can still heal myself?
I've done it once before,
back when I cut my palm open
trying to be your blood brother.

We slid a fresh blade into the utility knife
to keep things clean. The edge skated
deeper than my skin. You pulled it shut

with a fish hook and dental-floss,
wrapped our secret with a gauze bow
and doused it with Bactine. We never told
a soul as we watched the scar shrink away
into a thick wrinkle.

But we never got around to cutting you.

We slipped out of church to jump the cliffs.
The Potomac moved fast and brown
between the states and painted
the palisades wet just below
the high water mark.

The bishop was busy explaining how
Jesus Christ chickened out when the devil
was placing bets, while we folded
our chinos and sports coats.

Standing on the edge in nothing
but Weejuns we jumped—
you first. One hundred feet down,
arms slapped red, we swam back
to the soft bank. Hitting the water

ripped your leather soles straight off.
We pulled a junk tire from the trunk
of the Plymouth, cut tread
the shape of your feet with a coping saw,
tacked them to your loafers
with contact cement. Three years

of thirty thousand miles later we raced
across the states by motorcycle,
taking shifts. One drove
while the other slept, wrists locked
around the other's waist, making it
to the wedding with six hours to spare.
Your law was stop for every hitchhiker
and tip the musicians. Buy a flower
from the woman and let the shoe shine
boy give you a polish,
even if you've got suede boots on.

They say your car rolled
three times before it hit the tree,
and that you didn't die instantly.
In fact they say you were trying
to find a radio station when they found
you.