

Emergence and rot

by [Connie Zumpf](#) in the [April 11, 2018](#) issue

I see spring arrive with a pale ghost behind her—
the tulips and flax flowers didn't survive the last ax
of winter that came in March. Off with their heads,

into the compost with brown leaves from fall,
eggshells from today; wither, decay, and maybe
next season. The year he died, my father

didn't make it to spring, he was gone before
crocus came up through the snow. I saw him
this morning, his eyes and smile peered back at me

from my own silent mirror. I never know where
he'll pop up again. I see the persistence, the salvia,
lavender, thyme, fed by their own past lives.

But under these buds tipped by the sun, the business
of diminishment has already begun. Honeysuckle
spreads like creases and veins that twine my own skin.

Kernel to flower to seed, promise to breaking apart,
emergence to glorious rot. A rendering arc as primal
as mud on my hands—to rise up, then yield

with equal grace to the churn and suck, the dark
conditions of the clay. I strip off my gloves, feel
the layers folded into the moldering muck.

I see the dead leavings of each turn and turn,
waiting for my time to turn,
down on my knees, under this sun.