

THE SPOON RIVER Poetry Review

Kay Murphy

Black

Looking back into my black dress years,
one morning I am driving to work in rain;
the wiper handle falls off in my hand.

It is black too. We can assume
the sky is, and my jacket, bought
for \$5 soon after my son's death,
and my stodgy shoes which, before this,
I wouldn't be caught dead in.

I pull in at a coffee shop;
the only empty space is a blue one,
and I do, for the first time in my life,
I pull in, park, pop up my black umbrella.
The woman walking ahead of me turns:

You don't look handicapped.

Then I have to stand behind her in line.
She says:

*I'm sorry. But my husband is
handicapped, and I'm touchy about it.*

I don't blame you I said.
But I was dark and full of evil thoughts.
My son's leg was torn off
when he was killed on his motorcycle.
I should be able to park in a blue space.
Who says the handicap has to be obvious?
Wearing a black dress on a sweltering day
ought to be enough. I'm not trying to look
like a poet, or like I'm from New York.

I'm black on the inside too.

When I slide back
into my car, the black lace from the lingerie
borrowed from a friend slips into view.
Nothing else is mine either.