

Dirty Old Man Talks to Himself Behind His Back

For several minutes he has been watching
three squirrels chasing one another up and
down the scaly trunk of a pine tree. They
jump to the sweet gum and start all over,
spiraling around: the first is chasing
the third, which is chasing the second.
Then the order or pursuit is reversed:
the third chases the second chasing the first.

D.O.M. gets up, opens the sash window.
The creaking scatters the squirrels into
the woods. He sits down again, places
the heating pad against the back of the chair.
The room is still buzzing. Nothing to do.

Moments later he looks up from the book.
There they are, leaping like gymnasts, one
after the other, from the trunk of the pine tree.
Destination: birdfeeder. They lunge, barely miss,
crash land on the azaleas. Then begin again.

From *Viejo Verde*. Main Street Rag Press, 2019. Also published in *Birmingham Poetry Review* 45 (2018): 100-104.