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EPITAPH¹

The mellow Irish brogue had earned
Her mocking stares, but when she dared
To date a quarterback, they turned
(The pompom-wielding, flaxen-haired,

Long-legged daughters of the rich
That is) with practised ease to text
And phone and Facebook, called her ‘bitch’
And ‘chicken head’ and ‘pay lay’. Vexed

To desperateness, she told her folk
Who went, hearts lurching, to the school
And heard it was a harmless joke
“A drive-by drenching,” said the cool,

“Comes next.” The squirted Gatorade
That hit her like a turning tide
Came from a three-car motorcade.
She’d hanged herself before it dried.

When shock and horror took the place
Of the expected week-long laugh,
They turned once more to cyberspace
And trashed her Facebook epitaph.

¹ Based on the story of Phoebe Prince, who hanged herself in January 2010 in South Hadley, Massachusetts, following months of bullying. A chicken head is a girl who performs fellatio.

NOBODY TO BLAME²

Doug is a guy of simple mind,
Soft-spoken, nonaggressive, kind,
The sort of man who mows his neighbour's lawn,

Takes out the trash of those too old
Or in disease's stranglehold
Or even plain forgetful; for his brawn

(Redemptive makeweight, some opine),
Although he's pushing fifty-nine,
Is that of someone forty In their coop,

He's cleaning out the chickens, hears
The sound of angry voices, fears
For agèd mother Evelyn. On the stoop,

She and a salesman, toe to toe
Are standing. Like some Holy Joe
With brochure for a bible, he expounds

Upon the worth of a device
For double-quickly making ice,
Ignoring the admonitory sounds,

The finger jab of her whose chin
Is lower than his breastbone. In
A New York minute, Doug's between the pair

And shouting incoherently,
The salesman (no Achilles, he)
Has tail-turned; mom has repossessed her chair;

² Doug Minty was shot to death outside his Elmvale, Ontario, home in 2009.

But then a siren, cops appear,
See Doug, *con brio*, drawing near,
To have the salesman spoken to, his aim.

A gun is drawn—five tidy smacks—
His eyes congeal, his legs go lax
The SIU finds nobody to blame.