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Entrepreneur

Lorna Van Gilst
Dordt College

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Entrepreneur

Lorna Van Gilst

A wooden box,
a can of soda,
human spit,
four tins of polish,
two soft rags—

The prancing little shoeshine man's in business.

He hunches forward from his sideways water jug,
a leather shoe propped smartly
on his smooth-worn wooden box.

Somewhere above the shoe,
a lanky pin-striped business suit
leans fold-armed against a pole
to take in the show.

The little sun-dried street-dance man
spits out into the dust,
turns face down to the shoe,
dusts off a layer of big-city grime,
dips two fingers into the polish tin,
smoothes dark wax on the leather toe
 around the sides
 back to the heel,
squirts a spray of soda on the toe,
wraps two fingers in a soiled rag,
buffs in the moisture to a subtle glow,
unwinds the rag into a two-hand stretch,
see-saws the rag across the toe
 around the heel
 against the sides,
without missing a beat moves the foot down,
taps up the matching toe
 onto the little box—

For the encore.

When the performance ends,
one pin-striped arm unfolds,
sends down a bill or two—
Twin gleams of shoe leather
move away into the city dust.