Filibuster
2012
Letter from the Editor
Stephen Bray

Dear Reader,

I hope this letter finds you well and prepared to journey through the latest edition of the Filibuster. I suspect you are eager to explore this new creation, so I'll only take a moment to chat about the concept of this edition and recognize those who worked hard to bring you an enjoyable and satisfying journal.

From the beginning, I knew I wanted to create a journal that was streamlined in its concept, diverse in its material, and effective in representing the creative power of AUM’s student body.

Thanks to the design talents of Ryan Harrison, we readers can enjoy an edition that is both visually entertaining and easy to navigate.

I must also thank my co-editors, Matthew Johnson and Allison Parliament, whose constructive criticism and helpful assistance greatly contributed to the success of this edition.

Also contributing to this success is Dr. Robert Klevay, the Filibuster’s faculty advisor. His leadership and encouragement kept us all on task and inspired us all to enjoy the work set before us.

Finally, and most importantly, we wish to dedicate this edition to the writers, artists, and photographers who willingly offered their personal thoughts, experiences, and creations for our reading and viewing pleasure.

On behalf of the Filibuster staff, we want you to know that it’s been a joy serving you all this past year. With eager expectation, we present to you the 2012 Filibuster.

Happy Reading,

Stephen Bray

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Nº 000

In the Beginning
Andrea Vandermey

Print
Nº 001

Winged Beauty
Andrea Vandermey

Photography
Nº 002
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Chocolate Books
Arvilla Fee

Have you ever read
a book
that was as delectable
as a piece
of warm chocolate cake
with a liquid chocolate center
and you had to close
your eyes
to savor
the sweetness
against your teeth
and you sighed
as it melted
inside your mouth;
you chewed
slowly,
reveling in each bite
until

Delightful Addiction
Andrea Vandermy

Verse
№ 004

Hands silently move,
Fingers grasp a warm box.
Dancing around death,
Lips accept this fate.
Hand cupped,
Paper lit, smoldering.
Sweet aroma,
Mind and body eased.
Pleasure throbs through veins,
Each breath requires another.
Lungs fill,
They are empty.
Ashes build,
They are quickly flicked away.
Lost,
Lost without this delightful addiction.

Verse
№ 003

even the crumbs disappeared...
then licked
every last
smudgy word
one
by
one
off the tips
of
your fingers?
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### Spider Lilly

a few solitary stalks  
sprout  
from the grass  
upwards to the sky they reach  
reddish pink petals stretch  
open-armed to the heavens  
bright hues amongst a barren sea  
of green and granite  
(They were always your favorite,  
the spider lilies  
I can’t help but think now  
seeing them there  
that the dirt can’t hold those lilies  
down year-round  
and death can’t hold you either  
Jesus done came  
and got you first  
I hope I’m next to be sittin’  
round the table with you

### Into the Brook

The water falls  
spilling over the side of its  
miniature cliff erasing pigment  
and life form from the face of the hardened rocks below  
each waiting in mundane routine to catch the wetness  
Standing still  
and pressed tightly together  
they gasp for air between the splashes  
thankful for the reality of a shallow rain  
enjoying moments of blissful quiet within the drowning

Looking at the river I see  
no cheerful crickets or frogs or  
fish to mingle with only the sound of the  
shhhhh of the water muffling and hypnotizing  
the passersby and gazers (like me) who look into its brook

I watch the stones  
in wonderment wondering  
how much longer they’ll exist  
as their calloused covering completely  
soaks and re-soaks and withers between the pourings  
Here in the midst of the shhhhh I think of you  
and wonder if we’ll make it.
On Monday morning - that’s when she noticed him. As she rummaged through her giant purse, she sighed. It’s going to be another one of those days. She proved herself right when the quarter she needed slipped through her fingers and landed on the floor with an ominously echoing thud. She rallied her eyes as she picked it up. That was when she noticed him watching her. His eyes were all she could see of his face as they peered out from over the rather non-descript book he was reading. His eyes told her enough. He was not annoyed or irritated; rather sympathetic. Mind your own business, she plopped the change down. The young man behind the counter smiled uneasily and slid her change down. The young man behind the counter seemed to notice.

Monday morning came. Her alarm went off at 5:30; an hour earlier than normal. She reminded herself: "This is too kind. He can’t be a stalker -- not really early. Then I won’t see him. He won’t be there." She hadn’t ever spoken aloud to herself like that before. Am I going mad? If so, it’s his fault. Is he following me? Is he a stalker or something? He’s here all day or something? ‘Ma’am?’ the young fellow asked, trying to be polite, though the pensive look on his face made it clear he was confused. Suddenly he was standing right next to her, a glimmering quarter in the palm of his hand. "Please, take it. I actually found it on the floor." With a slow and steady motion she took the quarter from his hand and passed it on to the cashier. She did not notice the cashier give her the drink; she was looking at the man. Is he following me? Is he a stalker or something? she wondered. No, his face is too kind. He couldn’t be a stalker – not that I know what a stalker looks like. She found there was something quieting about him, his simple face, his sincere smile, and his sympathetic eyes. Like he really understands me. She felt as if she’d been staring at him an impolite amount of time when she realized that he had already sat back down. She had merely been picturing his face, as if he was still there.

By Friday she could not resist staying away. And there he was, seated by the window, reading his book, and sipping his coffee. She ordered her favorite blend, a half-smile on her lips. She kept daring little glances at him, hoping that no one else noticed. He didn’t seem to; he hadn’t looked at her or even acknowledged her presence. She had to dig change out of her purse again. A quarter, I need a quarter, always a quarter! ‘Here,’ a voice from over her shoulder called. Suddenly he was standing right next to her, a glimmering quarter in the palm of his hand. "Please, take it. I actually found it on the floor." With a slow and steady motion she took the quarter from his hand. "Thank you," she whispered. She could see that he smiled, but still, she could only see his eyes. Another weekend of waiting passed by. When Monday morning came, she arrived at 7:30, with time to spare just as she had planned. She ordered her coffee like before and brought enough change this time. She saw him only when she walked through the door, but did not look for him again. As the young cashier handed her the coffee, she leaned forward across the counter and asked, “Is he here all day or something?” “Ma’am?” the young fellow asked, trying to be polite, though the pensive look on his face made it clear he was confused. "That man—" she began, and turning slightly, she realized that the chair, by the window, was empty. She left her purse and coffee on the counter, coming forward. But there was no sign of his presence. His book was gone and there wasn’t even a coffee ring on the table. She ran out the door. "Miss!" the cashier called, but she did not hear him, for she was looking around outside. The cars in the parking zone had not moved. Maybe he walked. But she realized he wouldn’t have had enough time to get out of her range of sight. He had simply disappeared.

Walking back inside, she smiled apologetically to the cashier and collected her belongings.
Everyday, as I come and go, I pass this long stretch of road. On either side, long stretches of cotton field. One side has been picked, just sad looking twigs shooting up from the ground. The other, rows and rows of fluffy, white cotton. And I wonder, every day, why they left the one side alone.

Monday morning: that’s when he woke up. What a dream, he thought as he turned off his alarm clock. The man with the sympathetic eyes was about to get out of bed when three objects on his bedside caught his attention: a book, a quarter, and a cup of coffee bearing the decorative label of “Twilight Brewery.”
Breakfast
Matthew Kemp

you smell like vanilla
though you're anything but –
and because of that I smile to
m
y
s
e
l
f

and keep drinking my morning coffee

Little Pieces on the Floor
Antonio Boyd

Rid me of these little pieces:
The dated receipts
from swift swipes amounting
to irrelevant numbers. The church notices
that offer solace for this temporal place,
yet forever a little piece
of past forgone.

The number of her never called,
the face of a friend forgot,
the bank notices unchecked;
bits of cotton, specs of dirt,
miles of dust, all just...just stuff.

I've cleaned these pieces for years
and there's more left, and with
careful fingers, still picking, picking
call the rest.
While falling down, chasing my daughter 'round living room, I wondered:
Am I old enough to break my hip?
I hear that it hurts something fierce,
and I would like to avoid
learning lessons
before the
time is
right.

The Venetian sky drapes over my head
like cerulean gauze interwoven with fragments
of white Chantilly lace.

Bubbles of sound burst rhythmically
from all corners of St. Mark's Square –
children laughing, blue-black pigeons chatting.

Violinists coax magical melodies
out of strings and bows;
people sit placidly beneath ivory umbrellas
in outdoor cafés.

Houses rise up like stone tablets from inlets,
a myriad of watercolors:
egg-yolk yellow and burnt sienna
with window boxes of nodding geraniums.

Smells wrap around my head,
a shawl of tortellini and pizza margherita,
ciabatta, linguini with clam sauce,
sweet red wine.

Black gondolas slice through canal waters
as silently as old, black eels;
the striped gondolier hums
beneath his broad-brimmed hat.

Open markets shimmer: trinkets and beads,
a kaleidoscope of Murano glass,
hand-painted ball-room masques,
scarves as brilliant as butterfly wings.

I savor the last morsel of peach gelato,
in front of St. Mark's Basilica,
captivated by the richly ancient,
royally pristine Byzantine architecture.

St. Mark's tower rises black
against the sleepy sun;
the water taxi nods quietly
"Ciao, Bella, Ciao!"
I wave goodbye to Piazza San Marco.
L'appel du vide (part 1)

Deric Sallas

Verse

N° 013

Here I am moving closer -
closer to the void demanded of me.
The cyan flow, agent of crafted caverns,
the building block of Eden, exists in all states of being.
These rivers have no place here.

L'appel du vide (part 2)

Deric Sallas

Verse

N° 014

I am preoccupied
not with the task, but the task within.

My hands explore
these dehydrated walls -
picking and picking at parts of the whole.

The artifacts I excavate
fall to the ground -
ever again what they were.

¹L'appel du vide" is a French phrase that does not directly translate to English; however, it may be understood to mean
"the call of the void," or to describe the urge to throw oneself off of high places.

Elizabeth Reflects

Lauren McCain

Prose

N° 015

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Elizabeth read aloud from her Bible and smiled at hearing her favorite verse.

Bold rays of golden sunlight reached gently through her open window to brightly caress the delicate pages of the Good Book in her hands. The sunshine exposed her wrinkles and her sad, debilitating state. Elizabeth replaced a weathered bookmark to hold her place in Isaiah. She carefully laid the open Bible on her pillow.

Elizabeth shakily stood up and leaned on her cane for support. She hobbled forward in a crooked line from her bed and looked out of the window. The curtains billowed and swelled with the summer breeze that carried the melodious laughter of her grandchildren up to her ears. The youngest, Chris and Jeff, were fully unaware of their grandmother’s watchful eyes. They commenced with their game of wrestling in a scattered cloud of dust on the ground. The other children cheered while the young adults turned up their noses at such immaturity. Elizabeth laughed at the scuffle, secretly rooting for Chris while also praying for Jeff not to hurt himself.

"What fun! Oh, I wish I had the strength of those boys." She sighed sadly. The curtain slipped away from her fingers. Her heart fluttered with twinges of wearisome pain that rose and fell like the tide in her chest.

“It won’t be much longer,” she thought. An eerie train whistled in the distance. It was a mourning cry. But she had no regrets. It had been a good life. Full of hardships, to be sure, but everything had worked out in the end. And, this was the end. The end of her voyage, at least. Life was just beginning for those young boys outside. The future was theirs to face.

She eased down onto her bed once more. This was the first time she had visited her bedroom in two years. Her feeble body hadn’t allowed her to make the treacherous journey up the foreboding staircase. Losing her freedom had been difficult to accept. However, she had eventually come to embrace the side effects of old age. Her sons and daughters-in-law had waited on her every whim with gratitude and kindness. Elizabeth enjoyed the fuss that they made immensely. After all, she had taken care of them, hadn’t she? For the first time in almost seventy years, she was the priority. She thrived on the attention.

That afternoon, her son Jim had scooped her up in his arms and gingerly carried her up the narrow staircase so that she could visit her room again. The role of caretaker had been reversed. It had been decades since she had carried him up to the top of those same stairs. He was sitting at the bottom of the staircase now, waiting for her to call him when she was ready to venture back down. Everything was just as she had left it. She frowned at the layer of white dust that
He had rescued Elizabeth from working in had been a modest farmer from Kansas. had been helpless. Her husband, Mark Chatham, been angry… leaving seemed to be the only She had written him several letters in secret feasible option for her. Was he still alive? her pride had forced her into leaving him. And she had been so scared and in her dreams now. Elizabeth had always intended to go back. “America is only temporary. Dan.” She had said. “I’ll be back when this horrible blight is over and done with.” Her ancient words echoed through her mind and pierced her is over and done with.” Her ancient words said. “I’ll be back when this horrible blight shrugged one strand in her hair and kissed her heart.

She had never forgotten Dan. She had loved him. He was the only man that Elizabeth had ever truly loved. Stubborn, eighteen-year-old pride had forced her into leaving him. And she had been so scared and hungry… leaving seemed to be the only feasible option for her. Was he still alive? She had written him several letters in secret over the years. He had never responded. Elizabeth figured that he was still angry with her. But what could she do? She had been helpless. Her husband, Mark Chatham, had been a modest farmer from Kansas. He had rescued Elizabeth from working in a deplorable bar in New York City. Mark had been so kind to her… she had to marry him. It was the only way she could survive. He had provided her with life’s necessities. Elizabeth, in turn, had given him three strong sons to work their fields. Mark had been very caring towards her and they had shared many wonderful times together. But always there—in the back of her mind for seventy years—had been Dan. Mark’s old pocket watch ticked nervously from behind its protective glass container on the dresser. She grasped for her cane onto the floor in the midst of the confusion, she sat down in a musty chair that creaked noisily under her. The wind came bursting through her window unexpectedly in a violent gust, playfully ruffling her white hair. The room was suddenly in an uproar as dust blew in all directions. Elizabeth twitched her nose incessantly and fought off the urge to sneeze. A handful of old papers blew onto the floor in the midst of the confusion, revealing an old diary on the desk. She adjusted her glasses so that she could see the pages more clearly. Each revealed a day out of time when Ireland was her home. Hundreds of entries about her forgotten life were now before her. As she turned the thin, crackling sheets of paper, a small and almost disintegrated sprig of lavender slipped out from in between some of the pages. Her heart leapt into her throat. She stooped down and picked it up with quivering hands. “Oh, Dan!” She whispered. Her eyes filled with tears. One carefree afternoon, while walking along the Irish countryside, Dan looked down and picked up a bouquet of lavender for her. He slipped one strand in her hair and kissed her lightly on the forehead before he returned to work in his fields. She had kept that piece of lavender in her little book all of these years. Now it was just as faded and withered as she was. The broken fragments filled her hands. She grinned and touched her forehead in the place where he had delivered his mark of affection. She had loved him, though she had never told him so. She left without him knowing. That was what hurt the most. He didn’t know how she felt. But—couldn’t he tell? Wasn’t it obvious? Surely he knew! Her feelings and thoughts were so intense that she paused—fearing that she had said them aloud. The room was quiet. She searched the premises with a roaming eye, expecting to find a hidden eavesdropper. Elizabeth suddenly recalled Dan’s voice rumbling above the fierce ocean waves as her boat had left the harbor. “I love you, Elizabeth!” he had shouted. That was the last time she had seen Dan. The moment she heard those words leave his lips she had tried to run back to him. But it was too late. They were already too far out to sea. But he had admitted that he loved her. Elizabeth smiled like a little schoolgirl. She loved him! Of course he did! She heaved a sigh of relief. Had he continued to love her all of this time? Time hadn’t erased her love for him, after all.

“She must be all right?” she asked uneasily. “I love you!” she shouted. “Mother?” Jim called impatiently from downstairs. “What an earth are you doing up here? Are you alright?” Everything came back to her. Her room, the breeze, Chris and Jeff squatting at each other’s shoulders, her window— it all flooded back to her. She was in Kansas again. Her smile slowly faded away from her face. “I’m fine.” She called back dryly. “Just a while longer please, dear.” “Fine, but lunch will be ready soon.” He called.

Elizabeth searched her brain frantically. It was so hard to remember things now. What had she been thinking about? Oh—yes! Dan. She sighed again and brushed what was left of the lavender back into her diary. She reached for a piece of stationary and a pen. “That’s what I’ll do!” she thought happily. “I’ll write him one last letter. I’ll tell him that I love him! He must still be alive. He has to be!” But how should she start such a letter? Did she have the audacity to simply come out and say, “My Dearest Dan, I love you! Sincerely, Your Elizabeth?” No, no. That was all wrong. She would have to come up with something else. But what else had she to say? She loved him. That was all. Yet, she just couldn’t blurt that out to him! No after all of these years. He had married someone else, no doubt.
"I bet he married Margaret." She frowned at the thought. She dated the top of the page.

"June 20th, 1925..." She read aloud.

The familiar pains in her heart reverberated sharply in her chest. Time was short. She would say it.

"Dan," she scribbled on the paper, "I'm sorry I left you."

But that wasn't right. She was sorry, but she loved her family here and her life with Mark had been good. She scratched through that line. "Poor Dan!" she thought. She knew he wouldn't be able to read her handwriting. She started again.

"I just want you to know that I love you, and I always will." These. That was it. That was what she had longed to tell him for so long! What a wonderful feeling to have such a heavy burden lifted! She promptly sealed her letter. The stamp was the finishing touch. All that was left was to mail it.

"Mother! The girls say that lunch is ready now. I'm coming up." Jim started up the stairs.

Elizabeth clutched the letter in her hand. "What will Jim say?" she thought. Elizabeth quickly shoved the letter in the back of her diary. She would have to mail it tomorrow.
Rain
Deric Sallas

Verse
No 017

Rare clouds occupy
the sky today.
Opalescent shades that
hint at a storm passed.

Rain gently falls, glossing the ground.
No rain falls on forgotten pages—
desolate folds
entrenched in hieroglyphics.

The leatheread pages
curl, furl and flake
like dead skin.
The letters fade.

This bleached wasteland,
slowly chiseled by time,
falls to the ground in pieces,
imbibed and enlivened by the rain.

The North Pole
Deric Sallas

Verse
No 018

the man on the frozen sea rests—
his eyes skyward.
the subtlety of passing time
dances round his eyes,
nothing is above him—

the world beckons his feet
downward.

he feels the daunting shift,
the icy grip of a new day;
he screams silent pleas
to the pulsing monotony
of ice crashing in the sea.
**Shadow**  
Kimberly Gray

Shadow  
We meet again  
Externally attached  
Internally torn  
Darkness which you display  
Gives sight of black and grays

Shadow  
Once more leading me  
Foreign world  
Familiar memories  
Sharp stones sting my core  
With waves toward horizons

Shadow  
Why do you linger  
Prominent lies  
Latent promises  
Mucky waters veiling empathies  
Til’ the sun casts high, revealing ‘you’

Shadow  
You drive my sanity thin  
Fading memories  
Constant reminders  
Beautiful arms hands once enlaced  
Now broken I stand alone

Shadow  
What is this you reveal  
Tainted eyes  
Clarified visions  
Lost treasure at last retrieved  
Symbol of Love—grieving heart relieved

**Dazzled**  
Robert Bullard

Always looking through a prism  
seems a prison:  
the colors  
are chaos,  
and one becomes lost  
in the light.

**Just Wondering**  
Catherine Dupree

Why is it that  
when I see people with glasses  
I’m inclined to think they’re intelligent  
and not that their eyes are broken?
Tights
Andrea Vandermey
Prose
No 022

A worried look encompassed her face. Eyebrows furrowed. There she stood. This was the moment of truth. A deep breath revealed further agitation. She stared at the object in her hands, golden. Tearing off the back wrapper she carefully unfolded the stretchy form. Small, compared to her expectations. She forced away weary and fatiguing thoughts plotting in her mind. Plopping herself onto the toilet lid, she carefully began to scrunch together the golden material. One foot after another, it formed to her ankles and thighs. Scrambling anxiously to twist herself inside, she became breathless. Up she stood, yanking the form upwards toward her hips in a desperate attempt to fit. Finally, the springy material gave way and formed to her body. There she stood; before the mirror, gasping for breath. Composing herself, she brushed her hair calm, exiting the small room. A radiant smile plastered on her face.

Italy
Nick Richardson
Prose
No 023

On a chilly evening at a Rome subway station, a college student waits patiently for the next train, totally unaware of the gunman approaching him from behind. The cold barrel of a gun stings the patron’s ribcage, followed promptly by the phrase “Daami i tuoi soldi!” For those who are not savvy to Italian mugger speak, this translates to, “Give me your money!” Now to most people of a western civilized nation, this is understood to be a threat to one’s safety if there is non-compliance. However, in Italy, this is merely a time of reflection and an opportunity for the victim to plead his case, as well as the bystanders who are witnesses to this event to state each of their own opinions of the crime in progress. The following sequence of events and the ones I just mentioned, are a true story told to me by my Italian grandmother Giuseppina Leprè Mandon. The “victim” in the story is her nephew Stefano. Undaunted by the criminal’s demand, my cousin calmly explained to the robber that he only had enough pocket money to make it home, across town, via the subway car and therefore needed the money. In response, the attacker asked, “Well, how much money do you have and where do you live?” Upon hearing Stefano’s answer and without hesitation, the bandit explained that taking the subway to a different stop and then catching the bus would be cheaper and even quicker so therefore he could afford to hand over half of the money and still be able to make it home. By this time, a crowd had gathered around the two men and had split off into two opposing sides. One group is in agreement with my cousin that taking the subway is the cheapest and fastest way, while the other half agrees with the robber and believes his idea is the most cost-effective. Keep in mind that everybody is aware at this time that this began as an attempted armed robbery and the gun is still in plain view, however this is only a minor detail of the bigger problem which is the best route to get home and whose argument is more sound. The story ends with Stefano reluctantly handing over half of his money, the crowd dispersing, and him arriving home, without any money, on the city bus per the robber’s suggestion.
LOL
Antonio Byrd

Verse
N° 024

One: Laughing out loud describes bodily function of laughing. May not actually be laughing.

Two: Used to show a negative statement is a positive.

Example:
“Saw movie without you.”
“You jackass! LOL.”

Bluetooth
Antonio Byrd

Verse
N° 025

Oh . . . Suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu
slinkies and duct tape (a love poem)
Matthew Kemp

Verse
No 027

if i could capture your love—

i'd make duct tape

mesh fabric on silver-gray plastic with a thick layer of adhesive love and adoration
so when i'm lamenting life i'd stick it over my mouth

and let it absorb my words and hold them tight
till i balled em up and threw em away

when i was feeling down—

i'd write my pain on paper and stick it to the ceiling fan

let the words fly off into oblivion

shoot i'd stick it on my face and make funny shapes
like this (: -P )
silly and goofy—I can't help it

you make me giddy 'n' playful

like a young kid with the best thing in the world and unable to hold the smile

just gotta let it go and tell the world and let me tell you—

the two things kids love the most are—
slinkies

and tape.

and you—

aw you!
your love is way more productive than falling down stairs and making that

"shlink shlink shoosh" sound till it ticks ya mamma off!

so your love would have to be tape!

—but not the cheap stuff—

you know the kind you use to wrap up presents for family members you really don't care

about? but you want em to think you do, so you try to make it look like you spent a long
time wrapping it—but you didn't it?

no.

your love is bonding and multipurpose

the one thing that fixes everything
duct tape!

so when my heart gets cracked—i'd tape it up and patch it till it's healed
wrestling with the walls the devil tries to put around me cutting my hands?
paper towels and your love'd make the instant bandaid

why i'd write the world "I love you's and motivational messages on post-it notes

use your love to tape em up on concrete walls and windows

so the world could see that the real love of a real woman holds her man up

why i'd send rolls to the FBI interrogation department to use on terrorists

tape em to the chairs and put it over their mouths

that way some of the adhesive could sink into their skin and maybe

just maybe

teach em the language of love, not hatred

pull it off suddenly without warning

and instead of insults—sonnets—would fly from their tongues

i'd use it to patch up busted out windows on strangers' cars

to keep out the cold winds of a cold world

then write "YOU'RE WELCOME" on it afterwards in permanent magic marker

so if i could capture your love

i'd make duct tape

not slinkies

cause at the end of the day i'll need a patch-up

not a trip down the stairs

to really heal me

so the next time i'm broken and need fixin'
you'd only be a short walk away

just take a right at hardware

she's right there on aisle 6
The Bubble Gum People
Andrea Vandermey

Ye beware,
The old Bubble Gum people.
Three steps left,
One Step right.
They hold on tight,
With all their might.
You pull and tug,
With no avail.
Its fingers stick,
Its feet don't flail.
None can loosen,
None can free,
The sticky strings of tyranny.
Growing weaker,
The tugging does.
Until you're trapped,
Like a bug.

Ye beware,
Ye beware,
The Bubble Gum People.

A Fairytale
Danielle McCabe

Laurel curled her toes, turning her body to delve further into the warmth of her blanket. Her face pressed into the cheap fabric of the pillow, and a wide smile curled across her lips. As far as her body was concerned, she was the woman in the story. She was the sated heroine of a romance novel, her body being folded into his sweat-slicked arms and her mind cloudy with moments of undiluted physical and emotional release. She belonged to a man who needed her more than his own pride or freedom, and it was her fate to be saved by him. His fate was to belong to her. No matter the direness of her life, she would always be saved. An all too familiar ache began knotting in her chest, and for a moment, it constricted her breathing. It coiled within her, rough and abrasive. Laurel struggled to push her breath past the ache, placing it far away as she could in her mind.

Her fingers lighted over the cool, smooth cover of her newly finished novel. It was a fairy tale to be sure. But in the moments between the first few pages and the last words, Laurel existed in the book as someone else, a character. Her own reality was much like the beginning of one of those novels, ripe with uncertainty and strife, but Laurel's life was perpetually stuck there. She never found her happily ever after. Her face pressed into the cool, smooth cover of her newly finished novel. It was a fairy tale to be sure. But in the moments between the first few pages and the last words, Laurel existed in the book as someone else, a character. Her own reality was much like the beginning of one of those novels, ripe with uncertainty and strife, but Laurel's life was perpetually stuck there. She never found her happily ever after.

Laurel had heard her mother kick her out for coming home pregnant. Elise was her little bit of
perfect. But with light from the street peeking through a set of old broken blinds, she wished she had never crawled into Jackson Lane’s backseat on that hot afternoon so many years ago.

“Mommy?” Laurel swooped Elise up in a swift, well-practiced move, curving her little body along her own. Laurel kissed her hair, breathing in the clean scent of strawberry shampoo, trying to push later out of her mind. Elise giggled, making Laurel’s smile widen all the way to her eyes this time. She trapped her in her arms, snuggling further into the warmth and cleanness of the moment.

She closed her eyes, and whispered to her daughter, “We should be sleeping.” Elise wiggled around to face her. “But... I didn’t get my story,” she pouted. “You were already asleep once, bug.” “It couldn’t last because I didn’t get my story.” As if she had just remembered the grave misdeed, Elise bristled. She could almost imagine her daughter getting that stern look about her soft features. Elise would have her little finger pointed, her silky dark hair tumbling out of the ponytail. Elise would be the image of herself, a little Laurel. Laurel smiled again, but pretended to go back to sleep.

For a few moments everything was quiet, until Elise began earnestly wiggling, shaking Laurel from her peace with both the movement and the squeak of the old mattress. "Story, Mommy, or I won’t sleep. Puh-lease;” she begged. Laurel softly started her tale of a princess. Even as she began savoring the soft sounds of her daughter sleeping, Laurel continued whispering the tale until well after the happily ever after. She turned to look at the clock, knowing she had to get up. She didn’t have a choice. She sighed raggedly. She hadn’t seen her sister or her sister’s half of the rent in a week; exactly when the rent had been due. It hadn’t mattered that she had worked every extra shift she could manage, or that she had begged and borrowed to scrape it together, because she still was short. Russell had cornered her months ago when she had come up short the first time, and almost every month since. But somehow every time she had managed to slip by. Those moments had been miracles. This month was the exception. There was no slipping by. Laurel could still feel his self-satisfied grin following her as she slid out of his shadow, taunting her desperation. Russell had no feature that stood out as repulsive or even dissatisfying but still something made her want to run and never look back. Laurel raised herself from the bed, forcing herself not to look at her daughter. She considered picking her up and driving away, but her own childhood had consisted of midnight car rides away from her mother’s newest problem. She didn’t want her daughter to have that life, the one that she had had. She glanced tiredly at the worn thrift store furniture and cracked paint along the wall. It wasn’t anything special or nice, but it was their home. It was what she had. All she had to do was fix it just this once. She could find a new roommate, someone who didn’t have an addiction to bad boyfriends and crack. Her sister was beyond repair. Next month would be different. It had to be. All she needed was a break, a reprieve. Russell was offering exactly that. She took one last glance at her own reflection in the face of her small daughter, and steelied herself, hiding the ache that had begun to crystallize in her veins.

She wound her way out the door, locking the bolts on her own door as she walked down the hall to face Russell’s front door. This was where her night ended. Even as Laurel raised her hand to knock, and as she let Russell’s hand wind around her arm, Laurel stayed, staring at the rusty brown colored door where she was still whole. She didn’t feel his mouth or his hands, only the chill from the hallway. Laurel stayed in a fairytale.
Naked
Nickolas Smith

Roaming the land with no defense
Naked feet kiss the stones
Engraved in the roadway is her soul
Slipped in the soil are her toes

One with the earths two senses
Naked eyes closed and alone
The wind with freedom is in her control
And with the breeze her heart goes do

Inseparable Souls
Arvilla Fee

He placed one aged, wrinkled hand
flat against
the small of her back.
She leaned her shoulder into his
and lifted her snowy-white head.
They smiled simultaneously.

He pointed to the bluish-green pond
and told her
the koi fish looked like
pieces of gold shaved from the sun.
She observed the bold flashes of tangerine.
They nodded agreeably.

He guided her down the narrow path
then rested
beneath the bonsai tree,
intricate art work created by nature.
Her palm cradled the curve of his cheek.
They sighed contentedly.

He adored her now and sixty years ago,
blushing bride
who had born four children,
who made miso soup and rice balls.
He looked into eyes as dark as indigo ink.
They loved timelessly.
I waited for the knight on his white steed
to come riding in and sweep me off my feet.
He was supposed to be all that I would need.
Isn’t that what the fairy tales keep telling me as I read?

I battled the big bad wolf,
I overcame that hill - the little engine that could.
I went to the ball, glass slippers in hand.
I was the little mermaid waiting on a rock,
watching the waves crash upon the sand.

Why it is that little girls are told one day their prince will come,
and to smile and have no opinions?
What about the real world where things don’t always work out?
What about broken hearts?

I waited for a fairy tale,
one that might just come true.
Mine fell from the sky -
like thunder it came crashing down.

I remember snuggling under the covers.
Grandpa reading me stories.
Filling my head with dreams,
of the girl I was supposed to be.
Of all the things I should be.

I have my own white horse.
I do my own saving.
I let rain fall on my face,
washing make-up away.
Who needs to be a princess?
Who needs a knight to save them?
I never thought I’d give up on fairy tales.
I guess I just became too practical.
I chase the magic away,
as sharp as any double bladed sword.

As I sit and think,
I laugh to myself.
So much for Fairy Tales.

— Allison Parliament

"It’s time for your bath my dear."
"But mom..."

"No buts! You need to get clean. All your adventures thus far have left you quite filthy."
A pout emerged, lips began to quiver as fresh running water entered the tub.
Kyle watched as the bottom filled with this strange clear liquid. Like mom’s glass measuring cup, the water continued to rise, filling every crevice of the bathtub.
Taking a deep breath, he stepped into the warm water, eyes clenched. The bottom... where was the bottom? The water began to lap at his cheeks, welcoming him.
Slowly, clenched eyes loosened, replaced by wide orbs of awe and wonder. A strong wall of trees guarded the shore to his left, while the right held only open sea.

Open sea?
The peaceful waves that had first calmly welcomed began to rise and crash around him. Panicked, his little arms flailed about, searching for something, anything to latch on to. Eyes darted from the vanishing shore towards the endless open sea.

Nothing.
A small whimper began to form in his throat. A single tear ran the length of his cheek, hidden among the hundreds of tears thrust upon him by the ocean. Kicking his legs, his toe found a rock hard object. A small yelp, like might be heard from an injured animal, sounded as Kyle reached for his foot.

A plank, no bigger than the length of the small boy’s body floated delicately to the surface, disturbed by the violent kick.
Frantically, his small fingers grasped the board, hugging it with his entire body. Bright blue eyes darted across the surroundings, searching for help, for rescue. Brown ringlets straightened, heavy with water. His lips quivered as he held on, mind racing.
As he floated further into the nothingness, the waves weakened. Their friendly embrace once again consolated the boy’s mind, lulling him to sleep.
He dreamed... lying on the beach, safe from harm. Waves slapped against the wet sand as they came and retreated from the ocean. The water began to swirl, faster... faster...

Eyes bolted open. Water swirled around him, forming a small vortex. He was surrounded by walls of white stone that curved up towards the blue sky. It felt like he was in the middle of a volcano. Hot molten lava replaced by the whirlpool of water. The current was getting stronger, dragging him deeper into itself. He could see a tiny cave near the bottom, yet it might be too risky. Kyle swam desperately towards the porcelain looking wall, breathing heavily, occasionally mistaking water for air. The spiraling water gained strength by the second. His tiny arms, so frail compared to the mighty force of the sea. Frantically he kicked his legs, propelling himself towards the smooth wall. Hands searched for a hold,
yet found none. The strangely cool surface was completely unblemished and slick. Losing strength, his arms and legs gave way, allowing the spiraling water to wrap its engulfing arms right around him. Quickly, the water dragged him around and down. Without fighting, Kyle let the sea carry him toward the mouth of the small cave. Complete darkness consumed him. Washing over his limp form. Eyes tentatively searched, hoping for something familiar. Nothing. Eyes closed in return for a feeling of manufactured security. The unaltered focus on his surroundings was soon replaced by a realization of an acute pain. A burning, fire. Eyes bolted open, mind and body screaming, writhing in pain. He tried to squelch the unbearable pain with no avail. Oxygen deprived lungs thudded against his chest, threatening to explode.

One minute? Ten? How long have I been here? I am going to die... I am going to die... My mom, my family... I am never going to see them again.

Eyes closed against the darkness began to lighten. Curiously he peeked between long blonde eyelashes. A glimmer of light spread across the water as a beam of sunlight intrudes through a closed window. Hope, the first sign of hope began to pulse through newly revived veins. The burn in his lungs remained, but dulled. Floating closer and closer to the surface, all hope was renewed. Eyes began to blink shut, but only for a moment; offering a prayer, a praise. Only a few feet below the surface now, the sun began gleaming, blazing across the slick shiny surface. From underneath, it was as if Kyle was looking up at the world through a pane of glass. Oddly, he felt as if he were being born into this new world of light, from that of darkness. His head was the first to penetrate into the fresh clean air. Eyes adjusted to the beautiful sight of the sun. Lungs breathed deep, welcoming the fresh vapor that swirled around his lips. Arms extended, waving small circles in the water to continue floating. The water was once again calm, peaceful. Floating closer and closer to the surface, all hope was renewed. Eyes began to blink shut, but only for a moment; offering a prayer, a praise. Only a few feet below the surface now, the sun began gleaming, blazing across the slick shiny surface. From underneath, it was as if Kyle was looking up at the world through a pane of glass. Oddly, he felt as if he were being born into this new world of light, from that of darkness. His head was the first to penetrate into the fresh clean air. Eyes adjusted to the beautiful sight of the sun. Lungs breathed deep, welcoming the fresh vapor that swirled around his lips. Arms extended, waving small circles in the water to continue floating. The water was once again calm, peaceful.

A glint shined through the water, up towards him. It was almost as if the sea held a secret from him. She smiled cunningly, twinkle in her knowing eye. The glimmer Kyle again saw resembled that of metal. Kyle wondered at the possibility of treasure as the surface continued to gleam. A roaring noise began to resound through sensitive eardrums. The sound gained volume. Water began to rush. Harder, faster. Kyle thought that his eardrums might burst, that his heart would explode within his chest. Quickly he covered his ears, squeezing his eyes tight.

A stillness came over him. The rushing water could still be heard, yet softer than before. A cool breeze rushed against his flushed cheeks. Daring to open his eyes, he looked straight ahead. A boy with blonde hair and bright blue eyes stared back at him with surprise. Looking down, he noticed that the trucet was still running. Gently, he turned the knob, the rushing water quieted, silenced. Looking back to the boy in the mirror he managed a quirky smile.
Juvenile Delinquent Caught in the Act

Avilla Fee

We interrupt your regular programming
to bring you this breaking news:
A young girl with golden locks was arrested
in the Woods District just moments ago.
Her charges as of now include:
breaking and entering,
criminal trespassing,
petty theft,
and destruction of private property.
If convicted of these charges,
this young girl could face up to three years
in the juvenile detention center.
The victims of her thoughtless crimes,
the Three Bears, were simply devastated
by the home intrusion.
Baby Bear is still crying over his broken chair,
and Papa Bear just released this statement
to the press:
"It's a sad, sad world we live in
when one cannot even go for a walk
while one's porridge is cooling
without having one's home violated
in one's absence!"
We will keep you updated as these events unfold,
and please, folks, stay alert at all times!
There are rumors that "Golden Locks"
might be part of a gang
that includes another young girl—
who has allegedly been seen in these parts
wearing a red hood!

How I Came to Be Twenty-Two

Antonio Byrd

Not by age, but by rules
did I come to be twenty-two.
Sewn with a string by paternal hands
and dropped on a stage and for ages
followed the string where it pleased to go.
All these days, it pleased me so.

My dents from world travel stumbles
quickly mended. My cuts and scrapes,
covered in bandage. My belly filled
with citrus fruit, and not my hand lifted.

Subtle gains in age, subtle changes in body,
as then came the shock of how I had grown
to mend the wounds and feed the belly;
one by one the strings went and soon left
to walk alone.

Off the stage I fell, asking,
"What happened?"
My Heart A Celtic Knot
Allison Parliament

Verse
No 036

Faith, Love, and the Past, all entwined,
banded together into one.

Complex, beautiful, unique,
open and hard to break,
ever the same.

Tradition beats through out,
pulsing from within.

Cherished, protected, never forgotten,
the maid, the mother, the Crone.
Birth, living, death.

Running a course,
following a path.

Charlene
Andrea Vanderme

Prose
No 037

Books. Shelves upon shelves. An endless
array of wonder and adventure, waiting to
begin. Charlene's eyes breathed in every
spine, fingertips gently stroked. How could
she ever choose? A classic? A romance?
An adventure?
A blade ripped through her thoughts.
Quickly she reached for the sword fastened
about her waist. The clang of metal erupted.
She twisted the ball of the sword on her
palm, tempting her opponent. Eyes sharp,
they pierced the glowing orbs that took
her in.

A tall, lanky male, sword extended—ready
for another blow. His features rough and
worn, but young. Hands calloused, smile
riveting. Green eyes drilled back, beckoning.
Her strike was low, not unexpected. The blow
was countered, her sword thrust aside. The
blade came again, quicker, slicing a new
hole in his trousers.

Eyebrows arched, the young man seemed
surprised. His lips parted, tongue glistening.
Charlene!

A small voice filled her mind as the tall
figure faded to black. In his place stood a
woman, her mother. Standing about five feet
tall, worry creased her brow. She wore a
loose fitting blouse and slacks. Her earrings
still bounced, even though her head was
completely still.

The harsh whisper seemed loud enough to
draw more than a few onlookers. Looking
down, her feet were firmly planted atop
the library study table. Two young girls sat
on either side, unsure if they should laugh
or stare. In her right hand, she clung to an
object, a pencil, freshly sharpened.

Gingerly, she placed it on the table and
climbed down.

The walk home was quiet. Charlene's
feet dragged across the pebble scattered
sidewalk. Occasionally her eyes dared to
glance at her mother, whose face remained
solemn. A tight line ran the length of her
mouth where a smile should be. Eyebrows
creased—whether in fury or empathy
was unclear.

Two more blocks. Charlene thought to
herself. Fingers wrapped tight around a
warm leather binding. Stroking the spine,
she smiled.
So We Will Be Going Soon  
Keihi DePace  

Verse
No 038

Gone o’re hills, dark, vast, and far away
In to a world dreamed of yesterday
No more shall hopes, prevailing, live on
They shall be mute; like all others, gone.

Never again merry men speak
Never to those quiet and meek
Though his words address only our fear
He speaks soft; but we never will hear.

Fear of a world dying, stooped in decay
Fear of a world lost in fighting’s fray
Again, the heart rises, tugging the strings
No more the harp sounds; no more it sings.

Lost of the lost and last of the first
Only for love and warmth we do thirst
Here in the dead of a winter cold
We see nothing new sins are old.

My heart, it has a tale to tell
That my words shall your false hopes dispel
One life; one word: all I have to show
Of things I see; this is all I know.

Leaving then, is all we have to choose
In this life there is naught left to lose
Only in my mind are they what they seem
But a life and joy; homes and a dream.

So faint not, strong heart, oh, brave soul
Look on, towards the future-set goal
Whispering as we pass to the dawn
We will be going soon; soon we’ll be gone.

Shoe-Shine in Tokyo  
Arvilla Fee  

Verse
No 039

An unassuming figure on bended knees,
shoulders hunched forward,
eyes upon the feet of humanity,
swishes a clean, worn cloth
back and forth.
An artist in her own right,
she creates a shiny canvas upon which
the soles of men may trod.

An unassuming figure encased by cardboard
and the steel-gray slabs of
a buzzing Tokyo sidewalk
wears a simple white blouse and
egg-blue apron.
A queen in her own right,
she commands her polish to erase the stains
of the subway sand.

An unassuming figure with nimble black fingers,
surrounded by cans of Kiwi,
butters and a cup of green tea,
makes no excuses or apologies
for her career.
A business tycoon in her own right,
she tallies up her earnings in a leaf-brown binder
tied together with string.

A magician in her own right,
people remember ‘the lady who make shoes clean,’
and she
turns dirt
into Yen.
The Winds of My Hometown

Kelhi DePace

Verse

No 040

It was a windy day when to my hometown I came;
The people were as they had been, entirely the same.
It only I could show them how their ancient ways
Have left them in the sad world of those past days.

They see no need for progress and so they are left behind
To cherish the things which the past brings to mind.
They are left in shadows, for their past to fight.
"Of great men, better days, and what is upright."

The winds blow through the town by night and day
Always bringing the three: destruction, death, decay.
"No man can fight against their power so great!"
So it was here that I learned all life to hate.

I know they will tell me that, "human works will not remain,"
So their love of morals I must always greet with disdain.
This world is all have, so for it, I must fight
And hope that it will be eternal through human might.

Between the Anvil and the Hammer

Antonio Byrd

Verse

No 041

Snow litters the ground yet
cold never felt so warm
between the anvil and the hammer.
There’s a spewing from the sky
and it smells like fire.

Never shaped the future
’cause the future shapes us--
it makes the present possible.
What’s desired in our minds
we bring to reality with our hands.

We've plowed this land and
made a garden, plowed the
garden and made a factory.
Left razor blades in apples and
chains on trees.

The sun sits on horizon's edge,
peeping over hill and mountain.
Its light flees from passing shadows,
as slavery is a terror on crows' wings;
Dare we speak and disturb the universe?

The view from here is tunnel vision.
Build a wall of computer screens
and sacrifice virgins on digital stones.
Emotions encapsulated in lover's dreams
grow on decayed bones.

We've made our happiness, yet live
asking why do we have sleepless days, for
the air feels so warm between
the anvil and the hammer?
Still
Deidra Allen

The door is never opened to that room
Where pink suffocates the wall
Tiny clothes hang unworn in the closet
Tags still attached

The blankets laced with ribbons
Confined to their plastic wrapping
Still stacked in the rocking chair
Gathering dust

And the crib lines the wall
Still.
Bare as it has always been

Cookie Cutter
Arvilla Fee

They all look alike:
Thin, thin, unquestionably thin.
Everybody knows,
thin is hip; thin is in.
Half-starved, half-fake,
cut out the cookie,
now we bake
at 350 degrees
beneath a fake sun,
do not let them get
too over-done.
So-n-So had a tuck,
So-n-So had a nip,
the other So-n-So,
got to Paris on a trip.
Those Paris lights
aim at their faces,
bring out the air-brush
wipe out the traces
of any dark circle
of any aged line;
the public must see them
as one-hundred percent fine.
Fine sells magazines;
there’s nothing you can do;
she’ll always look this beautiful.

far more beautiful than you...
All blondes and blues,
not a single ounce of fat;
now how in the world
can you compete with that?
You use the same mascara;
you buy the same clothes;
you use the same colors
on your fingers and toes.
But they cut out the cookies
on the day you weren’t there,
and you got stuck
with your eyes and your hair;
and now you’re stuck wondering
if you honestly can
find 101 ways
to seduce your own man;
so you buy another magazine
and learn all the tricks
except for the one
that makes you look
like a stick.
Oh, Humanity
Kelhi DePace
Verse
No 044

It has been dark for days;
The world’s covered in that foggy haze.
They say, “It’s the industry, in the city.”
Oh, humanity, what a pity!

Your progress and your power
Shall soon you all devour.
Whether by power or lies,
All you make surely dies.

What hope then is there?
If all of life is but dust and air?
‘Let us return to the beginning!’
Oh, humanity, you’ll keep on sinning!

Look at Us They Say
Arvilla Fee
Verse
No 045

Look at our airplanes, they say; see how quickly we
can travel now – New York to Paris in one meal, a
movie and a nap.
Look at our computers, they say, software, hardware
megabytes, gigabytes; the entire world fits neatly into
the palm of our hand.

Look at our cars, they say, faster, sleeker, safer, sexier,
zero to seventy in four seconds flat; dual air bags,
of course, are standard.
Look at our Blackberry Pearl and that Apple iPhone and
the LG Star and the LG LW3000 Android phone;
we OWN communication!

Look at our televisions, they say, HD, plasma, flat screen:
crystal clear images on our 52” screens
with surround sound to boot!
Look at our theaters, packed wall-to-wall, grossing millions;
we must have our popcorn, our Coke, our Skittles; Give us
DVDs on Blue Ray.
Half way around the world: look at the sandals on our
bare feet, they say, see how dirty they become as we flee
from our homes?
We have no wings with which to fly, they say; only our feet
to carry us thousands of miles; we march to drums of war;
we are refugees.

Look at your computers, they say, do you read the reports
about Sudan? Do you see how they rape our poor women
and murder our children?
Do all those gigabytes tell you that 450,000 of us have died
in the past five years, they say, and that another 2.5 million
no longer have homes?
Look at your HDTV, they say; do you see us huddled together around our fires, casting uneasy glances over our shoulders as we grip our AK-47s?

Sit in your theaters with your ten-dollar popcorn and know that we will never see a movie, they say; our lives are our movies—rated R for violence.

As you ride in your sexy, sleek cars, can you envision the burned huts in our villages or the gaunt faces of our children as they brush off flies and wait for rice? If you could call me on your BlackBerry or iPhone, what would you tell me, they say? Could you tell me, for certain, that we will not die today?

Letters from the Front
Stephen Bray

Dear—
Mom, Dad, Sister, Brother, Girlfriend, Wife…

(The greeting won't be read, just the content—so be sure to mention that you're proud of where you've been, and eager to greet what lies ahead. Make it count, so the loss seems worth it)

(Harp on sentimental moments—something worth remembering—not like water through the fingers; leave the mind more to maintain than a portrait of the beginning of the end.)

(End with something quirky, don't be over sentimental. Downplay the awkwardness.)

Love,
Rooftops

Stephen Bray

From the rooftops you can see, with smoke in eyes, houses, livestock, vegetation, and vehicles. All burning. All on fire.

Smoke billows and wafts in all directions, like a sand storm or a blizzard, with heat that devours everything it touches. It touches everything.

White sheets and satellite dishes cover rooftops where children play and men lie in wait for other men. A hop and a jump lands a morning breakfast, a conversation, or a step into the darkness.

Telephone lines begin to unravel and fall, disrupting communication with every spark, snap, and pop. Inhaling becomes harder, running into the darkness, and praying for the rain.

Cadence

Stephen Bray

The lyrics were simple—kept fast feet moving forward, instilled cohesion, and tilled the ground for planting:

"When I die in a combat zone, box me up and ship me home. Pin my medals upon my chest, tell my momma that I done my best."

As an older man he acknowledged he overlooked the weight of the outcome, never noticing the "when," but running blindly in search of the medals.
Quietly Observing My Car
Matthew Johnson

Verse
No 049

No work today. It's time to rest.
I have run out of reasons to wake.
It seems I have made my conquest.
Was this all a mistake?
Still, you are an improvement.
I can't fix your body or paint.
Thank you for letting me vent.
Your silence is my true complaint.
Do you know what it's like: loneliness?
I'm unable to tell them so.
It's an exercise in foolishness.
To think they'll understand my woe.
Enough of this sappy mush.
Let's go, I need the rush.

Quietly Observing My Mechanic
Matthew Johnson

Verse
No 050

No blood, no pulse, no tissue to bind;
My heart beats all the same.
Just pop the hood it's easy to find.
It aches because my master feels pain.
Each day he tries to imitate man.
Though flesh and bone, he feels separate.
Friends? He has a limitless span.
It is love he cannot generate.
He asks, "Why am I man with a heart of metal?"
"Why can they live happy, while I am alone?"
So, he slams my door, pushes my pedal.
These thoughts he cannot condone.
"If I cannot love flesh and bone,
I will serve steel and chrome."
The Master chose remedial work.  
The Apprentice had gone to rest.  
The Master only made a twist, a jerk.  
But, he was not at his best.  
The Master met fuel and cheap wire.  
His frugality came back to bite.  
The flames consumed with rampant desire.  
No water was in sight.  
The flames now had the power.  
Greedily they burned the truck.  
Precious seconds dragged on for an hour;  
Until the water finally struck.  
The Apprentice roared with devastation.  
The Master knew well his frustration.

Your second and fifth steps are missing,  
like a first grader’s gap-toothed smile,  
and your porch sags in the middle,  
too tired, I suppose,  
to lie spine straight.  
Your door hangs by one hinge,  
frantically it seems  
– one last futile effort  
to save yourself  
from mouse droppings and cobwebs.

Your honey-yellow paint  
has peeled and faded  
under too many spring rains and  
too many shimmering summers  
and has turned as brown as mud  
in the bottom of a creek bed.  
Oh, close your curtainless eyes,  
and never mind the shards of glass tears  
shed over rocks carelessly thrown  
by peaks of puberty.

Your fireplace has crumbled into a mound  
of stones,  
buried itself in its own grave, I suppose;  
- because no one sits here for warmth,  
not even you.  
Alas, you shiver in the dark  
as the wind whistles through your weaknesses,  
and the moonlight skitters random shadows  
across the termites’ gourmet floor.
He had a new guest. Richard felt vigor in his fingers at the anticipation. He could scarcely recall the last time he had entertained a new guest. He had hosted an array of tea parties for his close acquaintances and friends, this much was true. Yet, it was much more thrilling to have someone different.

He smiled at the faded mirror, the reflection failing to smile back. That in itself was not unusual to Richard. He preferred to do without the blemish of his visage, instead gazing at the ancient bronze mask that obscured his features. Stark white gloves, fresh and crisp adorned his hands as Richard took his time to inspect the mask's surface. He had set aside a fresh suit, newly arrived from the tailor in a handsome burgundy red. He always insisted on new suits for such events as the dampness of his home ruined such attire too quickly. He was truly convinced it was something in the air...moisture had a tendency to cling to the walls on certain mornings.

He paused briefly as he rolled his fingers over the clasp of his fob watch. It was six-thirty. Plenty of time and yet hardly enough. Richard slid the prized timepiece back to his suit jacket as he fretted over his appearance. He still had much to do as he concerned himself on how he would treat his new arrival. Matters that seemed trivial to outsiders were life-or-death to his sensibilities. Even as he moved through the motions of affixing his tie, he mused aloud to himself.

"I wonder how he takes his tea? Perhaps I should use the fresh chinaware. No...no...that will not do at all. The rest do like the heirloom set and I should not insult my other guests for the sake of a new one. What would be the best conversation after introductions? Certainly not politics...or religion. Those discussions always get rather disastrous. Especially if he is a rude one..."

Richard paused for a moment after affixing his tie. He had not considered the idea of a rude guest. It had been a long time since he had to deal with a rude guest as well. He pursed his lips together, feeling the ruins of his flesh against the interior of the mask. A lack of manners was typical amongst the younger generations. He contemplated, mulling it over as he walked to the kitchenette. His fingers grasped a fizzy cloth and began to polish away at the old porcelain, deciding he would correct such infractions of etiquette if they came about. After all, a good host should be there to guide the conversation away from possible follies. Satisfied, he went about the busy work to make sure all the pieces had a fine luster.

Preparations were just as important as the presentation, Richard knew. He had hosted time and time again to the delight of his tea companions. He briefly settled his fingers on a fresh tin carrying the fragrant tea leaves for Darjeeling tea. His hand hesitated before sliding the tin back. Darjeeling was refined, heavenly,
and not always meant for the taste buds of those who could not savor its headiness. He would not waste expense until he knew the measure of the young man coming to join them that evening. He settled on the Earl Grey, an acceptable tea for the table and truthfully, one of his favorite pekoes.

He set the water to boil, knowing it would sit as only Americans would boil the water and the tea at the same time. It was a ghastly way to evicerate a proper cup of tea, but Richard Clemmings had the blessing of being British and had learned appropriate methods. He glanced again to his watch before walking to the door. The punctual and polite entourage had arrived as always. No sleet, snow, fog, or rain would keep his guests from being so errant as to arrive late. His hands became busy once more, sliding a coat from the back of Mr. Jives, a rather rotund but jovial merchant clerk for a shipping company that Richard's family had contracted with for years. Then there was Mrs. Pettiwake, a widowed friend of the family who had Richard cherished since he was a child, though noticing the smile of Cynthia... Ms. Clairmont...he reminded himself as he walked. He tried not to think how he had felt his eyes following him as he moved quickly to the door. He felt his eye briefly twitch in annoyance however when the bell began to clang again over the door. He paused at the threshold, smoothing down his suit before his hand reached down to open the door.  

He glanced down at his cell phone again, staring at the e-mail his father had sent. Peter was less than thrilled at the entrance. The door yanked open abruptly giving the cord a yank again. It had taken Peter a moment of confusion, having the suit jacket. After a moment of confusion, Peter found himself without the blazer jacket. "This way, please.

Richard began to walk, an even pace that belted heartiness rather than the aged stoop that Peter had imagined. He had imagined a lot, in fact. He had expected some ancient throwback to his father's years or older. His father had given him the impression that Clemmings had been a client for their bank for some time, Peter often recalled of the nursing ward of the family who had Richard cherished if only for her stories and experiences she often liked to share after her third cup of tea. Richard kindly drew back the chair to allow Ms. Clairmont sit down, a beautiful but engaged actress that had caught his eye two years ago with beautiful pale features and a smile that made his heart flutter. Lastly, he opened the way for Mr. Porter, a neighbor who had a fondness for smoking a cigar before sitting down for tea. He smiled to his table, setting the dishes down, his fellow friends and companions that had spent many a year with him.

"Tea will be shortly, we have one more joining us today. It does seem that he is a bit late but..." He paused, seeing them stare at him as he sighed briefly. "I know, I know...it is rather rude to keep us all waiting but there is no help for it. I—"

Richard felt the words leave his lips as the bell began to chime, indicating the last guest had arrived. He pardoned himself, though noticing the smile of Cynthia... Ms. Clairmont...he reminded himself as he walked. He tried not to think how he had felt her eyes following him as he moved. He felt his eye briefly twitch in annoyance however when the bell began to clang again over the door. He paused at the threshold, smoothing down his suit before his hand reached down to open the door.  

Don’t see why the old turkey neck couldn’t be here himself.

Peter shifted, straightening the collar again on his suit jacket. His nose scrunched up for a moment as his fingers clasped the right clasp of his dress shirt and sniffed it. A whiff of alcohol from the night prior wafted to his nose as he blinked a bit. He shouldn’t have gone out with the lads to the pub last night. Hopefully the host wouldn’t smell it. It was bad enough that he was out here. His dad had indicated that Clemmings was some sort of eccentric who insisted on hiding his features. Like the bloody Phantom of the Opera. He glanced up, shoving his cell phone away as he noticed the door still hadn’t opened. Essex was giving all its love today as well as he tried to ignore the cold fog still clinging in the air. What kind of git has tea at 9 o’clock at night anyway?

Peter contemplated walking away, giving the cord a yank again. It had taken him a good five minutes to realize that the cord was some sort of doorbell as he heard the clanging of a bell on the other side of the entrance. The door yanked open abruptly as Peter found himself face to mask with the same odor Peter often recalled of the nursing ward again on his suit jacket. His nose scrunched up as something began to waft over him, much more heady than the bit of spirits clinging to his shirt collar. Clemmings smelled of age, the same odor Peter had imagined. He had better days...the fraying of moth eaten clothing showing on the strands. The coats looked off as well, but Peter ignored it as he tried to catch up to his host.

It doesn’t matter a fact that his old man had sent him out to be some sort of doorbell as he heard the clanging of a bell on the other side of the entrance. The door yanked open abruptly as Peter found himself face to face with the same odor Peter often recalled of the nursing ward...
Richard had stopped within the kitchenette, patiently pouring the hot water of the kettle into a teapot with a fresh crush of Earl Grey being lowered into the kettle with the water. Fresh cream, sugar cubes, and a small bowl bearing layered honey was laid out onto the tray. Peter smiled, seeing an opportunity to maybe impress the host and hopefully leave a decent memory. It would get his father off his back and less harping on about his inheritance or how much of a disappointment he supposedly was to him.

"Do you need a hand? I could get the cups or the like."

"Oh, that is already taken care of, young man. I set the table moments ago. It would be insulting for me to have you do any work."

As he stood with the tray, Peter heard the sound of his host breathing deeply...like a vacuum sucking dust in. Richard had stopped rather than moving forward and Peter felt like meat on a display before his host spoke again. "You may wish to freshen up a little bit. I am not so sure the others will go without comment at the scent of beer on your person, my young friend. There is a sink over there for your hands and face. A dash of garlic or sage along the collar might also mask the smell."

Peter felt like he was twelve again and his father had found him sneaking a nip from his private shelf. He remembered his father just giving a wink and blowing over his finger, a secret between father and son. It had been a long time since he had seen such kindness from his old man and here was his host doing a gesture not too dissimilar. Without thinking, he found himself following the suggestion...peppering a little bit of sage and paprika to be safe, grinding it a little over his collar before wiping it away so no one would notice.

Peter moved for the hallway, pausing before he got his bearings. His feet began to pace down the hall...the dankened hall feeling like a tunnel that seemed to go on into oblivion. He told himself it was merely the light playing tricks, that he was still slightly hung over from last night. He tried to ignore the feeling that he was going deeper into the house, like walking into Hell. The scent he had picked up on his host grew and he tried to ignore the thought...that he could hear his footsteps. Soon, he could hear the clatter of cup against saucer as Richard began to pour tea. Even as he walked towards the threshold, he could hear apologies for the delay. He sounded so stodgy, kindly but he could already tell that this table was going to be full of the hoity-toity and stiffs his father usually entertained at the bank itself. He closed his eyes, inhaling before crossing the doorway to meet Richard’s table.

Richard guided him towards the table, his other hand sliding the chair out. Peter wanted to resist, to escape but fear gripped him...fear that if he did something other than what his host wanted...it spoke of a sure death.

"I am glad you joined us for tea, Mr. Dawkins. Your father has spoken to me on more than one occasion of his errant son but I must say, you do seem less of a horror than I thought you would be from his stories. But I suppose you can never judge a book by the summary of another person. No matter. We will have plenty of time to discuss this over tea. Do you take your tea with sugar...honey...cream? No words? No matter, we will have plenty of time to talk as I said. You should know, Mr. Dawkins that I have had a long relationship with your family..."

Peter blinked, trying to get his words to work before he cleared his throat...finally able to speak. "My...my father will come looking...or me!"

Richard merely smiled behind his mask at the young man interrupting him...such rudeness as he cleared his throat. "Perhaps...perhaps not, Mr. Dawkins. In the meantime, how do you like your tea?"
Verse

No 056

Don't you miss the days when a pair of new tennis shoes made you the fastest runner on earth and a cardboard box could be recycled in a hundred and twenty ways long before recycling was even cool; suddenly those four walls could become a fort a castle a jail... you were a cowgirl, a princess fighting a dragon, the cop who locked up the robbers forever.

Don't you miss the days when a plastic cup filled with chocolate milk and a bologna sandwich on fresh, white bread topped with a mustard smiley face tasted better than all the steaks in the world, especially if you were perched on a branch in your crabapple tree where blossoms, leaves and bumblebees transported you into your own private jungle far away from the houses and hot pavement.

Don't you miss the days when you could roll around in a patch of fresh, rain-soaked mud, and no one would yell at you because little brown-plastered faces were considered cute, and clothes could be washed. Besides everyone knows you cannot make pies or pretend to be a Tribal leader, or torture your little brother unless you have mud dripping off your elbows.

Don't you miss the days when you could pedal your bike a hundred miles an hour and impress your friends by skating backwards all the way down the street, and when you got tired you could lie on your back in the grass and stare at the clouds until they magically turned into T-rexes, a car with two tails or a hippo with lion paws and a toucan beak.

Don't you miss the days when ten feet of snow covered the ground and you shrieked for joy because school was cancelled for like a whole month and you could build snow tunnels and throw snow balls at the neighbor boys and stamp your feet on a rug when you came inside to drink hot chocolate and warm up your red, frozen hands.

Don't you miss the days when love wasn't any more complicated than circling yes or no on a note that the boy in the back row dropped on your desk when he walked by you... pretending he had to sharpen his pencil, and feeling better was as easy as sticking on a Band-aid.

Don't you miss the days when monsters were fake, the Tooth Fairy was real, stars granted wishes, you got paid to take out the trash, and nothing else mattered except being a kid?
Heart of the Phoenix
Kimberly Gray

Illustration
Nº 057

Lunar Descent
Dana Smith

Illustration
Nº 058
Lens
Andrea Vanderme
Photography
N° 059

Bottles
Andrea Vanderme
Painting
N° 060