



**FILIBUSTER
2012**





Filibuster 2012

Information
Nº 000

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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

Happy Reading,

Stephen Bray

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assistance greatly contributed to the success of this edition.

Also contributing to this success is Dr. Robert Klevary, 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.

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

Verse
Nº 003

even the crumbs
disappeared...

then licked
every last
smudgy word

one
by
one

off the tips
of
your fingers?

Delightful Addiction
Andrea Vandermey

Verse
Nº 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.

Spider Lilly
Matthew Kemp

Verse
Nº 005

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
Stephen Bray

Verse
Nº 006

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
shhhhhh 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 shhhhhh I think of you
and wonder if we'll make it.

Twilight Brewery
Kelhi DePace

Prose
Nº 007

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 rolled 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 cup of coffee towards her. "Enjoy," he said in hopes of receiving a cheerful response. "Thanks," she mumbled back and walked out through the door. She was paying little attention to her surroundings and collided with another woman who was about to enter, hot coffee drenching the white sleeve of her blouse. Before she vocalized her thoughts, she felt his eyes again. When she turned, he was watching her through the glass window where his chair was situated. Again, she could not see all of his face as the coffee shop's decoratively painted, purple and white logo, "Twilight Brewery", hid his features. Instead of demanding another cup of coffee, she drove away, not wanting to get near that man again.

But he was there every day: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. She would come in around 7:45. He would be there, seated by the window, reading a book, taking small sips from the cup of coffee on the low table in front of him. She tried to ignore his presence by acting like everyone else, drawing no attention to herself. The more she hid her emotions and the less she expressed her characteristic frustration, the more he seemed to notice. Driving home on Friday, hands clenching the steering wheel, she hatched a scheme. "Here's what I'll do: I'll get there 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.* All weekend long she was desperate for Monday to come, not dreading its return. Monday morning came. Her alarm went off at 5:30; an hour earlier than normal. She reminded herself: *It's worth getting up this early if he's not there!* At 6:45 she practically waltzed into Twilight Brewery, triumphant at last. She stopped at the counter as the cashier signaled he'd be right with her. With a smile, perhaps the first that she had graced the establishment with during the duration of that year, she looked around the room. She gasped: *He's here!* She ran outside, barely remembering to grab her purse off the counter.

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 darting 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 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 gazing 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. She took her purse and cup of coffee, heading for the door. He looked at her

from over the top of his book as she walked by. "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 parkingzone 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.



The other people had long since stopped watching her. She needed a place to sit and think. The only seat available was his.

She sat slowly, almost reverently, placing her purse on the ground beside her feet. She took a sip of her coffee and breathed in deep. Smiling, she thought with a faint laugh, *Maybe I'm crazy!*

There was a bang and a snarl from behind. She turned slightly, the cup of coffee in her hands, held close to her mouth. A man was fighting with the door; he'd closed his tie in it. She had only looked for a second, but suddenly, he stopped mumbling to himself, relaxed, and looked over at her. In her eyes, there was only sympathy.

* * * * *

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 bedstand caught his attention: a book, a quarter, and a cup of coffee bearing the decorative label of "Twilight Brewery."

Questions

Catherine Dupree

Verse
Nº 008

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.





Breakfast
Matthew Kemp

Verse
Nº 009

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

Verse
Nº 010

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, specks of dirt,
mites 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
all the rest.



Parenting
Stephen Bray

Verse
No 011

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.

Bella San Marco
Arvilla Fee

Verse
No 012

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

hand-painted ball-room masques,
scarves as brilliant as butterfly wings.

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

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

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

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.

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,



L'appel du vide (part 1)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 -
 never 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 melodic 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 this 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





blanketed her nightstand. She would have whipped out her handkerchief and polished it if she had had the energy. "What's the use now?" she asked herself.

There was a lifetime of memories in that old farmhouse. Her family had boldly faced the elements together there—tornadoes, snowstorms, and severe droughts—for seventy years. The plains of Kansas were a stark contrast to her native Ireland. She had traded green pastures for gold ones. Had she really left Ireland seventy years ago? The hazy little town of County Sherry seemed to exist only 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 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 again and inched over to her desk. She sat down in a musty chair that creaked noisily beneath 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 his work in the 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. He loved her! 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.

"Mother?" Jim called impatiently from downstairs. "What on earth are you doing up there? Are you alright?" Everything came back to her. Her room, the breeze, Chris and Jeff shouting at each other below 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 stationery 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! Not after all of these years. He had married someone else, no doubt.





Wolf Howling
Kimberly Gray

Illustration
Nº 016

"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." There. 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.



Kimberly Gray
3/14/12





Rain
Deric Sallas

Verse
Nº 017

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

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

The leathered 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

Verse
Nº 019

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
Murky 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

Verse
Nº 020

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

Just Wondering
Catherine Dupree

Verse
Nº 021

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 Vandermeij

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 Lepre Masdon. 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
Nº 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
Nº 025

What? . . . Uh?
I don't know.
Oh . . . Suuuuurrrre.
Yeah. Right, right.
Mmmmm, yes. I see.
Gotchya.
Oh . . . Really? REALLY!?
Geez.
Ok. Ok. Sure.
No problem.
Bye . . .
That bastard!

Belle of the Garden
Arvilla Fee

Verse
Nº 026

She's ninety-eight,
the beautiful
white-haired lady
who lives next door.

She dresses pristinely
in powder-blue cotton pants
and a white silk blouse,
her size six feet enclosed
in beige-colored walking shoes.

She enters her garden
three times a week
and presses a floppy straw hat
onto her head
then wiggles her fingers
into green and khaki garden gloves.

She's the cutest thing,
sitting on a round pink pillow
in the middle of her garden path,
her legs tucked neatly behind her
as though she has just come in
for a cup of Japanese tea.

But she's not there for tea.
She prunes, and trims,
and clips, and hoes,
carefully pulling weeds
and stroking petals,
as if flowers were children
in need of warm milk.

She told me once
that each flower
has meaning:
the Black-Eyed Susan
is encouragement;
yellow carnations,
cheerful;
a daffodil

stands for chivalry,
which, she says,
is not dead,
by the way.

A hibiscus means
delicate beauty,
a daisy
stands for innocence,
A lilac -
first love,
a white tulip
means forgiveness,
and a peony
is for healing;
she planted the peonies
after her husband died.

She rises,
stiffly sometimes,
and fans herself
with her floppy hat
as she surveys
her fragile art -
then picks up her things
and walks noiselessly
across smooth stones.

She always stops once
at the garden gate,
looks over her shoulder
and smiles.
I want to put a Calla Lily
in her hair
so she can wear
a flower's definition
of regal.

slinkies and duct tape (a love poem)

Verse

Matthew Kemp

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 momma 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 Vandermeij

Verse
Nº 028

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

Prose
Nº 029

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 was 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. Laurel heard the sound of her door knob turning, and knew it was the sound of the moment ending. In a few moments, she would have to paste on her smile, and face reality.

She turned her head to face the window, slowly savoring every second, while silently praying time could stop and hold her here. That she could fall to sleep with fantasies of heroes and romance. A soft glow from the street lights filtered through the small window, reminding her of what was still left to be done. Tonight would change her life, turning her far from who she had always pretended to be. She wanted to hide, but knew that there was nowhere for her to go. No prayers she could summon would help. No dreams of prince charming would reach fruition. She had even called her mother for help, a woman who had had put her on the street when she had been seventeen. It had been the first time in nearly five years that she had heard her mother's voice, and her mother had hung up on her. The echo of the dial tone had nearly broken her.

She felt the rush of cool air from the open door on her bared legs that were twisted between her sheets and heard the soft familiar rhythm of tip toes. She closed her eyes as a surge of emotion lodged between her breast-bone. It was indefinable for Laurel, this emotion. Something that was indistinct of one thought, but of many frayed thoughts that left her trying harder to be a better, a stronger woman. She loved her daughter, Elise, but some days all she had to offer her four year old was fake smiles. She had never regretted her daughter's existence. Not even when her mother kicked 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, curling 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 steeled 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

Verse
Nº 030

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

Verse
Nº 031

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.

So Much for Fairytales

Allison Parliament

Verse

Nº 032

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,
With words as sharp,
as any double bladed sword.

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

Bath Time

Andrea Vandermeij

Prose

Nº 033

"It's time for your bath my dear."
"But mom..."
"No butts! 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 consoled 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 swished 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. Like the steady flow of a river, the water slowly carried him. Looking down, Kyle stared into the eyes of the crystal clear water. Cleaner than any water he had ever seen. 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 faucet 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
Arvilla Fee

Verse
 No 034

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

Verse
 No 035

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,
 and 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,
never 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 Vandermeij

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 four, worry creased her brow. She wore a

loose fitting blouse and slacks. Her earrings still bounced, even though her head was completely still.

Charlene, get down from there this very instant.

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
Kelhi DePace

Verse
No 038

Gone o're hills, dark, vast, and far away
Into 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.

Last of the lost and lost at 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 tread.

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,
buffers 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.
If 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
air 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
gnaw 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

Verse
Nº 042

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

Verse
Nº 043

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,
went 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 LU3000 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

Verse
No 046

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

Verse
No 047

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

Verse
No 048

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."

88 Dually
Matthew Johnson

Verse
Nº 051

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.

Dually
Matthew Johnson

Photography
Nº 052



Better Day
Arvilla Fee

Verse
Nº 053

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.

Abandon
Andrea Vandermey

Photography
Nº 054



How Do You Like Your Tea?
Steven Parker

Prose
Nº 055

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 eviscerate 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 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 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 fact that his old man had sent him out to the middle of nowhere. It didn't matter a whit that the home before him was closer to a manor. Nor did he give a damn that the host of the soiree happened to be one of his father's clients. The whole thing was rubbish, an attempt at his father to impress a client.

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 'respected' Richard Clemmings. Peter felt his nose scrunch 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 often recalled of the nursing ward in a hospital. Most of all, he reeked of the mustiness that belied a decaying house...

rotting boards, old iron-based paint, and water damaged ceilings.

"Ah, you have arrived just in time. We were just about to start tea. Come in, come in...out of the cold. It would be rather bad of me to let you catch your death in this weather, young man. Your father would have ill words with me if that came to pass."

Peter hesitated, the scent giving a peculiar feeling in his throat...he swallowed, at a loss for words before crossing the threshold. Clemmings shut the door, the bronze mask reflecting Peter's pale expression. Then, without warning, his host had moved behind him to help him remove 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 belied 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, harking back to his grandfather. Maybe he meant Clemmings as in the family. He considered it as he walked, noting his jacket on the rack. Two other jackets and a scarf were there, though the scarf seemed to have 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.





Richard had stopped within the kitchenette, patiently pouring the hot water of the kettle into a teapot with a fresh crush of Earl w 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 darkened 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 sound...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 stiff his father usually entertained at the bank itself. He closed his eyes, inhaling before crossing the doorway to meet Richard's table.

His eyes opened as his host touched his shoulder and felt his gut tighten. He felt his skin break out in cold-sweat...fear sweat as he saw the smiling faces of Richard Clemming's guests. His bladder felt full suddenly, his tongue full of cotton and his

legs had become jelly. All the faces smiled at him, ignoring his expression of shock and horror for smiling was all these guests would ever do. Skull grins. The skulls grinned their skeletal smiles at the two of them as Richard's hand tightened around his shoulder. His brain raced, thinking of escape but he realized the hallway may have been as long as he imagined. He could feel the grip on his shoulder, a grip that belied power and strength of a vice as Richard's eloquent voice spoke through the mask easily. He tried to think of other options before feeling the echo of his doom race in the back of his head...his blazer jacket was on the coat rack. His cell phone was still within the jacket.

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?"



Cardboard Castles

Arvilla Fee

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!

Verse

Nº 056

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 cat 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,

getting a kiss,
and eating
a strawberry cup-cake.

Don't you miss the days
when you could play Ghost in the Graveyard
and get so scared by the night noises
that you thought you'd pee your pants,
but you kept playing anyway because
you liked to feel the pounding of your heart
inside your chest,
and afterwards you and all your friends
could catch fireflies
and put them in a jar
until the whole jar twinkled.

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 Vandermey

Photography
Nº 059



Bottles
Andrea Vandermey

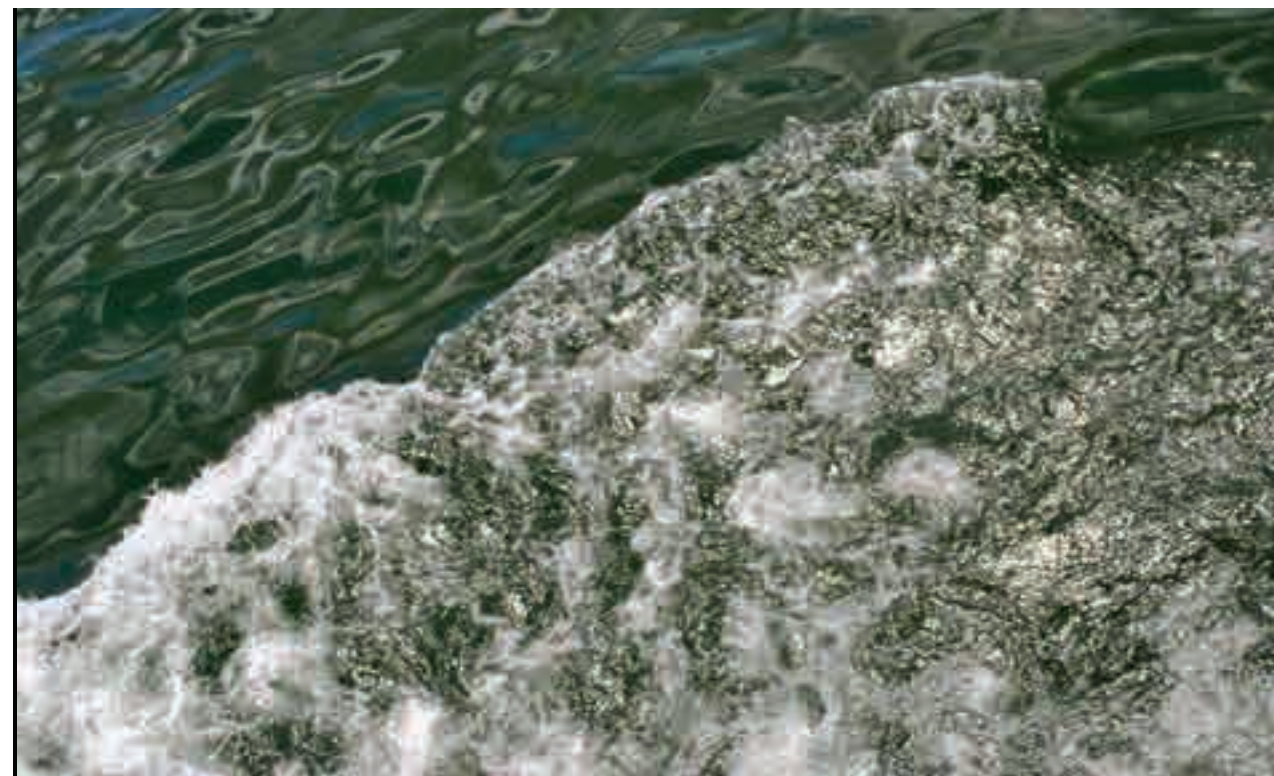
Painting
Nº 060





Spillway
Allison Parliament

Photography
Nº 061



Firework
Allison Parliament

Photography
Nº 062



