

## Fired

Sal Cetrano

You turn the knob, some antiseptic  
alloy burnished in grainy swirls,  
for the last time, and its static  
touch centers the moment, waffles  
the sick tensions, as your thoughts  
race and flutter, lurch and derail.

For the first time, the elevator  
comes too fast and falls non-stop.  
Spilt like dice onto the curb, you  
stare at spaces between buildings.

The nearest fountain's spray fails  
to wake you up, slap your face,  
dissolve a two-martini daydream.

Escape is a damp flannel suit.  
You audition reasons, explanations,  
break-even scenarios for those who  
**must** know, **should** know, **might**  
find out: permutations of failure.  
Underfoot, the subway clatters.  
You are hours early for the rush.

It dawns upon you suddenly  
that you are an intruder, despite  
your communion with the flow  
and the assurances of worth,  
old plastic-fantastic, stacked  
chill and slick in your pocket.  
Always, welcome stands provisional:

capped smile, greased red carpet,  
ivory hives where miracles happen—  
another you, perfected, pivots  
like a shark's tooth into place.