

Gone

by Philip F. Clark

On the train in the morning
in a crush of bodies and sweat
I read the news: ". . . have successfully
'deleted' the virus from the body." Gone.

Gone -- all those years
of oh I wish you would leave me
and oh please leave me, please, just go.
Gone; eloped to Vegas perhaps.

Erased. Like chalk across my body,
a fine powder of forgetfulness,
with a few swipes --- all those names
and faces, gone. The letters burned.

"Begone, you have no power here,"
the beautiful lady said, and off it went.
It left my body. No long good-byes,
no rent overdue. No thank-you's.

And I looked at myself, and waited
for the change to begin; the skin
to soften once again, the face to fill,
the hair to glow, the eyes to shine.

Gone. The years gone. What magic!
All the pretty pills I used to play
chess with: the blue King; the pink
Queen; the red and white Rook.

Gone. It took everything with it.
Except these: humor, anger, and memory;

a certain truth told slant, like the poet said.
Obliterated. With a needle, no less.

Forgiven completely like a student loan --
"Zero balance due." Gone, like last night's
misbegotten moon. Now, out of work,
the pallbearer's hands have nothing to do.

