

Bamboo Heart

By John Thiemeyer

The heart was shaped from earlier, more flexible shoots, tied together with cheap orange wire now bleeding in the water, and allowed to develop on their own, fixed in a plastic jar surrounded with small round pebbles, a triumph in its confinement.

It was the end of one year in a very dry and unsucculent place.

It was, the bamboo heart, a cheap ugly item that stood out, even in Wal-Mart, which is where my friend ran across it.

She knew I'd appreciate it.

She had a good idea what other people would be getting me — bullion by the boatload, damask from Syria, myrrh, the like — since it was, after all, a rare year.

Whatever else it might amount to in someone else's eyes, it was a rare year. It was a good year.

Notwithstanding, she had no idea what she should

get, what was appropriate.

But when she saw this, she knew this was the ticket. It would draw a smile from me.

To hell with the "spiritual progress" stuff. To hell with a momentary celebration, a few gifts, all the temporary rigmarole.

Let's just go for the smile right now. The temporary, the momentary, the monumental were all of a piece, one and the same. Be grateful and don't forget.

I keep it on my counter in my place (the one with the roof) where I see it periodically during the day. It looks like a round-bellied, big-hearted toad sitting there where I can't dismiss it. Laughing at me. To my face.

Don't take things so seriously. Don't forget the most important thing — to laugh. To see the humor in all this confusion and excitement. "Even boredom," she said. "Even when the lights go out."



By Nathan Roper

Take the Egg

by Jay Boss Rubin

Take the egg off my bacon egg and cheeseburger and
You're probably doing me a favor
Let it bring a little nutrition to someone else

Take the bacon off my bacon cheeseburger and
So what, I've still got a cheeseburger

Take the cheese off my cheeseburger and
I might be a little jealous of the guy
Sitting next to me if he's still got
Cheese on his, but it's no big deal, I'll survive

Take the hamburger off my hamburger and
Leave me with just the bun, if someone can
Fry up the meat and make a little
Sauce to feed a family

Take my bun? Take my bun when it's all I've got left?
Take it when it's hardened and grind it into bread
crumbs
Pry it from my cold dead hands

October 6, 2011, in solidarity with Occupy Wall Street

Getting Your Life Back

By N. Page

Getting your life back isn't easy
First you bounce off the walls
Look for long-lost things
Long lost friends
Find books you read 25 years ago
Eat stuff you shouldn't
Then eat stuff you should,
Stare at the wall
Sleep a lot, sleep some more
Stare at the wall some more
Think of all the things you did wrong
Forgive yourself and everyone else
Think of all the things you will do right
And then finally —
YOU are back
Hello you
Where have you been all these years?