HIDDEN TREASURES

Homeless and starved of nicotine, I pace the streets, eyes down, no shame.

Shame came and went that shy first time my back was bent and I picked up

My first stranger’s half-smoked ciggie, lying tempting in the gutter.

After that, it became easy – shameless, ignoring dirty looks,

I bent and plucked the half-smoked fags I’d never really seen before,

Before, when I had ready cash. Not caring they’d touched strangers’ lips,

Oblivious to the health risks, I was a boy again, furtive,

Hunting birds’ eggs in the dark woods, to prick them with a pin each end,

Put them to my lips and exhale, extinguishing the life within.

Now I was inhaling the life into my lungs, into my soul,

In fluttering moments of joy I’d not felt since I was that boy.

One day, among the kerbside weeds, I saw a cigarette unlit,

Complete, its filter fresh and clean, and as I lit this precious gift,

I had never been so happy, never felt so redeemed, reborn.