**A Tantalizing**
By William Mastrosimone

Dafne:
    Sir? (pause) Sir? (sitting on piano stool) My father froze to death out in the street. He suffered a stroke some months before and it left him no so responsible for himself. If you took an eye off of him, he’d wander out. You’d find him out on the street asking strangers for picket change, or stealing apples at the corner mart, or looking through a garbage can. It was quite embarrassing for the familiar. Such a comedown for him, from what he was before. (pause) Dad was a restorer. A historian with a hammer.  When I was younger he would take me sometimes. I’d hang onto his long scarf and walk in the wake of his pipe smoke. Cherry blend. Funny: I can catch a wiff of that now and suddenly he’d there. He’d take me to a cold ramshackle house where hinges screech and a rat would run for cover, where the roof leaked and the stairs buckled and floors warped, some landmark building. And grave men would be waiting there, and they’d make a big fuss over me, and asked Dad if he would restore this disaster back to the original condition. And Dad would puff on his pipe and give a hard look. His eyes could see under decades of abuse and neglect; strip away and sandpaper the dereliction down to the run in the grain of the wood. And he’d sat, “Yup,” and then do more than he promised. (pause) It was lunchtime when a police officer saw a passerby tripping over what he thought was a vagrant on the sidewalk. He nudged the vagrant with his billyclub. (pause) They say freezing is the kindest death. First you tremble, then you get numb, then you curl up like a baby in a crib, and sleep.