

Stemming and Fidgeting

Poetry by Nicole Kubilus

Lift Off

All it takes to lift is a shift
In the arch, then I march
Pitter patter, skitter scamper
Wall to wall, crash and fall

Roll over, scream "Red rover"
Again, I dash. Again, I crash
Over and over. Right and left shoulder
Ricochet's my child's play

No need for fields green
Basketball courts or cardboard forts
Television that hurts my vision
Pretend house with imaginary spouse

I don't seek sneakers
And boots don't suit
Even socks are crusty rocks
Any sole takes a toll

My feet are bare. Everyone stares
Tell me to stop. My heels bop
I am free to let my feet be
A spring, a swing

A rocking chair. My running dare
How fast I can go when I explode
Angry, scared. When no one cares
I elope, and all I hope

Is to run away, or maybe play
Disappear, there and here
No more control. Sprint to stroll
Pull me inside. I'm fried

Still, I get up. Tell the wall "Sup?"
Go again. Wall, catch me, my friend
Sprint. Smack my dirty handprints
All alone. No broken or shattered bone

Just bruises and vibrations. What a sensation
I feel alive. I can thrive
When I stand up tall. No longer small
All it takes to lift is a shift

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Head Banging

Slam. Whap. Pow.
How, how, how
Do you stop, stop stop
This agonizing bop, bop bop

That's what she said, and he
Wanting to set me free
Of a torture compulsion
Bang! Bang! Trigger convulsion

Something inside me breaks
Now I'm an earthquake
Fissures become veins
The wall channels my pain

Head like water in a plastic bin
Slosh. Slosh. Slosh to never end
Spilled everywhere. So aggressive
So unhealthy. So excessive

What starts as a natural disaster
Untamable, yet starting to master
Soothing like a rattle
Recovering from that inner battle

Then, it becomes routine
Once agonizing, now soothing
Like fingers drumming on a desk
The distress I can now digest

Knock. Knock. Knock
Tick-tock. Tick-tock
I zone out at the clock face
Head tapping. Zen-like pace

Lift me up. Carry me to bed
A pillow cradles my head
Much softer. Not satisfying
Not the wall. I started crying

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Stimming Staccato

My hands
Keep tempo
Of a drummer
Without sticks

They're the soft
Rap-tap-tap
Of loose and smooth
Weekend jazz

Next second
Rage thrash and smash
Break your neck
Heavy metal rock

Then peppy
Pop and pow
Boy band tune
And swoon. I squeal

Jump up and down
Jig and tap
Jazz hands open
Like a sunburst

The sound reverberates
The vibrations permeate
I must shake, stomp, clomp
Like blinking, breathing

This is stimming staccato
My percussion serenade
Always on replay
Every. Single. Day

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Hair

I play hide and seek
Behind greasy auburn tendrils
I don't have to look at people
They wonder where I disappear
In plain sight

I see colorful silhouettes
And sequins of sunlight
Peeking between strands
Bending, curling, unfurling from braids
One line makes a whole curtain

That tastes salty and earthy
Sort of crunchy like leaves
And chewy like gummy bears
Smooth on the tongue
No swallowing. No gagging

Gather the bundle and twirl
Around my finger. Loose and tight
The ends whipping around
In circles like whirlpools
Wagging like puppy tails

It feels good to yank them
With my own hands
When someone else does it
The hairs on my arms
Stand on end

Lightning zing
Of pain like
Pinching and pulling skin
Until it bleeds
And burns

No snips and snaps
No hair falling like feathers
On the ground, separated
Like eggs taken from chickens
And I crack like a shell

So let it grow
Even when the ends are dry
Splitting like a forked road
Tangled and dreaded
Snagging hair brushes

It's my style
My safe space
How I regulate
Straight up where I
Hide, and where I seek

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Visual Stimming

Ever had a staring contest with
The news reporter on TV
The dog, the doll
The stove, the toaster

Until your eyes are lungs
That held breath
For two minutes, ready to
BURST like balloons

Squeeze them tight until
Red is swaddled in black
Your eyelids are hands
Wringing juice out of a lemon

Open them in a gasp
Does it remind you
Of your first-born breath
How crisp and sweet it was

Blink to make life
Exist in a stop motion movie
So that you become the audience
Instead of the actor

So that butterfly kissing eyelashes
Create jetstreams to ward off
The fluorescent lights, bright clothes
The stark white math worksheet

Close your eyes. Black releases red
Recount how blinking
Doesn't have to be mindlessly
Taken for granted

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Sensational Fidgets

Chain Fidget

Two rings link together
In a pinky promise. A kiss
A fleck of light connects
Metal to skin as I begin
Moving index and thumb, improving
And adjusting the posture, trusting
The flow and rhythm. It grows on me
Sort of like two people in love
Slowly, then all at once. What zen
To pull apart yet never, ever let go

Fidget Spinner

It spins and purrs like a helicopter
So fast, ready to blast off
Yet perched perfect on my finger, lingers
Like an unburdened hummingbird
Silently vibrating, as if becoming
A bumblebee hovering on a flower
This is what life feels like. I might
Be in a trance with its cyclical dance
So natural in its radial expression
Free to eternal spinning without dizziness

Infinity Cube

A box that never locks up
Suppose it's similar to open and closing
A greeting card, meeting
Back at its center, stacks of plastic
Cubes outstretch, loosely curl in
Fit into place without gaps or space
So few bits create an infinite loop
Of movement that proves
To be so soothing for me
Click and flick. Click and flick

Koosh Ball

Please let me squeeze it
I've found that my meltdowns
Stay at bay when I sway
It from pinched fingers. Let it linger
And roll on my skin. Rub my chin
With tendrils that mesmerize
With bright multi colors. Smaller
Than my outstretched hand. I can
Squeeze it tight. No fight or flight
It's not a neglected object

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Sensational Fidgets

Liquid Timer

There is not sand demanding timeliness
Just pretty liquid confetti
Overlapping, not blending. Descending
Warm and cool colors pooling
Flip over. There's a cascading array
Of bubbles and blotches. I spot them
All. Streaming so fast. None of them stall
I wish I could swim in that glimmering
Liquidy stained glass and pass through space
Without a sense of time. How sublime

Pop-It Toy

I push down plastic domes. A fantastic
Sound takes me back to playgrounds
Blowing bubbles. Run and stumble
Popping every one. Sounds like dropping
Bubble wrap down. Pound the ground
Snapping under my feet. Later, pull out a treat
Bubble gum. From my mouth I blow
Bigger until bursting. Repeat with vigor
Just like how I "pop it" nonstop
Flip over. Dip the domes. Flip again.

Pop Tube

A plastic pipe ripe for the taking
Push and pull like the lull
Of an ocean, high and low tide
Put your ear to the end, hear
The wisps of wind beginning to crawl
At the speed of a snail leading a crab
Out of its shell. Tell me if you
Think the plinks when stretching it apart
Sound like the croon of cartoon growth spurts
It weathers being stretched and shoved together

Slinky

Spools of metal pool
Into my hands, landing
In a perfect stack. I track
Metal clinking without kinking
In my grip. Fluttering like flipping
Pages in a book, gaging
The tempered speed, never ceasing
To amaze my unbroken gaze
My steady hand ready to
Transfer right to left in a deft manner

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Sensational Fidgets

Wacky Tracks

Flick and kink. Click the links
Assemble to resemble
A circle, snake. Make a cross
Squeeze it together. Snap these
With the flick of my wrists
I prefer to twirl them
Like spooling yarn. Fuel
The speed with stress. I guess
It's haphazard use. Loose
Enough. Tough not to break apart