

Stone work

by [Angela Alaimo O'Donnell](#) in the [January 15, 2008](#) issue

I know the one I want when I find it.
Turning them over, like tortoises,
rubbing their ridged underbellies, their curves,
their pocked histories of love and grief,

I palm the one that speaks my other name,
the one whom I become this still moment,
lead-light, soft as chalk, right as spring
after weeks of needling sleet, the dumb tomb.

I run my tongue along its edges, taste
the sharp consonants, the gush of vowel,
the salt that grits the honest surface,
telling its years in the still pool of tears.

A stone in a heart made of sorrow,
a node in a kidney (gorgeous agony),
a missile thrown to break the martyr's skull,
a stranger at the gates of the body's love.

I press it down hard in the good dirt
next to the one I loved best yesterday,
assembling the poem, stone by sudden stone,
faithful as flesh to its house of bone.