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Protective Covering

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PROTECTIVE COVERING

Almost everyone wants me to discard
my old guitar case: my wife
keeps threatening to buy me
a new one; my mother wonders
how I stand the embarrassment;
my students worry my scarcely contained
Garcia will tumble, damage its over 25 year
old wood beyond return;
total strangers balk at the adhesive
tape holding that case together,
giggle or stare or boldly question
my motives, my sanity even.
I tell my wife, whoever else listens,
it seems silly to me to purchase
a new case for more than the guitar
itself might garner on the open
market, its lacquer scratched by my incessant,
illicit picking on its classical frame;
its neck microscopically warped by the time
eighteen years ago I tried steel strings
to produce the dangerous sound
I was after in those days.
But I'll tell you now, if you're
the type to listen for the truth,
the way it can play, like a minor chord,
softly working its way over snow and sorrow,
I keep the case because, even more
than its self-contained guitar,
it has traveled with me, on crowded
subways to Washington Square jams,
to too smoky, filled rooms at Folk
City, or Bernie's Bagels in Columbus
Ohio, to California and back in the back
of my small Toyota.
Faithfully it has kept quiet about
my longings until I was ready to
let them out, silently it has
kept the surprise of my above average
singing voice, my musical talent,
my penchant for both the romantic
and the ridiculous, a secret safe
with me until I was ready to unveil,
perform.
There is no way, it is too late
to look for a new case now;
its tape, tatters, threats
to unravel become me far more
than most people seem to know.

by Joe Benevento