Pantoum
BY RANDALL MANN

If there is a word in the lexicon of love,
it will not declare itself.
The nature of words is to fail
men who fall in love with men.

It will not declare itself,
the perfect word. Boyfriend seems ridiculous:
men who fall in love with men
deserve something a bit more formal.

The perfect word? Boyfriend? Ridiculous.
But partner is . . . businesslike—
we deserve something a bit less formal,
much more in love with love.

But if partner is businesslike,
then lover suggests only sex,
is too much in love with love.
There is life outside of the bedroom,

and lover suggests only sex.
We are left with roommate, or friend.
There is life, but outside of the bedroom.
My friend and I rarely speak of one another.

To my left is my roommate, my friend.
If there is a word in the lexicon of love,
my friend and I rarely speak of one another.
The nature of words is to fail.
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