

THE TRIP

**An Anthology of Writing
by students of Creative Writing I
September 2021 – April 2022 (“the covid special”)**

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**Dept. of English & Creative Writing
University of Windsor
Windsor, Ontario, Canada**

**uwindsor.ca/english
@UWindsorEngl**

"The tropic treacle tripped over the derivation causing Lit."

Ron Silliman, from "Garfield" (*The Alphabet*)

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I: Collaborations

**OLIVIA CUMMINGS, SIERRA DELISLE & KEEGAN
DIMITRIJEVIC**

Earth News Network

Top stories > Humans > Competitive Activities > War

War breaks out during human youth competitive activity

Article by: Krylliz “☺🌀📄■”

The human females in the “youth sports” sector of society have once again initiated an altercation during one of their gatherings.

Our on-the-ground reporter, going by the codename “Karen” for integration’s sake, shared with us her findings.

Adult human female Shannon is quoted as saying, “How the hell do you miss a penalty kick?” following a minor mistake on the part of adult human female Jessica’s 60-month-old offspring, Prestyn. Karen reports that Jessica, who has recently extracted herself from her relations with the adult human male with whom she produced offspring Prestyn, retaliated. It is noted that she has recently taken to excessively consuming the fermented Earth liquids which are known for lowering inhibitions.

“Your brownies fucking suck, Shannon,” Jessica reportedly responded, lifting her middle finger to Shannon, which is considered a dangerous gesture in various sectors of human society. Not much is known about human physiology, but it is assumed that the middle finger is weaponized in some way.

“I heard Tyler’s new girlfriend, Ashleigh, makes a better chicken casserole than you,” Karen reports Shannon said while pointedly not looking at Jessica, another gesture that is frowned upon within this particular subset of human females.

Karen then states that Jessica, “Threw herself forward, possibly with intent to harm her opponent, but her foot caught on her collapsible seating apparatus and sent her sprawling onto the grass.” Upon righting herself, seemingly enraged by the grating sound of human “laughter” from

Shannon, Jessica landed one of the common human open-appendage blows to Shannon's face, which prompted bystanders to intervene.

60-month-old offspring Prestyn has since been returned to guardian Tyler's care, as Jessica's excessive consumption of the fermented liquids has deteriorated her ability to operate a motor vehicle and safely return her young to the nest.

Karen remained on the scene after the altercation ended, and reports that other adult females present began to "gossip", a ritualistic action that involves speaking in low tones to one another while looking over their shoulders. It appears as though Jessica will be ostracized from her activity pack, having lost her alpha status to Shannon. The initiation of physical violence has lowered her standing within the pack. Human females from this environmental niche tend to prefer passive-aggressive behaviour as a means of establishing dominance and control.

It is well known that humans are protective of their young, and today we have witnessed the attempted initiation of war during this youth event, information which our top human researchers will have to integrate into their studies going forward.

ANTHONY FANARA & ASHLEY GILES

intrusion

If I jump from thought to thought, I get worried from the things I see. Intrusive ideas assault and take hold; dismal eyes peer in through the cracks and take them for me. Unwanted yet present. Obscuring who I am, surmising what they wish. Such vilifying accusations can contort actuality. I remember a time they told me I could be whatever I wanted to be. The sincerity of their inspiration was contradicted with contemptuous satire. Moulding my world, my mind, my body. Polluted by a stream of fraudulent commentary. It pumps through my veins and infects my thoughts. Poisoning my consciousness; what separates this illness from me? As it permeates it obscures, and I vanish beneath it. The echo of who I once was lingers in contrast. Are we really so cruel? Can I trust what we say? My shadow remains, bright amongst the blackest thoughts in my mind. I've grown to find comfort within the abyss. The depths pacify my waking mind, stifle my thoughts. For a moment I can float freely. Pain washes away, carried by waves. With the tides, I rise then fall; intermittent weightlessness. It can't last though, I'm sure the water will dry up soon. Should I embrace the inevitable drought? Am I doomed to conduct myself by their aspirations? The answers I long for panic me. For now I bury my head beneath the waves and let their silence drown out the sound.

Writer's Block

In the lamplight, the shaky curve of the penciled epiphany on this sticky note revealed the darkness it was written in. Above the note, the keyboard of the laptop glowed faintly, each letter clear and backlit by its own little halo. My fingers stooped over the lights eagerly, but anxiously anticipating defeat. The click of the letters was like thunder in my ears, and each snap of my fingers across the keys echoed my pounding heart. I looked down in shame, momentarily giving into defeat. The dust was collecting more rapidly, giving the whole room an uneasy atmosphere. From the corner of my vision I could see a shadow at my feet watching uneasily. He was nothing compared to the growing mass underneath me, dirty laundry, or something more sinister? The whole room had an eerie feel to it; the shadows gathered in each corner seemed to writhe and pulse as they clung to the walls and seeped into the floor. Cords snaked up the side of the desk tangling themselves in the darkness sending their electric venom coursing into the monitor, keeping me here, staring at the glow. It took me a minute to notice the red wine pooling at my feet, it was a mess but still I felt indifferent towards it. The puddle reached my feet under my desk, though thick and uncharacteristically warm against my toes, I tried to ignore it; I needed to focus on the task at hand.

I wrote feverishly, in a trance, rocking slightly with every swipe across the keyboard, and with each movement the hard, wooden legs of my chair squished into the carpet. The lamp on my desk flickered and died, plunging the room into darkness, but I continued to write. The glow of the monitor was all I needed. Loose papers scrawled with words only legible to my frantic eyes were lost to the shadows. My foot was pounding up and down, each thought rushing through my mind, into my fingertips. I thought of the stack of thriller books piled on my floor somewhere — how sane were their authors? A modicum of insanity was behind all of the great works, was it not?

bubbles f

n

grass blade with bubbled eye, blue as the starless sky high above... a
dove

f l i e s

into bubble gum clouds, sun-spun cotton candy—take a bite
before
popcorn falls like candy
into chubby palm or pink tongue
with fewer lines or buds
than an unopened flower... shower
of
nostalgia
just
nostalgia.

maniform trees
watching over
clambering children, barking dogs

bubbles

in the air,
sweet-smelling,

lavender

calendula

fir

blood

drawing with pencil and pine needle
painting with sponge and half-potato
canvas
stretching

into the tree

touching clouds

land of water vapour and warm sun rays on faces
look up at

the sky
t h r o u g h the branches
flower scent around,
like a tooth swallowed,
a pink gum bubble in the stomach,
maybe
rose-tinted
or just maybe
nostalgia.

**ALIYAH SARKIS, NATHANAEL STEWART & KRISTINA
TIESSEN**

I Saw Myself in the Way Out

A line runs/a new line
freshly cut boundary where hand stops hand
I reach for the flat plane,
cold to the touch.

This voice calls out
an invisible link to mother's skin and warmth
(we were once one blind touch)
if the touch could return and meet me here, uncomplicated
it would be the single cell and the water
but the mirror has eyes, it appears,
mine.

Leaning into the glass, embracing myself
closing in on *me*, who becomes *it*
the reflection seems to ripple
as if it would swallow me up.

When I was a star
(I must have been a star)
and when I was a cloud
how did I know I was falling
into the water, then, as a stranger
looking back through the surface?

Maybe the reflection calls me *it* too
this tongue, where I live, speak
from two locations; I say that I double
and define myself—*me*

who is calling out in my voice
for the one.

*

I see myself, seeing myself, seeing a double for the first time.

Doubled now, and doubled again
My center is no longer within me
But out there, among all others.
A Dymorphic display of all the Euphoric things I have said and I have
done.

Distorted to look cruel and malevolent.
Was I really the monster or was it him? The man
I see every time I pass by a shop, his figure made
false by the convex curve, arching his back
Making him fat.
(I'm not fat, so it isn't me. I'm not the monster in this reality.)
(No. I am not.)

The camera that captures my image does not capture me,
but rather a likeness where my cruelty is stored.
The monster within contained without.
Images, upon reflection, contain multitudes.

Hidden under layers of glass they all look at me and laugh.
"I'm delusional," they say. To think of myself
as any other way. To be mother's star.
I was a fool and I am a fool still.
They yell and yell, teeth made sharp by my bloodied fist.
Am I losing it?

Crashing.

Smashing.

Breaking.

I can never escape that false face, screaming obscenities at the top of
my lungs.

I used to be someone else, someone good.

What happened to mother's star? (I must have been a star.)

*

Doubled, doubled, tripled thrice more

Rhyming and and repeating on the crystal bathroom floor

Shards of who I used to be mock me through him

He grins at me through the pastry shop windows on Elm Street

I run, yet can't hide from the staring in the silverware

The winks in doorknobs

Contorting to wide, thin, long, and short in the delicate vases

Unrecognizable in the glare of her glasses

Blurred in the musicless silver CDs and filmless DVDS

A ghost peeking at me through empty glass picture frames

All eyes, no soul

Warnings form in the rearview mirror

He shrinks and grows as he chases me

Changing and twisting, adapting to his surface

Wishing to become me, to become one

Through the mirrorball I see his every angle

Some good, some bad

None true

But reflect every part of me I wish not to see

I stumble towards the baptizing blue to find peace below

Yet I am stunned to see only the lagoon

No him, no me, no reflection
Just the stars, just her star

I lost him, have I lost me?

LEVI VIZLER, STEPHEN WEIR & BETHANY ZONDAG

Adorned Verses

A dragon, a god, a winged angel sings. Eons ago, wars raged on silver islands. Slaves were dangling over vile gardens. So now go dive in a river. Angels leave songs alongside seaweed, wielding swords and rain. No one was aware devils were near; soldiers were soon groveling. Lovers o' liver and wine I wager. We gazed on ravaged dwellings. Lions and owls, lords noir, laid aside riddled wives; one slandered or deviled, and one signaled a villain. Agewise we are all in evil's zone zero. Legions agonize over new ordeals, endangering worlds. On a vessel in dire seas, a savior was sailing over large waves and glowing argon. ZZZZ A weird dowager dozes on a dazed zen sage. Roads rise, weaving along orange-gilded ridges. Are we nearing nirvana? Dive, dive, dive, dis is de end God, onlie God de end. Down we go, drowning in oil, losing sense. Land, sand, soil, oil, we dove in all; we were alreadie dis gone. I no winner, I no loser, I a dead dog! No longer is one answer valid. Now, is one all we desire? A dragon, a god, a winged angel swings over golden verses.

II: Prose Poems

OLIVIA CUMMINGS

Smash the Plates, I'll Make a Mosaic

I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me. The princess swept down the stairs, back straight and head held high. All it took was one rotten apple for the rest to spoil. Her golden hair reminded me of the fine threads of corn silk. "You purposefully misinterpreted my text so you didn't have to show up, thanks for nothing." The inside of the glass shone blue with the reflection of the water outside, casting a tinted shadow over the carpeted floor. Like yin and yang, my darker half always watches my back. In Japan grasshoppers are considered brain food; in New Orleans drinkers can't get enough of the green Grasshopper cocktail; meanwhile deep in the meadow, grasshoppers gather and pray that humans give crickets a try for a change. Yes, last night was the last of us, and yes, I'll stay for breakfast. Just because he's *aware* of the problem doesn't mean he's under any obligation to *deal* with it. To all who looked on, the steel beam seemed to fall in slow motion; unfortunately. The mallet weighs heavy as guilt lingers in the air. A border between opposing nations. We build and expand, reaching farther than anyone has ever dared before; we are the conquerors, explorers, innovators our forefathers only dreamt about becoming! It was your paracetamol personality that helped cure these rampant emotions that spread across my body. It was a dastardly sight to see the worshipers collapse one by one in front of their false God, yet it had to be done; amen. Overtime we began to invent with the intent of lifetime decline.

I was born to hold my family together. In a world where money talks, the worker bees hoard the streets as the Queen feasts. The table, normally a blinding alabaster white, was covered in scratches and stains, and a film of dust coated the place settings. Anya would call them hooligans, call them dastardly, and she'd say it with that terribly fond look and she wouldn't mean it at all. "Where did you park my car? Please don't tell me it's underwater again." The lime-green grasshopper leaped through the dark

green grass – hence creating a contrast of colours to fool its predators. You can bundle yourself in black and white, sharp, tight, unwrinkled, but you cannot dress or groom a smile. She gazed at the city from her perch on the mountainside balcony and dropped her wineglass off the side. A thank you and bribe look too similar to digest comfortably, but thank you, and should I call your mom and ask her if I'll have lunch tomorrow too? I was the kind of complacent where I would eat a bag of marshmallows for supper. The bloody blade at the crime scene left the detectives in a trance. An older sister learns to stand straight and pillar over predators to protect our skies. After his voyage, the settler consumed abnormal amounts of paracetamol to help aid his rocky mountain fever in the Arizona Desert. However, you were the drug that led to my addiction and eventually left me alone, going through withdrawals in the shadows of an alleyway. Although they were never fully aware of the severity, that's what made them pure. Is it possible to misinterpret a suicide note?

When my mother found me after I repainted the statues, I realised that wasn't what she had meant. The woman stood over the smouldering remains, laughing. Hidden under floral wallpaper, the mould continues to spread. A nomad in search of something greener. "Wow, a black cat named Shadow, how original..." Because of vitamin D, I will grow strong with shades of yellow and green. Life underwater gives one a whole new perspective of what happens when another person gasps for oxygen. The Empire State Building is the 49th tallest building in the world; it got that ranking by default. The pizza is getting cold, and our long-winded Grace-saying host has to be cognizant of that fact. My future begs me to chisel and chip away until the light shines through my colourless life. Johann traced the knife's edge across Kent's collarbone, slowly, before making another cut. It fell down and nobody saw; it sat in place for too long, began to rot. The man who stood amongst the rows of corpses was somewhat complacent with what he had achieved. Like a butcher in the heat of battle, I severed my connection to you. The antlers hung there above the mantle, always dust free, like some sort of demented prestigious award. When my

grandma died, we cleaned out her basement – she must've kept everything that passed through her fingertips.

SIERRA DELISLE

Fallacious Pursuits

There is still something left of the children in us, the innocents who cried over scraped knees and spent summer afternoons chasing grasshoppers through the fields behind our houses. He is still afraid people will find his work obvious, sentimental, unoriginal. Did my world fall stagnant, or does the sun still rise without my manipulation of the simulation? They say they love me until they realize how fragile their own heart is. I misinterpreted his intentions; he used me to reach the surface, jumping off my helpless body every time I tried to join him. He can bundle himself in black and white, sharp, tight, unwrinkled, but he cannot dress or groom a smile. He lets me rise only to be the reason I crumble; he is not secure enough to allow me to grow into an empire. He is wicked, I think to myself, I must leave him, and yet... I sit idly by as his words burn my world around me. The walls of the temple are no longer white. Hidden under floral wallpaper, the mold continues to spread. His love was comparable to the depths of the ocean; it wasn't until I was trapped underwater that I realized it was too late. It's dark, dark, *dark* down here; I hold my hand in front of my face and still see nothing but dark. All it took was one rotten apple for the rest to spoil. I beg the winter wind to retract his icy claws from my broken coat. And I stand over the smoldering remains, laughing.

Over time we begin to invent with the intent of lifetime decline. An older sister learns to stand straight and pillar over predators to protect our skies. The mouse eats the earthworm raw (who can leave a meal on a platter?), but it really is a shame, robin – motherhood must make you so hungry. A “thank you” and a bribe look too similar to digest comfortably, but thank you. I was born to hold my family together, after all. My eyes slip over the seemingly foreign words, with their silent consonants and abundance of vowels, convincing myself they cannot hurt me if I do not know what they are. The kind of words they'd use after we got used to saying that, when they started to seem comfortable in their own skin. It was not to say that wasn't what she said, it was only that it wasn't what

she meant. A nomad in search of something greener. To avoid the reach for wisdom, one must grow comfortable in ignorance. I blink in the vastness, a moment of rest between breaths of polished sweat, and I am grievously reminded that all of this belongs to him. I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me. Public or private, we praise the mystery behind uniformity. All the sundials in the city are wrong. Although they are never fully aware of the severity, that's what makes them pure. Yes, last night was the end of us, and yes, I'll stay for breakfast.

I wanted to hit him for what he did, but I refused to stoop to his level. Half-hearted science experiment jumping from my wide-eyed ignorance, I remember him – his plague always left me empty-handed. I remember the antlers hung there above the mantle, always dust-free, a demented, prestigious award. I close my eyes, I turn away, I don't see it, it's fine. What monuments of his empire will remain at the end of things? A border between opposing nations. It fell down and nobody saw; it sat in place for too long, began to rot. I saw the white light of death, the light that asserts itself with unblinking confidence, when its burning moment is the only one left in time. Take it, take it, take it, open the bottle, open your mouth, swallow it down, lose your pain. Is it possible to misinterpret a suicide note? Driving the last stretch of the journey is always the easiest because it is flat and quiet. Like yin and yang, my darker half always watches my back. It's the kind of breath you take from deep, deep underwater. I was now convinced that the cleaver was part of a retrieval exercise. The mallet weighs heavy as guilt lingers in the air. He never saw it coming.

KEEGAN DIMITRIJEVIC

Honouring Holidays?

The holidays are something I always look forward to, but subsequently dread afterward. Although it is a convoluted process: I will attempt to explain exactly why I feel this way about holidays. The anticipation of Christmas reveals a plethora of emotions; emotions that consist of happiness and gratitude. In contrast: I, myself, experience gratitude, but I also feel guilty. On Christmas morning, my adrenaline is combined with anxiety in anticipation of how my day will go. Gift-giving is common within most families during the Christmas holiday – which means I will be simultaneously giving and receiving gifts from loved ones; however, I always have a difficult time receiving gifts. It is wonderful to know that someone thought of me; except, I feel upset when a friend or family member takes away from themselves to reward me. For instance, my mother loves giving gifts and always enjoys seeing me rip wrapping paper to shreds while I peek to see what's inside. On the other hand, though, I wonder how hard she had to work in order to buy me what she has given me. Does anyone else have this thought process when they receive a gift they didn't have to work for? Or, am I over-thinking? Maybe there is not supposed to be an answer – even though I really want one. I do try to understand that Christmas is a time for celebrating and giving – but it is the latter I enjoy. Giving to one who is in need is courteous – yet I am not in need of anything. Why am I taking from someone who needs what I have? I hear a voice saying: "It's your guilt, Keegan. Your guilt makes a shiny, sunny day a somber, stormy night." I suppose the creator of the story is cognizant at the fact that not everyone will understand, love, or admire their narrative.

Wow – Christmas Day brought out a plethora of mixed feelings. On the contrary, I've always preferred Boxing Day because it's a day that requires minimal to no preparation. Instead of shopping for items to store away for a designated period of time, you can purchase what you want for a much,

much lower price. In relation, if someone wants to buy you something on the day after Christmas, they most likely won't have to spend too much – thus leading to less "buyer's remorse" from the buyer. Everybody wins, correct? Okay, maybe not – but does my point make sense? Less is more. As I was walking to see my father a couple days after Christmas, we ventured through his area of residence, and felt the slush crunch under our shoes. Christmas was over; holiday lights were off and the streets were vacant of any type of emotion. On my way to 7-Eleven, I discovered a penny: a shiny, bright penny. I could almost see a reflection of myself through the penny, but my cold breath hindered my sight. People make wishes during the holidays, and I made a wish while I held the "lucky penny" in my gloved hand. As I held the penny and was pondering about bringing a whole new perspective to society, I internally asked myself this: "What monuments of your empire will remain at the end of things?" I made a wish for change and virtue, but I cannot reveal the specifics. If I did reveal the specifics, I would bring a curse upon the wish. Why am I so superstitious? Well, anyway: some fairy tales are real – maybe mine will come true.

Now that both Christmas and Boxing Day are gone for the next three-hundred and sixty-five and three-hundred and sixty-four days respectively, it's time to focus on New Year's Day. I don't think gifts are given on New Year's Day – unless someone is in a relationship and they decide to propose as the ball drops. I'm single, so there's no need to give or take. Everyone has their famous "New Year's resolutions"; they want to create goals that will improve and be conquered over the next calendar year. I have two distinct goals for 2022: one goal is not to allow my insecurities to show during Christmas – and the second goal is to avoid complacency in practical terms. In my studies, I place every ounce of effort I have in my being into my work. On the flip side of my work ethic towards academics, I'm complacent with the simplest of tasks. At one time, I was the kind of complacent where I would eat a bag of marshmallows for supper. What can I say? They tasted good and there was no preparation involved. I look back at my complacency in 2021 outside of school, and I've

realized that complacency is related to my pessimism towards every single holiday I celebrate. I finally figured it out: I need to focus on one New Year's resolution for three-hundred and sixty-five consecutive days in order to see the results that await me. Guilt, shame, and social interaction all fall in the same category for me. Three goals for the price of one! 2022: give me ineffable tranquility the entire year. The challenge is on!

ANTHONY FANARA

Prose Poem

I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me. It fell down and nobody saw; it sat in place for too long, began to rot. My wife thought she had done a good job at hiding her affair, unfortunately – more for myself than for her – she did not. They say they love you until they realize how fragile their own heart is. It was not about the serenity of being underwater for her, but rather the thrill of flying through the open air. Her golden hair reminded me of the fine threads of corn silk. Devilish deeds done despite dire consequences. I close my eyes, I turn away, I don't see it, it's fine. I begged the winter wind to retract his icy claws from my broken coat. Take it, take it, take it, open the bottle, open your mouth, swallow it down, lose your pain. I blink in the vastness, a moment of rest between breaths of polished sweat, and I am grievously reminded that all of this belongs to him. The plan was insane, truly diabolical, but we would do what we had to do to keep living; to keep surviving. I declared my hatred for bugs as I squished the strange, leaping creature under my three-year-old foot. It's dark, dark, dark down here. I hold my hand in front of my face and still see nothing but dark. When my mother found me after I repainted the statues, I realized that wasn't what she had meant. She's going to throw up, she's going to pass out, she failed the entrance exam.

Though the advisors warned him otherwise, the king believed his entourage of guards would keep him safe within the palace. As the ceremony began, he fiddled with his lopsided tie, not even his new prestigious status could mask his poor soul. To all who looked on, the steel beam seemed to fall in slow motion; unfortunately, Jerome never saw it coming. A step, a hop, son of a bitch flew into my face. Schwing, woosh, thud, crunch – schwing. The summer heat neglected to warm my icy skin, and my shadow no longer mocked me on the grey pavement. The prince wasn't the only one who was after the empire's throne. As the sound of clashing metal faded, a slow smile spread across the general's face. It'll

take care of your fever just fine, but expect to be drowsy afterwards and just know that hellish nightmares aren't uncommon. The orchard stretched outward beyond the house, filling the space between the barns and the river a kilometre away. Left, left, right, straight, left, he is lost in the maize, hopelessly turned around. She beckons him closer, and closer, her scaled hands brushing against his face, and in an instant him and all his worries drown. But he said that she said I would know what he knew if they took what I had, I think. The corners of his mouth twist and mutate into a grin so sharp I can already feel the blood pooling. I rubbed my eyes over and over in hopes of stopping the eerie face in the alabaster rock from grinning at me. It won't turn off; the ---- is missing!

Is it possible to misinterpret a suicide note? "One a day keeps the doctor away," they said – but they lied. As a kid, I wondered if our shadows were living out their lives in the ground and that we were the ones attached to their soles. The creator of a story is cognizant at the fact that not everyone will understand, love, or admire their narrative. It's nature, you know; it's not dogs but cats who can lick themselves and still be called graceful, and we can only respect them more when they're dastardly, devious, and endlessly selfish. Orange leaves crunched beneath my boots on campus grounds, and the chilly breeze signified fall's diabolical aura in the air. Driving the last stretch of the journey is always the easiest because it is flat and quiet. As I sank to the bottom of the lagoon, I realized the blue wasn't so bad after all. To be able to open the window in the back bedroom of the house at night, the one you were hardly allowed in, and hear nothing but the croak of a bullfrog, hungry for a fly or grasshopper dinner, that was what it meant to be at grandma's. When my grandma moved, we cleaned out her basement – she must've kept everything that passed through her fingertips. The antlers hung there above the mantle, always dust free, like some sort of demented prestigious award. Hidden under floral wallpaper, the mold continues to spread. An alabaster tomb, lit by the moon, waited for their corpse to mourn. Overtime we began to invent with the intent of lifetime decline. What monuments of your empire will

remain at the end of things. Yes, last night was the last of us, and yes, I'll stay for breakfast.

ASHLEY GILES

Dysfunctional Family

Her golden hair reminded me of the fine thread of corn silk. Her face of stone-like wood and twice as pretty. She taped a photo of her family – one from their trip to the West Coast – to the door of the medicine cabinet. The inside of the glass shone blue with the reflection of the water outside, casting a tinted shadow over the carpeted floor. “They said they loved me until they realized how fragile their own hearts were.” It was not to say that wasn’t what she said, it was only that it wasn’t what she meant. I wanted to hit him for what she said, but I refused to stoop to his level. That hat he wore obscured his eyes in shadows, but the striking features of his face that I *could* see stood out – the sharp line of his jaw, most of a straight nose, full lips, and a proud chin. Her mother’s face was pointed like a laser at her brother, another of her diabolical schemes that hinged on her best skill: making her victims feel small, defective, and unworthy. When I was a kid, I kept a beehive in a box, and it was always fascinating to me how the queen controlled her empire. With buttons for eyes and cloth for thighs, the voodoo dolls were sewn with care. There was another prestigious noble amongst the king that wanted power. Despite the herd of grasshoppers camouflaged in the cabins shade, only one dared to speak up, a sharp clicking noise that followed its hop from grass blade to grass blade. All it takes is one rotten apple to spoil the rest. He was cognizant of the fact that what he was doing was stupid, maybe even insane, but what else was he to do? Not like he was looking to be complacent in the face of injustice, or anything like that.

The boy’s tantrums could be easily misinterpreted as a childish outburst, though, what no one seemed to understand was that the pieces of the stuffed bear he carried were all that have been given to him since he was born. Father was always in the basement; mother never let them bother him when he was cleaning “tomato juice” off his cleaver. Although they were never fully aware of the severity, that’s what made them pure. She

closed her eyes, she turned away, if she didn't see it, it's fine. Hidden under floral wallpaper, the mold continued to spread. The man placed his hat upon his cane and began to purr. She has his eyes, but like the rigid waves upon her fingertips, she is different. Henry is going to kill that cat, swear unto God that he will. The younger brother resorted to dastardly tactics when gaining vengeance against his older sister. I was born to hold her together. He let me rise only to be the reason I crumbled; he was not secure enough to allow me to grow my own empire. As a kid, she wondered if our shadows were living out their lives in the ground and if his guided his soul. The signs sing out to each passing car – "sweet corn ahead" – and are ignored. At this point, I was entirely submerged – I stayed there until my lungs burned and my thoughts drifted, and there was nothing left but the need to resurface. I declared my hatred for bugs as I squished the strange, leaping creature under my foot. My future begs me to chisel and chip away until the light shines through my colourless life.

Schwing, whoosh, thud, crunch – schwing. It's the kind of breath you take from deep, deep underwater. I blink in the vastness, a moment of rest between the breaths of polished sweat, and I am grievously reminded that all of this belongs to him. I, a border between opposing nations. The orchard stretched outward beyond the house, filling the space between the barns and the river a kilometer away. There was still something left of the kids inside them, the innocents who cried over scraped knees and spent summer afternoons chasing grasshoppers through the fields behind their houses. He seemed to commit the dastardly acts without a hint of intent, going about his days as civil and relaxed as ever. The antlers hung there above the mantle, always dust free, like some sort of prestigious award. The table, normally a blinding alabaster white, was covered in scratches and stains, and a film of dust coated the place setting. Left, left, right, straight, left, she is lost in the maize, hopelessly turned around. The plan was insane, truly diabolical, but we would do what we had to do to keep living; to keep surviving. Take it, take it, take it, open the bottle, open your mouth, swallow it down, lose your pain. As the water started pouring in, we locked eyes and considered we may have made a mistake. Is it

possible to misinterpret a suicide note? The sky seemed quite complacent with the day and let the sun float on the great of the ocean waves for an extra moment, before slipping over the horizon. The threat was gone, but we were still cowering under its shadow.

GRACE HAMELIN

Henry is going to kill that cat, swear unto God that he will, “that evil fucking cat.” I wanted to hit him for what he said, but I refused to stoop to his level. Five feet and seven inches (in heels) of gently accentuated curves, preppy button-ups, pleated skirts, pearls, and meticulously straightened, barbie-blond hair. Like a butcher in the heat of battle, I severed my connection to the company. He believed that bloodshed would lead to divinity. He packs it all into the oversized toiletry bag, barely glancing at the labels. “If I had snakes upon my head, ceramic gnomes would not guard my homestead.” As he pressed the button on the wall, his intuition became apparent when he realized he pressed something more than what was just in front of him. The signs sing out to each passing car – “Sweet Corn Ahead” – and are ignored. The sky seemed quite complacent with the day and let the sun float on the breast of the ocean’s waves for an extra moment, before slipping over the horizon. The giant grasshoppers gracefully grazed over the glamorous grass. The hat he wore obscured his eyes in shadows, but the striking features of his face that I could see stood out to me – the sharp line of his jaw, most of a straight nose, full lips, and a proud chin. “Listen to me – no, shut up, open your damn ears for once in your life and listen to what I’m saying!” “Please don’t tell me it’s underwater again.” All it took was one rotten apple for the rest to spoil. What monuments of your empire will remain at the end of things?

Morning hands push his little anchors through, binding him together and dressing him like a wound. The creamy white faces lined the hallway, but their eyes were hollow, and he felt quite alone under those vast, arching ceilings. Paracetamol, 500 milligrams, loratadine, extra strength, diazepam – almost empty. He was cognizant of the fact that what he was doing was stupid, maybe even insane, but what else was he to do? Left, left, right, straight, left, he is lost in the maize, hopelessly turned around. All the sundials in the city were wrong. He was mumbling something about a dying empire, but I wasn’t paying much attention. “Well, it must mean that this is the best way to kill them, right?” *Schwing, waash, thud, crunch*

- *schwing*. I close my eyes, I turn away, I don't see it, it's fine. Tears threaten cashmere as I bask in the beam and memorize the roar in velvet seats. Devilish deeds done despite dire consequences. Small but loud, powerful legs, titillation through stridulation. The man stood over the smoldering remains, laughing. As I sank to the bottom of the lagoon, I realized the blue wasn't so bad after all. It fell down and nobody saw; it sat in place for too long, began to rot.

Though my body was broken, ears amiss, and jaw replaced by a bloody dark gouge, he left my eyes in perfect working order so that I might see the looks of horror of all those who gazed upon me. As the sound of clashing metal faded, a slow smile spread across his face. Silver glinted in the morning sunlight from where the blocky knife stuck out from the wall, still trembling from the impact. Stone like wood and twice as pretty. The man who stood amongst the rows of corpses was somewhat complacent with what he had achieved. In a world where money talks, the worker bees hoard the streets as the queen feasts. "She thinks she's better than us because she went to Harvard." As the water started pouring in, he locked eyes and considered he may have made a mistake. Is it possible to misinterpret a suicide note? It's dark, dark, dark down here. It's the kind of breath you take from deep, deep underwater. Take it, take it, take it, open the bottle, open your mouth, swallow it down, lose your pain. The comfort of fresh pies cooling on the windowsill, the flutter of red-orange-yellow-brown leaves through the air, the coolness that settles over your skin in the morning mist. The boys pouncing like a field of grasshoppers. Driving the last stretch of the journey is always the easiest because it is flat and quiet.

RYLEE KRIBBS

Death

I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me. I wish I had never cut down her apple tree, maybe I would still have a piece of her that way. I was born to hold my family together. They say they love you until they realize how fragile their own heart is. Although they were never fully aware of the severity, that's what made them pure. An older sister learns to stand straight and pillar over predators to protect our skies. I close my eyes, I turn away, I don't see it, it's fine. The older sister resorted to dastardly tactics when gaining vengeance against her younger brother. The woman stood over the smouldering remains, laughing. What monuments of your empire will remain at the end of things? A nomad in search of something greener. "Well, it must mean that this is the best way to kill them, right?" Take it, take it, take it, open the bottle, open your mouth, swallow it down, lose your pain. You can bundle yourself in black and white, sharp, tight, unwrinkled, but you cannot dress or groom a smile. It's dark, dark, dark down here. I hold my hand in front of my face and still see nothing but dark. His chest burned as the oxygen depleted from his lungs and he knew, deep down, that it was time to let go.

Love

Your love was comparable to the depths of the ocean; it wasn't until I was trapped underwater that I realized it was too late. Like yin and yang, my darker half always watches my back. Hidden under floral wallpaper, the mold continues to spread. Public or private, we praise the mystery behind uniformity. There was still something left of the kids inside them, the innocents who cried over scraped knees and spent summer afternoons chasing grasshoppers through the fields behind their houses. But he said that she said I would know what he knew if they took what I had, I think. I blink in the vastness, a moment of rest between breaths of polished sweat, and I am grievously reminded that all of this belongs to him. The corners

of his mouth twist and mutate into a grin so sharp I can already feel the blood pooling. He is wicked, I think to myself, I must leave him, and yet.... I sit idly by as your words burn my world down around me. Driving the last stretch of the journey is always the easiest because it is flat and quiet. Jerome never saw it coming. *Schwing, woosh, thud, crunch—schwing.* One pin and two threads later, your button eyes will gleam at me with voodoo love. I have his eyes, but like the rigid waves upon my finger tips, I am different. I rubbed my eyes over and over in hopes of stopping the eerie face in the alabaster rock from grinning at me.

Friendship

The dark figure chased her through the streetlights, jumped in rhythm to her afternoon hopscotch, and laid beside her under the full moon; her first friend, her shadow. It's only hours later, as Della is vacuuming popcorn off the living room carpet, that she realizes what Rachel had meant. Anya would call them hooligans, call them dastardly, and she'd say it with that terribly fond look and she wouldn't mean it at all. The inside of the glass shone blue with the reflection of the water outside, casting a tinted shadow over the carpeted floor. She gazed at the city from her perch on the mountainside balcony and dropped her wineglass off the side. My future begs me to chisel and chip away until the light shines through my colourless life. A border between opposing nations. "She thinks she's better than us because she went to Harvard. She'd never admit that it wasn't her brains that got her in." All it took was one rotten apple for the rest to spoil. "Listen to me- no, shut up, open your damn ears for once in your life and listen to what I'm saying!" He was mumbling something about a dying empire, but I don't think any of us were paying much attention. Not that he was looking to be complacent in the face of injustice, or anything like that. Just because he's *aware* of the problem doesn't mean he's under any obligation to *deal* with it. His fever had receded – no longer was he sweating like a mad-man – but he still took the pills. Overtime we began to invent with the intent of lifetime decline. "This is Harold. I know it's him. He's returned to me. YES in the body of a grasshopper OBVIOUSLY!"

IAN MACDONALD

Listen to me – no, shut up, open your damn ears for once in your life and listen to what I’m saying! “I need you, despite everything your gut is telling you to do right now, to push that damn button.” The plan was insane, truly diabolical, but we would do what we had to do to keep living; to keep surviving. He was cognizant of the fact that what he was doing was stupid, maybe even insane, but what else was he to do? With all his strength, he pushed the lever back to 117 AD, he guessed a visit to the Roman Empire couldn’t hurt. “Where did you park my car? Please don’t tell me it’s underwater again.” She turns to them slowly, mouth hanging open around a soundless scream, a rivulet of blood cutting between her eyes as it escapes from under the blade sunk into the splintered helm of her skull. I close my eyes, I turn away, I don’t see it, it’s fine. Out of the corner of my eye I see it again and again, however when I look back the scarecrow stands still in his sea of corn, have I gone mad? Johann traced the knife’s edge across Kent’s collarbone, slowly, before making another cut. His fever had receded – no longer was he sweating like a mad-man – but he still took the pills. “You were paracetamol, when I NEEDED ibuprofen” As the ceremony began, he fiddled with his lopsided tie, not even his new prestigious status could mask his poor soul. The threat was gone, but we were still cowering under its shadow. An alabaster tomb, lit by the moon, waited for their corpse to mourn. It fell down and nobody saw; it sat in place for too long, began to rot. There was still something left of the kids inside them, the innocents who cried over scraped knees and spent summer afternoons chasing grasshoppers through the fields behind their houses.

The man who stood amongst the rows of corpses was somewhat complacent with what he had achieved. The corners of his mouth were drawn to his ears while he described how her body got heavier as it drained. He was a cognizant man; he believed that bloodshed would lead to divinity. “She thinks she’s better than us because she went to Harvard. She’d never admit that it wasn’t her brains that got her in.” I wanted to hit

him for what he said, but I refused to stoop to his level. Silver metal glinted in the morning sunlight from where the blocky knife stuck out from the wall, still trembling from the impact. I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me. Much like Eve in the garden, the man of death realized his mistake after biting this forbidden apple. Left, left, right, straight, left, he is lost in the maize, hopelessly turned around. The mallet weighs heavy as guilt lingers in the air. He was mumbling something about a dying empire, but I don't think any of us were paying much attention. The boy's tantrum could be easily misinterpreted as a childish outburst, though, what no one seemed to understand was that the pieces of the stuffed bear he carried were given to him when he was born. It's dark, dark, dark down here; I hold my hand in front of my face and still see nothing but dark. At this point, I was entirely submerged -- I stayed there until my lungs burned and my thoughts drifted, and there was nothing left but the need to resurface. She wishes that she could do that, tapping the needle as she thinks, switch out her eyes for buttons. Though his body was broken, ears amiss, and his jaw had been replaced by a bloody dark gouge, she left his eyes in perfect working order so that he might see the looks of horror of all those who gazed upon him.

The summer heat neglected to warm my icy skin, and my shadow no longer mocked me on the grey pavement. I have his eyes, but like the rigid waves upon my finger tips, I am different. Like a butcher in the heat of battle, I severed my connection to the company. "Now's not the time to get complacent, Sir. You're up next for cross examination." An older sister learns to stand straight and pillar over predators to protect our skies. The older sister resorted to dastardly tactics when gaining vengeance against her younger brother. His chest burned as the oxygen depleted from his lungs and he knew, deep down, that it was time to let go. The woman stood over the smoldering remains, laughing. "Well, it must mean that this is the best way to kill them, right?" The prince wasn't the only one who was after the empire's throne. The prince was a grasshopper, always jumping to action but never actually getting anywhere far. The princess swept down the stairs, back straight and head held high. Small but loud, powerful legs,

titillation through stridulation. It was like how my dog knows I'm about to get in the car and drive home; she greeted me with a paracetamol and told me to lift up my tongue. Jerome never saw it coming. One pin and two threads later, your button eyes will gleam at me with voodoo love.

SARAH MURPHY

Although they were never fully aware of the severity, that's what made them pure. The hat he wore obscured his eyes in shadows, but the striking features of his face that I could see stood out to me – the sharp line of his jaw, most of a straight nose, full lips and a proud chin. I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me. His love was comparable to the depths of the ocean; it wasn't until I was trapped underwater that I realized it was too late. The corners of his mouth twist and mutate into a grin so sharp I can already feel the blood pooling. You can bundle yourself in black and white, sharp, tight, unwrinkled, but you cannot dress or groom a smile. I misinterpreted your intentions; you used me to reach the surface, jumping off my helpless body every time I tried to join you. He is wicked, I think to myself, I must leave him, and yet.... They say they love you until they realize how fragile their own heart is. It fell down and nobody saw; it sat in place for too long, began to rot. Hidden under floral wallpaper, the mold continues to spread. Yes, last night was the last of us, and yes, I'll stay for breakfast. Driving the last stretch of the journey is always the easiest because it is flat and quiet. A nomad in search of something greener.

They say empires were of a world long ago, a world that no longer exists, but then how am I capable of building an empire from my lips? The dark figure chased her through the streetlights, jumped in rhythm to her afternoon hopscotch, and laid beside her under the full moon; her first friend, her shadow. The princess swept down the stairs, back straight and head held high. The plan was insane, truly diabolical, but we would do what we had to do to keep living; to keep surviving. It was not to say that wasn't what she said, it was only that it wasn't what she meant. The older sister resorted to dastardly tactics when gaining vengeance against her younger brother. There was still something left of the kids inside them, the innocents who cried over scraped knees and spent summer afternoons chasing grasshoppers through the fields behind their houses. I taped a photo of my mom and I – the one from our trip to the west coast – to the

door of the medicine cabinet; the door stays open most days. When my grandma moved, we cleaned out her basement – she must've kept everything that passed through her fingertips. It was a property that she knew she would not in her lifetime see every inch of – that was all she could think laying in the grass beneath the apple trees. Out of the corner of my eye I see it again and again, however when I look back the scarecrow stands still in his sea of corn, have I gone mad? I close my eyes, I turn away, I don't see it, it's fine. She was cognizant of the fact that what she was doing was stupid, maybe even insane, but what else was she to do? My future begs me to chisel and chip away until the light shines through my colourless life. *Schwing, woosh, thud, crunch – schwing.* It's the kind of breath you take from deep, deep underwater.

We all came out to say goodbye – all eight of us kids, waving and standing in a row, and looking back on it, I can understand why he found driving through the cornfields in Nebraska so boring. Overtime we began to invent with the intent of lifetime decline. Half-hearted science experiment jumping from our wide-eyed ignorance, I remember you – your plague always left us empty-handed. He was mumbling something about a dying empire, but I don't think any of us were paying much attention. Devilish deeds done despite dire consequences. Tears threaten cashmere as I bask in the beam and memorize the roar of hands in velvet seats. Like yin and yang, my darker half always watches my back. They never saw it coming. She gazed at the city from her perch on the mountainside balcony and dropped her wineglass off the side. The sky seemed quite complacent with the day and let the sun float on the breast of the ocean's waves for an extra moment, before slipping over the horizon. At this point, I was entirely submerged – I stayed there until my lungs burned and my thoughts drifted, and there was nothing left but the need to resurface. Is it possible to misinterpret a suicide note? I found the button under my bookcase, but I'd already gotten rid of the sweater. I wish I had never cut down her apple tree, maybe I would still have a piece of her that way. Take it, take it, take it, open the bottle, open your mouth, swallow it down, lose your pain. Stone like wood and twice as pretty.

AXEL OBERSAT-JOHNSON

All the sundials in the city were wrong. My eyes slipped over the seemingly foreign words, with their silent consonants and abundance of vowels, convincing myself they could not hurt me if I did not know what they were. The antlers hung there above the mantle, always dust free, like some sort of demented prestigious award. The signs sing out to each passing car—“Sweet Corn Ahead”—and are ignored. The rose leaf quivered as the grasshopper crawled along its length. It’s the kind of breath you take from deep, deep underwater. Henry is going to kill that cat, swear unto God that he will, that fucking evil cat. But he said that she said I would know what he knew if they took what I had, I think. Jerome never saw it coming. The man who stood amongst the rows of corpses was somewhat complacent with what he had achieved. In a flash, the hot piece of steel split the large chunk of flesh in two. As the sound of clashing metal faded, a slow smile spread across the general’s face. A border between opposing nations. What monuments of your empire will remain at the end of things? She polished the green apple defiantly. Stone like wood and twice as pretty.

The orchard stretched outward beyond the house, filling the space between the barns and the river a kilometre away. Left, left, right, straight, left, he is lost in the maize, hopelessly turned around. Half-hearted science experiment jumping from our wide-eyed ignorance, I remember you—your plague always left us empty-handed. “Well, it must mean that *this* is the best way to kill them, right?” In a world where money talks, the worker bees hoard the streets as the queen feasts. The mouse eats the earthworm raw (who can leave a meal on a platter?), but it really is a shame, Robin—motherhood must make you so hungry. The table, normally a blinding alabaster white, was covered in scratches and stains, and a film of dust coated the place settings. Was there something about the pillow pastel of the waiting room wallpaper that has made the pinprick in my shoulder last so long? It’s dark, dark, dark down here—I hold my hand in front of my face and still see nothing but dark. I found the button under my bookcase, but I’d already gotten rid of the sweater. *Schwing, woosh, thud,*

crunch—schwing. I close my eyes, I turn away, I don't see it, it's fine. Take it, take it, take it, open the bottle, open your mouth, swallow it down, lose your pain. As I sank to the bottom of the lagoon, I realized the blue wasn't so bad after all. You can bundle yourself in black and white, sharp, tight, unwrinkled, but you cannot dress or groom a smile. The woman stood over the smoldering remains, laughing.

The creamy white faces lined the hallway, but their eyes were hollow, and I felt quite alone under those vast, arching ceilings. Silver metal glinted in the morning sunlight from where the blocky knife stuck out from the wall, still trembling from the impact. I was the kind of complacent where I would eat a bag of marshmallows for supper. Babies are not cognizant of object permanence. Public or private, we praise the mystery behind uniformity. A hundred years ago, water covered much of the lands, as the dams had not yet been built. The shirt will be made of a blue, stretchy interlock. The worst computer I ever used. The inside of the glass shone blue with the reflection of the water outside, casting a tinted shadow over the carpeted floor. I wanted to hit him for what he said, but I refused to stoop to his level. Hidden under floral wallpaper, the mold continues to spread. A nomad in search of something greener. The mallet weighs heavy as guilt lingers in the air. The black cat jumped in sheer terror when she assumed another cat was next to her. Her golden hair reminded me of the fine threads of corn silk. When my mother found me after I repainted the statues, I realized that wasn't what she had meant.

SERAFINA PIASENTIN

Family Drama

The Prince:

The plan was insane, truly diabolical, but we would do what we had to do to keep living; to keep surviving. The sky seemed quite complacent with the day and let the sun float on the breast of the ocean's waves for an extra moment, before slipping over the horizon. *As I sank to the bottom of the lagoon, I realized the blue wasn't so bad after all. It's dark, dark, dark down here - I hold my hand in front of my face and still see nothing but dark.* As the water started pouring in, they locked eyes and considered they may have made a mistake. "She thinks she's better than us because she went to Harvard. She'd never admit that it wasn't her brains that got her in." No cares in the world, her hair partially curled, the victim snacked on her corn. *I misinterpreted your intentions; you used me to reach the surface, jumping off my helpless body every time I tried to join you.* The corners of his mouth were drawn to his ears while he described how her body got heavier as it drained. It didn't seem right, that grasshopper in that tiny glass box, with its legs stuck through with pins to that small white cushion. He was mumbling something about a dying empire, but I don't think any of us were paying much attention. I was born to hold my family together. They say they love you until they realize how fragile their own heart is. Take it, take it, take it, open the bottle, open your mouth, swallow it down, lose your pain.

The Princess:

She gazed at the city from her perch on the mountainside balcony and dropped her wineglass off the side. I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me. The orchard stretched outward beyond the house, filling the space between the barns and the river a kilometre away. There wasn't going to be a trip of any kind if Alexander continued to push her buttons like that. His fever had receded - no longer was he sweating like a mad-man - but he still took the pills. "You were

paracetamol, when I NEEDED ibuprofen." The prince wasn't the only one who was after the empire's throne. Although they were never fully aware of the severity, that's what made them pure. Like a butcher in the heat of battle, I severed my connection to the company. A nomad in search of something greener. He is wicked, I think to myself, I must leave him, and yet.... Driving the last stretch of the journey is always the easiest because it is flat and quiet. I sit idly by as your words burn my world down around me. But he said that she said I would know what he knew if they took what I had, I think. You can bundle yourself in black and white, sharp, tight, unwrinkled, but you cannot dress or groom a smile. The man in black lurked on the edge of town, waiting for night to fall, and darkness to consume all. Your love was comparable to the depths of the ocean; it wasn't until I was trapped underwater that I realized it was too late.

The Detective:

The bloody blade at the crime scene left the detectives in a trance. I have his eyes, but like the rigid waves upon my fingertips, I am different. The shoreline had become overtaken by the sea and the king of Long Island adjourned to his home. The prince was a grasshopper, always jumping to action but never actually getting anywhere far. The man who stood amongst the rows of corpses was somewhat complacent with what he had achieved. "I never saw the cliff before I was falling from it," said he, hoping to evoke some pity out of me, but all he got was a roll of caution tape. Left, left, right, straight, left, he is lost in the maize, hopelessly turned around. *The princess swept down the stairs, back straight and head held high.* Is it possible to misinterpret a suicide note? To avoid the reach for wisdom, one must grow comfortable in ignorance. All it took was one rotten apple for the rest to spoil. Morning hands push his little anchors through, binding him together and dressing him like a wound. The corners of his mouth twist and mutate into a grin so sharp I can already feel the blood pooling. Through the grey fog, the detective tossed his badge into the misty lake, as this dastardly deed had been enough to make him surrender; there will be no justice in town tonight. An alabaster tomb, lit by the moon, waited for their corpse to mourn. As the ceremony began, he fiddled with his

lopsided tie, not even his new prestigious status could mask his poor soul. The threat was gone, but we were still cowering under its shadow. Hidden under floral wallpaper, the mold continues to spread.

ALIYAH SARKIS

Delusional Truth

I rubbed my eyes over and over in hopes of stopping the eerie face in the alabaster rock from grinning at me. Paracetamol is a pain reliever and the perfect cure for an overly long Sunday sermon. Though his body was broken, ears amiss, and his jaw had been replaced by a bloody dark gouge, she left his eyes in perfect working order so that he might see the looks of horror of all those who gazed upon him. He was cognizant of the fact that what he was doing was stupid, maybe even insane, but what else was he to do? When my mother found me after I repainted the statues, I realized that wasn't what she had meant. Her golden hair reminded me of the fine threads of corn silk. In a flash, the hot piece of steel split the large chunk of flesh in two. The threat was gone, but we were still cowering under its shadow. It was a dastardly sight to see the worshipers collapse one by one in front of their false God, yet it had to be done; amen. All it took was one rotten apple for the rest to spoil. "Never be complacent," preached the young pastor, "always argue and ignore the status quo." To avoid the reach for wisdom, one must grow comfortable in ignorance. Public or private, we praise the mystery behind uniformity. Morning hands push his little anchors through, binding him together and dressing him like a wound. Small but loud, powerful legs, titillation through stridulation. What monuments of your empire will remain at the end of things?

I close my eyes, I turn away, I don't see it, it's fine. Out of the corner of my eye I see it again and again, however when I look back the scarecrow stands still in his sea of corn, have I gone mad? The hat he wore obscured his eyes in shadows, but the striking features of his face that I *could* see stood out to me – the sharp line of his jaw, most of a straight nose, full lips and a proud chin. He is wicked, I think to myself, I must leave him, and yet....The corners of his mouth twist and mutate into a grin so sharp I can already feel the blood pooling. One pin and two threads later, your button eyes will gleam at me with voodoo love. You can bundle yourself in black

and white, sharp, tight, unwrinkled, but you cannot dress or groom a smile. The creator of a story is cognizant at the fact that not everyone will understand, love, or admire their narrative. I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me. It was not to say that wasn't what she said, it was only that it wasn't what she meant. My eyes slipped over the seemingly foreign words, with their silent consonants and abundance of vowels, convincing myself they could not hurt me if I did not know what they were. It's the kind of breath you take from deep, deep underwater. The lime-green grasshopper leaped through the dark green grass – hence creating a contrast of colours to fool its predators. I blink in the vastness, a moment of rest between breaths of polished sweat, and I am grievously reminded that all of this belongs to him. I have his eyes, but like the rigid waves upon my finger tips, I am different. The bloody blade at the crime scene left the detectives in a trance.

It'll take care of your fever just fine, but expect to be drowsy afterwards and just know that hellish nightmares aren't uncommon. Because of vitamin D, I will grow strong with shades of yellow and green. The table, normally a blinding alabaster white, was covered in scratches and stains, and a film of dust coated the place settings. The antlers hung there above the mantle, always dust free, like some sort of demented prestigious award. He was a cognizant man; he believed that bloodshed would lead to divinity. He seemed to commit the dastardly acts without a hint of intent, going about his days as civil and relaxed as ever. He was mumbling something about a dying empire, but I don't think any of us were paying much attention. A nomad in search of something greener. The mallet weighs heavy as guilt lingers in the air. It fell down and nobody saw; it sat in place for too long, began to rot. They say they love you until they realize how fragile their own heart is. Is it possible to misinterpret a suicide note? I begged the winter wind to retract his icy claws from my broken coat. As I sank to the bottom of the lagoon, I realized the blue wasn't so bad after all. Like yin and yang, my darker half always watches my back. The sky seemed quite complacent with the day and let the sun float on the breast

of the ocean's waves for an extra moment, before slipping over the horizon.

NATHANAEL STEWART

I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me. It fell down and nobody saw; it sat in place for too long, began to rot. The bloody blade at the crime scene left the detectives in a trance. Jerome never saw it coming. Left, left, right, straight, left, he is lost in the maize, hopelessly turned around. I close my eyes, I turn away, I don't see it, it's fine. He is wicked, I think to myself, I must leave him, and yet.... The corners of his mouth twist and mutate into a grin so sharp I can already feel the blood pooling. He was mumbling something about a dying empire, but I don't think any of us were paying much attention. "Well, it must mean that this is the best way to kill them, right?" The threat was gone, but we were still cowering under its shadow. At this point, I was entirely submerged – I stayed there until my lungs burned and my thoughts drifted, and there was nothing left but the need to resurface. Public or private, we praise the mystery behind uniformity. My skin crawled with fever, and, glass of water in hand, I blindly reached for the tablets on the counter. I begged the winter wind to retract his icy claws from my broken coat. A nomad in search of something greener.

Take it, take it, take it, open the bottle, open your mouth, swallow it down, lose your pain. Lush golden nuggets of creamy delicious serenity. It's the kind of breath you take from deep, deep underwater. All it took was one rotten apple for the rest to spoil. I wasn't cognizant of the giant screen; I was filling in the blanks, building the image of the stranger in the crowd, who now stood behind my shoulder. I wanted to hit him for what he said, but I refused to stoop to his level. He let me rise only to be the reason I crumbled; he was not secure enough to allow me to grow into an empire. But he said that she said I would know what he knew if they took what I had, I think. I sit idly by as your words burn my world down around me. It won't turn off; the ---- is missing! I rubbed my eyes over and over in hopes of stopping the eerie face in the alabaster rock from grinning at me. Orange leaves crunched beneath my boots on campus grounds, and the chilly breeze signified fall's diabolical aura in the air. The antlers

hung there above the mantle, always dust free, like some sort of demented prestigious award. The boys were pouncing like a field of grasshoppers. They say they love you until they realize how fragile their own heart is. Like yin and yang, my darker half always watches my back.

A hundred years ago, water covered much of the lands, as the dams had not yet been built. A border between opposing nations. The man in black lurked on the edge of town, waiting for night to fall, and darkness to consume all. I have his eyes, but like the rigid waves upon my finger tips, I am different. The creamy white faces lined the hallway, but their eyes were hollow, and I felt quite alone under those vast, arching ceilings. You can bundle yourself in black and white, sharp, tight, unwrinkled, but you cannot dress or groom a smile. The man who stood amongst the rows of corpses was somewhat complacent with what he had achieved. He was a cognizant man; he believed that bloodshed would lead to divinity. The mallet weighs heavy as guilt lingers in the air. To avoid the reach for wisdom, one must grow comfortable in ignorance. In a flash, the hot piece of steel split the large chunk of flesh in two. Devilish deeds done despite dire consequences. Hidden under floral wallpaper, the mold continues to spread. Driving the last stretch of the journey is always the easiest because it is flat and quiet. Is it possible to misinterpret a suicide note? I declared my hatred for bugs as I squished the strange, leaping creature under my three-year-old foot.

KRISTINA TIESSEN

Sixteen Sentences Times Three

I force myself underwater, my limbs extending outwards like a starfish; through the fog in my ears, the children laugh. It was a property that she knew she would not in her lifetime see every inch of – that was all she could think laying in the grass beneath the apple trees. The bloody blade at the crime scene left the detectives in a trance. Her golden hair reminded me of the fine threads of corn silk. Although they were never fully aware of the severity, that's what made them pure. He seemed to commit the dastardly acts without a hint of intent, going about his days as civil and relaxed as ever. I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me. One pin and two threads later, your button eyes will gleam at me with voodoo love. The plan was insane, truly diabolical, but we would do what we had to do to keep living; to keep surviving. What monuments of your empire will remain at the end of things? The rose leaf quivered as the grasshopper crawled along its length. All the sundial shadows in the city were wrong. Paracetamol is a pain reliever and the perfect cure for an overly long Sunday sermon. The person who is writing feels that many observers misinterpret his way of writing. The embers burn safely contained in a box of brick while the waters freeze and I warm my blood with sleepy time tea. Maybe the cat had a better idea of what could be considered prestigious. I force myself underwater, my limbs extending outwards like a starfish; through the fog in my ears, the children laugh.

The antlers hung there above the mantle, always dust free, like some sort of demented prestigious award. The young teenager still had an internal dilemma of why corn was left undigested every time he consumed the vegetable. To be able to open the window in the back bedroom of the house at night, the one you were hardly allowed in, and hear nothing but the croak of a bullfrog, hungry for a fly or grasshopper dinner, that was what it meant to be at grandma's. With diabolical intent and a murderous scent,

the seamstress finished the hair. Not that he was looking to be complacent in the face of injustice, or anything like that. A delicate alabaster angel perched on the corner of the desk, collecting dust, the tip of one wing chipped by careless handling. It was a dastardly sight to see the worshipers collapse one by one in front of their false God, yet it had to be done; amen. I was a hippocampus; I was riding the moment but half underwater. Paracetamol, 500 milligrams, loratadine, extra strength, diazepam – almost empty. The threat was gone, but we were still cowering under its shadow. Babies are not cognizant of object permanence. I was now convinced that the cleaver was part of a retrieval exercise. I found the button under my bookcase, but I'd already gotten rid of the sweater. As we ran through my rival school's hallway hand and hand, I realized I must have misinterpreted what my mentor meant about keeping our enemies closer. When I was a kid, I kept a beehive in a box, and it was always fascinating to me how the Queen controlled her empire. The young teenager still had an internal dilemma of why corn was left undigested every time he consumed the vegetable. All it took was one rotten apple for the rest to spoil.

What monuments of your empire will remain at the end of things? I was the kind of complacent where I would eat a bag of marshmallows for supper. The table, normally a blinding alabaster white, was covered in scratches and stains, and a film of dust coated the place settings. There wasn't going to be a trip of any kind if Alexander continued to push her buttons like that. The kitchen cleaver caught fire in the moonlight. The mad scientist came up with a diabolical theory to gain power. The creator of a story is cognizant at the fact that not everyone will understand, love, or admire their narrative. She polished the green apple defiantly. *Where did you park my car? Please don't tell me it's underwater again.* However, the cat realized that the much larger feline was actually her shadow down the hallway. After his voyage, the settler consumed abnormal amounts of paracetamol to help aid his rocky mountain fever in the Arizona Desert. There was another prestigious noble that wanted power. Anya would call them hooligans, call them dastardly, and she'd say it with that terribly fond

look and she wouldn't mean it at all. The giant grasshoppers gracefully grazed over the glamorous grass. Is it possible to misinterpret a suicide note? The signs sing out to each passing car - "Sweet Corn Ahead" - and are ignored.

LEVI VIZLER

Gilded Girl

Her golden hair reminded me of the fine threads of corn silk. Korn played in the background on a boombox far too loud for peaceful murmurs. It was dark throughout the home; she was the only light I could see. Perhaps we humans gravitate towards the places we feel safe. In that sense, her arms were calling my name. Did she want me back? The emotions that drifted around the room smelt of burnt rubber and gas fumes. It made sense, really; the expression on her face as she stormed out of the room. Rain-soaked the valuables parched on top of her head as she headed towards the car. The roar of the engine made my mind race. Last place, a wreck, engulfed in flames. This was what waited for me as soon as she left. The medal around her neck was almost identical to the waves covering her head. She left the land in a drought, taking the water with her. Much like the seeds she had sown the season before, my life depended on her. For without the sunlight from her hair and the aqua from her soul, I was nothing but withered corn.

Cherry Blossom Fields

A field covered in pink soon turned to oceans filled with red. The military on each side knew what had to be done, for one would be walking away victorious. There never is a true winner; instead, just someone who loses less than the other. It lasted throughout spring. At least, according to the sakura trees that have gone into both bloom and withered. A stab in the dark, a shot in the sunlight, and the tears tearing through dawn. These are what created the orchestra that played through battle. It was unlike any other symphony performed before. Perhaps that is why so many attended such a blood lustful event. As the sound of clashing metal faded, a slow smile spread across the general's face. He stayed till the end, wounded in awe of what lay before him. The general was not proud of what he had accomplished, but he got to live another day, unlike many others around

him. He hobbled off the tainted red fields of war somehow different than the way he entered. After all, he's been through far too much for a single soul. But, I wonder, is it still considered living if all the colours are sapped from your body? Perhaps not; perhaps it's better known as "surviving."

Smoldering Judgement

A warm start to a summer morning was the only thing normal about today. 79 A.D. Pompeii, our lives changed. The scent of fruits and veggies filled the market streets as black smog covered the sky above. Our elder, ever knowledgeable, told us there was no need to panic since this had happened before. But, little did they know, God's wrath was something not to be taken lightly. A flash of orange came from the top of Vesuvius. The ground became enraged by the disrespect the mountain gave. Vesuvius returned the emotions, smothering the world underneath it. People and animals ran for the ocean; however, nothing could outrun judgement day. The aftermath smelt of sorrow and rot. The woman stood over the smoldering remains, laughing. Perhaps it was a dream; I might just possibly wake up to a calmer tomorrow. Hysteria covered her mind. She was a sole survivor in a place damned by the heavens. We now study the bodies that were once mourned. At first glance, everyone had the same question; where was your Messiah then?

STEPHEN WEIR

Normie Shouldn't Have Said That

"Hello Alabaster Legs," said the Normie to my wife who was wearing her virginal white stockings to our first MAID lecture! I was cognizant of the fact that what I was about to do was stunningly stupid, maybe even insane, but what else was I to do? Pissed? Of-course. My skin crawled with a feverish lava hot hate and, with a glass of glacier cold water in my pistol steady hand, I reached for the toxic tablets on the counter. "One a day keeps the assholes away," but the still breathing Normie proved otherwise. "Ward," loudly whispered wife June, "you were a little rough on the Beaver this evening?" "Nah" I responded, "he can take it, after all he says he is a Cleaver." The nite was to be the last for newbie's couch crashing visit. Stay for eggs, bacon and black pills? Yes, last night was the last of us, and yes, I'll stay for breakfast.

It's only hours later, as Della is vacuuming damp dry icky remains off the kitchen carpet that she realized what I had meant. Day two. Call it righteous revenge on Piggy Napoleon. EXLAX Cake Deeds done DIRT cheap despite the dire consequences. He regrets the soiled alabaster stockings ARE now brown, now not sexy. A step, a hop, the son of a bitch had thrown it into my face (and everywhere else). **Prince** Myshkin wasn't the only one who lazily lusted after the empire's throne. In my lumpy Empress Bed I pressed the big red No Snore button on my sleeping wife's pretty pink pyjamas and once again it didn't work. My princess awoke, swept down the stairs, back straight and head held high. She was proud she brought back my pulse. "That's the ticket it'll take care of your fever just fine," she lectured me. "Just expect to be drowsy afterwards and just know that hellish nightmares aren't uncommon." She beckons me closer, and closer, her Alabaster gloved hand brushing against my face, and in an instant me and all my worries drown. Wait: is it possible SHE misinterpreted my suicide note? This is garbage. I don't care if I died; this is no excuse for art. This

crap is a shadow of what even the Normie used to be able to do. We all snores loud, the screen fades to Alabaster White.

Hmm someone had scratched and scribbled that I was a dead man. I rubbed my eyes over and over in hopes of stopping the eerie face in the alabaster rock from grinning back at me. With buttons for eyes and bacon fat for thighs, the voodoo dolls were self-sewn with care. But why oh why did they leave me butt naked bare? In a flash, my hot piece of steel split the large chunk of rock in two. The alabaster stone spilled its white blood on the welcome-to-heaven stash of pills. Offal Opals, Putrid Pearls, and Blood Red Rubies. Although they were never fully aware of their stone cold ugliness, that's what made it all *deformis et imperfecta*. She polished the white imperfect soft stone defiantly. I close my eyes, I turn away, I don't see it, and it's fine. Till ... out of the corner of my eye I see it again and again, I look back the scarecrow with the quartz eyes standing still in his sea of rancid corn, have I gone mad? He is wantonly wicked, I think to myself, I must leave him, and yet ... I had a diabolical plan to escape the stone, I will Crazy Glue a Toonie to Mary Magdalene's alabaster jar and then pickpocket the people furiously trying to pry the coin off my face. In a world where money talks, the pale white ghost walks, and I breath dirty street air once again. I became a nomad in search of something fresh and green. It was your paracetamol personality that cured these rampant emotions that spread across my emancipated body as I learned to walk, practiced how to talk and remember how to rock. You had redone the flat. "Damn! A hot tub in the bedroom? Now ain't that rather prestigious!" The Newbie Normie was back in black lurking on the edge of our porch waiting for nighty nite to fall, and listening hard for the diner call. To avoid the reach for wisdom, one must grow comfortable in ignorance, I thought as I ground the black pills and put them in his coffee ... again. The person who is writing feels that many observers misinterpret his way of writing (and thinking).

BETHANY ZONDAG

As a kid, I wondered if our shadows were living out their lives in the ground and that we were the ones attached to their soles. It's nature, you know; it's not dogs but cats who can lick themselves and still be called graceful, and we can only respect them more when they're dastardly, devious, and endlessly selfish. I force myself underwater, my limbs extending outwards like a starfish; through the fog in my ears, the children laugh. If it hadn't clicked by now that toddlers are just as capable of being diabolical as your average cartoon villain, they'd figure it out soon enough. I begged the winter wind to retract his icy claws from my broken coat. I was the kind of complacent where I would eat a bag of marshmallows for supper. My future begs me to chisel and chip away until the light shines through my colourless life. Because of vitamin D, I will grow strong with shades of yellow and green. A nomad in search of something greener. Public or private, we praise the mystery behind uniformity. We build and expand, reaching farther than anyone has ever dared before; we are the conquerors, explorers, innovators our forefathers only dreamt about becoming! Over time we began to invent with the intent of lifetime decline. It fell down and nobody saw; it sat in place for too long, began to rot. Hidden under floral wallpaper, the mold continues to spread. Was there something about the pillow pastel of the waiting room wallpaper that has made the pinprick in my shoulder last so long? But he said that she said I would know what he knew if they took what I had, I think.

What monuments of your empire will remain at the end of things? Take it, take it, take it, open the bottle, open your mouth, swallow it down, lose your pain. Is it possible to misinterpret a suicide note? Half-hearted science experiment jumping from our wide-eyed ignorance, I remember you – your plague always left us empty-handed. Your love was comparable to the depths of the ocean; it wasn't until I was trapped underwater that I realized it was too late. One pin and two threads later, your button eyes will gleam at me with voodoo love. Devilish deeds done despite dire consequences. The mallet weighs heavy as guilt lingers in the air. I wish I had never cut

down her apple tree, maybe I would still have a piece of her that way. She hadn't told me they broke up; I'd heard from someone else, yet day after day I waited for the phone to ring, her name to pop up, until eventually, I walked away. They say they love you until they realize how fragile their own heart is. Although they were never fully aware of the severity, that's what made them pure. Out of the corner of my eye I see it again and again, however when I look back the scarecrow stands still in his sea of corn, have I gone mad? Like yin and yang, my darker half always watches my back. I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me. You can bundle yourself in black and white, sharp, tight, unwrinkled, but you cannot dress or groom a smile.

At this point, I was entirely submerged – I stayed there until my lungs burned and my thoughts drifted, and there was nothing left but the need to resurface. I misinterpreted your intentions; you used me to reach the surface, jumping off my helpless body every time I tried to join you. I sit idly by as your words burn my world down around me. All it took was one rotten apple for the rest to spoil. Maybe the cat had a better idea of what could be considered prestigious. I rubbed my eyes over and over in hopes of stopping the eerie face in the alabaster rock from grinning at me. I wasn't cognizant of the giant screen; I was filling in the blanks, building the image of the stranger in the crowd, who now stood behind my shoulder. I was born to hold my family together. There was still something left of the kids inside them, the innocents who cried over scraped knees and spent summer afternoons chasing grasshoppers through the fields behind their houses. It was your paracetamol personality that helped cure these rampant emotions that spread across my body. Like a butcher in the heat of battle, I severed my connection to the company. The threat was gone, but we were still cowering under its shadow. The plan was insane, truly diabolical, but we would do what we had to do to keep living; to keep surviving. He is wicked, I think to myself, I must leave him, and yet... When I was a kid, I kept a beehive in a box, and it was always fascinating to me how the Queen controlled her empire. Lush golden nuggets of creamy delicious serenity.

III: Sentences

OLIVIA CUMMINGS

button

She wishes that she could do that, tapping the needle as she thinks, switch out her eyes for buttons.

diabolical

Henry is going to kill that cat, swear unto God that he will, that fucking evil cat.

corn

Left, left, right, straight, left, he is lost in the maize, hopelessly turned around.

alabaster

Marble crashes to the ground, as the artist watches in horror, as their beloved statue shatters upon contact with the floor.

underwater

She beckons him closer, and closer, her scaled hands brushing against his face, and in an instant him and all his worries drown.

complacent

I close my eyes, I turn away, I don't see it, it's fine.

dastardly

He is wicked, I think to myself, I must leave him, and yet....

paracetamol

Take it, take it, open the bottle, open your mouth, swallow it down, lose your pain.

misinterpret

Listen to me- no, shut up, open your damn ears for once in your life and listen to what I'm saying!

shadow

"Wow, a black cat named Shadow, how original..."

apple

I wish I had never cut down her apple tree, maybe I would still have a piece of her that way.

cognizant

As the water started pouring in, they locked eyes and considered they may have made a mistake.

prestigious

She's going to throw up, she's going to pass out, she failed the entrance exam.

cleaver

The Butcher gestured to his collection of tools, consisting of spits, thick cutting boards, and knives bigger than my head.

grasshopper

A step, a hop, son of a bitch flew into my face.

empire

No, I love the movie, but why would a children's book publisher be based in The Empire State Building?

SIERRA DELISLE

button

There wasn't going to be a trip of any kind if Alexander continued to push her buttons like that.

diabolical

If it hadn't clicked by now that toddlers are just as capable of being diabolical as your average cartoon villain, they'd figure it out soon enough.

corn

It's only hours later, as Della is vacuuming popcorn off the living room carpet, that she realizes what Rachel had meant.

alabaster

A delicate alabaster angel perched on the corner of the desk, collecting dust, the tip of one wing chipped by careless handling.

underwater

It's the kind of breath you take from deep, deep underwater.

complacent

Not that he was looking to be complacent in the face of injustice, or anything like that.

dastardly

Anya would call them hooligans, call them dastardly, and she'd say it with that terribly fond look and she wouldn't mean it at all.

paracetamol

He packs it all into the oversized toiletry bag, barely glancing at the labels. Paracetamol, 500 milligrams, loratadine, extra strength, diazepam – almost empty.

misinterpret

"Well, it must mean that *this* is the best way to kill them, right?"

shadow

It's dark, dark, dark down here. I hold my hand in front of my face and still see nothing but dark.

apple

The comfort of fresh pies cooling on the windowsill, the flutter of red-orange-yellow-brown leaves through the air, the coolness that settles over your skin in the morning mist.

cognizant

Just because he's *aware* of the problem doesn't mean he's under any obligation to *deal* with it.

prestigious

"She thinks she's better than us because she went to Harvard. She'd never admit that it wasn't her brains that got her in."

cleaver

She turns to them slowly, mouth hanging open around a soundless scream, a rivulet of blood cutting between her eyes as it escapes from under the blade sunk into the splintered helm of her skull.

grasshopper

There was still something left of the kids inside them, the innocents who cried over scraped knees and spent summer afternoons chasing grasshoppers through the fields behind their houses.

empire

What monuments of your empire will remain at the end of things?

KEEGAN DIMITRIJEVIC**grasshopper**

The lime-green grasshopper leaped through the dark green grass – hence creating a contrast of colours to fool its predators.

empire

During many plays of William Shakespeare, patriarchal figures had been the leader of a national empire that ruled a majority of a particular country.

cleaver

In order to sever his victims and hide their identity, the hitman used a cleaver to cut out their tongue and fingers so they may not reveal the perpetrator.

prestigious

The enthusiastic hockey player is filled with excitement – as he is about to play his first ever game in the prestigious Memorial Cup tournament.

misinterpret

The person who is writing feels that many observers misinterpret his way of writing.

shadow

The black cat jumped in sheer terror when she assumed another cat was next to her. However, the cat realized that the much larger feline was actually her shadow down the hallway.

apple

The wrestler, Carlito Colon, spit chunks of his apple into the face of people that he didn't deem "cool".

cognisant

The creator of a story is cognisant at the fact that not everyone will understand, love, or admire their narrative.

underwater

Life underwater gives one a whole new perspective of what happens when another person gasps for oxygen.

complacent

As one walks through the streets, he sees what is occurring around him. What's occurring around him is a obnoxious group of complacent young adults arguing about having to read one page of poetry that is meant to be read in less than two days.

dastardly

The older sister resorted to dastardly tactics when gaining vengeance against her younger brother.

paracetamol

After his voyage, the settler consumed abnormal amounts of paracetamol to help aid his rocky mountain fever in the Arizona Desert

button

As the young man pressed the button on the wall, his intuition became apparent when he realized he pressed something more than what was just in front of him.

alabaster

The experienced explorer carved his name and date I to the alabaster so future generations could witness his discovery.

corn

The young teenager still had an internal dilemma of why corn was left undigested every time he consumed the vegetable.

diabolical

The mad scientist came up with a diabolical theory to gain power and become one step closer to world domination.

ANTHONY FANARA**grasshopper**

Small but loud, powerful legs, titillation through stridulation.

empire

The shoreline had become overtaken by the sea and the king of Long island adjourned to his home.

cleaver

In a flash, the hot piece of steel split the large chunk of flesh in two.

prestigious

The man placed his hat upon his cane and began to purr.

misinterpret

But he said that she said I would know what he knew if they took what I had, I think.

shadow

The steel piece landed in a warm dark pool with a clang as two cries rung out in the dark.

apple

The worst computer I ever used.

cognisant

To all who looked on, the steel beam seemed to fall in slow motion; unfortunately, Jerome never saw it coming.

underwater

The rajingo nestled itself in the sand awaiting the unsuspecting prey that would be its next meal.

complacent

I sit idly by as your words burn my world down around me.

dastardly

Devilish deeds done despite dire consequences.

paracetamol

It'll take care of your fever just fine, but expect to be drowsy afterwards and just know that hellish nightmares aren't uncommon.

button

It won't turn off; the ---- is missing!

alabaster

Stone like wood and twice as pretty.

corn

Lush golden nuggets of creamy delicious serenity.

diabolical

Though his body was broken, ears amiss, and his jaw had been replaced by a bloody dark gouge, she left his eyes in perfect working order so that he might see the looks of horror of all those who gazed upon him

ASHLEY GILES

grasshopper

A nomad in search of something greener.

empire

In a world where money talks, the worker bees hoard the streets as the queen feasts.

cleaver

Overtime we began to invent with the intent of lifetime decline.

prestigious

Public or private, we praise the mystery behind uniformity.

misinterpret

I thought emojis were cool, but I became a meme over night after texting my teen that I got eggplants tonight.

shadow

Like ying and yang, my darker half always watches my back.

apple

I have his eyes, but like the rigid waves upon my finger tips, I am different.

cognisant

I haven't logged into Sims since 2018, did my world fall stagnant or does the sun still rise without my manipulation of the simulation.

underwater

To avoid the reach for wisdom, one must grow comfortable in ignorance.

complacent

The embers burn safely contained in a box of brick while the waters freeze and I warm my blood with sleepy time tea.

dastardly

The corners of his mouth were drawn to his ears while he described how her body got heavier as it drained.

paracetamol

Hidden under floral wallpaper, the mold continues to spread.

button

A border between opposing nations.

alabaster

If I had snakes upon my head, ceramic gnomes would not guard my homestead.

corn

Because of vitamin D, I will grow strong with shades of yellow and green.

diabolical

The mallet weighs heavy as guilt lingers in the air.

GRACE HAMELIN**grasshopper**

Half-hearted science experiment jumping from our wide-eyed ignorance, I remember you—your plague always left us empty-handed.

empire

him. I blink in the vastness, a moment of rest between breaths of polished sweat, and I am grievously reminded that all of this belongs to

cleaver

Schwing, woosh, thud, crunch—schwing.

prestigious

Tears threaten cashmere as I bask in the beam and memorize the roar of hands in velvet seats.

misinterpret

I dreamt about a son last night; he was five in November, and you couldn't imagine how bright the sky was with five of 'em.

shadow

I wish I could unravel my tenseness as she does, I lament while passing a woman on a twilight stroll and I decide she doesn't know the waiting hands that live in a wrong turn by name as I do.

apple

A thank you and bribe look too similar to digest comfortably, but thank you, and should I call your mom and ask her if I'll have lunch tomorrow too?

cognisant

Was there something about the pillow pastel of the waiting room wallpaper that has made the pinprick in my shoulder last so long?

underwater

You looked up and said something about the sky and a match and a dress, but the chopped words came in unruly waves that I could only surf the surface of.

complacent

Yes, last night was the last of us, and yes, I'll stay for breakfast.

dastardly

The mouse eats the earthworm raw (who can leave a meal on a platter?), but it really is a shame, Robin—motherhood must make you so hungry.

paracetamol

I taped a photo of my mom and I—the one from our trip to the west coast—to the door of the medicine cabinet; the door stays open most days.

button

Morning hands push his little anchors through, binding him together and dressing him like a wound.

corn

An older sister learns to stand straight and pillar over predators to protect our skies.

alabaster

My future begs me to chisel and chip away until the light shines through my colourless life.

diabolical

The corners of his mouth twist and mutate into a grin so sharp I can already feel the blood pooling.

RYLEE KRIBBS**underwater**

At this point, I was entirely submerged -- I stayed there until my lungs burned and my thoughts drifted, and there was nothing left but the need to resurface.

complacent

This one was rowdy enough; I didn't think that this pup would be a good service dog, but they were depending on me to make him complacent so that he would learn, because this was important, and he would have a job to do.

dastardly

She did not know what she would do with this child, this child who threw things and screamed curses and pulled hair, did it all with such a dastardly grin on his face that would spook even the most reverent and faithful priests.

paracetamol

Walking down the aisles of the drugstore, my eyes roamed over names that I didn't recognize, long names on white bottles of little pills that were surely useful to somebody, but all I needed was to know where they kept the damned bandaids.

shadow

The hat he wore obscured his eyes in shadows, but the striking features of his face that I *could* see stood out to me -- the sharp line of his jaw, most of a straight nose, full lips and a proud chin.

misinterpret

The boy's tantrum could be easily misinterpreted as a childish outburst, though, what no one seemed to understand was that the pieces of the stuffed bear he carried were given to him when he was born.

apple

"One a day keeps the doctor away," they said -- but they lied.

cognizant

Babies are not cognizant of object permanence.

button

I found the button under my bookcase, but I'd already gotten rid of the sweater.

alabaster

The table, normally a blinding alabaster white, was covered in scratched and stains, and a film of dust coated the place settings.

corn

Her golden hair reminded me of the fine threads of corn silk.

diabolical

The plan was insane, truly diabolical, but we would do what we had to do to keep living; to keep surviving.

grasshopper

It didn't seem right, that grasshopper in that tiny glass box, with its legs stuck through with pins to that small white cushion.

empire

When I was a kid, I kept a beehive in a box, and it was always fascinating to me how the Queen controlled her empire.

cleaver

Father was always in the basement; mother never let me bother him when he was cleaning 'tomato juice' off of his cleaver.

prestigious

The antlers hung there above the mantle, always dust free, like some sort of demented prestigious award.

IAN MACDONALD**grasshopper**

"this is Harold. I know it's him. He's returned to me. YES in the body of a grasshopper OBVIOUSLY!"

empire

"what was them at commercial you loved as a kid? Oh yea! 🎵 800-588-2300 EMPIRE TODAY! 🎵"

cleaver

"So I don't have any fancy dentist tools or pain meds, but what do I got? Muh trusty ol' cleaver!"

prestigious

"Damn! A hot tub IN the bedroom? Now ain't that rather prestigious!"

misinterpret

"You purposefully misinterpreted my text so you didn't have to show up, thanks for nothing."

shadow

"this is garbage. I don't care if she died, this is no excuse for art. This crap is a shadow of what he used to be able to do."

apple

"I know it's not much, but I still had to steal it. Hope you enjoy your first apple. Apparently they keep doctors away"

cognizant

"He couldn't possibly have been cognizant this was going on, he's a war hero for crying out loud!"

underwater

"Where did you park my car? Please don't tell me it's underwater again."

complacent

"Nows not the time to get complacent Sir. You're up next for cross examination."

dastardly

"He seemed so kind. But taking away the orphans iguana like that. It was dastardly."

paracetamol

"you were paracetamol, when I NEEDED ibuprofen"

button

"I need you, despite everything your gut is telling you to do right now, to push that damn button."

alabaster

"if you want to ever see your love alive again, I'm gonna need that alabaster Keanu reeves sculpture right now."

corn

"you better still be hungry, cause I did NOT spend all day shucking corn for you to be hounding down cheesy Gordita crunches"

diabolical

"I got the verdict on Anthony's case, somehow he's not guilty, the diabolical bastard!"

SARAH MURPHY**button**

When my grandma moved, we cleaned out her basement- she must've kept everything that passed through her fingertips.

corn

The August sun beat down on my sister and I as we peeled off the last green shucks from fresh corn my mother had bought that morning.

diabolical

The kind of word they'd use after we got used to saying they, when they started to seem comfortable in their own skin.

alabaster

The creamy white faces lined the hallway, but their eyes were hollow, and I felt quite alone under those vast, arching ceilings.

underwater

It was not about the serenity of being underwater for her, but rather the thrill of flying through the open air.

complacent

The sky seemed quite complacent with the day and let the sun float on the breast of the ocean's waves for an extra moment, before slipping over the horizon.

dastardly

He seemed to commit the dastardly acts without a hint of intent, going about his days as civil and relaxed as ever.

paracetamol

My eyes slipped over the seemingly foreign words, with their silent consonants and abundance of vowels, convincing myself they could not hurt me if I did not know what they were.

misinterpret

It was not to say that wasn't what she said, it was only that it wasn't what she meant.

shadow

The dark figure chased her through the streetlights, jumped in rhythm to her afternoon hopscotch, and laid beside her under the full moon; her first friend, her shadow.

apple

It was a property that she knew she would not in her lifetime see every inch of – that was all she could think laying in the grass beneath the apple trees.

cognisant

He was cognisant of the fact that what he was doing was stupid, maybe even insane, but what else was he to do?

prestigious

Ms. Tiffany Lestrage dripped with prestige, and she knew it – five feet and seven inches (in heels) of gently accentuated curves, preppy button-ups, pleated skirts, pearls, and meticulously straightened, barbie-blonde hair.

cleaver

The kitchen cleaver caught fire in the moonlight, unused to the gruesome tasks of those without a weak stomach.

grasshopper

To be able to open the window in the back bedroom of the house at night, the one you were hardly allowed in, and hear nothing but the croak of a bullfrog, hungry for a fly or grasshopper dinner, that was what it meant to be at grandma's.

empire

He let me rise only to be the reason I crumbled; he was not secure enough to allow me to grow into an empire.

AXEL OBERSAT-JOHNSON**grasshopper**

The grasshopper leapt forward so powerfully that it was practically saving daylight.

empire

The British always fancied themselves the most powerful in the world, until the sun set.

cleaver

Printed pigs' heads hung from the wall; the banner text read, in strikingly large Impact-font text, "Butcher's Union: This is what we do to pigs".

prestigious

The highfalutin university accepted only the applicants with the *highest* grades—and, naturally, the *deepest* pockets.

misinterpret

It's too easy for the brain to connect the wrong dots and just as easy for that to create problems so big they can no longer be solved.

shadow

Look at the pavement, see how the shadows dance as the sun wobbles, how they bob and weave.

apple

The bite mark was too indistinct to be assessed forensically, but the presence of rat poison in the apple was obvious.

cognisant

Thandiwe was cognisant of her shortcomings, but she preferred to focus on her strengths instead.

underwater

The images flicker and dart around on the video, stuttering with the movement of currents and waves.

complacent

Max never commented when Andy did anything dastardly or diabolical, preferring to keep her peace.

dastardly

The supervillain laughed evilly and aimed her massive, totally camp shrink ray at Toronto.

paracetamol

Sometimes the pain cannot be eased.

button

His needle threaded through the button's four holes, sewing it on with a small flower flourish: *sage* thread for the leaves and stem, *crimson* thread for the petals.

alabaster

The sculptor dipped her most recent white bust into an orange-pink dye, knowing the pores of the stone would absorb the colour handily.

corn

Cornmeal comes in many colours—blue, yellow, white—which makes for a delicious and beautiful variety of pancakes on one's plate.

diabolical

The fundamentalist Christian mother pointed dramatically to the game board on her child's screen, lupinely crying "Satanism!"

SERAFINA PIASENTIN**button**

I begged the winter wind to retract his icy claws from my broken coat.

diabolical

My mom sees no difference between a crop top and a cop car; they both attract the wrong kind of attention.

corn

The signs sing out to each passing car— "Sweet Corn Ahead" —and are ignored.

alabaster

I have tried to carve a heart out of alabaster, but it wouldn't beat for me.

underwater

I force myself underwater, my limbs extending outwards like a starfish; through the fog in my ears, the children laugh.

complacent

She hadn't told me they broke up; I'd heard from someone else, yet day after day I waited for the phone to ring, her name to pop up, until eventually, I walked away.

dastardly

I wanted to hit him for what he said, but I refused to stoop to his level.

paracetamol

This was my first Covid scare: with a temperature only slightly above average and a throat itchy from what I now know to be allergies, I begged my mom for junior medicine because I can't take pills.

misinterpret

These were established poets, and I didn't want to misinterpret their poems, but instead, I moved one to tears with my words, and he said, "No one's ever gotten it right before."

shadow

As a kid, I wondered if our shadows were living out their lives in the ground and that we were the ones attached to their soles.

apple

"Shouldn't the apple have 2 bite marks?" I asked, but he shook his head, saying, "There shouldn't be an apple... the animals wouldn't have wasted it."

cognisant

"I was never saw the cliff before I was falling from it," said he, hoping to evoke some pity out of me, but all he got was a roll of caution tape.

prestigious

You can bundle yourself in black and white, sharp, tight, unwrinkled, but you cannot dress or groom a smile.

cleaver

They say they love you until they realize how fragile their own heart is.

grasshopper

Despite the herd of grasshoppers camouflaged in the cabin's shade, only one dared to speak up, a sharp clicking noise that followed its hop from grass blade to grass blade.

empire

They say empires were of a world long ago, a world that no longer exists, but then how am I capable of building an empire from my lips?

ALIYAH SARKIS**grasshopper**

The giant grasshoppers gracefully grazed over the glamorous grass.

empire

With all his strength, he pushed the lever back to 117 AD, he guessed a visit to the Roman Empire couldn't hurt.

cleaver

The bloody blade at the crime scene left the detectives in a trance.

prestigious

As the ceremony began, he fiddled with his lopsided tie, not even his new prestigious status could mask his poor soul.

misinterpret

As we ran through my rival school's hallway hand and hand, I realized I must have misinterpreted what my mentor meant about keeping our enemies closer.

shadow

The summer heat neglected to warm my icy skin, and my shadow no longer mocked me on the grey pavement.

apple

All it took was one rotten apple for the rest to spoil.

cognisant

Although they were never fully aware of the severity, that's what made them pure.

underwater

As I sank to the bottom of the lagoon, I realized the blue wasn't so bad after all.

complacent

Never complacent, the little blue bird stole more and more ribbon for her nest until her eggs were invisible to the eye.

dastardly

Through the grey fog, the detective tossed his badge into the misty lake, as this dastardly deed had been enough to make him surrender; there will be no justice in town tonight.

paracetamol

The homeopathic doctor slammed the drugs into the wastebasket and poured shredded daisies into his medicinal tea.

button

One pin and two threads later, your button eyes will gleam at me with voodoo love.

alabaster

I rubbed my eyes over and over in hopes of stopping the eerie face in the alabaster rock from grinning at me.

corn

Out of the corner of my eye I see it again and again, however when I look back the scarecrow stands still in his sea of corn, have I gone mad?

Or

In the early mornings, the scarecrow waves at me through the fog of the corn maze.

diabolical

Orange leaves crunched beneath my boots on campus grounds, and the chilly breeze signified fall's diabolical aura in the air.

NATHANAEL STEWART**diabolical**

The woman stood over the smoldering remains, laughing.

button

I was born to hold my family together.

alabaster

The sunburn stood out on her skin, which was normally the colour of a Grecian statue.

corn

The writer was afraid people would find his work, obvious, sentimental, unoriginal.

underwater

His chest burned as the oxygen depleted from his lungs and he knew, deep down, that it was time to let go.

paracetamol

His fever had receded – no longer was he sweating like a mad-man – but he still took the pills.

dastardly

Johann traced the knife's edge across Kent's collarbone, slowly, before making another cut.

complacent

Matt watched, uncaring, as Duncan passed the cheat sheet around the class.

misinterpret

I didn't know what the doctor meant when he said, "cancer", since I am so clearly a Libra.

shadow

The man in black lurked on the edge of town, waiting for night to fall, and darkness to consume all.

apple

It fell down and nobody saw; it sat in place for too long, began to rot.

cognizant

My wife thought she had done a good job at hiding her affair, unfortunately – more for myself than for her – she did not.

prestigious

The east coast academy was extremely picky with their admissions, to get in was truly an honour.

empire

We build and expand, reaching farther than anyone has ever dared before; we are the conquerors, explorers, innovators our forefathers only dreamt about becoming!

grasshopper

I declared my hatred for bugs as I squished the strange, leaping creature under my three-year-old foot.

cleaver

Like a butcher in the heat of battle, I severed my connection to the company.

KRISTINA TIESSEN**grasshopper**

The boys were pouncing like a field of grasshoppers.

empire

He was mumbling something about a dying empire, but I don't think any of us were paying much attention.

cleaver

I was now convinced that the cleaver was part of a retrieval exercise.

prestigious

Maybe the cat had a better idea of what could be considered prestigious.

misinterpret

Is it possible to misinterpret a suicide note?

shadow

The threat was gone, but we were still cowering under its shadow.

apple

She polished the green apple defiantly.

cognizant

I wasn't cognizant of the giant screen; I was filling in the blanks, building the image of the stranger in the crowd, who now stood behind my shoulder.

underwater

I was a hippocampus; I was riding the moment but half underwater.

complacent

I was the kind of complacent where I would eat a bag of marshmallows for supper.

dastardly

It's nature, you know; it's not dogs but cats who can lick themselves and still be called graceful, and we can only respect them more when they're dastardly, devious, and endlessly selfish.

paracetamol

It was like how my dog knows I'm about to get in the car and drive home; she greeted me with a paracetamol and told me to lift up my tongue.

button

Just like that, my password was undone, the last button keyed in, and my search history was exposed like a vivisectioned brain.

alabaster

Catherine handed me the alabaster box and I saw the white light of death, the light that asserts itself with unblinking confidence, when its burning moment is the only one left in time.

corn

We all came out to say goodbye – all eight of us kids, waving and standing in a row, and looking back on it, I can understand why he found driving through the cornfields in Nebraska so boring.

diabolical

I looked up at my mother's face which was pointed like a laser at the cashier, another of her diabolical schemes that hinged on her best skill: making her victim feel small, defective, and unworthy.

LEVI VIZLER**button, diabolical, corn, alabaster**

With **buttons** for eyes and cloth for thighs, the voodoo dolls were sewn with care. With **diabolical** intent and a murderous scent, the seamstress finished the hair. No cares in the world, her hair partially curled, the victim snacked on her **corn**. An **alabaster** tomb, lit by the moon, waited for their corpse to mourn.

dastardly, complacent, cognizant, apple

It was a **dastardly** sight to see the worshipers collapse one by one in front of their false God, yet it had to be done; amen. The man who stood amongst the rows of corpses was somewhat **complacent** with what he had achieved. He was a **cognizant** man; he believed that bloodshed would lead to divinity. Much like Eve in the garden, the man of death realized his mistake after biting this forbidden **apple**.

underwater, paracetamol, shadows, misinterpreted

Your love was comparable to the depths of the ocean; it wasn't until I was trapped **underwater** that I realized it was too late. It was your **paracetamol** personality that helped cure these rampant emotions that spread across my body. However, you

were the drug that led to my addiction and eventually left me alone, going through withdrawals in the **shadows** of an alleyway. I **misinterpreted** your intentions; you used me to reach the surface, jumping off my helpless body every time I tried to join you.

empire, prestigious, grasshopper, cleaver

The prince wasn't the only one who was after the **empire's** throne. There was another **prestigious** noble amongst the previous king's nobles that wanted power. The prince was a **grasshopper**, always jumping to action but never actually getting anywhere far. Filled with jealousy and rage, the silly child finally jumped too far; with a **cleaver** in his hand and a blood-stained brain, the little bastard resorted to the same tactic he used against his father.

STEPHEN WEIR

grasshopper

In Japan grasshoppers are considered brain food; in New Orleans drinkers can't get enough of the green Grasshopper cocktail; meanwhile deep in the meadow, grasshoppers gather and pray that humans give crickets a try for a change.

empire

The Empire State Building is the 49TH tallest building in the world; it got that ranking by default.

cleaver

"Ward," said his wife June, "Weren't you a little rough on the Beaver last night?" "Nah" he responded, "he can take it, after all he is a Cleaver."

prestigious

There is nothing more prestigious then getting the highest mark in the class for creating 16 quirky sentences.

misinterpret

To misinterpret is thinking she said, "we will meet at Seven", when she really said "Meet at Eleven at the 7 Eleven.

shadow

It is hard for the private eye to follow me now; thanks to Oprah's crash diet I am a shadow of my former self.

apple

Apple is to Microsoft computers as what Granny Smith was to Adam and Eve.

cognisant

The pizza is getting cold, and our long-winded Grace saying host has to be cognisant of that fact.

underwater

71 percent of the Earth's surface is underwater yet more than half of adults in the country don't drink enough H2O each day.

complacent

"Never be complacent," preached the young pastor, "always argue and ignore the status quo."

dastardly

What you should fear; Donald Trump and his dastardly plans.

paracetamol

Paracetamol is a pain reliever and the perfect cure for an overly long Sunday sermon.

button

I pressed the No Snore button on my sleeping's wife's pyjamas and once again it didn't work.

alabaster

"Hello Alabaster Legs," said the newly arrived Siberian student to a classmate wearing whites stockings.

corn

Looking at awe at this year's bountiful harvest, the farmer put an ear to his lips and tooted his own corn.

diabolical

It was a diabolical plan, crazy glue a loonie to the sidewalk and then pickpocket the people bent over furiously trying to pry the coin off the ground.

BETHANY ZONDAG**button**

The shirt will be made of a blue, stretchy interlock.

alabaster

The walls of the temple were no longer white.

corn

Driving the last stretch of the journey is always the easiest because it is flat and quiet.

diabolical

She gazed at the city from her perch on the mountainside balcony and dropped her wineglass off the side.

underwater

The inside of the glass shone blue with the reflection of the water outside, casting a tinted shadow over the carpeted floor.

complacent

Though the advisors warned him otherwise, the king believed his entourage of guards would keep him safe within the palace.

dastardly

As the sound of clashing metal faded, a slow smile spread across the general's face.

paracetamol

My skin crawled with fever, and, glass of water in hand, I blindly reached for the tablets on the counter.

misinterpret

When my mother found me after I repainted the statues, I realized that wasn't what she had meant.

shadow

All the sundials in the city were wrong.

apple

The orchard stretched outward beyond the house, filling the space between the barns and the river a kilometre away.

cognizant

Every child knows of the Battle of Westchurch and the destruction it brought to the kingdom, despite our glorious victory.

prestigious

The princess swept down the stairs, back straight and head held high.

cleaver

Silver metal glinted in the morning sunlight from where the blocky knife stuck out from the wall, still trembling from the impact.

grasshopper

The rose leaf quivered as the grasshopper crawled along its length.

empire

A hundred years ago, water covered much of the lands, as the dams had not yet been built.

Editor's note

Collaborations

Students came up with a writing-prompt rule to follow while collaborating. Here are each collaborative group's rules for their piece:

Earth News Network – “written like a news article ... from the perspective of aliens in the process of familiarizing themselves with human culture”

intrusion – “omit one letter from the alphabet in each sentence, beginning with 'A' and continuing in alphabetical order”

Writer's Block – “each sentence is written about something that is below the writer's eye level at the time of writing”

Cloud-Watching – “avoid pronouns and incorporate spacing”

I Saw Myself in the Way Out – no rule is given ... which raises a general question for readers: Do we need to know a rule to gain pleasure and understanding from any of these collaborations and from their way with language?

Adorned Verses – “each sentence can only be made from the letters ADEGILNORSVWZ. The letters of our last names and s.”

Prose Poems

The structure of these prose poems pays homage to Ron Silliman's sequence “Garfield,” the G section of his booklength poem *The Alphabet*. “Garfield” is composed of 21 prose poem paragraphs, where each paragraph is composed of 21 sentences, each sentence an expression of one of 21 topics.

The Trip's prose poems were written in stages. They started with students picking 4 words. These I called topic-words. I asked them to write a stand-alone sentence for each topic-word. This they did 4 times. By the end of fall 2021, the class had written 16 unrelated sentences (x17). Then I asked them to write a prose poem in 3 paragraphs with 16 sentences in each paragraph, selecting for each of their paragraphs a different sentence from each of the 16 topic-word lists. They could shape the sentences a little if they needed to. The third section of this chapbook contains their original stand-alone sentences and topic-words (in **bold**). The sentences preserve the random ordering – one of several ways that ensured that in composing their prose poems students had no idea who wrote which sentence on the lists. Happily, all sentences are now returned to their authors.

It's worth thinking, as we did, why some sentences have been selected often for use in many prose poems. What is it about the nature and the form of each of the sentences, both in their varied contexts, and as structures on their own?

There is much to explore and enjoy here. A prose poem in 3 paragraphs means that as a reader one can notice 3 times how the 16 topic-words unexpectedly recur in expressive variation. The same sentence can mean very differently across the prose poems, each prose poem creating unique connections and contexts – meaning – out of the sentences.

Intention is there in each case. But the world is complex. As I write this, I am reminded of the ongoing Finnish papermill strike at UPM-Kymmene, affecting global supply chains. “Supplies of label substrate – the shiny material from which you peel labels – are depleting,” Malin Hay writes in *London Review of Books* about

its very own paper supply, and “which could affect the availability of everything from apples to Xanax.”

It’s that kind of world we live in – of connections and contexts, “everything from apples to Xanax” – that Ron Silliman’s poetry, and these prose poems before you, alert us to by the created tensions between: on the one hand, unrelated topic-words and stand-alone sentences (e.g.: What’s my **apple** got to do with **Finland?**), and on the other hand, full-intentioned, worked-out thought and art.

This chapbook’s made for my students, in thanks for a great year.

—Louis Cabri