

1. Dahl was a fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force / 2. Sleeping facing north /
3. F. Scott Fitzgerald in *This Side of Paradise* /
4. Hercule Poirot / 5. Abibliophobia

5. What do you call the fear of running out of things to read?

4. Who did Agatha Christie describe as a 'detestable, bombastic, tiresome, egocentric little creep'?

3. Which novelist is thought to have used the term 'T-shirt' for the first time?

2. Which night-time ritual did Charles Dickens believe improved his writing?

1. Which branch of the British Armed Forces was Roald Dahl a member?

QUIZ

WRITING PROMPT: *Ascend*

LIQUID ARMOUR BY LIV FOWLER

Relaxation and communication intertwine through intoxication
Lips are less tight meaning fights can ignite
But that's alright
'cause tonight's not that kind of night
Your mum jokes hitting the peak of conflict
Banter that won't poison like a snakebite
But what seeps through the surface is the panic,
The fear
That people can see the struggle and won't come near

So the beer and gear make the blanket of safety feel
Warm
So that fear disappears
Making it crystal clear
No one wants to be here
Trying to prove our worth through social stamina
Knowing you don't fit into that calibre
Where being cocky is the armour for insecurity
'cause as we all know
Judging a book by its cover
Is none other than
Believing fiction as
Reality

GAP

BY ERIN JAMIESON

do you wonder
in that infinitesimal gap
do we replay our lives?

no- at least I don't
I feel you beside me
& that is all
I know.

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RULE OF SIX

It bled red. The
clotting forgotten.

SIMON LOVETT

Regretting words
that burst the dam.

MADELEINE WRIGHT

I cried today. The
ghosts listened.

SERINAH KINGSLEY

I said sorry.
I regretted it.

MATTHEW MOTA

I suppose it's too
late now.

LUCY SINGER

FIVE YEARS LATER BY DAN STATHERS

It was probably more the taste than the humiliation
of having to wash your mouth out with cheap, municipal soap,
bent over the Belfast sink
because you shouted "Fuck" in class at the top
of your voice - an outrage
in more than ninety-seven countries,
despite the approximation of ten thousand
people
doing it in the time it took
for you to be dragged from your shoulder
sockets to the boy's lavatory,
and five years later,
when the mild-mannered doctor
talked to your mother
in spectrums and syndromes,
could you still taste the bitterness?

!@#%&

BEGIN

BY PAIGE EVANS

I spoke to my therapist last night
And asked her why I couldn't write
And she told me that my words were
derived from pain
Not the ones I speak; there's few of them
But the ones on the page.
The well of content I use has dried up
The narrative is no longer sad, flowing, but
whole.
You should write what you know,
And what you know now is love.

Maybe this is enough.
But I don't feel that he completes me
He begins me,
The sentences etched on my paper
shouldn't halt
For he doesn't stop me
That dot at the end of the line is no full
stop but an ellipsis
The promise of something more
Over the cliffs of Caswell Bay
Where I told him I wanted to wake up next
to him every day from now
Not because I'm settled on his ground
But because this is where we'll moor
For the night, until we continue down the
canals
Travelers exploring and learning
forevermore

Maybe she is right
My therapist, last night
When I asked her why I couldn't write
The well I have been using is dried
The bucket fell as the string snapped
and sighed

A sigh of relief that this was done
That I can use waters from the sea to
write my melodies
From the streams that lit him up back
home when he came to visit me
From the tears of laughter of the card
game, of the tumbles
The script of the shape that our bodies
make at 4am underneath the bedding
That's what I want my words to say
How can you scream a verse about falling
as softly as a whisper
The excruciating pain of being so adored
When the waters you have been drinking
told you that you are flawed
And you are, but that is fine,
I breathe it in -
I am not complete
With him, I begin.

BEHIND YOU

BY LUCY SINGER

A WOMAN *in her fifties stands on stage.*

WOMAN

I'd been telling him to sort out that mirror for
weeks. Such a lazy old bastard, he never did things
when I asked him to. He always said 'I'll do it, I'll
do it', and then he never did. I'd always end up
getting fed up and just doing it myself. And then
he'd have the cheek to complain that he was 'just
about to do it'. 'Just about to do it' my arse.

(Pause)

That morning he told me he was going to walk
round to Johnny's to watch the footy. I said I beg
your pardon. He looks at me all confused, like a
deer in headlights. I tell him 'I've been asking you
to fix that mirror for weeks now, and you said
you've been busy, but now you've got time to go
round to Johnny's and watch the footy'.

(Sighs)

He sighs. He sighs. Unbelievable. As if I'm the
one being unreasonable. He tells me that he'll do
it, he'll do it. I say that's what he says every time,
and he never does it, I always end up doing it, and
quite frankly I'm sick of it. He rolls his eyes at me.
(She takes a sharp breath)

I could've slapped him around right then and
there. But I said fine. You go to Johnny's, and I'll
go to the garage now. I'll sort it out, as always.
He tells me I'm being dramatic, that he'll fix it as
soon as he gets back, but I tell him no. I tell him
I'm tired of waiting, and if I want something done
right, I best go and do it myself. He storms out.

(She rolls her eyes)

What a child. On one of his strops, as per usual.
There's no talking to him when he's like that, so I
decide to set off. I get in the car, I start reversing
out onto the road, and then... there's a thud.

(She shrugs)

But like I say, I'd been telling him to fix that mir-
ror for weeks.

SOLACE

BY JOSH ENTSMINGER

At first there was scratching. Soft and quick
against the bunker door. But at least then he knew
where it was. The absurd comfort of knowing,
despite everything, it was still there. But now,
there's no scratching, no sloshing in the hallway,
no drips, no creaks.

He waited for some sign, pacing through the
bunker, hidden in a basement no one knew to
look for. Thinking back, it only took two weeks
until every time he sat down on the pristine
couch, consumed by dark swirl on the surface
of the bitter instant coffee, he knew every step
he would take that day, every motion, always
glancing at the door. It was only a week ago
that he started to sleep next to the door, his ear
pressed against it, hoping for the relief that it was
still there – a creak, a scream, anything.

How many times had he reimagined the path
down the basement steps. Retracing the path
through the narrow concrete hallway to the safety
bunker. Closing his eyes to meticulously count
the cracks in the hall he missed as it chased him.

The brief glimpse of shadow and movement
trailing behind his eyes as he scrambled to shut
the door. He began to populate the hallway
sometimes with faces, paintings, embracing a
neatly woven confusion, falling prey to the hope
that maybe everything was really uncertain.
He sat, staring at the door, tracing the outline of
the door's bolt in the air with his finger. He knew
how easy it would be to release the mechanism
and open himself back up to the world. As he
sat, letting the hours pass by, a thought began to
make him smile. A thought too inviting to ignore,
changing the colour of every experience. Still, he
couldn't help but embrace it, feeling the weight of
opening the door ease with every passing second,
until he asked himself.

'Does it matter if it's still there?'