

JASON BREDLE

Retina Heart

The village burned an effigy
of a snowman to mark the end
of winter—a gray, annual affair noted
for its remarkable scowls
and dismal sense of order.
There were good cakes.
Juan got a red stain on his pants
that to this day
he's never figured out.
You couldn't put a cap
on my melancholy.
You could put a cape on it
I guess. We bought carrots
and when Juan learned
eating them was a traditional gesture
of goodwill, he grabbed them
and took huge bites
out of all of them.
Before we separated, he asked
if I was sure I knew
what I was doing. I said yes
but had no idea what he meant.
I was trying to make a retina
out of my heart.
After that, I washed my eyes
with baby shampoo. I couldn't deal
with any more tears.

Beating a Dead Horse

Not to beat a dead horse or anything
but can we beat a dead horse
for a little bit right now?
I know part of it
is just to get outside,
feel the wind in my hair
and sun on my arms
as I really give it to a dead horse
a few times.
I know beating a dead horse
has its detractors,
those who say it's unethical—
but the horse is already dead.
I didn't *kill* the horse.
I just like to exercise my right
to limber up and get loose
on a dead horse every once in a while! Perhaps I deserve to be killed
by a living horse.
Perhaps I am, indeed, despicable.
Oh, man. But to get out there
and find the perfect dead horse
to limber up and really get loose on,
that sounds pretty sweet.

P-Bear

Where to begin?
There are literally dozens of letter,
word, and sentence combinations
from which to choose,
many of which
create meaning for readers
to appreciate, and, at times,
fall in love with. Turning
to your favorite flower is easy
when it's your childhood sweetheart Black Eyed Susan Forget Me Not,
but what if her name is Fern?
I want to learn
how to levitate
over several hectares of open land,
kill someone with my bare hands,
and drive a van
real fast, you used to think,
looking into the distant
farmland of your youth.
Now you merely stare
at the page.
What do the words mean?
It's futile, what with the storm
outside. You're alone in a home
alight with one, steady heartbeat.
Yet still you can hear it.
It's out there. Like a cross
between a puma and a bear, a p-bear
is coming for you
and there's nothing you can do
about it.