

Ellie **Sawatzky**

TRUTH SERUM

*after Naomi Shihab Nye*

I made it from month-old cherry blossoms,  
eight soggy pompoms like the hearts  
of former cheerleaders. The seawater  
pinkened, prickly sweet in my basement apartment.  
A passing siren—the rescue Chiweenie’s howl  
in the key of anxiety? I used that.  
A pinch of parsley from the herb basket  
my love planted for me.  
Stirred it widely. Noticed the new bluebells  
outside my window, the dead  
tulips, bleached deer bones found  
on a Gulf Island beach. Added one  
of each. Called upon my inner teacher  
in her dramatic blood-coloured dress.  
Imagined how many recipes.  
How much fir and rosemary,  
bicycle grease. Lost hair. Rust flaked off  
pipe dreams. The heartskin of activists,  
light from bedside lamps  
of the chronically sick  
and sad, LOLs swimming frantically  
upstream in the last of the earth’s  
clean water. Eyelashes  
of newborn babies. Semen of patient  
Instagram husbands. Sex dream  
inside a sex dream inside  
a dream. Chokecherries. Golden  
berries. Grandmothers’ names.  
I added the purple potatoes harvested  
from my own family. Stirred  
until it was thick with starch and holding  
space. My love, somewhere,  
clicking his tongue for the cat  
before dark. The moment  
between the summoning and  
the cobwebbed ears perked  
under the neighbour’s porch?

Perfect. I filled silicone ice cube trays for the days it would be harder to feel like we belong here. Noticed the height of the sky and the full mood of being. How it felt a little easier after I admitted I was scared to carry the wolf spider outside and release her under an oak tree.

## VAPORWAVE

One day when I'm a great-aunt  
I'll be asked for stories  
from a simpler time—

before the internet  
and legal drugs and  
the plague. What

will I remember?  
That I once rode  
a lonely Greyhound bus

to Winnipeg?  
Sewed yo-yos  
with Grandma

on the glider swing?  
I loved a boy named  
Tyler who did backflips,

knew all the lyrics  
to 'Renegade.' My future  
Mennonite husband,

hair like the tassel  
on a cornstalk. He held  
my hand at a house party

the first time I ever  
got high. It wasn't  
just a hallucination—

I really did play Liat  
in *South Pacific*  
in the basement

of the Baptist church,  
God help me. I thought  
I was born for the stage,

blonde hair pinned under  
a black wig. No one  
talked about

cultural appropriation  
back then. I loved  
the rancid smell

of theatre makeup.  
Waiting upstairs in a shiny  
pew for my chance

to unbutton a grown  
man's blouse. Cabaret  
music under my feet.

What will they want  
to hear from me, my young  
blood, that cell phones

were basically free?  
Or that I once walked  
through cornfields

with only bank billboards  
and my own brain  
for company?

Grandma's dead.  
Tyler killed himself  
in our last year

of high school. I had big  
impossible dreams  
and disgraced myself

stupendously, and living  
through a global crisis  
doesn't make anything

more meaningful.  
But you do.  
Yes, you.