

## LEFTHANDED (a long poem)

Over five cups of coffee,  
and one tall glass of water,  
a plate of Dot's peanut butter cookies,  
one heated argument about provincial politics,  
side one of 'I'm Your Man,  
a whole stack of hot pink Post-its,  
and one Coastal newspaper previously used to keep  
the rain off,  
the six of them decided on a name: Lefthanded,  
sir, except for hockey, (they were words stolen from  
Birney)  
and waved like a West Coast flag.  
During that week, three years ago, when Will and  
Franny were not Will and Franny, he wrote twenty-two  
four line stanzas about the Canadian identity. He was  
trying to write about love.

hands it in and calls it Letters from the Editor.

Will doesn't laugh.

Chuck writes plays  
plays at writing.

Dot's stories are average  
fourteen pages long  
without whiteout.

Her credit card bill is stapled between pages six and  
seven.

Thom makes friends with Funk and Wagnalls,  
takes Merriam Webster on a date  
and, over words and lobster, she gives up her  
connotations  
but not before Thom springs for champagne.

Jimmy offers the grey woman  
a hand with her groceries  
a portrait for a dollar.  
He draws her, because that's what he does, with the

After the fight in Thom's kitchen,  
around the table that was never big enough for six,  
he sends the issue early,  
before anyone has a chance for "Sorry."  
"The Break Up" includes: one (1) "Dear John" letter,  
written, but never sent; one (1) apology; one (1) story  
about moving house; one (1) itemised bill from an  
overnight stay at St. Jude's Hospital; one (1) poem  
that might be about unrequited love, but is more  
likely about love that never gets close enough to be  
requited; one (1) flipbook story drawn at the bottom  
of each page. Two stick figures start the issue dancing  
between words, heads held close where those words,  
whispered, can still be heard. On the last page of  
issue 12 (where names of contributors are listed with  
favourite songs, snacks, and outright lies about where  
they've been published), two stick figures sit in  
opposite corners.  
They are not dancing.

first pen

his fingers find sticky at the bottom of his bag.  
Quick, messy lines,  
eyes that don't match,  
but her bus is coming,  
his bus is two minutes up the street.  
With the dollar warm  
from her hand, she gives him  
"It looks just like me."

When they lose their way, Franny finds  
the right page in the table of contents.  
Everyone's on the same one.

Lefthanded No. 2

The phone rings four times,  
then the machine:  
"24 hours of old school Galactica on TV.  
We won't be getting up to answer the phone  
or any skill-testing questions.  
If you bring pizza, buzz, and we'll let you in."

four (4) rhyming couplets about anatomy; one (1) full page apology to a grade 11 Biology teacher; and fourteen (14) incidental drawings tucked into corners. Lefthanded No. 3 comes together, like Franny and Will in San Francisco to celebrate three years sleeping next to each other. They bring the California sun home and also a recipe for deep fried octopus balls. Franny says you can't find everything with Google. Will has new poetry on his tongue, and he kisses Franny more often just to hear her speak the words he writes. She suggests cherry blossoms for next issue's cover, offers her own sketches and a title, but Thom says there is something out there, something that sounds better than love. On the whiteboard in Thom's kitchen, Lefthanded no. 12 (slated for a December 10th printing) is titled: "Secular Winter Celebration."

Franny has a thing for Dirk Benedict.

Chuck buzzes them in, but only after Will swears he bought the large margherita on whole wheat from the real Italian place on the corner.

A move well-practiced,  
Will's arm, stretching, squeezing Franny close on  
Chuck's couch.  
The same couch dies in his parents' basement,  
lives for those moments when boys and girls used  
commercials for kisses.

Chuck has a thing for Dirk Benedict, too.

Lefthanded No. 2 is renamed "Science and Fiction" and includes: one (1) portrait of the Millennium Falcon in black ink; three (3) emails, unabridged, commenting on Lefthanded No. 1; two (2) poems about Starbuck; one (1) poem about Apollo [because Franny never likes to see anyone left out, even fictional characters from 1970s television]; one (1) short story that reimagines Watson and Crick in space;

Canadian identity were published, and Will took home the biggest prize a country can give a poet from the West Coast. The money paid for the pizza their friends ate helping Franny and Will move into the blue house on the hill. The rest of the prize was a gold circle on the cover of his book, turned face out on the shelf. That gold circle means sales. That gold circle means Will has to fly one thousand miles for ten minutes of reading. He lets Franny's brother take new photos for the papers, under the tree in their front yard, on the one bright day in September. Chuck takes them both to dinner at Lumiere because if Will answers a few questions, they can expense the meal. Franny buys him a new notebook for the new book. It's pale blue, with clouds, and the heart on the cover is hers.

Franny sits on the couch and draws the trees outside their window. Thick lines of charcoal cut the wrong way through the college rule books she buys at the grocery store with her eggs, Will's 2% milk. Next to her scribbly pictures of birds are the scrawled words about flying that become poetry later, after the adventure, and when she reads them for Will, aloud, over hot chocolate in the kitchen. Her jeans are stained with grass. She draws over the dirt with ink. She walks in sideways rain, her umbrella waiting in the bucket beside the front door. She sits at the bus stop and when people ask, because they always do, Franny says, "I like to be out here where things live."

Lefthanded No. 1

Six artists do not make a circle a hexagon  
has six sides until it breaks,  
scatters, and pieces get stuck between couch  
cushions.

Thom writes out the alphabet,  
all twenty six in black ink block print,