

I Need You ^Too Tired^ to Remember
(an intrusion poem, after Julie Berry)

I know I have been absent. I apologize. I have ^daughter^ disappointed ^stroke^ you and been hard ^stroke^ to pin down. I know ^daughter stroke^ I have reneged ^brain^ on dates ^surgery^ and appointments ^stroke^ and commitments. I know ^frontal lobes^ I haven't ^frontal pull^ shown up when I said ^sensory overload^ I would. I know ^hit^ it's been a long ^hit^ long time ^scream^ and I should ^slap^ be over it by ^punch^ now. I know ^fight flight freeze fawn^ so many ^hypervigilance^ things. None of them ^hypervigilance^ real or true. Our ^breathe^ world ^ground^ has been ^ER trip^ shifted and shuffled. It has ^ER trip^ imploded. I don't ^love^ know who I am ^love^ anymore. I rise and ^tired^ care and ^tired^ then go ^exhaustion^ to sleep. I might ^exhaustion^ read ^care^ a poem. Or call you ^care^ at the oddest hour. I still ^don't care^ exist. Don't ^too tired to care^ give up. I need you ^too tired^ to remember who I am.

RBC PEN Canada New Voices Award

Nancy Huggett | 2024 Winner

Selection from *Revelation*

Caregiver as catacomb. All the things she has buried in the winding caverns of her calcified heart, in her veins—the plaque that grows and hardens into thinning, thinnest tunnels. Can she find the fool, the born again in these ruins that run deep outside the city walls? This underground, this buried bank of bones and memories. The twisting tunnels sprouting skulls, the vacant sockets of vision, that Hadic breeze blowing through the hollowed cranium, past the nasal bone—a solitary note that rides on sorrow thinned to dust. The labyrinth of it all—the past, the possibility, the sudden flares of light and shadows dancing. The helpless hopeless spells. The pentimentoed plans scratched into quarried walls. She threads her needle in the dark with invisible bacteria— *kribbella cansticallisti*, *catacumbae*—sewing bright efflorescence into her every nook and cranny until she is a glimmering incantation in the dark.