Girls hurt each other like tooth decay, like

they start off saccharine as slurpees in sticky tween hands, like

here, let me fix your cat liner, draw it higher so as not to droop the eye, wish on the lash, can you smell my breath?, i think he's hurting you, don't text me ever again, text me when you get home!, hey! i'm changing!, when we move out let's get this beanbag for our house, come sit in all my lectures, come with me to the grocery store, here take my change, we'll share a cocoa, i don't think my mom's ever loved me, thank the stars at least you do,

push the ache of wisdom into each others' crowded jaws, like

take some baby cream for your hands,

don't you dare talk to me like that, god. i'm so sorry. i didn't mean it, i made this without meat so we could share, if only i could just marry you!,

i got in! can you believe it?,

big city bigshot, call me when you arrive!,

ah! i forgot! it was so late,

he's everything i've ever wanted - it's a dream,

sorry i've been

so busy, but happy birthday!,

how's the boyfriend doing?

it's the same old,

we'll catch up soon,

yes! soon!

i promise,

lose each other like milk teeth.

2025 RBC/PEN Canada New Voices Award Anna Sokolova | 2025 joint winner Selections from *Fragments to a friend*

Fragment 182: I might go

Missing you is in my throat: sore taste of waking up ill, not breathing well all night, something to eventually cough up. I am soon to flip a coin for a choice

the size of my life. Very much I want to put my head down in your lap and sleep. But you, the first of the coin-flippers, with your six-foot fiancée and new mortgage,

dear old best friend, what can you know of this disease?

And if I might go and try again, call heads for love, requited love, I might prove every biphobe right and end my search

with my own man. Then our weighted coins might be our change for bus fare to new towns.

This poem is an "anti-erasure" that expands on one of Sappho's remaining poetry fragments, using the version from Anne Carson's If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho.