

“Having just read an essay in which I’d mention the excuses that the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, an inveterate procrastinator, had made for his tardy correspondence, she began one e-mail: ‘I’m so sorry about the delay in writing you! The fact of the matter is I’ve taken ill after weating excessively thin breeches in bad weather—not to mention because of my toothache, insomnia, gout, cough, boils, inflamed eyes, swollen testicles, and raging epistolophobia.’”

“I ended up getting a bit screwed over on the secret society front so I’ve vowed to spend the 12 hours a week writing a novel. If I was willing to devote that much time to chanting in a tomb I should be willing to devote it to writing! 6-12 Sundays and Thursdays. Might call it BOOK and BOOK. :)”

“But the thing is, we’re all like that. Nobody wakes up when they want to. Nobody did all of their reading (except maybe the crazy people who win the prizes...)”

### Cold Pastoral

- First person about a girl who is romantically involved with Brian but isn’t convinced it’s perfect. Seems very flirty but is consciously trying to play it off cool. Brian suddenly dies and she feels weird about it as his more involved ex-girlfriend seems closer to the family. She is semi jealous because the ex-girlfriend Lauren is skinnier. Neither seems to acknowledge one another but also don’t seem hostile. It becomes clear that Lauren is more tied to Brian than she was. Lauren asks her to get his diary (which she didn’t know about from his room) because he wouldn’t want his parents to read it. Diary reveals that he was questioning if he made a mistake with Lauren.

“A lot of time was spent being consciously romantic: making sushi, walking places, waiting too long before responding to texts. I fluctuated between adding songs to his playlist and wondering if I should stop hooking up with people I was 80 percent into and finally spend some time alone. (Read the books I was embarrassed I hadn’t read.) (Call my mother.) The thing is, I like being liked, and a lot of my friends had graduated and moved to cities.”

“One thing I am is self-aware (to a neurotic fault), and I recognize that a massive percentage of my self-esteem depends on the attention of a series of smug boys at the University of Vermont. The problem is I’m good at attracting them: verbally witty and successful at sending texts. I’m also well dressed, or try to be, and make fun of boys in the way that reads as I like you.”

“Lately, I’ve felt a kind of numbness. Like this feeling like I’m faking it all—but maybe it’s just because I’m used to being in love.”

### Winter Break

- Girl falls in love for the first time before leaving for college and comes back from winter break to see her boyfriend. Spends a ton of time with him. Dad is alcoholic, brother is distant playing video games. Mom is lonely and cautioning against the boyfriend because of the above.

“But this was the time when I found everything romantic. I granted the world a kind of strange generosity. Ideas convinced me and ordinary activities had an almost giddy newness.”

“I hated this kind of discussion and I hated myself for hating it. I wondered for a moment who else my mom might confide in but I wasn’t actually sure how close she was with any of her book-group friends.”

### Reading Aloud

- Middle-aged woman Anna diagnosed with cancer goes twice a week to read things to a blind, 20 year male named Sam attending Yale Divinity. She secretly undresses each time and wishes for more romance from her 70 year old husband Martin who is also blind and recently went back to work. She simultaneously is longing for her previous health when she danced at the Met. Husband suddenly dies and she goes to see Sam for the last time.

### The Ingenue

- Girl has boyfriend Danny who claims he invented “Cha-Cha-Cha” in birthday song. He is an actor and she goes to visit him in the summer, where she feels left out from the close acting group who’s been living together. Very jealous of a girl Olivia he acts with, though he assures her everything is fine. His ability to lie is revealed when she is the only one who catches him cheating at a completely meaningless game of yahtzee.

“Olivia literally rolled onto her side and I felt an odd nostalgia for my high school friends and the days when everyone shared the same world of people. “

“Argh man” he said. I missed you. I really did miss you. His eyes were sad and he kissed me on the nose. It was as if he’d just realized it. Just actualized the refrain of our phone calls.