



# HOTEL ALMIGHTY

SARAH J. SLOAT

READER'S GUIDE

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In making these poems I tried to leave behind the story told in *Misery*, which centers on a writer held hostage in a snowy landscape. Do you ever sense the original story making its presence known, in vocabulary or topic or otherwise?
2. For the most part I tried to avoid an explicit connection between the text and the visuals of the poems, yet wanted them speak to each other. Are there any poems where you feel the visual is directly tied to the text? Are there poems in which you feel the image jars?
3. In "He seemed helpless to stop it", how do the visual elements contribute to the sense of a plot "mov(ing) on in spite of everything?"
4. I wanted the look of the pieces to have a certain "bookishness," which is why I decided to retain them on the page. In what other ways might you see this collection as a celebration of reading?
5. The majority of poems appear to begin with the word "Misery," since the title of the novel stands atop the page. Does the word color your experience of the poems?
6. One of the phrases I found when I first began these poems sprang from the accidental nearness of "hotel" and "almighty," which together became the working title of the book. Do you think *Hotel Almighty*, as a title, makes a good home for these pieces?



7. Confetti was one of my go-tos for the visuals. What effect does it have for you? Is the effect different in the different poems in which it appears?
8. It took ages to settle on the visuals for "Fluid, the promise." Do you think the collage works with the text?
9. In the poem "Why not invite him in," I set out to dominate the page with dots like pop artist Roy Lichtenstein. I even used dialogue balloons since it fit the subject. Yet when I looked for speakers I couldn't resist figures from an old painting. Would modern-looking figures change the poem?

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# *HOTEL ALMIGHTY*

## WRITING EXERCISES

1. Pull a page from a book you're willing to part with. Scan it for interesting words or phrases and see if you can string a sentence together. Try to make it surprising rather than just grammatical. Circle the words and obscure the remaining text with a marker or shade it out with a colored pencil.
2. For a different effect, instead of obscuring the text you don't want to be part of your poem, cut it away with an x-acto knife, leaving holes in the page. Then take the page and place over an image that you like, or simply a sheet of colored paper.
3. "Darkness was a woman's fingers" starts with a metaphor, a good way to launch a found poem. Find an abstract or general word high on the page. A gerund will also work. Then look for either "is" or "was," followed by a phrase or noun that might define it. It can be anything, e.g. "the hospital was a wig of damp curls," or "sleep was a hut on a highway." See if the page takes you somewhere surprising.