Gangsters, Scissors, Tape

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We're cutting out headlines, making poems.

I'm hoping for silly and surreal like the ones in the teacher's guide, but then Joe Bob says, "Kidnap notes!" and I remember where we are.

Not enough scissors, so I remind them to share. Rafael hunches in a corner with one pair, says "They're mine."

"Where's the tape? Where's the tape?" everybody asks, though they know.

It's just that things are cool right now and nobody wants to reach across anybody else for it.

So I become Tape Man, Mister Neutral: part of my job.

But I push a little, also part of my job, and ask Rafael for the scissors.

His brother Cleo, wise in both worlds, gives me his.

The bell rings, and they leave in my hands their threats, dope manifestos, and brags of a thousand dead.

I count the scissors, prepare for the next group, and pray for us all.