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Gangsters, Scissors, Tape

Rick Stansberger

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.