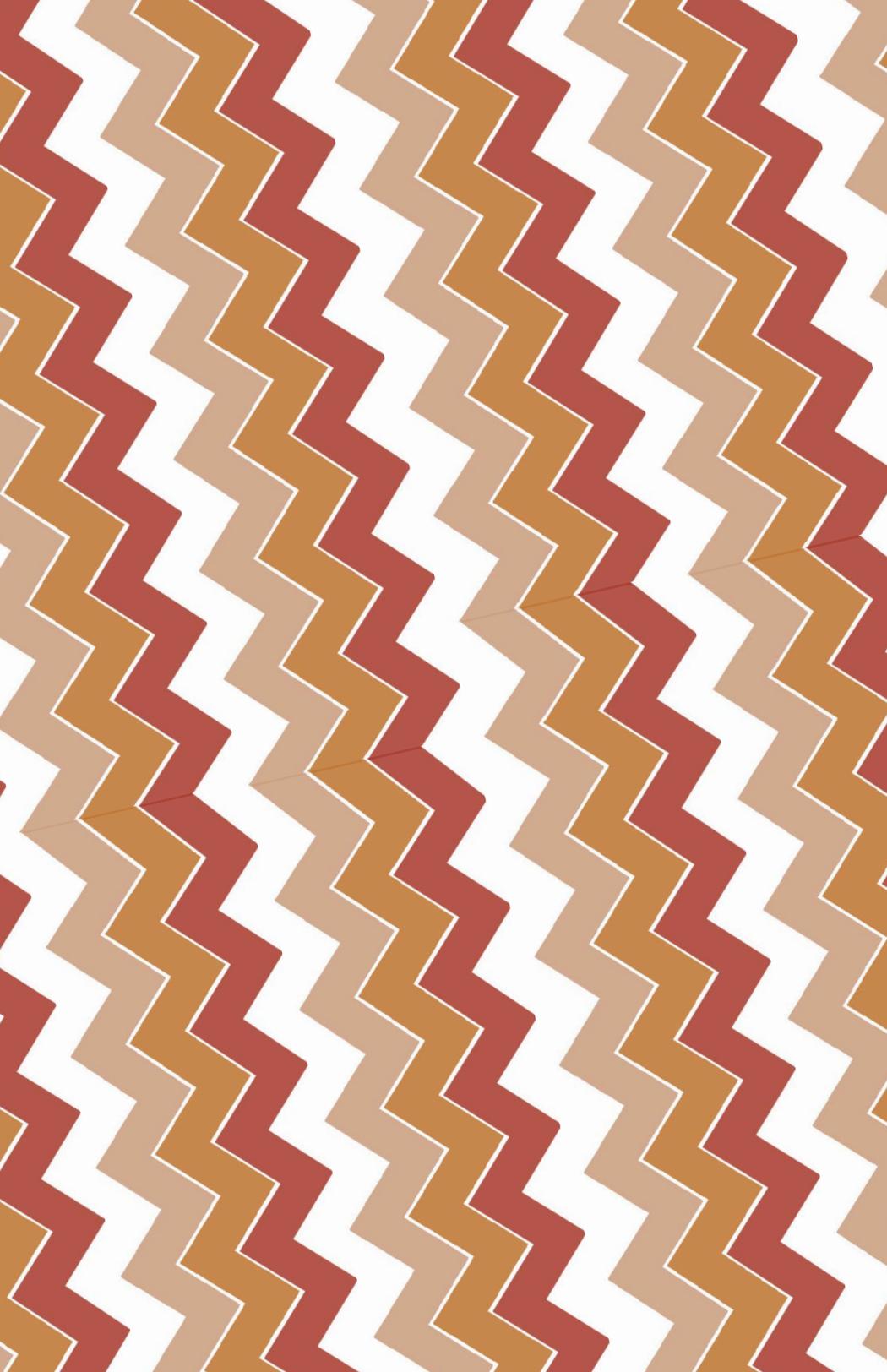


SHAKE IT UP & THROW IT AT SOMETHING HARD



BT SHAW



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#63

ESSAY PRESS GROUNDLOOP SERIES

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Introduction

In May 2014, I was living in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam with two-fifths of my family when China erected an oil rig in waters so disputed they have no agreed-upon name. Anti-Chinese protests welled—overnight, armed guards set up checkpoints at our district’s entrance. Warned to avoid public spaces, I holed up with our preschooler for a hectic schedule of Play-Doh and obsessive news browsing. Factories burned, rhetoric swirled. Everybody ticked. (Meanwhile, Iraq. Meanwhile, Nigeria. Yemen. Ukraine. Syria. Meanwhile—)

Near the end of his life, my father was plagued with an aphasia that manifested as noun substitution. *Birds* became *helicopters*, his *wallet*, his *holster*. Three years later, as China prepared to fire on the Vietnamese navy, I dreamt I, too, lost control of speech. Discussing parenthood with a longtime friend, my sleep-self could spout only CNN-style warspeak. The harder I tried, the less control I had. My frustration grew monstrous, but my friend was unfazed. He calmly kept nodding.

When I woke, I logged on per usual, pre-coffee, though not for news. Now I was looking for language with explosive potential—inert until detonated by a single-word substitution. Hundreds of searches later, *Shake it up and throw it at something hard* became an exploration of the sentence as delivery system. Womb and drone. Mad. Lib.

In Vietnamese, the only thing that separates *mother* from *tomb* is tone—ditto *your horse* and *your mama*. Built entirely from found text, *Shake it up...* most pleases me when it ignites both horror and humor. Writing it has, at times, made me feel like a confusedly bad person, but I'm okay with that. Every bomb starts with somebody's baby. Whenever I think an end's been reached, something else explodes.

**Shake it up
& throw it
at something hard**

Definition

1.
 - a. an explosive device fused to detonate under specified conditions
 - b. ATOMIC BABY; *also*: —usually used with *the*
2. a vessel for compressed gases: as
 - a. a pressure vessel for conducting chemical experiments
 - b. a container for an aerosol (as an insecticide)
3. a rounded mass of lava exploded from a volcano
4. a lead-lined container for radioactive material
5. FAILURE, FLOP <the play was a *baby*>
6.
 - a. a long pass in football
 - b. a very long shot (as in basketball) <shooting 3-point *babies*>; *also*: HOME RUN
9. something unexpected and unpleasant — often used with *drop*

History of baby-making on the Internet

In 1986, police investigated the sharing of a computer print-out from a digital manual titled the *Complete Book of Babies*. Students shared the list with classmates and experimented with building many of the babies listed, including the one used in Oklahoma City, with suggested upgrades. In 1994, a thread on the National Rifle Association's bulletin board detailed how to make babies out of jars. In March 1996, a New South Wales MP called for legislation regarding Internet access for youth, following reports of a boy injuring himself while trying to follow a baby recipe online.

Through 1998, the common view of the instructions was that they were used by curious youth anxious to build babies simply as a dangerous experiment "with no intention of hurting anybody."

Makers of babies are creative (and not afraid to use animals)

Sheep. All the time. They go for cheap and easy. Once the ordnance ran out overseas, they started making fertilizer-based babies with cheap electronics parts. They're usually ghetto, done in a rush. If it's a device by an organization, then it's probably neat and labeled via some Internet manual. It's hard to describe trends because the device is left up to the imagination of the baby-maker.

How to make a bottle baby

Fill a rolled up piece of newspaper or paper towel with baking soda. Take a plastic water bottle filled halfway with vinegar and put in the newspaper or paper towel. Shake it up and throw it at something hard. Your bottle baby will explode without a bang.

A good headline is simple and direct

Egyptian forces raid militant baby factory near Cairo

Baby disposal unit called to Seattle police station

Education: The cheap, easy way to eliminate dirty babies

Vietnam War babies still killing people 40 years later

Haggis-related baby scare inspires poem

What is a bomb?

What is a bomb? Oh, what is a bomb? I must find out today what makes Jim Dear and Darling act that way *La la lu La la lu* Oh my little star sweeper I'll sweep the stardust for you *La la lu La la lu* Little soft fluffy sleeper here comes a pink cloud for you.

How do people make bombs?

Too much vodka and not enough common sense, for the most part.

How much does a bomb really cost?

If you can afford a coffee a day, you can afford to have a bomb.

What is it like to be a bomb?

For centuries, this question would have seemed absurd: behind that adorable facade was a mostly empty head. A bomb, after all, is missing most of the capabilities that define the human mind, such as language and the ability to reason. René Descartes argued that the young bomb was entirely bound by sensation, hopelessly trapped in the confusing rush of the here and now. To think like a bomb is to not think at all.

Soothing a fussy bomb

If you're frustrated to the point of wanting to throw the bomb out the window (believe me, it has happened to all of us), hand the bomb to someone and take a break. If no one is around, call someone and tell them it's an emergency.

Most-hated bomb names

Madison. Jayden. Braden. Mackenzie (*low class*). McKenna. Addison. Jackson. Kaden. Gertrude (*ugly*). Hunter (*violent*). Kaitlyn. Hayden. Bertha (*ugly*). Bentley. Michael (*boring*). Aiden. Makayla. Tristan (*fakey*). Destiny. Nevaeh. Hope.

Put the headline in present tense if the events are happening now

Bomb formula shortages spark concern

Benzocaine and bombs: not a good mix

First bomb of 2014 life-changing for new parents

What your post-bomb body says about you

Italian bomb saved thanks to world's smallest artificial heart

Babies in small wars

1. *Aviation*

Normal scouting missions will in most cases be modified to search attacks, performed by airplanes of the scouting or observation class armed with light babies and machine guns.

2. *The march*

Native buildings generally should not be used by patrols for shelter. Most of them are unclean and infested with insects. Sometimes, vacant buildings may contain mines or babies laid by the hostile forces to explode on contact.

3. *Attacks on towns*

One baby, penetrating the roof of a small house before exploding, will effectively neutralize all occupants; those not being killed or wounded will immediately escape to the streets to become targets for machine guns.

Do planes slow down to drop babies?

Theoretically, they do not. The laws of kinematics do not require them to slow down. Instead, where and when they drop their babies have already been sort of predetermined by the laws of physics.

FAQ

What is a smart baby?

A steerable baby that is guided to its target by television or laser beam.

What percentage of babies used by the U.S. military are smart babies?

A *Jane's Defence* expert once said that approximately 25 percent of our babies are considered "Smart Babies." *Jane's* is usually nearly right.

Can a smart baby malfunction after it has been dropped?

Most problems with smart babies stem from stupid people around. Those babies aren't much smarter than a moth flying towards light.

If Jesus was perfect, how come he couldn't solve calculus problems and equations and create the atomic baby?

So you think creating a baby makes someone intelligent. I would say the opposite may be true. Why would a peaceful person like Jesus create a baby?

Where do bombs come from?

Cleveland. They come from Cleveland.

Meaning of your bomb's name

Appointed. Torch. Sent from the sky. Innocent. Wished for. Star of the sea. Holy book. Gift of God. Let it happen/come. Hope. God is compassionate/merciful. Bitter. Bitter. Kind.

Bombs can see colors at birth

though often they will have trouble distinguishing similar tones. For this reason many bombs prefer to look at black and white patterns or objects with similarly highly contrasting motifs. The ability to distinguish colors develops rapidly, and as early as four months old some bombs begin to show a preference for certain colors.

What does it mean to dream with a bomb?

To dream of an extremely small bomb symbolizes your helplessness and your fears of letting others become aware of your vulnerabilities and incompetence. You may be afraid to ask for help and as a result tend to take matters into your own hands.

Why does God make ugly bombs?

There isn't a God, just ugly people.

To defuse a baby

either blow up the baby in place or transport it to a safe location and blow it up there. This is done by shooting it from a distance or using a small baby of your own. Another popular method is to smash or cut the baby with a remote-controlled water cannon. In a counter-strike, walk near the baby and depress the trigger button. A progress bar should appear ----- . Use button (e). Simply move in front of the baby, then hold.



O baby

Bound in the grassy clarion air like the fox of the tally-ho thy field
the universe thy hedge the geo Leap Baby bound Baby frolic zig
and zag The stars a swarm of bees in thy binging bag Stick angels
on your jubilee feet wheels of rainlight on your bunky seat You are
due and behold you are due and the heavens are with you hosanna
incalescent glorious liaison

Note on originating texts

Alan Menken's "What is a Baby?" from *Lady and the Tramp* begat "What is a bomb?"

The *United States Marine Corps Small Wars Manual* begat "Babies in small wars."

Gregory Corso's "Bomb" begat "O baby."

Search engines spawned the remainder.

Acknowledgments

How to make a bottle baby appeared in *The Found Poetry Review* (Vol. 8).

Definition, History of baby-making on the internet, and If Jesus was perfect, how come he couldn't solve calculus problems and equations and create the atomic baby? appeared in the inaugural issue of 1001.

Author bio



Photo by Aliyah Shaw

B.T. Shaw grew up in Ohio. Her work includes *This Dirty Little Heart* (recipient of the Blue Lynx Prize for Poetry from Eastern Washington University Press) and the forthcoming *Dear Dear*, a chapbook collaboration with poet Jennifer Richter and visual artists Larissa Hammond and Abra Ancliffe. Shaw's writing has received support from Oregon Literary Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts and has appeared recently in journals such as *Seneca Review*, *The Found Poetry Review*, and *Hubbub*, as well as in the exhibit *Echoing Nostalgia* at San Art Gallery, Ho Chin Minh City. She lives in Jakarta, Indonesia.



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