Poem, A Chapbook

Dudes be tall like trees up north with big swinging
Pinecones and maple syrup dripping from their trunks

Pancakes are a simple pleasure

This book contains no periods

Try to count them

Count to zero
People sing more than you know
Caravans of circus animals don't come to see you on purpose
Special is as special does, doesn’t it?

That last one was a question mark
It looks like a period on fire
A lump of coal
Releasing a plume of black smoke
Like a flag above it
But it isn't
It only denotes an interrogative
Something that needs an answer
Page three
Here we go
We are really going to get poetic now

There might even be a rhyme somewhere
But probably not

Try to count them too
Now that we are all paying attention
Let’s pause for a moment to consider death

That was enough

We are ready to move on now
If this poem turns out alright for us
(we are in this together, you and I)
I will take everyone out for ice cream
We’ll all get together and chase after the truck

We will be a gleeful mob when we are finished
But we are not ready yet
We still have more raging to do
In our poem

Cuz that’s what we are doing, right?
Raging?

That is two more periods on fire

You can count those two
Also
When I read newspapers
I light them on fire first
To make the news more urgent

Let’s wake up and read the news together
Seven is a lucky number for us
They are all lucky numbers
We are lucky to have them at all
Sometimes the poems want to go to the end of the line (they must be feeling lucky) and turn themselves into prose, something like the news maybe, something with periods maybe, something to be set on fire

But fuck all that

You and me,
We are here to poem
An exclamation point is
A period with a knife in it!
If I am poem-ing too fast for you
I can slow down a little but not too much

When people like us get raging on a poem
Like this one (any poem will do) we gotta hold on
Tight, dude, tight

Remember those tall dudes from the first page

Let’s bring them back into play
When I was a little kid I went to visit a cabin my buddy’s family used to rent every summer up north on a lake in one of the really cold states and this one time we

Sorry about that
I was doing it again

Fuck those tall dudes anyway

At the end of the story everything was going to be on fire, except for the final period

How unrealistic is that?
So we've decided we're gonna poem hard
In the realist mode
(though we reserve the right to take liberties)
And afterward the world will be changed for the better
Because we will all have ice cream
I wish the exhaust of an ice cream truck
Smelled like bubble gum

I know that is not a particularly original wish
We have all had it
But I wish that wish anyway
And I am sorry
I cannot make that happen for us today

It wouldn’t be realistic

Let’s take a moment to mourn the loss
Of delicious bubble gum fumes
There
That was enough

No wait

One more

Hey maybe after we have finished this poem
And eaten our ice cream
You can poem me for a while

We'll rage again

After a little rest
If you can feel the heat of the poem  
The burn in your fingers and eyes  
Skin peeled and popping, cool air  
Against pink tissue, stop

Put down the book

You have lit the wrong thing on fire
A period is a just a tiny burnt pancake
Stuck to a white wall at the end of something someone
Once called a “complete thought”
Did you see?
Did you see?
Did you see?

That was almost a little baby poem right there

All you have to do is get people to look around

Let’s take a moment to look up from the page

To appreciate our surroundings

It’s okay
Don’t rush
The poem will be here, waiting

More people dance than you might expect
Some people only do it in dreams at night, sure
But you should see them wriggle, bounce, rage
 Movements that could be described as poetry
 If we wanted to walk down that cliché

By the way, did you notice that “e” with the little hat on it?

We poem hard, realistic, and gritty
But also sometimes cute
At least when it comes to our hats

Or maybe e’s head was just starting to catch fire
Heard that can happen if you poem
too hard
too long

Let’s take a moment to dump a cup of water on our heads, to be sure
Sometimes I like to walk and read a book at the same time
Let’s try it

Really bury your head in the book and start walking

What we are doing right now
(walking and reading at once)
Is a great activity because when you look up from the page
There is a whole new world around you
One you hadn’t even known you might be headed to
Because your eyes were busy reading

Don’t look up yet

Keep walking and reading

Keep trying to count things

Don’t worry

I will too

You are not alone
You could just as easily read the word LOVE a bunch of times while you walk,
I realize

You will end up in the same place no matter what you read
And that place will surprise you, no matter what
Whether there are any periods or no
You will end up somewhere blind
New
(possibly on fire)
If you walk fast and read deep

Let’s take a moment and try it

Keep walking

Remember to read deep

Hard
Now look up and take a moment to appreciate your new surroundings

Where are you?

You are here

Wherever that is

Is always home

Hold that thought forever

Don’t “put it on hold”

Hold onto it

Squeeze it tight with your brain’s fingers
Always home

Period

All raged out?

Let’s go get some ice cream