

Bill Siverly

Broken Teeth

for Lisa Jensen, DMD

Early in the plague year, I bite too hard
on a crust of toast. I catch a sharp stab in tooth 31.
Social distance mandates dental clinics closed.

Dentist open, she says I have a cracked molar,
and a real crack requires root canal or extraction.
Root canal so painless it's no longer a metaphor

for extreme distress. Dentist goes on to say,
clients bring their broken teeth in times of stress,
the kinds of stress we live with constantly today.

She treated four broken teeth last month,
when she rarely sees ten a year. What's more,
after the election in 2016, one broken tooth

after another made their way to her chair.
The president in 2020 shrugs off the virus plague.
How hard and how long the gnashing of teeth.