

Dear Sophie Blais,

My month at Can Serrat was stimulating and productive. I wrote 17,000 words of a new novel manuscript, *I Feel Better When You're Here*, the story of a woman travelling through alternate realities while grieving the loss of her husband. As important as the measurable progress made was the discovery of a new style of writing I believe will permeate everything I do in the future.

Here's an excerpt of my work:

*There is nothing more exquisite, nothing that better explains the mystery and beauty of being alive, than that ball of morning fire burning over the lake and through the windowpane and into your dreams. First you feel it, a soft pulsing pleasure, and then you sense the colours, crimson and atomic tangerine, the beginning of everything. When this happens there is usually a moment when you don't know where or what you are but feel only warmth and consciousness and possibility, which is more than enough to rouse you from your sleep.*

*That week was different because every time I woke up I had to was remember. The knowledge licked brazenly at my toes before leaping up over the bed to sweep my mind and heart. This is, it said. This is. I'd been using pills to fall asleep, so strong was my physiological impulse to avoid this moment. It was never clear what would be better, staying in bed or facing the day, and of course I had tried both.*

*When Owen died my mother immediately tried to move in with me—my mother with her endless bottles of remedies and creams and oils—but I only let her stay for two nights before asking, gently, that she trust me, that she let me find my own way through. She lived two hours away with her third husband, my stepdad, and they could be on my doorstep in two and a half hours, she said, with Swiss Chalet no less. I didn't have the heart to tell her it was no longer my favourite.*

As it happens a piece of flash fiction I wrote at Can Serrat also won 3<sup>rd</sup> place in Wigleaf's the Mythic Picnic Prize this month. It was inspired in part by the work of a few mixed media artists at the residency. You can read that story at [Wigleaf.com](http://Wigleaf.com).