The Quiet World

In an effort to get people to look into each other’s eyes more, the government has decided to allot each person exactly one hundred and sixty-seven words, per day.

When the phone rings, I put it to my ear without saying hello. In the restaurant I point at chicken noodle soup. I am adjusting well to the new way.

Late at night, I call my long distance lover and proudly say I only used fifty-nine today. I saved the rest for you.

When she doesn't respond, I know she’s used up all her words so I slowly whisper I love you, thirty-two and a third times. After that, we just sit on the line and listen to each other breathe.

—Jeffrey McDaniel