

M. A. SCHAFFNER

Oh Dorothy

A scarlet monkey—golden epaulets—
blows on his whistle and screams. The sacristan
trembles with his little bells and runs. Just once,

I wish, as the rest dive under their desks,
I'd like the chain of command to dangle straight,
each link clean and visible, and weigh

no more than I can carry without cursing
the day I entered this paper city.
The monkey spits out vocals—a question?—

then scratches out the first eye looking back.
It's hard for everyone, even for the boss,
who looks at the tissue caught in his nails

as if for an answer, and proclaims
the meeting over—regarding the next,
time and the agenda will follow shortly.