

issue 19
streetcake



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front cover image - ryan forsythe

[INFRA] – jeannie cole

someone was always dying somewhere– howie good

ten pound note – andrew mccallum

a-passing – tom wingfield

love – jennifer wong

(INFRA)

It means 'below', like night vision -

the hand lifts

and falls

to hot objects

and leans in, temperature sensing

bold & tropic for target acquisition.

We swim together in the blocking saunas,

irradiant in the field of security

like sunlight at zenith.

Cooking is a hot, hyperspectral topic,

stirring hot properties into reflectograms

into the atmosphere -

into thermal activity -

converting ambient light photons straight to hype

to reveal underlying layers.

SOMEONE WAS ALWAYS DYING SOMEWHERE

1

Car crashes. Bathtub drownings.
Untraceable poisons.

Falls were good, too.

Fire told a story.
She knew how the story would end.

Thick, black smoke poured in.
She heard sirens in the distance.

Always coming. Never here.

2

How dark it must be there,
either a long journey or a long sleep,

the way a man's heart
keeps on throbbing
as if there was a later.

Based on phrases from Duane Swierczynski's novel *Fun and Games* (Mulholland Books, 2011) and Donald Ray Pollock's novel *The Devil All the Time* (Doubleday, 2011).

Ten Pound Note

She hates ceilings and walls.

“What's your name?” they ask.

She thinks it might be Maisie. She likes the name Maisie. She thinks it suits her. But the uniforms put her off and she can't be sure.

“Address?”

“Under the stars,” she says, laughing.

It wasn't very nice of them to take the stars away. They are all she has. Except for the ten pound note.

How had she come by it?

She can't recall.

She isn't being uncooperative. It just isn't so easy to remember. The days merge. The sun rises and darkness falls, over and over. She might have found the money and forgotten. Sometimes there is a shamed face in the crowd and money is pressed into her hand, which then goes quickly into the pocket of her dress. A Vinnie dress this week, speckled with blue roses and with a generous pocket. The St. Vinnie's mob had given her a hat too. She'd decorated it with some shiny tartan ribbon she'd found in the park.

In the park...

The Alexander Salmond Gardens...

That's where it had all begun...

When her stomach began to grumble, she put her hand in her pocket. She almost mistook the ten pound note for a piece of litter. She didn't come across too many tenners these days. This was one of the new Scottish plastic notes. It didn't feel like real money. It had none of the greasy smoothness of the old pre-Independence paper notes. Several times in the park she'd almost thrown it away with the pages of the book she'd been reading. The cover had long since been discarded. Each page she tossed away as soon as it had been torn out and read.

She washed her hands and face in the Sean Connery Memorial Fountain, in front of the fine figure of Theseus slaying the Minotaur. She'd been ten years old when the memorial was built. There had been a fuss, she remembered. The sculptor had planned Hercules slaying a lion, but the design committee had objected to the lion because it was an English emblem. She'd since read all the Greek myths. The committee had missed the point altogether. A load of bull, she thought. She was surprised they hadn't banished Diana and the Stag as well.

Then she wandered off and found a café that had seen better days and ordered chips and cheese. The service was terrible but the food was good. Maisie forgot about the ten pound note. When she finished her meal she looked around the empty café, stood up and walked out.

Later in the day she remembered she hadn't had coffee. Coffee was needed to wash down her meal. She remembered that coffee sometimes came with chocolate mints. She was partial to chocolate mints. She went back to the café, sat down and ordered coffee.

A bright young girl took her order. She was much younger than the skinny scowling woman who'd served her lunch. The girl brought the coffee and then forgot about Maisie. There were no mints.

The café had no atmosphere, Maisie decided. Not like the soup kitchen where you stay a while, chat if there's anyone worth talking to and then go off to mind your own business. She pushed aside her cup and saucer, got up and walked out the door. Outside on the pavement, the skinny waitress was smoking a cigarette.

The young girl followed her out, waving her arms and yelling. The woman with the scowl started running towards her.

"She didn't pay for the bloody chips she had either. Grab her, Kate!"

Maisie hitched up her dress and ran wildly down the street. Let them chase her. She could still give them a good run for her money, even at her age.

The gap widened between Maisie and her pursuers. She might even have made good her escape had she not careened into the uniform.

“I have money,” she said, catching her breath. She smiled sweetly and held out a handful of coins. The skinny woman scowled again, said it wasn’t enough and accused her of trying to do a runner – twice.

“It was the same meal,” Maisie pointed out.

The uniform took her to the police station.

“What is your name?” they asked

She thought a while. “Maisie,” she said.

“Address?”

“Under the stars.”

“You’ll have to lodge two hundred pounds bail and appear in court tomorrow morning to answer charges,” somebody said.

“I only have a tenner,” she told them. “But you can take that. It’s brought me nothing but bad luck.”

“Where did you get it?”

She didn’t know.

She was asked whether she wanted to make a statement. She borrowed the desk sergeant’s pen. Slowly, carefully, in a fine copperplate hand she wrote across the ten pound note:

The right to be left alone is the beginning of all freedom.

Two
lights
cat eyes
a shadow
coming up
tail behind
stretch along
a constant line
of dotted colors
So stand back,
because it's
faster than
you expect;
suddenl
carriage
after
carriage
fly past like
rockets
with wheels
racketing
an sheer spee
gustsucking
with this terrifying
rockwhoshing
that sends my heart
wowthumping
and leaves m
shaking
as I watch
carriage
after
carriage
clatter
away
until
lea
snow
marks
cut
the
path

Love

Keys cut while you wait.

Clink. Clink. Clink.

While you wait.

You think of last night.

Fresh bouquets made

while you wait.

Luxury of petals

of time.

You draw clouds in the air.

Love gone

by tomorrow night.