

issue 20 streetcake



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thank you to all of the amazing writers who have contributed to streetcake over the last 3 years. thanks also to all our supporters... we look forward to much more streetcaking in the future...



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from autumn poems

bloody rain milk butter turned to blood that's what i call
a drone strike. scoop up lake juice sludge boat elegant
metal skin daddy shell bye. groaning mind come taste
hereof for the woods were shitty thin 'n' sparse fact period.
lady of the milk snatch unavailable for comment. orange
pathway purple sky my very first very last dream in muscle
car town. not dead to any place all my switches turned
on deep spontaneities no squares not getting it a faster
lower sun clean background miracle before this time
another month before this time another month

overbalanced saccharine bright metal scrap
marked peripheries your sweet crude work
in violet hour. i just needed spark plugs for
daffodil meadow receiving station. squirm
objects all chanting the red count "lightning
can't make it can't." challenging arc multiple
grotto but i'll be wanting sun down fat meat.
pursued by a false monk our very own katrina
moment white tiles safe
green tiles alligator.

j.r. clarke

(Mo[ve]ment)

potholed choreography
 candescent adolescent
 nightmare of dying
you couldn't tell yes
 to those eyes
red like spent cartridges
 blood in milk
in a few seconds
 algebraic loneliness
 rules
 winding heartbeats
of clockwork toys
slow
humble cross-examination
 stands up proud
 are we
 or is this
 you
 what -
 ?
a cross to nail ourselves
then drag
around wall papered depths
 our
 own space
to stretch
firm helpless emotion
for the trip back down the road
looming towards
 synthetic crutch
 a familiar aura
moving
 is it this way
 or that way
 in my dreams
a hunger
a fetish
we won't ever forget

trini decombe

intruding
new dynamics
of established
sectors
left to be

checked

winner

or lose

track of
passion

& devotion

insinuation's
not enough

condition
to the

statement of

truth

to me not
you &
me

always

in-

vading
space.

nikki dudley

The whirled is dan generous
- I could make a home but
home won't forgive.

Don't wannah loose threads, don't need
to re-invert – still
think about chile hood in the hood is
where I love.

Missing sum – think! Equations
are more easy, more easy
than pies and mash.

I root my words in cool her, can you
still see
me, por favor.

The streets. Streaks of light darkness,
bow tea full sky.

Don't you
Don't it
Forget the about

Close My Eyes

I noticed your Dr Martens before I noticed you. And then once I looked at your face, I couldn't stop staring. Well, perhaps not staring, but glancing and then glancing again, trying to work out who you were.

We had waited on the first floor and then we got in the lift with the bald man who said that the rooms had been changed at the last minute. He said something about the difficulty of parking his car because of a conference in the city centre, and you said he should try cycling, but I didn't look at you then. Why would I; strangers stare at the doors in a lift, not at each other. Then I followed the back of your dark wavy hair to the register. You waited for the bald man to sign his name, and then you signed yours and scribbled your address. You had the same post code area as me. I remember that; I remember thinking *this person must live in the country near me*. But I didn't look at your name. I had no interest then. You were just a dark haired woman carrying a large bag and wearing glasses.

And I'm climbing out of my four by four, its engine still quietly running, the window wipers persistent against the wind and the rain, and into the night. Something has caught my eye, a glint, a flash on the side of the brambled road ahead and I'm ludicrously leaving the safety and warmth of my car to investigate.

There were carafes of tea and coffee on a table at the end of the room, but no biscuits as you'd expect. I needed some liquid to wash down a tablet and so I poured myself a tea, the milk already added, and I remembered thinking that drinks seldom stayed hot in those thermal carafes, but I helped myself anyway, and sat next to you. That's when I noticed your boots.

I thought this was the room, the room we'd be in, and it was all a bit casual, a semi circle of soft leather chairs, the men chatting at one end, the women in silence at the other. And although I admired the boots, I didn't really look at you. It would have been difficult anyway; the chairs were fanned slightly outwards, so I was looking towards the side of the next woman's head. She had short brown hair and a thin face but her body was surprisingly plump. She tried to call her husband but there was no signal and she looked quite downhearted. Of course, I could have looked at you then,

when we were all pretending not to see the plump woman's distress, but I would have had to turn my head back towards you and that didn't seem right.

And I'm saturated, my hair plastered to my head. I can hardly see. The storm is shooting pinpricks of liquid into my face and the trees lean towards me with frowns. But there it is; a bicycle wheel, buckled almost beyond recognition, protruding from the bushes

We walked into the room, single file and sat at the table. It was something between a rectangle and an oval; four women and four men, three down one side, three down the other and two at the end. The women sat together, except for you. You sat between the teacher, who looked like Billy Elliot's dad, and the tall guy with a paunch who reminded me of my cousin and you started to chat. And that's when I noticed you; your face was definitely familiar. Deep set eyes behind the dark framed glasses, good bones, but looking a bit worn.

I was still trying to place you when a woman came in and sat at the head of the table. Her hair was in a bun and she looked as though she had been rushing. "Hello everyone," she said in a mellifluous Scottish accent and then looked at all the faces looking at her. "Okay," she said, taking a deep breath and scooping loose strands of her hair ineffectually towards the bun. "Let's start with a round of introductions. Maybe name, age, occupation and who lives at home."

And I want to go back to the car. The storm is fierce and I'm groggy with fear. The car keys are in the ignition. Someone could take it, drive away, and leave me alone, stranded down this coal Country lane. But I'm propelled forward by the wind and a determination I don't realise I possess.

The grey man started speaking, he had been in the lift too, but I didn't hear his name and occupation; I was distracted by the thought of what I might learn about you when it was your turn. A blonde woman with no chin was next, then the plump woman, who was sitting next to me. She worked part time as a secretary or something and had twin boys; I remember that, because she talked to us later, just before we left. And then there was me and I was conscious of you gazing at me as I lied about my life.

Billy Elliot's dad was a forty year old primary school teacher; I would never have guessed, he looked so angry, and then it was your turn. Helen, you said, with a nine year old at home, but an older child from a previous relationship. You said nothing about an occupation, but hunted in your massive bag for a tissue. And after

noisily blowing your nose you added. “Oh, I’m forty-four next birthday, God willing.” And I’m sure you looked at me.

And I’m slapped by branches as I drag them away to see what I knew I would see. A silhouette of a body, limbs positioned unnaturally, still wearing a cycle helmet. And as my eyes adjust to the gloom, I know that it’s a woman, and I take a step closer.

So there we all were; the comical bald man, who turned out to be a butcher, Billy Elliot’s dad, my cousin, the grey, the blonde, the plump and you.

“Does everyone know why we’re here today?” the Scottish woman asked, trying for enthusiasm as she looked around the table.

“Bloody speed cameras?” the butcher volunteered.

The Scottish lady sucked in her cheeks. “Road safety; speed awareness. You’re all lucky no one was killed,” she reproved, and I glanced at you yet again. You’d removed your glasses to rub your face and I could feel heat slap my cheeks as it hit me who you were.

And I’m backing away through the bushes, my hand over my face, blocking out the open eyes, glinting at me, staring, accusing. And as I turn towards my car I feel a crunch under my foot, and I look down to see a pair of glasses, now twisted and broken like the body I’ve just seen. And I search through my handbag with trembling hands. But when I lift the mobile towards my face, illuminated by the headlights of my car, I see there’s a deep dent in the front bumper, my front bumper. I crouch down to take a closer look and there’s a Doc Marten boot trapped under my wheel.

Of course it couldn’t have been you, the body I broke, the corpse I left with its dead staring eyes all those years ago. But I couldn’t be sure, so we’re inseparable now, a cloying friendship born that night when I offered you and your bicycle sanctuary from the city centre rain. And we didn’t live in the same village after all, so no one knows that you’re here, with me forever, safe from those dangerous country lanes.

jo langton

Burning Recklessness

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nk

no cigarettes

nine
days

once fine
 all change
 known
 me or you -

we're
not
meant
to
 be

to gether

we are

(fresh start
new perspective:)

strong
 Steaming along

**[Burning
Recklessness]**

sean neville

Crimes Against Humanity (part 2)

Audience, do you love me yet? Don't worry; you will. You're going to love me like you've never loved anyone before.

When America was part of the Congo there was a program called *Philosophie pour les Enfants*, and a famous philosopher named Jacques came to our school and told us that eyes were not meant for seeing. They were meant for crying.

I had already suspected that--because of our family crimes.

Like the Dead Kittens incident. The Dead Kittens Incident happened in Chicago and it was the beginning of the family curse.

Right around the time I was learning to subtract fractions Dad 1 and Mom 1 drowned a litter of kittens in the bathtub, and since then the family's been living under a dead kitten curse. There's a Before Dead Kittens era and an After Dead Kittens era. You can just say Before or After. As in, Sean, was your tatted-up trans-gender wino period Before or was it After and, of course, I'll say, it was After.

The family thinks of certain events as either Before Dead Kittens or After Dead Kittens. But we don't say Dead Kittens. We say Red Mittens. Mom 1's idea. Looking at me, you've probably noticed how accursed I look. You knew there was something hard to figure about me, something slanty, but you weren't quite sure what. What secret is he carrying around you thought. And I thank you for not probing. You don't say anything to me—and I've kept a journal of your silences—you don't say anything because you don't want to lower my self-esteem. Thanks. But you probably all go around saying to each other, "That Sean-person—he sure looks like one accursed teammate." Well, now you know what that's all about. Dead Kittens.

How Mom and Dad 1 did it was they put Mimsy's mewling kittens in a brown paper bag, brought them into the bathroom, and filled the tub. I watched Mimsy listening outside the bathroom door. She rose up and leaned on the door and meowed. Then the sound of the mewling stopped. And Mom 1 came out with the wet bag. There were tears. Mimsy went into the bathroom. I stayed outside. Things were a little blurry.

After that, Mimsy looked at us from a different place in life. She ate her food as usual over in the corner of the kitchen, but now unhuman magic pooled about her.

Bonny Bobber asked how were the kittens. I told her. From a kitten killing perspective I told her. From the Mom and Dad 1 world view I told her. Then the whole neighborhood knew. We were Kitten Killers. We were death shipped in from another land. We were humanity gone mad.

Bad things began to happen. In truth, they had already started happening, but now there was compression to the bad. Dad got fired from the Crackerjack factory. He punched the floor manager for calling him an idiot. Everyone called him an idiot. I called him an idiot. He was a kitten killing idiot.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, well, Sean, if Dad 1 was an idiot probably you are too. And maybe you're right. But if I am an idiot, I'm a small-time idiot. Dad 1 was a big-time idiot. Big-time idiots don't give twopence ha'penny about how anyone feels but themselves. Small-time idiots can sometimes empathize.

Dad 1 got rehired--then fired again.
Same thing.
People don't like idiots. I don't. Between an asshole and an idiot, I'll take the asshole.

Eating dinner from the coffee table, Dad 1 sometimes looked at me and said, "You remember the kittens." And I'd say, "Yup." Sometimes I'd say nope and he'd look confused.

If he'd die, then maybe there'd be a chance for me. But he didn't die. One thing about idiots—they die hard.

Reality was cheating me. But it wasn't the real reality. It was the famous false reality you've read about—the same false reality they talk about on TV. No way could this be the real reality--because then why bother living?

So I began to search for the real reality. I dug, I hunted, I scanned the horizon. I listened to Black Sabbath.

Our idiot family was run out of Chicago. We strapped some junk to the top of the Ranch Wagon and made a trail of exhaust fumes all the way to Oregon. We ate flapjacks in Salt Lake City and corn dogs in Boise. Mom 1 squeezed a pea-sized blackhead out of Dad 1's back in a motel near Cheyenne. She saved it in an aspirin bottle. America was pushing us west. America was getting smaller. America had cut us out.

Further west, Mom and Dad 2 were waiting for me under a willow tree. They chanted in unison, "The Prince of Darkness grim cometh. Yet we tremble not for him. For one little word shall fell him." They chanted these words for three days from noon to midnight. And at home in bed they chanted them.

Back in the days of false optimism, Dad 1 had named the Ranch Wagon The Intimidator. Sometimes I heard him talking to mom in bed—the living room was their bedroom—saying something like, "I think The Intimidator needs a new thermostat" or the "The Intimidator's running pretty hot, could be a bad hose." And Mom 1 would say something like, "Did you know there can be holes inside holes?"

Anyway, the Ranch Wagon blew a gasket near Moscow, Idaho. We left the Ranch Wagon and the junk on the roadside. We built a yurt nearby in the Snake River Valley. We ate wild blackberries. We were chased by a bear.

Now give me love.

steve toase

Leica M-2 body, 8th June '72, Trang Bang
(A found poem from the edge of sleep)

One-eyed and blind
Like a mad king
Sight plucked
At the true horror of it
You blink when chain tugged
A dancing bear
Click
Scorched skin
Click
Shattered bone
Click
The corpse laundry
Like the mad king
Vitreous
Humour on hands
You cannot
Do not
Turn
Your blind eye away

serena wilcox

In Another Silence, I Speak

this place had no city

just landscapes—minute moment of psyche

sometimes I see them

when a black belt unbuckles or thrashers sing

I weep when the wind strangles a tree