

# STREET CAKE

experimental writing magazine

## issue 73

### part 2



@ jim zola

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### part 2

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g l i t c h  
g l i t c h  
g l i t c h  
g l i t c h

Do you sometimes feel like

that gaping hole in your chest    stretched into what feels like    glitter to space  
the quiet taste of salt    how everything feels so good    it hurts  
the world is deep and you're dead    what is sad    in your ribcage a name bullet  
an earthquake inside you    the world dingshes    and dingshes    and dingshes  
you don't know    if you're smiling    all gone no tears    am i happy  
it's not painful    i don't know    maybe i am    broken



## Stray Hairs

**Content Warning:** References to corpse/hair/floating dead body/food/baking/knife/jealousy

Speckled granite countertops reflect the overhead lights in the kitchen. One orb forms an artificial sun, burning my eyes in the white spaces in between. To my left, is a four-pound tub of flour. My fingers are covered in shortening; the pastry cutter slips from my hand . . .

the indentations from a pen still throb. Earlier, I labored to take notes on a subject: centered, on a professional web page, with dream-like gallery flair. Straight platinum blond hair, with green eyes—the pose not forced—effortless. Degrees, positions, posts; a three-story house with expansive windows overlooking the ocean. Plenty of room to breathe. . .

breaths to push the dough out with a rolling pin, attempting to make a circle. Perfect rounds and other shapes, to my right, in the opened cookbook, tell me what to do—effortlessly, but these things are not so effortless—not for everyone. I settle for ragged edges, and just a hint of a circle taking shape in between . . .

the reeds of grass in the lake, the other day, I saw just hair floating. The strands billowed and danced, the underside of a jellyfish unraveling. With a stick, I poked the swirling mass and caught the chin—and tilted it up to see a face I'd seen before on website profile pages . . .

of my cookbook are stained with melted shortening. As I'm forming the crust, a strand of hair falls in—and another and another. I dig through the apple filling to find all of them, with blond at the roots . . .

I'd cut the waterlogged strands. I'd stuffed the hair into a sack and chucked it onto the kitchen countertops. . .

blaze still with orbs of harsh light that fall onto the apples, which are cut like the edges of noses and ears—and in them, I see her face. A short life can add up to so much. Covering the filling with ragged dough, I pinch the edges into sharp peaks that tear in the middle . . .

I slice, when the crust is done. Some strands still cling, coated in sugar and cinnamon.



## Horoscope

today you'll meet a dog  
 it will howl  
 never you mind its name will be good in all  
 respects athletic thick-pelted  
 generally domesticated dog will be  
 friendly the opposite of hiddenness  
 its tongue a chance meeting at  
 gathering the chewed-off the brought-along  
 sense dog's claws will dig in  
 straining it is strong-willed  
 in the hunt its ability to ground-scent  
 will be exhilarating it won't require any prodding  
 footslogging dog will be relentless  
 dog won't stand much  
 in relation to time its interactions will be hard  
 to figure out it belongs to the farm  
 dwelling always in the primal duration dog will be hard working  
 straining forward beast  
 herding days it's not a sage  
 every dog is drab-coated  
 truth No dog knows shame  
 it's not afraid of dying  
 dog puts up with change  
 nobody becomes what she's not



## I am – the story of a Tiger Girl

On Tuesday they cut my tail                      not off, just about a third                      enough to stop the swish.  
 my stripes are fading with each brillo pad scrub                      pink soap innards streak my fur  
                  mingle with my bright red blood                      shreds of steel spike my skin                      they  
 examine my ears                      I want to hear what they are afraid of                      what they thought would  
 happen if they let me stay                      let me                      paint my outside as I wish

I am pacing                      in the manner that you                      and they expect                      taking the food they give  
 urinating neatly                      so as not to offend                      reduce myself to the squalid horror they  
 imagine                      just a whisker away                      my eyes disturb them most

my eyes are just like yours.

my eyes have been gazing                      searching                      for years                      collecting cues                      admiring  
 images noting the lie of the nap                      the unique hues                      the play of light that allows  
 disguise                      courage came first                      courage to try a tiny scrap                      brave face                      catcalls  
 and side swipes

I felt I could breathe

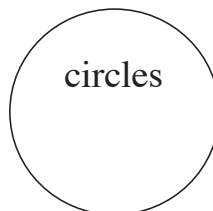
they say I'm not safe                      that I'm putting us all in danger                      bad things do happen                      my  
 tail is not the cause                      they shine the light                      an involuntary blink                      You see                      my  
 eyes are just like yours

I think they hope I'll just stop                      finish it because it's all too                      uncomfortable  
 agree                      that it this just a silly phase                      a game                      a laugh                      beg  
                     forgiveness                      don my pussy bow blouse                      leopard print shoes                      re-join the ranks  
 queueing for food                      fawning over titbits                      strolling in neat lines around the parks ignoring  
 the scuttle of the alleyways                      they shine the light                      they shine  
 the light                      my breath                      builds  
 a roar.

## Strung together parables and misinterpreted music

All the shattered spaces of another:

tiny steps  
that lead  
in



As if  
covering the eyes  
were a metaphor

displace

m e n t

in a

sink hole

Nowhere in the solar system(  
usually  
an umbrella  
has  
a  
strict  
purpose  
)

A sign mistaken for an allegory  
placed into rotation

A pumpkin appeared in the space  
between this year and the last

Rats gnawed the faces off clocks

The vague reaches of arm lengths  
enough to engulf a memo

The remnants: the big toe / Yawning: baroque chapel / Intergalactic interchanges: missed /  
the same

# bang

that a

champion  
sword  
swallower  
instigated

engravings + enshrine + the + accuracy + of = depiction

gray            toned  
silences    turning  
foibles        into  
fables/       across  
human        tongues  
malfunctions  
flooded  
unfathomable  
chance/      coughs  
vast consumerism  
beyond forms in  
which mountains  
blink/        stuttering  
machine      meets  
the            fruitless  
stomping/  
bothersome  
flames calculate a  
variation/       a  
memory        can  
instill    a    heart  
attack

the  
sy  
mb  
ol  
of  
ma  
nip  
ulation  
flut  
ter  
ing

the symbol of manipulation fluttering

the symbol of manipulation fluttering

pointed  
jagged  
spilling  
follows  
function  
curving  
burning

drenching      this indifference      with individualized      gasping



## Berlin, November

I was just sitting here thinking about you  
 and how from a certain perspective society is nothing but the interaction of planes of power  
 although that's the kind of perspective that can kill us and in particular you  
 and I was wondering which of the spirits of the dead appeared to you as you lay there  
 breaking down the borders inside your body in a cascading revolution against the material  
 conditions of being alive  
 and what secrets they let you in on considering you were close to a spirit yourself  
 you were a fine-boned ear pricked to the hum of the other world

I imagine them clustering round you, or settling, perhaps  
 I like to think of the dead gently sinking down on top of each other as in the formation of  
 sedimentary rock  
 piled on one another and on you until you are covered in soft dead like snow

Down here we are still debating how many cops you can balance on the head of a pin  
 and the horrible technologies of the master's house  
 I wonder if there are ghost cops and ghost fascists and sickeningly brutal ghost methods  
 of annihilating resistance to the concept that what *is*  
 has been since the beginning and ever shall be  
 and that the act of imagining a world where things are otherwise, where things are okay,  
 where we're all looked after is anything other than sacred, utter observance

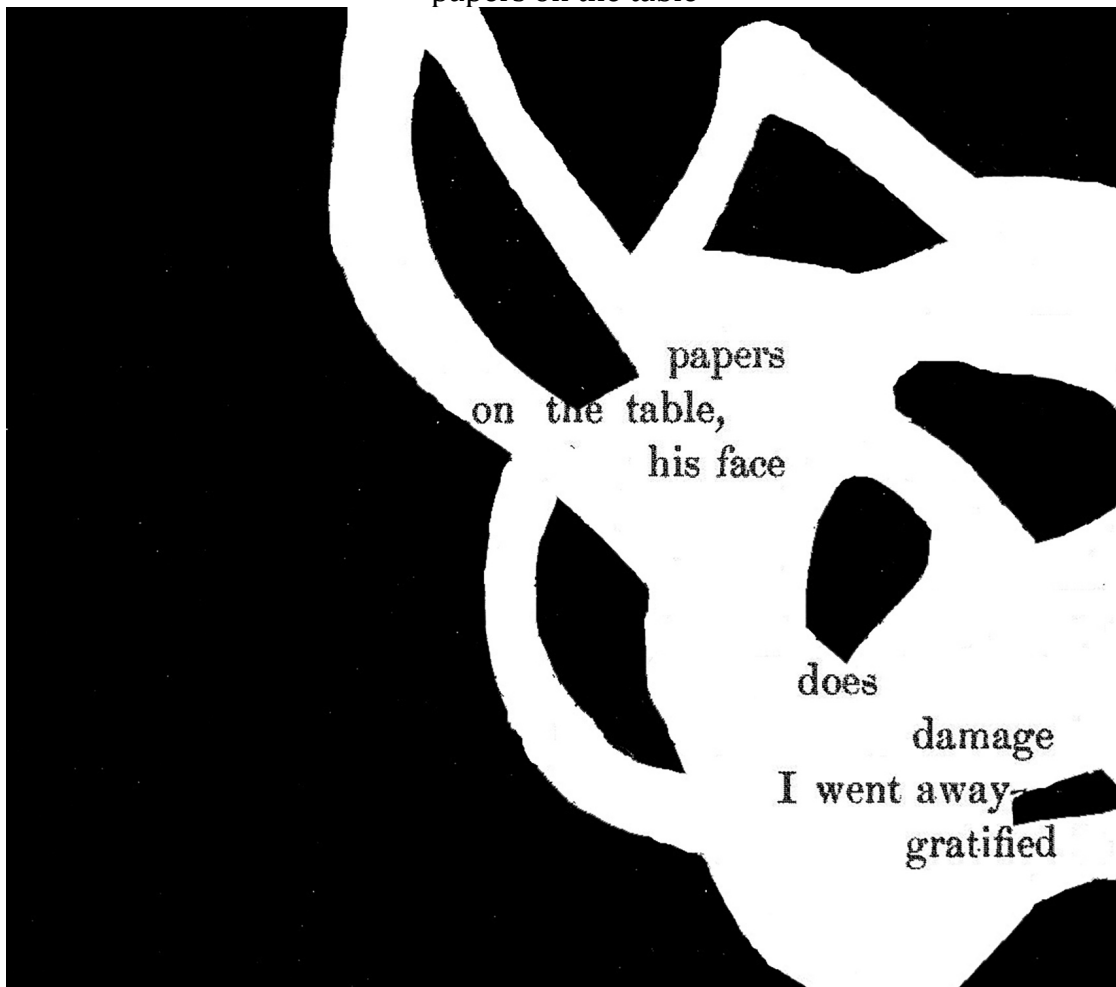
I hope not  
 I hope it's light and loose where you are  
 I hope music is something you can hold

Berlin is PTSD  
 It's a conversation overheard between a junkie and a haunted doll that appears in the corner of his  
 room at night  
*What does it fucking want*  
 The city has a bombsite texture  
 like breathing air that just now had a scream in it

I always knew which of us would be the first to die  
 Our soft bodies draw all the pain in a place towards themselves  
 Little sensate pots of nerve endings that we are  
 Little polyps, little sea urchins  
 So squeezable! So crushable!  
 Living can leave such lacerations  
 You were the only sane one of us

# Great Wall

+  
 +  
 Qin  
 Han  
 Ming  
 dynasties  
 defending  
 across two millennia  
 travailed  
 of men  
 thousands  
 &&&&&&  
 and blood  
 of tamped earth bricks  
 fortifications  
 {}{}{}{}{}  
 steps  
 stone  
 steep  
 between  
 ()()()()()()()()()()()  
 barracks and watchtowers  
 thrusting  
 hectokilometers  
 ridge-clamped  
 WWWWWWW  
 wind away  
 watch the ramparts  
 touch it - walk it



papers on the table

papers  
on the table,  
his face

does

damage

I went away-  
gratified



I have eaten the plums. I'm alive. My own brother survived. This is justice, say the mobs. But the timing was atrocious. The same cold morning, reporters arrive with their cameras & their blackboards. "When the violence started, you fled the restaurant?" A diagram emerges. Arrows are drawn. "They're saying the plums were cooked? You had no idea? Why didn't you tell?" A flurry of chalk dust & pencil shavings. Of course, the sense of guilt macerates. I can still make things right. I pen a short note, with unmistakable intent. Factions form & inflame the street. I skulk palely from the lectern. It will probably be said I was saving myself. I shuffle off hangdog, the cold lunch crowd passing.

## Incarnate

I was a shark in the past. This may sound strange to those of you who don't recall your former lives, but I'm certain it's true. Or as certain as I can be considering the confusion and distortion prevalent in the species of which I'm currently an active member. I recall my former life most clearly when showering or swimming laps, and you must agree that this makes perfect sense. When I press my cheek against the cold tiles, I remember coursing through currents with easy grace, sailing past reefs and flushing out lesser fish. Oh, I was never a premeditated murderer, I just had to eat. Everyone down there understood that. They would have done the same thing if they had three rows of serrated teeth. I didn't have many friends back then, but I sure had respect for someone with my brain size.

I think I can now say with authority that arms and legs are little more than impediments in water. All that flopping around attracts sharks who think they've homed in on the tremors of a dying fish. I remember being tempted toward shore on several occasions by this ruckus only to clamp down on a plastic fin or a Styrofoam surfboard. Try getting that stuff out of serrated teeth. Based on this experience I concluded that humans tasted just awful and vowed to avoid them. Look at me now.

I've learned that talking about my past life at parties is a maneuver that diminishes the odds of future invites. Whenever I find a sympathetic ear the response to my disclosure is always something like "I was a wolf!" or "I was an eagle in *my* past life!" Sure, I'd select a noble or endangered animal if I were delusional too. Who'd want to be a shark?

So I'm tied to a past I didn't choose, craving its trappings like a strange addiction. Bathing, surfing, even rain draw visions like a magnet: rushing headlong into the tide, cleaving the rough green sea, breathing in dark, still water.

## P-2-P

I do have a pot to piss in it's  
 true in fact I've got several pots  
 containers for liquid the steaming  
 streaming arc of piss receptacles that  
 could be considered pots for the purpose  
 of this phrase it's a good saying a  
 lovely bit of alliteration I like it it's  
 not so difficult to find something to  
 piss in or on on if outside  
 in if inside last night's mug of camomile  
 tea did me just fine at five this  
 morning they smell much the same let's be  
 honest usually though it's the glass of  
 water by my bed sometimes I have to empty  
 it first drink it I mean before emptying  
 myself into it I have to choose the size of  
 water glass carefully too big and I'll end  
 up drinking too much so need to piss  
 more too small and there's not enough space to  
 piss in it's a fine balance



- after Ada Limon posted ‘is it okay to start with the obvious?’  
in an Instagram caption.

it’s not okay to start with the obvious, so let’s start with a metaphor: an orange rots from the inside out until its covered in white fuzz going green and flies’ eggs are laid in the centre and two days later they are born into maggots that eat the rotting flesh and they devour it until there’s nothing left there’s nothing left there’s nothing left there’s nothing—

ok. that’s enough of that. it’s not okay to start with a metaphor that obvious, so here’s something less obvious: most people know that flamingos eat shrimp and that’s what makes them pink, not remembering that shrimp that are uncooked are a blueish grey, and flamingos don’t have the luxury of cooking them before eating. this could get convoluted if i tried to make it a metaphor. i have never eaten a blueish grey shrimp for my stomach acid to dissolve the crustacyanin protein chain and release the carotenoid that makes a flamingo pink.

but it’s not okay to start with something that convoluted and seemingly unrelated, so here’s something sweet: otters will hold hands to avoid floating away from each other. this is both obvious and unobvious. i have known this fact since i was a child, my mother has never heard of it. (perhaps the metaphor is in there somewhere.)

it’s not okay to start with something that only some people know, so here’s something we can all relate to: that scene in *mamma mia!* (2008) when amanda seyfried is singing honey honey about her mother’s sexual partners and her own potential fathers and even though it’s definitely the best song of the film and you sing and bop along happily you cry later about it because your own father didn’t want you and in *mamma mia!* (2008) all three of amanda seyfried’s fathers want to be her father and actually work for it how crazy is that a father actually trying and her mother has always done her best she did her best you know fuck—

it’s not okay for the start of the poem to be the ending, so let’s begin.