

**issue 25**  
**streetcake**



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## issue 25



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**julia ciesielska**

**GLASS JAW**

grow into that role  
for thirty years  
rounds  
encircled us with red marker  
bloody knuckles could not recall  
how to hold a breath  
without getting porcelain headache

when mothers went on booze  
swelling from love  
fear for sudden jab  
stayed locked in throats  
in few square meters  
another fight was set up

is that right

**Write a Poem about a Prompt**

Write a poem about how you woke  
to a bird crashing into the window  
how there was no time to be stunned

how you turned to find an imprint  
of your wife's imprint in the sheets  
her slim leg not there to squeeze

how the painting over your head  
was off center (a bit to the right)  
how the sky didn't even look right

how the tip of the moon was missing  
how your wife's skin was wound up  
and wounded by the simplest touch

how she owned a rusted paring knife  
how she never planted that pear tree  
how instead she pared down the brakes

how you drove clutching the wheel  
how you knew about the brakes  
because it was nothing new

how you kept thinking about the bird  
how quickly she fell to the earth  
how things break all the time.

**tim keane**

Cities Often Give Away Heavenly Trees

resources would exist  
rejoice, if life, her shut  
corners, would turn off  
from superfine things that don't  
educate, to listen away  
the outside and the cost  
and establish wings,  
inhabit deserving air  
breathing the extent  
that trees persuade and reveal  
and save those materials to establish  
care, an altogether ingenuous messenger,  
that, turning to us, would say it needed truth.

**Silence**

When Joshua died, everything went black.

When he woke up, everything was grey. He was lying on his back on the bottom bunk of grey bed, on top of grey sheets, tucked beneath a thick grey duvet. As his vision cleared, he saw that the rest of the room was the same dull shade. Grey walls, grey floor, grey ceiling, grey doors. The other beds were as grey as his, and the three men standing in the corner of the room talking to each other in hushed voices were dressed in grey jeans and grey shirts. With the dim light coming from the ceiling and the absence of windows, even their skin looked grey.

He had no idea where he was.

But I remember: walking out of class – a hand held in mine – laughing – smiling – talking – crossroads – traffic lights – headlights –

The images were returning. Joshua felt sick. He could vaguely remember now that he was dead. Only, though this didn't feel like life, it didn't feel like death either. He'd always thought death would be a stretch of blank nothingness. In a strange moment of disbelief, he thought of heaven and hell. And then he looked at the grey scene before his eyes and thought of purgatory.

Where am I?

This is the Institute.

Christopher, one of the grey men who shared his room, introduced himself and explained. Joshua listened, but didn't understand. This was too much to contemplate in one day. The men took him down through grey corridor upon grey corridor until they reached a grey dining room full of grey people, where grey food being served from one end. He sat down to eat with the others.

They were older than him. Christopher was thirty or so, and Joshua had never felt so young. His eighteen years seemed a meagre achievement and his confusion with regards to his situation made him feel younger and younger and smaller and smaller. The men talked while he, the boy, sat in a numb silence.

And how did you die, then?

Joshua looked up at them and forced a shrug. The memories were still vague.

But I remember: crossroads – traffic lights – headlights – still laughing – red – the sound of running – cars – a scream – panic –

He said nothing. He couldn't bear to. It was still all a blur in his mind.

After lunch he was sent to see the supervisor, whose grey eyes scrutinized him for a moment.

Aren't you too young? (Joshua certainly felt too young.) How old are you? Shouldn't you be in the Children's Institute instead?

I'm eighteen.

Oh. Then yes, you're meant to be here. (Joshua certainly didn't feel as though he was meant to be here.) You look younger, you know.

I know. (Joshua felt younger too.)

Well, now that you're here, you have two choices: you can die – fully – and elapse into peaceful silence and end everything forever, or you can remain in the Institute and train until it's time for you to return to the world you used to be a part of and guide people.

Guide people?

Yes, guide people. You want to do that? Yes? Well then; Christopher will tell you everything you need to know.

But Christopher's explanation confused him, and even after a whole grey week in this grey world where the rooms had no windows and doors never led to the outside, Joshua still didn't really know where he was or what he was doing. He still wasn't sure if he was dead or not.

But I remember: cars – a scream – panic – not thinking – running – realising – impact – flying – pain –

The grey months passed by, and Joshua learnt. He trained and he prepared, still not quite sure why, and Christopher taught him everything he was expected to know. He met other people, spoke to them, befriended them, memorised their names. With no clocks or calendars, he lost track of time and soon after lost track of so many other things that he stopped caring, and his confusion and lack of knowledge ceased to matter. Even when Christopher left to work on another case, Joshua knew enough to get by in the Institute on his own. Someone else took over his training. His time passed swiftly and while he was never happy, he was never unhappy either. Eventually, he had gotten so used to his grey life of training, sleeping and eating, that the previous life – the one that was completely a life and not half a death – seemed like a distant dream, as if it had never happened at all.

Then, one day, he was called to see the supervisor.

You're ready. (Joshua certainly didn't feel ready.) This is your last day at the Institute. Tomorrow we will send you out to your charge. As this is your first case, it will be someone you knew previously, when you were alive. Do you understand that? Do you mind?

Yes, I understand. And no, I don't mind. I can do that. (Joshua didn't feel as though he could, but it seemed pointless to say so.)

Then say your goodbyes and tomorrow you'll go.

Joshua left the grey room and headed down the grey corridors to eat his last grey meal with his grey friends.

But I remember: impact – flying – pain – pain – blurs – noise – cries – screaming – ambulance lights – darkness – silence – this –

The next day, Joshua left the Institute for the first time. He walked through the coloured city in an unseen grey silence and watched real living people pass him by in all their colour and splendour. This world now seemed the fantasy, and the Institute seemed real. He'd once known these streets well, but now he felt like a stranger as his grey feet silently paced the coloured ground. From his pocket he took the grey slip of paper on which was written the name and address of his charge.

He found the house. He slid through the windows and glided up the stairs and into the attic bedroom on the top floor. Between the blue carpet and the white ceiling, she sat at her desk with a book in one hand, staring at the mirror. She was half muttering, half singing along to the song whispering out of her radio. He saw her, he heard her, and he remembered.

I remember we walked down the road from our last lesson, hand in hand, talking and smiling and laughing. I remember that we were going to theatre, that we were excited, that we were missing the train. I remember you ran across the road. But I could see the headlights. I could see the headlights and I yelled and I ran and I pushed you onto the pavement and turned. You screamed out, and I screamed silence.

Now you sit at your desk and stare at the mirror covered with dead photographs. I do not know how long it was since I last saw you and since you saw me for the last time. But I do know that there are tears in your eyes, and that I will change that.

I will haunt you.

I will help you and I will heal you and I will watch over you for as long as you need me to. Then I will return to my grey silent world of life-death and leave you to live your coloured life in peace and happiness.

But not yet.

For now I will kiss away your tears and comfort you. I will teach you to forget and teach you to move on. I will keep you safe and I will make you happy once more, all without you ever knowing. I will love you as much as ever, while you, obsessed with my absence, fail to notice my silent presence.

# genopoetics

I WILL here give a brief sketch of the progress of opinion on the Origin of Species. This Abstract, which I now publish, must necessarily be imperfect. I am fully convinced that species are what are called beautiful monstrosities. Furthermore, I can hardly believe that when we look to the woodpecker and the humblest parasite which clings to the hairs of the beetle which dives through the warmer or shallower waters which is wafted by the gentlest breeze I do not see that there is any difficulty in the artificially imperfect state of the male sex which very rarely or never becomes broody which seems to me extremely perplexing their endurance is only temporary untouched and unexplained like a picture by a Connoisseur; each species is good for itself when I then tickled and stroked them natural instincts are lost from the first dawn of life, with their masters being first Crossed with a female-ass or another flower we need not be surprised at the result our profound ignorance in regard to the mutual relations of all the beings which live around us I have found it difficult when looking at Any two species to avoid picturing to myself. One of the first points which strikes us is the struggle for existence hence we may safely Conclude that He who believes that Convenient to faCts and grAve objections through natural seleCtion At first

the aCcumulation  
Cannot be  
cAutious in saying  
instinCt or any  
femAles in the  
interCrossed species  
cannot be Considered  
produCed under  
common pArents.  
extinCtion  
cAnnot be denied  
Changes which have  
Attempted to  
influenCe  
many ocCasional  
speCies of the  
inextricAble chaos  
expeCt to discover  
A wide area  
ocCupied by a closely  
modified And improved  
Collection of  
anCient and utterly  
grAve objections  
It Cannot be  
humAn intellect  
ever so Closely  
Classed as another  
widely rAnging  
Considerably modified  
future degrAdation  
I can only reCur  
thAt it is  
more Closely related  
briefly reCapitulated  
fAr too heavily  
Confessedly ignorant  
we Are  
Under domestiCation we see  
Conditions of life  
governed by mANy  
most anCiently  
orgANic beings  
nature aCts on  
it unConsciously  
in each suCcessive generation  
individuAls and races  
struggle for existenCe  
shall decreAse  
in the sCale of nature  
turn the bAlance  
sucCess will often depend on

the Assertion  
 always ready to act and select  
 should nature fail  
 each Creature  
 special Acts of creation  
 will be a constant tendency.  
 characteristics of varieties  
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 this grand fact  
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 nature  
 no man can explain  
 it seems to me  
 upland geese  
 should have been created  
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 absolutely perfect  
 we need not marvel at the  
 slaughtered  
 daughters  
 and at other such cases  
 as far as we can see  
 physical conditions seems to have  
 blind animals  
 from a striped progenitor  
 independently created  
 which they all  
 should the colour of a flower be  
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 for an enormous period  
 The species should be  
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 architectural powers  
 As we see  
 a common parent  
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 not perfect  
 successive crosses  
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 as the record gives  
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 changed simultaneously  
 above and below  
 the grand fact  
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 the more ancient a  
 theory of descent with modification  
 of ordinary generation

The wonderful  
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 This same principle  
 and the Close alliance  
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 oceaniC islands  
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 living naTuralists  
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 thAt we are always  
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 the truTh of the views  
 stoCked with  
 more weiGht to  
 doubT on  
 The future to  
 be Able to view  
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 independently Created  
 and whiCh consequently have  
 The same view to  
 be Given as a curious  
 ordinary birTh  
 a miraculous aCt of Creation  
 Comanded suddenly to flash  
 in the Case of  
 beAring  
 The mother's womb  
 ignore the whole subjeCt of

reverent silence  
 how fAr I extend  
 some Arguments of the  
 Chains of affinities  
 neCessarily implies  
 at An embryonic age  
 modificaTion embraces  
 plAnts from  
 a deCeitful guide  
 so trifling a Circumstance  
 thAt the poison  
 all the organiC beings  
 firsT breathed  
 Cease to be metaphorical  
 diverging lines of desCent  
 of lonG lost structures  
 mAy fancifully be called  
 in an Admirable manner  
 extreme imperfeCtion  
 a poor Collection  
 mirAculous acts  
 Catastrophes  
 unChanged whilst  
 the first dAwn of life  
 independenTly created  
 by the Creator  
 beings not as speCial  
 from the pAst  
 progress Towards perfection  
 with worms Crawling  
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