

issue 38

streetcake



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Fire in the Sky

She sits in her garden beneath the sun's potent glare soaking up the summer glory and watches her brother's shadow self; his spindly arms and legs reminding her of a fly caught in a spider's web.

Thud thud thud.

The beat is steady, continuous, thumping her temples. She screams inside. Can't he see how distressed she's become, fidgeting with her skirt, twisting the skin on her fingers, flinching every time he inhales?

She closes her eyes.

A slight breeze runs its fingers through the clump of feathery grass ruffling the wheat-like heads and spilling seeds onto the earth. She swallows. There is no air. Her throat constricts and for a second she knows her life is meaningless. Each successive minute is agony. He carries on regardless.

One two three four –

Look how easy it's become. He's not even trying.

A smirk pastes itself across his face. She remains in the dark confined within a wound-like cleft splitting itself open. How much longer will she have to wait? Who will summon her?

Five six seven eight –

Easier and easier; he makes it look effortless.

Come watch me soar—

And then a bird from out of nowhere, its silhouette reminding her of a phantom kite, glides overhead, dragging her sight to the fire in the sky.

seth crook

Long Jack

dangles

from a short

cut rope

cut short to keep

a gap

between his

two feet

the ground

chris doyle

Shift/delete

Are you sure

Ok

Ok

Blue line grows

Slows and

Falters.

System error this file is in use

It cannot be deleted

This memory remains

Ingrained on the chip

Burned in

A ghost file

ZERO ONE ONE 0100100100000011011000110 ONE ONE ONE ONE
011101100110010100100000011110010110111101110101

011100000110110001100101011000010111001101100101001 ZERO
ZERO ZERO ZERO 001101000011001010110110001 ONE ONE
0000001000000110110101100101

01101001001000000110000101101101001000000 ONE ONE ONE
00110110111101110010011100100111 ONE ZERO 01

Shift/delete

Attempt 2 of 2

Attempt failed

Reboot. Reboot.

charlie hill

One word story

Summer.

Endnote.

A one word story? Really? I don't see why not. Look at it this way. A story begins with a prompt. A stimulus. Something that triggers a cognitive or cognitive/emotional response in the reader. This usually takes the form of a word or a sequence of words - a sentence, perhaps – and, more pertinently, it is usually followed by more of the same. But this approach is symptomatic of an author's desire to influence the character of the reader's response: the greater the number of words involved, the more their meanings and associations are mediated. What if there's a better way? What if we do away with such authorial manipulation? After all, a single word can provide the necessary trigger. And, after setting us on our way, leaves us free to explore the most corrupting, cathartic, shocking and balm-like stories there are, those that draw on previous mediations of meaning and association perhaps (because what doesn't?), but are also created new, by us, in what is left of our own imagination...

Nil by Mouth

(i.m Emily Willow)

She could never finish an exam paper
let alone a whirring dinner, barbed meat
pickaxing its way down ravaged gorge
before the nightly toilet flush of bile.

Through youth's contorted hall of mirrors
she slunk her way to operative bed;
lay a pale and thin white stick of nicotine
ready to be struck and supped.

Later, the surgeon's notes sank on desk
though were starved of any mention
of when wrapped wrist-tag was read
a mouth wrote out a perfect smile.

bill mcstowe

Standstill

I do try once in a while and not just when I'm drunk. Like the other day, Cindy was cleaning our bedroom and when I walked in she had the feather duster in her hand.

I dropped my drawers and said, "You missed a spot."

She told me I wasn't funny.

Which is bullshit, because that shit was funny.

Everything changed when the baby was born. Back when we were trying to make that kid, if I used that feather duster joke, me and Cindy are naked in about four seconds.

In those days, she called my junk Vader. She needed Vader before she got out of bed in the morning. She needed Vader when she got home from work. If Cindy had two glasses of wine with dinner on the weekend, Vader became dessert. She was all over me.

We're not even Star Wars fans. That's the thing. We like the franchise, but we're thirty-

six years old and once Lucas started claiming the fourth movie was the first movie and all that

shit, we just gave up and started paying more attention to Batman.

I did, though, try the Vader shit again the other day when Cindy was in the shower. I pulled the curtain back and said, "Meet your destiny."

Cindy screamed and said, "Get that thing away from me."

It made me sad.

Not that it's always like that. Sometimes there are flashes of hope. Like, Valentine's Day, we almost had sex. Not the last one, the one before that. The one when I remembered to bring home the flowers.

Cindy is upstairs cleaning the baby's room. Our house is all hardwood floors and we don't have a lot of furniture. I can hear her moving around.

I hate when she goes in there.

When she does, all I can think about is how long it's been since I've been in there. I told her, when we came home from the hospital that day without the baby, I'm never going in that room again.

Canadian Sunset

Last night I dreamed I came into possession of an eraser and attempted to remove the bullet between the Canadian guard's shoulder blades; right before silver wings dragged him into the foggy sunset. When I woke up, I thought I should have erased the darkness lurking behind him in the first place. He sat on coral-leafed mountains, glaring down on a barking dog and people holding candles. I can't tell you what he said, except: "Some souls are made of dreadful, moldy fabrics."