

STREET CAKE

experimental writing magazine

issue 68

part 2



©angela caporaso

contents

issue 68

part 2

COVER: angela caporaso – vertical e

zainab ismail - admonition in comic sans

sofia kaloterakis – words as bodies

claire loader - orbit

sarah loverock - natural blonde

tristan moss - night sky

paul robert mullen - day 32

donnarkevic - on his deathbed

laura pearson - to feel alive

tyler plofker - a letter

brad rose - windows

k. t. slattery – the weight of time

grace tompkins - general relativity

anannya uberoi - pinwheels

ellen uttley - the key

ADMONITION IN COMIC SANS

ONCE I penned an ode for you
it filled my gaps and

overlapped hollow
divergent streets

THEN I ~~tore you out~~
akin to scar tissue on my left arm
[couldn't extinguish the oven tray]

NOW I write **limericks** about how you're a **fool**
your name
either birdsong or a riddle scorched on skin



I can't distinguish



Words as bodies

Death shakes
our living bodies
Is there, in its

A b

s
e
n
c
e

in the hours of pages left

[...]

as a wave of collective lament rises
organic essence is encapsulated
in a newspaper frontline

DEATH TOLL RISES. STAY HOME. STAY SAFE.

STAY HOME. STAY SAFE. STAY SAFE.

STAY HOME.

STAY HOME. STAY SAFE. STAY

H <-> E <-> A <-> L <-> T <-> H <-> Y

S T A Y CLOSE

BUT STAY D I S T A N C E D

WE LIVE UNCERTAIN TIMES

TIMES OF CRISIS.

TIMES

FUSED TIMES

TIMES

TIMES SPARSE

TIMELESS TIMES

Times that are drawn on graphic lines

__un_____
____certainly_____
____in the____horizons____

Orbit

Do you ever stop to think of time
 How it sits within the mind
 The year a circle
 The week like an egg
 Numbers like a winding
 clock
 that
 spins
 herself
 to
 us swirling orbit
 between into just
 slip dust like
 that the
 days

I wrote my speech for the Emmys, you know.

I never thought I'd be nominated, but it was nice to get it all down. To have it there, just in case. I played this chick, Nea, on this show on FX a couple months ago, *Dead Space 5000*. Some people have heard of it.

It got cancelled after two seasons but there was Emmy buzz for it for a while and... I just wanted to be prepared. So I wrote this whole speech for it. I was going to sell them on the "woe-is-me poor kid from Arizona raised by a single mom" spiel. I knew I wasn't going to be nominated. I knew that.

It's hard because you don't know what they're classing as "supporting actress". That's what I would have been nominated for but yeah, didn't happen. What's a "supporting actress" anyway? That could be any actress, right? That could be the ugly girl playing a corpse for three seconds.

So I didn't get nominated but it's fine. There's always next year. I'm aiming high and digging deep. I think I might go method, see if there's a part of me I can tap into to really bring the next role to life, you know?

I met Teagan a couple years before *Dead Space*. I knew from the second I saw her, that's the girl. That's my girl. She just had this aura about her. A magnetism. Curly blonde hair, these gorgeous, Hollywood eyes and a body that screamed girl next door.

For people like her, I think fame is an act. Some people are immersed in it and some can just turn it off and on again. It's how some celebrities can be out in the open and never get chased by the paps and why some need to wear sunglasses and a fucking winter coat in the middle of asscrack L.A. August.

I didn't know if I wanted to be her or be with her. I just knew I had to meet her.

Did I mention this was before *Dead Space*? Good, because I want to stress that there is no way in fucking hell I would ever be a production assistant if it wasn't the only way to get into acting. They sell you on it being a good experience, you know, networking and shit. "You'll meet the producer! You'll meet the director!" What a crock of shit. The only thing you'll meet is early morning coffee orders and pissed off drama queens.

It's brutal. I only stayed because the pay beat waiting tables.

Teagan had just won the role as lead actress in this show, I forget what it was about. Something to do with female assassins, I think? Same old low budget effects, shredded stunt doubles in blonde wigs and abysmal acting. No one really acted, you know? Everyone was just reacting to things. "Now look scared!" That's not acting.

Teagan could act, though. She carried the whole thing. I've never seen anyone cry on command for fifteen takes. It was nuts.

She was so beautiful. After a few weeks of bringing her coffee I asked her on a date to this Mexican place in Downtown. Amigos? Paquitos? I forget. The food sucked.

Teagan's lips tasted better.

She stayed at my apartment in between casting calls. We'd lay together for hours, just talking. About how L.A. sucked, how anyone even remotely famous could get their hands on a lifetime supply of coke or LSD or Xanax. We talked about the president and Korea and World War Three. Sometimes we'd just talk about acting and how bitchy her co-stars were.

She'd kiss me for hours and put her hands under my sweater. In the low light of dawn, I could have been in love with her. I could have made her stay.

Teagan never finished her latest movie. Something about a jealous ex-boyfriend, I didn't get all the details. The cops are being pretty tight-lipped about it.

They think he shot her, though.

Teagan's role is up for grabs. She'd already been name-dropping me to the producer and I'm around Teagan's height, so we'll have to see.

I hope they're not after a natural blonde.

night sky

myth

mapped

mini

malist

mast

er

pi

ece

day 32

their lies have washed up
on the shore
cracks // like spider mesh
forming on the casing
of their fraudulent fat bubbles

the barefoot power
of masses
are standing upon shoulders
rising from the depths of
despotic cultural anesthetic

for every casualty
thousands are rising for the clash
with silent death
and lies

Gaga has them singing from their mansions
tonight
muting the colour of fear
for something more
than nothing at all

On his Deathbed, my Father Creates a Cubist Poem

breathe breathe breathe labored breath

rise rise
the and the and
fall fall

rise
the and of a ♂ the last
fall

the Ω
the Ω

at last no more
push → and ← shove push → and ← shove
it

over over
back on the shelf due due
over
and out of the mind
mind mine out of earth

earth 土 earth

a ♠ a ♠ in spades
the sky blue the sky blew

the sky adieu adieu



To feel alive

I just want to feel alive.

You can, all you have to do is:

run a marathon

have ten thousand in the bank

holiday in The Maldives
and document it online

be established
or on the way to insta-famous

love somebody who is picture perfect
and tell the world about it daily, but subtly

surround yourself with a long list of friends

a pretty face and a skinny body can also help,
but only if you dress it accordingly
to what the influencers tell you

don't age – you must look twenty when you're forty
but grow and record your spiritual journey
which you should experience
with phone in hand to document every moment

demonstrate kindness
because it's a trend thanks to Coronavirus:
do your Grandma's shopping and tweet it to your fans

and if all else fails
fake your happiness and just pretend.

I think I'd rather feel dead.

A Letter

To Any and All:

I have been afflicted with a terrible sickness.

Peculiar and malignant – the issue is not one of physical pain or fatigue, but of time and predictability. I don't know why, but

I
can
on
ly
w

I suppose the problem is evident.

It started, not too long ago, with the occasional fallen period. I blamed my own sloppiness at first (it being such a minor lapse of punctuation), but I quickly began to notice more substantial punctuation marks missing from my work; question marks and exclamation points absent from where I was *sure* I had left them. At this point I became somewhat concerned – but I thought it to be a merely *cognitive* issue, a problem of forgetfulness.

Then entire letters began falling off.

First it was just "i"s and "l"s – unstable, thin, letters without much base of support. Then the middling letters ("k"s and "d"s) were lost, and it was only a few days before even the sturdy "m"s and solid "z"s were consistently falling from my page. This is when I became fully aware of the unusual character of my affliction. Certainly I could not be forgetting entire letters – and, more than that, I could see *them as they fell*. The first one I rem

em
be
r

I begin again...the first one I remember distinctly – the last "l" in "formal". I watched as it plummeted from my page, falling and tumbling into the abyss. I laid my hands by my sides immediately, not daring to cause any further harm and quite unsure of what I had just seen. Could it have been what I thought? A letter there and gone – not erased or deleted, but *fallen*? Humans are prone to mistakes of the mind (especially in visual perception and cognition) and I convinced myself this was the more likely explanation. A visual illusion.

It quickly became apparent that I was wrong, or at the very least a more profound explanation was necessary.

The letters continued to fall with increasing frequency, and it was clear that I was either suffering from an outright mental illness or what appeared to be happening was so. Considering that I showed absolutely no other signs of mental disorder, I was forced to accept the latter option. And while it was important to come to terms with the fact of circumstance, this left me with absolutely no understanding of what exactly was occurring.

I searched for any and all materials I could find, for any information on the subject, for any previous case, and found the problem completely without precedent. The only form of information gathering available to me was first person inspection; a case study of my own peculiar ailment.

I watched intently during the dur

ati
on
of
th
d

I watched intently during the duration of the deterioration, hoping for some clue to stymie it. This I was not able to do. However, I was able to infer at least a few facts concerning my condition which hopefully can help you understand.

From what I have gathered: the form and content of my prose is irrelevant. The affliction strikes at random. The random occurren

ces
inc
rea
se
i

The random occurrences increase in rate as time goes on, but only if I'm writing. As in – if I was to put down my pen and rest, coming back to the page a few days hence I would find the state of my condition exactly as I left it. But, if I was to continue writing, my condition would continue to rapidly deteriorate.

This is the extent of my knowledge on the subject.

Without any clear way to reverse, halt, or even slow down the decline, I was continually forced to change both how and what I write.

It quickly became impossible to even *think*

of
writing
an
arg
u

It quickly became impossible to even *think* of writing an argumentative essay. Similarly, any serious attempt at literary fiction was made hopeless.

For a while poetry became my refuge. The focus of all my energy.

Its malleable conventions allowed me to convey grandiose ideas and feelings in relatively few words. Considering the difficulties inherent to my condition, poetry felt like nothing short of a panacea. Yet, even within the domain

of
ve
r
s

I am very sorry...even within the domain of verse I was forced to continuously adapt. Fewer stanzas and lines, fewer words and letters. I continued to at

te
m
p

I need you to understand...I continued to attempt it for as long as I could; until I was *insurmountably* persecuted by this awful ailment.

I have not written anything for qu

ite
a
w

I have not written anything for quite a while due to worry over my conti

nu
ed
de
t...

...I say, due to worry over my continued deterioration; overwhelmed by the fear of where this is all going.

I write this now out of desperation.

Please help.

I do no

t
w
a...

...I do not want to give up my pen yet. I am scared.

I'm not sure what you can do, but there must be something. Anything.

I have given you

the
fa
c...

I have given you the facts and circumstances. There must be so

me
th
i...

...someone you can call or re

a
c...

...reach out to.

I am no
t
s
u...

...I am not sure what h
a
p
p...

...happens now.

It is a
l
l...

...falling away.

But you h
a
v...

...the fa
c
t
s...

...I have given th
e
m...

...to you, p
l
e
a...

...help. Pl
e
a...

...I am sc
a
r...

...I
a

m

s

r

G

x

e

!

a

b

d

?

- ,

t

“

g

f

k

n

.

?

J

t

s

x

n

v

(

-

o

<

b

*

A

&

/ ,

w

p

-
y

d

.

y

u

q

c

a — f z p l
 r n b v c x
 s m y b i
 g ! x b d
 q ? - , t “
 g f k m . ?
 J t s t
 n v (- o
 c b *
 e & / , u z
 o d . y u q c
 y
 F z p l h
 s x b — m
 u r h
 g ! x k b a s
 e
 ? - , t “
 r
 w ? i c

Windows

Wednesday, on the way to the carwash, my car caught fire. And not the good kind, either. Sheila came running up to me and said, *Everything is getting worse and worse*. I told her the main problem is there's no solution. Everything has a life of its own. You keep trying and trying, but no matter how hard you try, before anyone knows you're gone, you're back where you started. Say, what ever happened to What's-His-Name? You know, Mr. It's-on-the-Tip-of-My-Tongue? Yeah, that guy; the one who hardwired the software and debugged the earworms. Before he disappeared, didn't he buy that bogus kidnapping and ransom insurance? I guess these days you can't be too careful. No, don't pay any attention to the venom-colored sunlight. I just painted the windows. They only look like they're snakes.

The Weight of Time

Ten Twenty

Thirty

Forty

Fifty

Sixty

Seventy

...

General Relativity

For the first time, I can see space bending around the faces of my friends. I think this means they must be more massive than whatever space-time is made of. To me, it is honey. Honey you can breathe. You can see the music in waves through it. Honey. I can see the music in waves.

There are bodies everywhere. Flesh but also sweat. Bodies bending honey so much I find it hard to stand up. I am being pulled just as I am pulling them, but I must be less. I must be. Because as Jonnie walks past me I feel my body follow him but my legs don't move.

I catch myself on the way down wondering about what outside is like right now and decide to sit rather than fall. I don't know how I have the time to but I do.

Others sit with me. I do not pull them down. I do not think I have pulled them down.

Now we are singing loud like our lungs might come out. And some people are still dancing, with lights flashing across their faces from fairies reliant on batteries.

I feel like maybe I am a battery, but I think I am more like gravity.

And the people around me are fairy lighted and touching each other. I wonder if they are sticky from the honey.

I feel hands on my back.

They are soft so I do not make them stop. They slide down from my shoulder blades and wrap around my waist. His nails are clean and his hands do not seem to require anything of me. I lean back into the kind touch, pushing the honey away until my head finds the gap between his shoulder and neck.

There I rest. Feel breath on my collar bones. Watch music waves through gold. I hope he does not mind that I am sweating.

Out of the window, through the fairy lighting, I see the dark.

It is a shock.

His hands change, as they slip over me, into a question. I turn and look. He is beautiful. I feel rude for not looking at his face before but his hands tell me all I need to know.

He smiles now, and kisses me sweetly. I realise it has been a while since my face moved out of awe and into something closer to reason. The outside seems like a nice idea so I grab his hand and stand up.

He comes willingly to the window. The glass is cold on my exposed back as we push up against it.

I think I hear piano over the crowd.

He tastes like cinnamon whiskey. I want to pour him on a fire while he kisses me.

I push open the window through the honey. It moves like before a tsunami.

There is man sitting at a piano, playing Clare de Lune. Next to him is an elephant, old and grey as the sky on Sundays. Its ears move to the mood of the music.

I see the sound wave its way towards our fourth-floor window. It spreads out in all directions from the man and the piano and the elephant, makes it seem like they are the sun, sending their rays to us without meaning to.

The waves of music push at me.

I lean further out. His hands are hard around my waist.

'Don't fall' he whispers in my ear.

I never would.

The leaves are ruffled by the wind and the man is playing the piano.

Inside, the beats are hard and absolute. They rip through honey and the people follow suit, dancing like bergamaskers and I love them. I love these sounds and these bodies and the screaming of lyrics and the liquor. I love it all, it is my home. But I have to leave.

I am drawn outside. To the thing in the streets.

He does not follow me this time.

Before we move apart, I make sure to kiss him like he deserves. I push our bodies so close that no honey can come between us and run my teeth over his bottom lip. He smiles into me. I think I might choke on the beauty of his cheekbones.

His eyes are green.

The door closes behind me and suddenly things are quiet.

The piano is playing. I am pulled towards it like the melody has hooks in my skin.

The elephant is grey and hazy. She moves slowly, swaying from one foot to another. Honey pushes around itself, away from her. Eyes half closed and lazy, she does not need to focus. She is safe.

I do not know if she or the pianist sees me but I hope they do. I want to be part of this, not just an audience. So, I stand closer than I need to.

The music expands through the golden haze harder now and her trunk swings. I realise why she is blurred.

Radiating.

Her forehead is vibrating, something inside of her forehead is vibrating. She is singing. And the waves she is creating go on for miles. I follow them with my eyes, they make the buildings look like a heat wave.

She is singing.

I am standing still.

The party sounds are not drowned out but they are separate from this. Maybe it is because the wind cannot touch the indoors, maybe it is because my friends' focus is inwards, but right now they are more like leaves rustling than music.

Background radiation.

I am crying. I don't realise.

I had forgotten calm.

It seems to disappear when busy arrives with tabs and vodka and speakers. But now the piano and the fingers playing it, the elephant and her music, hold me close, calm my breathing until it is steady.

I stop sweating.

The song ends.

She steps forwards, towards me. He does not smile, but the lines on his face make a shape like comfort, if comfort looked tired and pleased.

I rest my forehead against her trunk and thank her. She has not stopped singing so now inside me is a heat wave too.

Her skin feels like skin which surprises me. Its soft warmth is somehow at odds with the grey power of elephant pictures I grew up with. Might and gentleness never reflected in each other so perfectly until now. But somehow, I am at home in her touch.

I smile.

I feel the honey pushing my body towards something more like intimacy, like full body, but I resist it. I respect her too much to give in.

Instead, I apologise for the tears I have left on her trunk.

Thank them once more.

Then we are all gone.

pinwheels

you took my frail hands twirling
twiddling in the midst of sometimes
sun-stroked sometimes moon-lined
fabricated dream-like realities with
lapses of time Dislike steps in
bunches of lost flowers from ancient
lands in fragmen ted memories of you
and I from different lives eternally
t

r

i

p

p

i

n

g the light fantastic in what
we called Pinwheel Patterns in what we
thought was borrowed time.

S E I R A D N U O B
E O
I U
R N
A D
D A
N R
U I
O E S C A P E
B O U N D A R I E S R
T