

# STREET CAKE

experimental writing magazine

## issue 69

### part 1



© shane allison

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Weird é

Dear ~~Michelle~~, ~~Michele~~-Michéle,

I wish you wouldn't use the French é, the accent on your name. This isn't your name after all. ~~Do~~ Don't you dare worry that it inconveniences some people. Even when people mock you, ~~Do~~ Don't be shy and quiet when you say *it's French, its pronounced Mee-chell not M-chell*. ~~Is it really~~ It's necessary to keep a photo of your birth certificate on your phone.

With the other images of things, you are ~~not~~-proud of.

Yours [not just since you left school but] always

## Crossover

I utter discreet to find its playwright. Another gee word  
lost in my body. An unpaired ubiquity, meaning, this headless  
omniscience      Silence, seeming the demon's crowd

a poet of hibernation, emerging from a witty handbag      a moon,  
suddenly, rived out of this belly      an absurd dictionary still patient,  
waiting, for a handful of phenoms, crazy      these are the segues  
needed to wrap the gallant's horns and hoofs

Rest are all the circuitous lines mushrooming our love,  
running through the unmathematical streets  
Longer minds featured in our boos and body-arts, our limbs  
amended with the glory of lightyears  
Love, as you know, a yellow silken thread, lost in this woolly planet  
I know I am not alone with my legs and hands or my sleepless halo,  
the culverts shifting their roles  
their phases      under my unedited skin

A good luck wish says, mind it you're written, and sentenced  
to the metaphors      words that are nights ready to ferment you,  
kudos, your involvement detoxed!

## The Message

*THE MAN enters the space. He is swigging from an unmarked bottle. He turns on the video camera and sits in front of it. Talking directly down the lens.*

If you're watching this, I'm already dead. Just kidding. I've just always wanted to say that. No, I'm still alive- hopefully. And if you're watching this you are too. Here's to the end of the world!

*He takes another swig from the bottle and steals himself to tell the story.*

It's been nine years two months one week and about 17 hours and if the broadcasts were right, then it's safe outside now. Not that there's been a broadcast in... I don't know how long.

I'm recording this, so that you know what happened here. And you'll know that I'm out there, somewhere.

I have a confession. I should never have been here. Happy accident. The deliveries brought me to the right place at the right time. God bless, Sainsburys.

I can tell you everything that happened. That morning. Before it all went to shit. God knows I've relived it often enough. I've just done a drop. I'm in my van. Finishing the receipts. It's 10.36. Popmaster on the radio. 3 in 10. Spandau Ballet. Easy win. So far, so normal.

The broadcast cuts out. For a moment, silence.

Then the siren starts.

You know in the old war movies you hear the air raid siren, and it's almost... musical. That's not the right word... Like, it's kind of... point is, it was never scary.

The real one fucking was.

My brain hasn't processed it before I'm being dragged out of my van. Shoved towards the back of it, this bloke shouts at me. "Get the food." I'm on auto pilot some parts of my brain aren't working as fast as the others, but I just do it. The bloke starts grabbing stuff, he shoves a box into my arms. "Come on!" he screams.

It's the bloke I've just delivered to. Rob. He runs round the back of the house into the garden. The siren is still blaring, but not just from

the radio, from all around. There's a door. He runs through it. I follow. Behind me a slam. Metal on metal.

Silence again.

Time catches up with me. I try to ask the question but my voice catches in my throat. Rob's doing something, working at some computer- twisting dials trying to find something. Then the ground shakes.

Rob stops. "Fuck" he says. There's a window in the door we came through, my senses have come back enough to see that the light outside has faded. It was gorgeous sunshine a minute ago.

Rob stumbles back to the room falls into a chair. I stare at him all the way. And at that moment I realise I'm still holding the box of food. A tin of pringles sits on top. I don't even like pringles.

We stay like that for minutes, hours, I don't know. Eventually he speaks. "So" he says, "Looks like we'll be spending some time together. What's your name, friend?"

We talked. About anything but what had just happened. Family, the football, jobs. Normal stuff. Eventually, he gets to talking about being a survivalist, building a bunker in his back yard. A fucking bunker. Hoping he'd never have to use it. Hearing the siren, and just grabbing me. Not thinking, just doing.

Now, I'm saying it to you, I realise how ridiculous it sounds. These survival guys are supposed to be in the Nevada desert or something, not in Guiseley. And definitely not getting a food shop home delivered. But there you go.

We got along well in the early days. Rob had packed books, DVDs, games, all the entertainment you needed when you stuck in a metal box underground.

It was almost pleasant.

Until the food began to run out.

Not the stuff from Sainos that was long gone. The tinned stuff, Rob had packed. The problem is, he hadn't counted on there being two of us. It rather fucked up his ration planning.

We did our best, stretched stuff out. But hunger's a bitch. It gets to you. Makes the little things bigger. Puts a little itch in your brain. And by this point we'd been stuck in a box for four years.

I can't remember what started it, but the argument was big. Irrational, intense and eventually, inevitably, physical.

I didn't mean to kill him. I just shoved him too hard and his head hit the wall. He was gone before he hit the floor.

I wanted to weep. I didn't. Something had changed in me. I couldn't tell you what. But I knew tears were a waste. Whatever the world was now, it was time to be practical.

So I ate him.

I cut him up. Cooked him. And I fucking ate him. The guy who saved my life.

I've never said it out loud, before. It helps.

*He takes a deep drag from the nearly empty bottle.*

You might be appalled; you might have done worse. I'm not proud of it. I don't feel anything about it, really. It solved the ration problem. Guess he saved my life twice.

So now you know.

That's my confession. What do you reckon? Three hail Marys and £20 in the poor box?

But, here's the thing. If I have to, I'll do it again. Not because I've got a taste for it- it's fucking awful tell you the truth. But because that's the world now. Survival of the fittest.

And I'm going to survive.

As soon I hit stop, I'm going to suit up, open the door, see daylight for the first time in forever. Leave the tomb behind and see what's left of the world. Might visit Skegness- I've never been there.

If you've found this place, now you know what happened here. And you know that I'm out there. Somewhere.

## Requiem

i to the hands            that bread between fingers            and it to me  
i it on and            blackcurrant squash            wine is alcoholic  
i to my chair            about what            the boy i to school with. he  
"What *can* you do?"  
i to we            can not and i            everything we was in  
i was dutiful            so i around the lack            and away  
"Can you not            "Can you not            "Can you not



**Be your muse**

Read this poem with music on.  
Might be *hip-hop, Rnb, gospel.*

If *hip-hop.*

I bet the rapper is telling a story of how he sold drugs to break bread for his daughter, or he is *screaming fuck the government.* Scream along with him. *Fuck the government.*

If *Rnb*

I bet the singer is crying over a heartbreak. Comfort him. Or is kneeling down in the rain, about to propose to his girlfriend of two years. Stop him. Tell him love is a trick for adults, like candy is a trick for children.

If *gospel.*

I bet the singer is extoling God for shielding them from an accident other passengers died from. Or he's thanking God for life. Stop him. Tell him to tell god that people have tilted towards science & we need another Jesus/sign to stay with him.

In this poem, i bet you heard the symphony of guitars, piano chords & jungle bash anchoring rages of the frustrated, the heartbroken & the unbeliever.

## TRAFFIC PUNCTUATION: A BRIEF DRIVER'S GUIDE

1. When approaching a comma,  
take  
your  
foot  
off  
the  
gas.

Speeding up is allowed once you have completely passed the comma zone.

2. Stopping is required at all periods.  
For better visibility, period signs are always red.

3. No one really knows what to do at a semi-colon; use good judgment.

4. An exclamation mark indicates a roadside spectacle!  
Such as dead bodies!  
Or crunchedcars!  
Sudden stopping is not an option!

5. In the rare event that you encounter a question mark in the road, you must  
decide which way you really want to go. Choose wisely. Will it be the road  
not taken?

6. An ellipsis designates the absence of something, such as . . . where you  
need to turn.

7. (Parking is permitted here.)

**Ad I Finitum**

As your 'conversation'  
runs

I...I...I...I...I...I.....

I  
run  
away from

You... You... You...you...you.

“...and then she suddenly vanished  
leaving only her boots.”

the tallest woman  
in the land of Trebuchet

*suture # 7*

Oblige

a  
strategy of

balance

meat

and sky

Slow

blur

of

mountain

Silence

the common threat

[Erasure poem]. Source Text: Pike, Christopher. *Slumber Party*. pg. 36. Scholastic, 2005.

Meaning

e g a p e h t f o  
 life is a  
 blank space  
 a l l c o r n e r s  
 a n d b e y o n d...

g n i h c t e r t s  
 ; a v a s t  
 s e s s  
 h p l s n s  
 a e e  
 w e d  
 r h  
 e c  
 n i  
 n t o  
 l i n e a r i t y

the small dark light

the question

: how

, before

the final  
sentence

clunks

, to re-  
buff

one's  
self trans

-parent,

to admit

*that light*

, which

out of  
phase

with life

, slightly  
cancels?

## Always ask why

Always ask 'Why?' three times.

*Why?*

Because all good fairy stories have three parts.

*Why?*

Because first people obfuscate then get to the point, then overgeneralise.

*Why?*

Because people are like that.



**I hate more than Daylight Savings Time/  
the world so cruelly steals from me**

*(erasure of "How to Fall Drunk in Love—With Yourself"  
on Emma Bolden's blog A Century of Nerve)*

I might hate so much  
because  
on only three  
of thirty-three exceptions

(count the first exception  
in distance: my feelings  
with Chinese take-out)

I discovered this particular form  
of shock.

The Emergency Room  
I don't really remember.

I think banana leaves were involved.

The exception count broke up  
so really I was only in part of that day  
which means I've been in only half-days

none of which count.

Needlessly feeling this  
changed

the only reason that I, myself, *feel*  
was I didn't allow fact.

*Sometimes* is pretty awesome  
in fact.

I can be the charge of happiness.

This year I have  
the single *ever*  
which required a peek

along with some *don'ts*.

The Bench where we used to meet

is covered in weeds now,  
they intertwine and gasp,  
strangle each other,  
I guess we escaped that.