

# STREET CAKE

experimental writing magazine

## issue 75

### part 1



@andrew graber

# contents

## issue 75

### part 1

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actually come true for you

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natasha bredle - a dabble of morning obsessions

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## playing name games

i keep names inside me / all the names of me / all the names inside of me / making  
names / making your name / the game of names / name calling / sticks & stones may  
break my bones but names can never –

hurt me?

they fucking can. this name sticks. this name sticks in my throat. sticking this name in  
your throat. i can feel it on my tongue. making you eat your fucking words.

a sticky ending

Time core initiation in...

5...

elapsed duration can only be subjective  
 Norsemen screaming down the hill  
 everybody you see will die or be enslaved  
 there is a balance point  
 a hundred years gone

*I need*

we inject a year prior to the election  
 and this time Kennedy wins  
 temporal coordinates can have no single form

4...

*I need to reach*

everybody you saw died or was enslaved  
 chronology mapping underway  
 as you enter the interconnect you make a choice  
 Norsemen  
 we inject two years prior to the election  
 this time Nixon wins so Kennedy lives and can  
 the genes of the defeated living on  
 not so hypothetical when you can step out of the core

3...

and see familiar faces in the street  
 a hundred years gone

*I need to reach a point*

we always set up two or more drives  
 towards the outcome we desire  
 this building where we're talking lost to fire  
 dug up and every fragment labelled  
 sometimes the feedback loop destabilises, switching:  
 Kennedy Nixon Kennedy Nixon

2...

faster than we can map  
Kennedy Nixon Kennedy Nixon  
a hundred years gone  
yesterday  
Kennedy Nixon Kennedy Nixon

*I need to reach a point with*

until some alter-chance explodes  
Kennedy Nixon Martha Thorogood  
but as one present branches into future threads

1...

so just as many pasts converge on now  
Kennedy-and-Nixon  
if probability flow is conserved  
which it is as surely as we know  
 $\lambda(p)/t = dp/dt \cdot \rho^*$

*I just need to reach a point with*

there are no survivors  
in the long- or short-terms  
a mathematical abstraction

### **time-core initiated - enter**

which I often worry at of late

*I just need to reach a point*

do not hesitate  
history is not a fragile thing  
and it is already filled with atrocity  
Norsemen

*I just need to reach a point with  
us kissing*

gone

\*pronunciation guide:

“lambda of p divided by t equals dp by dt all into rho”

# lines of women

unbroken lines

bust

waist

hip

proper arrangement of lines

proper arrangement of

women

outline

other lines

that extend beyond

*h o r i z o n t a l*

lines are not good

should be avoided

*d*

*i*

*a*

*g*

*o*

*n*

*a*

*l*

lines cut the

neck

line

not good

women

curved

proper evenly spaced

women

*h o r i z o n t a l*

lines break the

figure

should be combated by

long v

raglan

*e*

women

*r*

avoided

swagger

*t*

women

are not proper

*i*

women

*c*

outline this

*a*

woman

close line the

*l*

who are

closing lines around

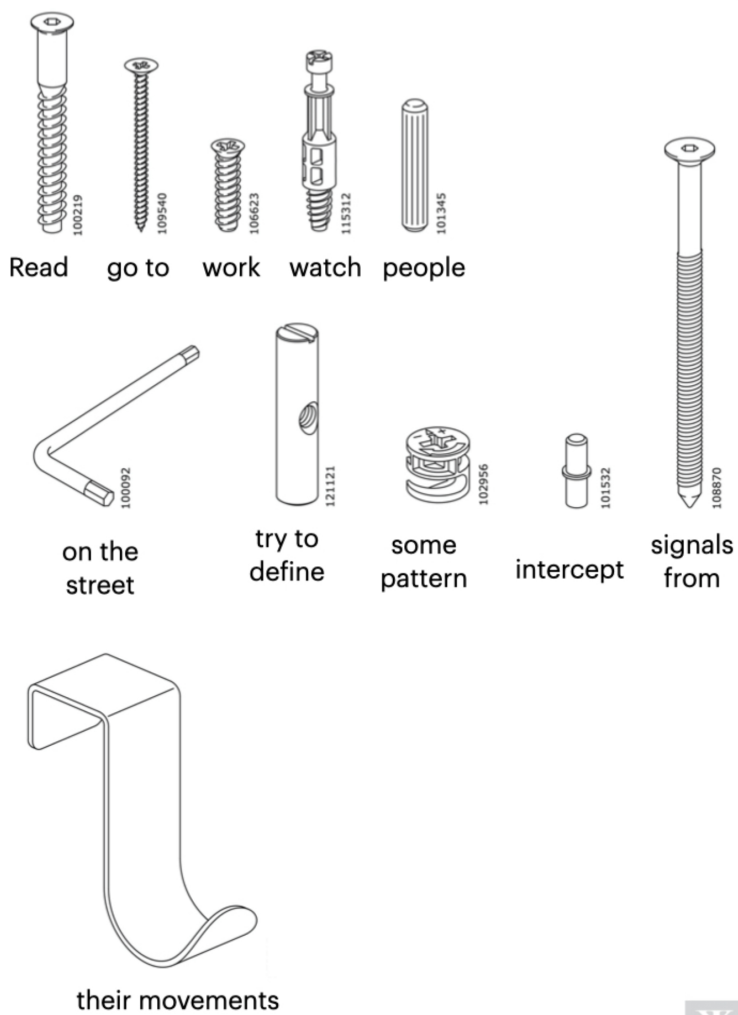
lines

women

cutting the figure

breaking

women



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1. walk down by the  
river and along  
the city's streets

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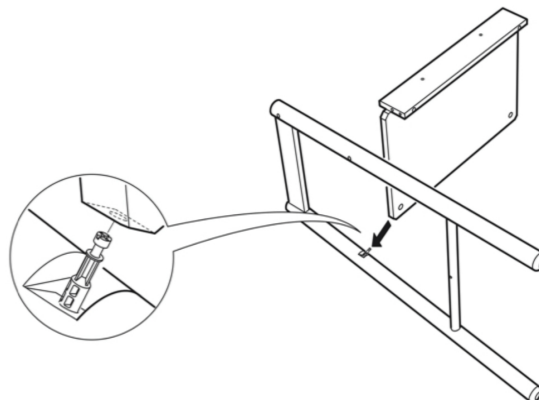
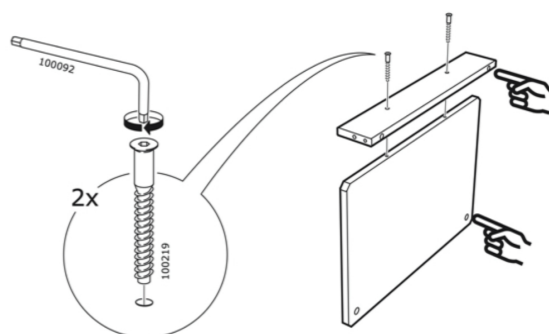
2. try to fool yourself  
into looking at the world  
this way and seeing it  
that way

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3. try to fool yourself  
and sometimes you'll  
succeed

---

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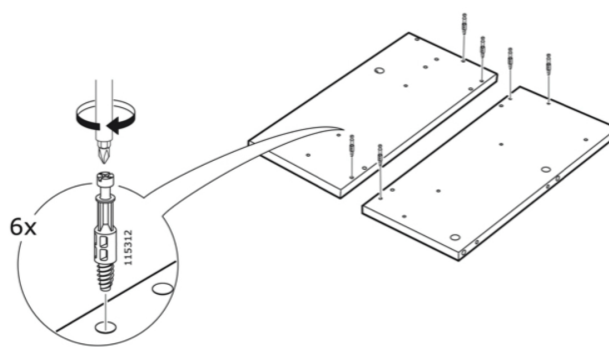
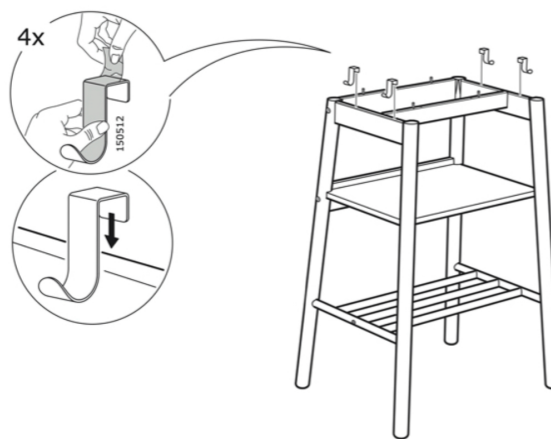
4. draw cards from a  
specially prepared  
and painted deck -  
the Astronomer, the  
Mirror, the Empty  
Man

5. drink thimblefuls  
of green absinthe

6. dangle a plastic  
crucifix in a phial  
of your own urine

7. wrestle with  
angels on the banks  
of the Clyde

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8.



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maybe that will change

can have a happy life  
without knowing anything at all  
indifferent to the human struggle

cats think they're so important

drove to a 7-eleven parking lot  
walked to a nearby bridge  
jumped

## Ten to one

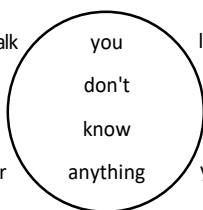
(10) You could be killed in oh so many different ways  
( 9) that I couldn't even begin to list them all  
( 8) and though your risk of murder is slight  
( 7) the chances are you haven't considered me  
( 6) as a perpetrator, which is unfortunate  
( 5) as you should be suspicious  
( 4) but the odds are  
( 3) ten to one  
( 2) you won't  
( 1) be.

## Talk Talk

### Him

### Her

like all women when you talk  
are emphasising how close you are to someone and you  
particularly care whether they  
how much stuff you have or how important you are or



like all men talk to emphasise the distances between people and you  
need to listen or get to  
them because more than  
you talk to prove what a big swinging dick you are

## Blood Pressure

5th January

Dear Maude,

The GP recently advised that any increase in my statin medication will be hazardous to my health, so I've scoured the internet for non-invasive ways to bring my blood pressure down. Let me tell you, most of them seem like quite a bit of effort. So instead of losing weight, walking round the block twice a day, or eliminating all salt (aka flavour!) from my diet, I went all the way to the seventh result on the Goooooooooogle search and found that writing letters, specifically love letters, can lower one's blood pressure. Turn over ----->

P. S. This one's on paper, and I fully expect an RTS as the last address I had for you is more than ten years old. But I think I've still got your personal email from when you gave it to me at lunch in the office all those years ago. So expect a few emails as well. It's for my health after all.

Best wishes,

Phil

To: [Matilda.Ford@msn.com](mailto:Matilda.Ford@msn.com)

From: [PipJenner1973@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:PipJenner1973@hotmail.co.uk)

14th February

Hi Maude,

I didn't expect you to reply to my letter - let alone give me your new email address. What a pleasant surprise. So you're still in Surrey then? That's nice. After I left the stalite company, I moved to Birmingham and then Bromsgrove. Did you know that Bromsgrove is also a type of soil? Fascinating.

Anyway, I drafted this email on the 8th, thinking a month between comms was suitable, only to realise that the 14th would be so much more symbolic, especially since back then - ten years? - we seemed to be pretty steady going until you had to return to The States to see your father. How is he, by the way?

Though I'm aware the military isn't the easiest path, he was quite lucky being able to retire at my age. With new government regulations, I've still got a good thirty years of work left in me. Speaking of work, I'm intrigued by your new pursuit. I knew you were doing that evening horticulture class back when we worked together, but I didn't imagine it would result in you working as a civil servant in - what was it called - ah, I've looked it up in another tab and it is the Animal and Plant Health Agency. To think, I thought everyone who studied horticulture would become a florist. Shows how much I know, I suppose.

I've always wanted to be an agronomist, which I'm sure you know is just a fancy word for dirt scientist. Grading land and that, put simply. You'll be hot on that at the moment, I'm sure, with Brexit and all. Do tell me what you can about soil regulations and those pesky invasive species of plant you mentioned in your first email. I'm eagerly awaiting your reply.

Kindest regards,

Phil

17th March

Phillip Jenner  
Bumble Bees  
Hilltop Road  
Bromsgrove  
B60 1AA

Maude,

I'm a bit of a cheapskate and when I found some of my old stationary, I couldn't resist. Also, you did say you wanted to send me a letter and that my handwriting was a bit naff. So I've put extra concentration into penning this and avoiding chicken scratch.

We'll see if it is as effective as I think it is, mind you, I've had a few glasses of red wine. Tannins don't prevent cancer after all, I've found. That Harvard paper wasn't even published! The study was found to be incomplete and the results left unpublished, but the media loved it. Very much like that butter study that landed on the cover of *Time* magazine. Call me Dr Jenner, I suppose. Alcohol is also not great for my heart, so I've written today off as a truce between me and my blood pressure.

Don't laugh at me, but perhaps we could meet sometime? London has been a stranger for a while, and I wouldn't mind getting reacquainted at the cafe or restaurant of your choice. I may be counting on you not being able to read this, because I'll admit my hand is shaking slightly as I write this. Probably another thing that makes up this degenerative cocktail of aging.

Anyway, the kettle has just boiled for my post-wine recovery coffee, and with these shaky hands, I'll ruin this letter if I continue to write it with coffee in hand.

Looking forward to your next email,

Phil

13th April

To: [Matilda.Ford@msn.com](mailto:Matilda.Ford@msn.com)



From: [PipJenner1973@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:PipJenner1973@hotmail.co.uk)

Hi Maude,

I wanted to get in a message before you checked your email on your lunch break. You asked if I ended up marrying Jackie like I planned to when you returned from The States in 2007. No, I didn't. We'd been together for five years at that point and we were very friendly in a way that could be only that: friendship.

I'm aware that it's impossible to remain in that honeymoon phase of a relationship where everything is impassioned, but I also believe you can slip too far in the other direction. At the same time, there was an element of embarrassment to our silences after a while. We acted as if we were pensioners already, without much to say to each other and that lack of common interests that comes from having to find a mate within less than a mile radius.

I'm not saying I'm the most exciting or impassioned man - I believe you can find that on YouTube these days, or is it OnlyFans? I wish I could say I had children to tell me, but I don't as you're aware, but my sister certainly does.

I realise my emails are likely far longer than any others you receive, so I wanted to include that (again) I'm keen to meet up sometime. It'd be better for you to reject me at this point if you don't want to rather than playing keep away. That was a bit blunt - James Blunt (yes, I'm laughing to myself), but I'm at the stage in my life where wasting time in a finite existence doesn't appeal to me. As any survey on professionalism would tell you, professional dominance is now my number one as a white male over the age of forty. It just happens. I've read I'll be even more incorrigible after fifty-five hits me.

Hope you have a nice lunch break.

Phil

*13th April, 13.08*

Hey. It's Phil.

Okay? I figured this would be easier.  
It does defeat the original purpose of your letter writing, however.

All things considered, Maude  
I don't think my blood pressure is my biggest worry rn

No? What's your biggest worry, then?

Would you like an honest answer?

Fire away, duck

You

Me? Lol

I doubt I've been anyone's biggest worry since my infancy.

I think you mean rejection.

Rejection is your biggest worry

And I gave you my phone number.

That must mean something to you.

It's all question marks here.

Right, well. I'd best get back to work.

But you're keen to meet?

*13th April, 18.35*

Oh!

Sorry.

One of those, 'I swear I replied' instances.

Sure, let's meet then.

You're single, right?

You haven't mentioned it.

So thought I'd ask.

*13th April, 21.00*

*Strictly* was on!

So sorry.

Gosh I'm bad at this.

Which is why I'm still single, btw.

So, yes, I'm single.

Hope that answers your question.

*21.15*

You've got motive

You watch that? Can't stand it.

Parading women around in costume.

Irks me.

Dancing takes skill though.

But I understand what you mean.

No doubt it's the sequins that get the views.

And wouldn't you like to parade me around in costume?

Replying to:

And wouldn't you like to parade me around in costume?

No.

I'd like to have it how it was when we were in our twenties.

The bliss of having nothing, really.  
And I didn't need anything but you.

Cheesy chips and cheap vodka then.

Replying to:  
And I didn't need anything but you.

Aww <3

I'm going in next week  
To buy a book from Foyles  
Shall we?

*Matilda sent a location.*

Oh, go on then.

20th April, 13.58  
Foyles, Tottenham Road, London

Phil could feel his big and small toe chafing against his new shoes. It was too rainy to tell if his palms were sweating. As he meandered down Oxford street, trying to prevent the blisters on his feet from bursting. London was the dirtiest clean city he was familiar with. Other places couldn't cope with the grit, but everything here was organised chaos.

The rain dragged the spring temperature down and Phil shoved his hands deep into the pockets of his wool coat. Water pearled on the surface of it and rolled down towards his feet. When he looked up, Matilda was standing to the side, kicking her boots out as she chatted passionately into her phone.

"All right?" Phil asked when she'd hung up. She wasn't facing him, and his voice caused her to contort her neck. "Hi. Okay?" he said again.

"Is that you, Pip?" Her hands were suspended halfway between her hips and face.

"Yes." He was pink, and couldn't help smiling at the nickname.

"You've aged well," she said. "Oh, don't make a face. It's impossible to call a man beautiful or cute without emasculating him, so I've gone for the safest option."

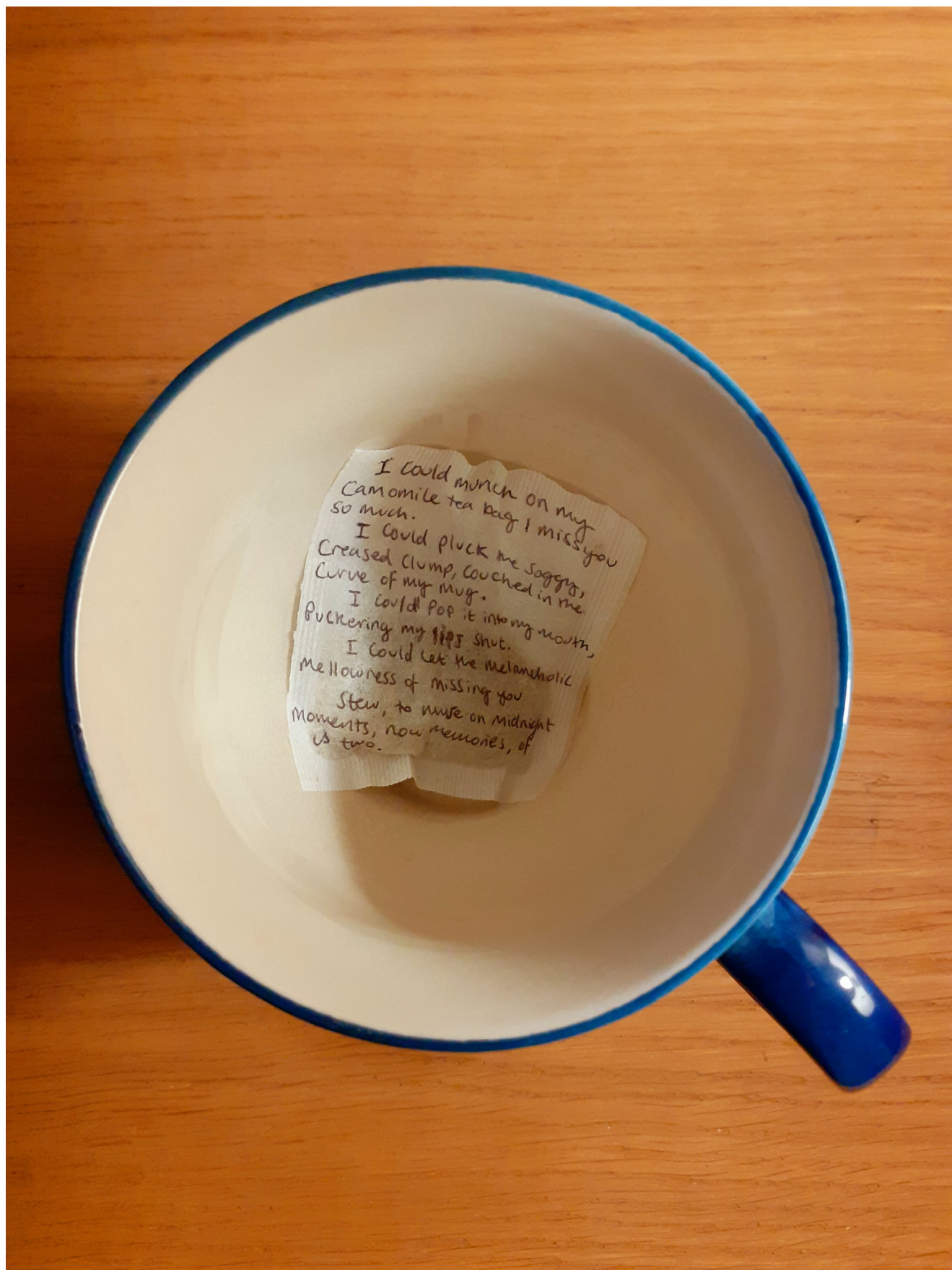
She had a small area of exposed skin between her ankle boots and black jeans, and she too looked as if she hadn't aged a day. He guessed her top was a body suit, the way it skimmed her abdomen and sank flawlessly into the waistline of her skinny denim. Over the ensemble, she was consumed by a heavy black coat that was bursting at its quilted seams with stuffing.

He assumed his expression was open, because she took several steps forward to stand on his toes and grab his face. “Exactly how I remember,” she said after kissing him. “And you’ve shaved. That’s new.”

She walked ahead towards the gold establishments of shirt makers and other iconic west end landmarks.

“Come here,” she said. “Tell me about your blood pressure. Have I lowered it?”

He ambled dutifully after her, heart pumping in his ears. Blood was everywhere, that was for sure. Maybe he should eat more salads and use low-sodium seasoning after all.



I could munch on my  
Camomile tea bag I miss you  
so much.  
I could pluck the saggy,  
Creased clump, couched in the  
Curve of my mug.  
I could Pop it into my mouth,  
Puckering my lips shut.  
I could let the melancholic  
Mellowness of missing you  
Stew, to muse on midnight  
Moments, now memories, of  
us two.

## Housemates

I wonder if you remember (I'll never forget) when you slept in my bed and let me cling to your heart because mine was broken.

I'd dragged myself to the corner shop, squeaked out a 'thank you' and realised it was the first time that day I'd spoken.

It was at the time my wisdom teeth were cutting through, one on either side. In battle or alliance with each other, I couldn't tell. All I knew was that sharp ripping that could only be endured

## Definitely Foxes

(I have converted the audio file to video file so I can attach it.)

like / reply / share

There were some strange noises around 2. 30 am.

Some big mammal? or a bird?

Quite disturbing. Anyone else heard them?

It sounds like foxes mating.  
The vixen makes the  
loud screeching sound.

That is quite disturbing.  
Where exactly  
was this heard?

I believe it was coming  
from the park wood / park wood meadow,  
but I could be wrong. It was  
like this for a minute or two,  
I have recorded only the end of it. In the beginning  
it was much louder.

Sounds like a big animal. Worrying!

## Dragons!!!

[Inserted frame from Game of Thrones]

Foxes.

Foxes.

Foxes.

If you are disturbed by them, use earplugs,  
but you should be glad there's any wildlife  
left in the area.



That's a muntjac  
They sound like foxes  
but a higher pitched version. Almost like  
someone being murdered.

Nope, I'm wrong. The more I listen to it the more it sounds like a mating vixen.

whichever it is, it is a  
beautiful, small, furry animal  
and I don't see why it would  
be described as disturbing.  
However, this word might well be applied  
to many humans in the area!

**Fox**

It' s foxes x

If that's all it is then can't be that bad.

Definitely foxes

That does sound like foxes mating.

Definitely foxes

Definitely foxes, used to have them making this noise by my house!

Muntjac screech loudly too.

Yes -now I've heard the recording  
-it is foxes.

There seems to be  
quite a lot around.

I guess now we know

18/5/2021 Thread on Nextdoor app.



### 10 Ways to Cope with Your Next Writing Rejection

I had received an emailed rejection of a humorous poem called “10 Ways to Cope with Your Next Writing Rejection.” Number 1 was “Regift it.” In my disappointment, I didn’t take my own advice but chased a muscle relaxer with a beer. It wasn’t too long before I felt like the body that had been pulled from the canal after three days in the water. Even if I had wanted to follow Gerhard Richter’s example, I couldn’t have managed it just then. Only when he destroyed a painting, so to speak, scratched it out, was it fit to be seen.

## Probably Just Yet Another Coincidence

Nothing big,  
but my phone

auto-corrects  
underserved

to  
*undeserved.*