

# STREET CAKE

experimental writing magazine

## issue 89



@ angela caporaso

# contents

## issue 89

COVER: angela caporaso

geoffrey aitken – yesterday/today/tomorrow

alex carrigan – a parade of dead girls

mark d cart – deep thoughts

ian chapman – tupperware box

harley claes – the machinated world

bart edelman – simultaneous submission

beau farris – death from above

j.i. kleinberg – half-moon and 86 percent

zainab kuyizhi – how to know he is the right man for you

francesca leader – advice for your first divorced christmas

kate lunn-pigula – figure me out

amy marques – noblesse oblige

corey mesler – the monkey calls

ilias tsagas – new beginnings

**yesterday/today/tomorrow**

it appears

daily

the news

cannot stop

some people

making it credible

regardless of

popularity

## A Parade of Dead Girls

*After Kim Vodicka's "Emotional BDSM"*

Imagine being so insecure that you're literally jealous of a parade of dead girls. Imagine the nerve to camp outside the prison the night before the execution.

The execution was marked on your calendar with angry red circles while the paint dried on the sign you made that said, "LET HIM LIVE!"

"Let him live so he has a chance to be reformed!" you wrote in your letter to the governor, spraying the letter with your nicest perfume before you mailed it.

You mailed hundreds of letters to the man whose dangerous predilections made fodder for the podcasts and TV specials that come out every few years.

Every few years, you find yourself drawn to the sunken eyes and strange haircut of a man who killed many a young woman and did vile things to their bodies.

You wanted your body to receive the same treatment as theirs, to be the object of someone's hate and mania that you desired the blood so badly.

You desired it badly, even though it only meant you would remain alone. Imagine being so insecure that you're literally jealous of a parade of dead girls.

**deep thoughts**

I'm sorry to have to  
ask you again  
but do you have a pen?

## Tupperware Box

When my mother  
tells me she is in so much pain  
and hasn't slept for days  
I fetch out an old Tupperware box  
and unclip the lid. I take out  
slips of faded paper  
and read them aloud:  
how sad  
poor you  
hope you get better soon  
that sounds awful  
she replies with words  
she keeps in an old  
enamelled biscuit tin  
at the back of the pantry:  
thank you  
thanks for asking  
oh thanks  
after we've both read our pieces  
we return them -  
close the lid on the  
Tupperware box  
and enamelled biscuit tin  
and think  
what a great family  
we have.



the extinction  
of print

TELEVISION WAS  
JUST A BABY  
AND WE DIDNT  
KNOW ANY  
BETTER MAKING  
MAN MACHINE

we purify in jazz we swallow

fragrance lusting for beauty

propogating our thoughts

just sinsuckers in the throttle of reality

questioning the life the crippled god the agony



MR. and MRS. NORMAN

Simultaneous Submission

Oh, do, do, do, do...  
Submit when you please,  
Anywhere you're inclined,  
As often as you desire.  
We won't hold it against you,  
Or be the least bit disturbed.

Yes, go for it all.  
Light the literary lamp—  
The whole kit and caboodle—  
Lock, stock, and barrel.  
Add the entire enchilada,  
While you're at it, Buster.  
What, pray tell, is there to lose?

After all, the shrinking odds  
Never tilt in your favor.  
And you wouldn't even know  
The flavor of the month,  
If it kissed you on the lips.  
So, please hesitate no more.  
Send, send, send, send...  
Sooner, rather than later.



### Death From Above

unveiling the rug I expose  
a graveyard for boxelders.  
flat-backed and dead  
hundreds of husks drift,  
float on the hardwood.

simplifying these little deaths  
I need each point to be related

like recognizing a face, I squint  
massaging the mass in my peripherals  
until I find a pattern

forcing a connection,  
understanding is a cookie cutter.  
ignoring individuals,  
I am quickly overwhelmed

interrupting other chores, I stare  
hoping to revive the pile.  
resurrect the collective  
selfishly apply catharsis  
after apocalypse  
my eyes pour over the mass  
unable to distinguish a single carcass  
a little shine to pesticide

dead insects curl their legs  
there are 8.1 billion people  
and I cannot pin-point  
crawling over the land  
cannot find a deeper meaning

cannot find a single point  
within a wave, cannot see  
a single droplet  
cannot discern one moment  
from the day  
a collective combines and I can't help but look for myself  
the minute becomes minute  
in their annihilation  
bugs bleed into each other  
as my thoughts overlap

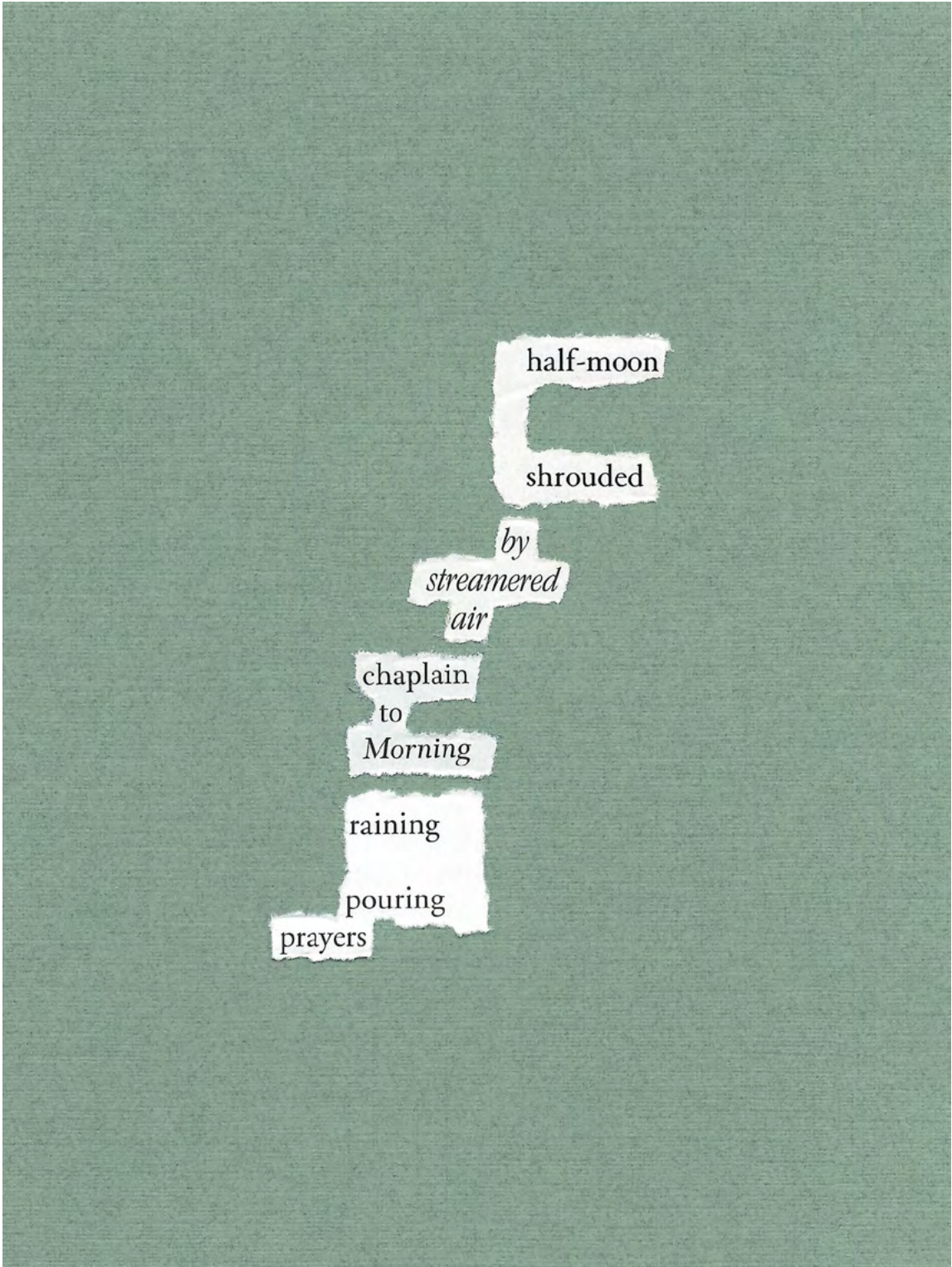
counting their bodies,  
I constellate the dead

like a connect-the-dots game  
dictated by my own attention.  
I overlook whole deaths  
gloss over tiny lifetimes

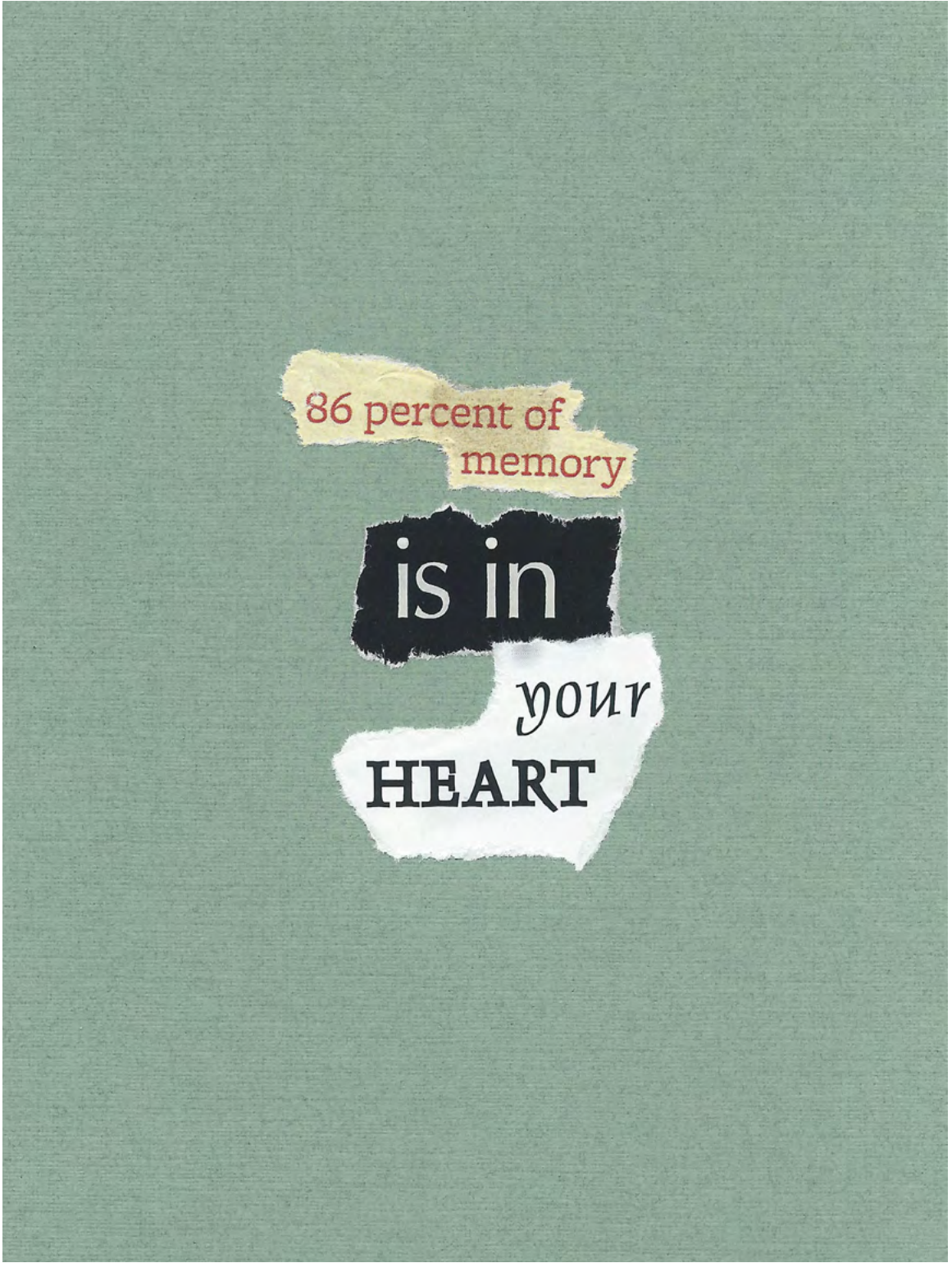
were my body a peculiar husk  
buried on linoleum flooring  
I'd probably overlook it

organized by orange wings,  
my broom shuffles generations  
onto the dust pan

this is what I mean  
when I talk about guilt



half-moon



86 percent

## How to Know He is the Right Man for You

you don't.

Advice for Your First Divorced Christmas

\*

Be

Prepared

to put up your

Christmas tree in Jan-

uary, and take it down in March.

\*\*\*

## Figure Me Out

‘They’re beautiful,’ I said, of the flowers which had been delivered to my desk. That was what you were supposed to say when you were surprised with flowers, even if you didn’t find them beautiful. I suppose they were beautiful, if you like that sort of thing. Maria and I had returned from a much-needed coffee break to find them sitting there.

‘That’s sweet,’ said Maria. ‘Your partner is very romantic.’ Maria wasn’t a romantic person; John hadn’t received a compliment.

I smiled, fixed. The flowers were shades of blue, purple and white. They sat in an expensive-looking clear glass vase. I identified a white rose in the middle of my collection, but I didn’t know the names of any of the other flowers. This confirmed it, then.

John was reading my diary.

I still wrote a diary, on paper. That morning I woke at 6am, as I had for the past twenty years, to write my diary entry. It was a sacred, stress-relieving thing to me. I’d been idly flicking through my previous entries, when I noticed something odd. John had been decisive about lunch, which he rarely was, and I had complained about it, in my diary, four days ago. He often left wet towels on the floor, yesterday he hadn’t. I had written about that three days ago. It could be a coincidence, I thought. My initial reaction was to wake him up and start a fight and I didn’t want to do that without proof. So, this morning, I had written: ‘Harvey got flowers delivered yesterday. It was so romantic, in front of everybody. What was the occasion? “oh no reason,” said Harvey. “He just likes to send me flowers.” What a keeper. We were all very jealous.’

Of course, Harvey hadn’t received flowers yesterday. Harvey would probably have some strong words about the cultivating and marketing of flowers. He would probably bring up the bees and dump whoever it was who had dared to send him a present. So too, John had

never sent me flowers. They weren't in my thoughts – they were old-fashioned and probably damaging to the environment. If John sent them today, never having done so before, then I would have proof that he was reading my diary. I read my words back. They didn't even sound like me, my personal writing. Would he know I was on to him, so to speak? And I had self-censored; I wrote for a living, but my diary was my personal thing. I was suddenly shy and didn't write as much as I normally had.

Harvey lulled me back to life. 'Are any of those rhododendrons?' He asked. 'I'm allergic to them.' I shrugged. He managed to identify every single flower online. His nose was safe, for now. He even offered an attempt at a compliment. 'They're very... bright!'

Maria and Harvey and I shared a graduate student office. My thesis on Virginia Woolf, focusing specifically on her diaries, was a couple of years in. I enjoyed the research. I'm fascinated with the diary form. I was getting a few teaching gigs too.

I stared at the flowers throughout the afternoon. Maria caught me gazing at them a few times. She said I was taken with them.

'You're such a girl!'

Conversation that day had been centred on privacy online. Harvey was against an online presence. Maria was all for it. 'Privacy is a Victorian invention,' she said. 'It's outdated. It was a flash in the pan anyway! We have far more privacy now than when families lived in slums.' I knew for a fact, though, that if I told Maria that John had been reading my diary, she wouldn't call it outdated. I knew that she would say I should dump him.

Harvey said that the internet 'just made a commodity out of everybody.' He asked what I thought. I looked at the flowers.

‘Maybe privacy is an illusion,’ I said.

I took my beautiful, expensive flowers home with me. The glass vase was a pain to carry home, but we only lived a mile away from my campus. My biceps were starting to ache, as this was as much as I had exercised them in a good few months. I received smiles from other people; people in their cars and fellow pedestrians. I must be nice, they must have thought, because someone thought to buy me flowers today. But I felt a guilt-like pang in my stomach. Why did I feel guilt? John was renegading the trust we’d built in our relationship. He was the one reading my diary. After the flowers were delivered, I felt that I could no longer trust him. But, strangely and throughout the day, that feeling disappeared. I felt almost understood. I no longer needed to worry about the awkward conversations I didn’t like having, I could say what was bothering me and, like magic, he would know and it would be solved, or at least acknowledged. He cared. I wouldn’t say so, not even to him, but walking back, I realised that I almost liked what he was doing. I had left work with visions of breaking up with him; wondering where to stay for the night. I arrived back wanting to see him.

When I got home, I placed the flowers on our white kitchen table. How long had he been reading my diary? Everything is public nowadays anyway. Reading a diary isn’t a big deal; it’s not like I’m being spied on. I read Woolf’s diaries. I study them. What does that make me?

He arrived home at 9pm, which was fairly early for him. He’s a chef. ‘I was so sick of food,’ he said. ‘But I managed to pick this up.’ My favourite takeaway pizza. ‘I need something that isn’t fancy food,’ he said. I looked at him. Had he known that pizza was my favourite because I’d told him, or because he read it in my diary? I didn’t care.



‘Thank you.’ I grabbed a slice. He produced a bottle of red wine from his bag. He looked tired. I’d been in the kitchen where he worked. He was a different person there. He shouted a lot, it was very hot and everyone was hurrying all the time. I couldn’t stand it. At work, I mused and he toiled.

He put Nirvana on. His favourite band. I tired easily of Cobain’s gravelly voice. But John was being so sweet that I couldn’t tell him, there and then, to switch it off. It would have ruined the moment. I made a mental note to write about it in my diary.

‘How was your day?’ he asked, sniffing my hair. It made me giggle. The bottle was nearly empty and we had spent the evening talking and eating pizza. Usually, other evenings, we were both tired, so we tended to watch some TV. I would be mentally exhausted and he physically. We ended up watching a stupid comedy show on Netflix until we decided to go to bed.

‘Oh it was fine,’ I said. ‘I had some flowers delivered,’ I said, coquettishly.

‘Did you?’ he replied. He did look handsome. ‘That was nice of whoever sent them, wasn’t it?’

‘Mmm,’ I said. ‘And then I worked on my research.’ I saw him start to lose interest, as I thought he would. I have two and a half degrees and he has none. It doesn’t bother me, but I think it bothers him. He is quiet, strangely bashful, around Maria and Harvey. He is far more confident with other people. But it was only a hunch; he had never told me that he felt unconfident. And why should he? He was a head chef at a fancy restaurant at 32. He always started fidgeting, when I mentioned anything academic. I changed the conversation.

‘How was your day?’

He perked up. ‘Jeff burned his whites when he was flambéing. That was funny!’ he laughed, remembering to himself. ‘He was briefly on fire!’ I must have looked alarmed because he assured me it was fine. ‘We shouldn’t let him look after presentation if he can’t get basics right!’ I felt myself getting fidgety then, as he told the story for a longer period of time. I would find myself wondering to myself about pieces of my research.

‘Thank you for the flowers,’ I said. He had still been talking about Jeff. He looked proud of himself. ‘What made you think to get them?’

‘I just thought it’d be nice,’ he said, suddenly bashful. Guilty.

‘I don’t think you’ve ever bought me flowers before.’

‘I think I have.’

‘Not at work.’

‘No, I suppose not.’ He was cagey now. ‘Shall we go to bed?’

And that next evening, after writing about Nirvana, he suggested I choose the music. ‘I always choose,’ he said. I wrote about how much I liked prosecco and my favourite chocolates and, the next day, he came home with them. I was writing less and less in my diary and I had no outlet to filter my real feelings into. I was getting more and more wound up. My outlet that I’d had all of these years was no longer available to me. I found scrap paper and wrote my thoughts and feelings on it and tore it up into tiny pieces and chucked them in the bin. I felt like I was being watched.

It wasn’t so far away from sharing online, I supposed. And, God knows, John had asked me to open up to him more, particularly in the earlier years. He’d got angry at my diary once. He said I told that all of my secrets and not him. He asked why I couldn’t let him in? What was the matter with him? I said nothing, of course, he was being silly.

After a couple of days of prosecco, my favourite meals and a courteous boyfriend who was making more of an effort to listen to me talk about my research, even though I could tell he didn't enjoy it, I felt impatience set in.

He'd bought two bottles of prosecco that evening and we were on the second. It was the most I'd drunk in ages and I couldn't really handle it anymore. I knew I shouldn't like what he was doing. But what made me respect him less was his inability to see that I knew.

I was talking about my research, about Woolf's diary and I felt mischievous. I suddenly felt an urge. The alcohol had got rid of my anxieties.

'Babe,' I said, staring off into space. 'Would you ever read my diary?' I was just so curious as to what his reaction might be. It felt compulsive.

He sat up. Pale. Spluttering. 'What? No! Of course not! That would be the worst thing, wouldn't it? Why? Why ask that?'

'I'm studying Woolf's or, now that we're a bit more acquainted I should probably call her Virginia,' I said, languorous. 'It's weird that I call her by her surname when I know a lot of her most private thoughts.' I sighed. 'I was just curious. I read her diary all day. It's weird, you know?' I shot him a look.

He sighed, relieved. He must think I was stupid!

'I mean,' I prodded, a little angry. 'We don't have privacy in the same way anymore, do we? What with advertisers spying on us and everyone uploading all their trivialities all the time.'

'That's true,' he said, not sure where I was going with it. He was still calming down. Heart rate returning to normal.

‘I suppose that’s the one private thing left,’ I said, sitting up and drinking my wine. ‘I don’t know what I’d do if someone were to read my diary.’ I looked at him. ‘Would it feel like a betrayal of trust?’

He was antsy again. I smiled, lay back down.

‘Anyway, I was just thinking,’ I said. ‘What shall we have for dinner?’

The look on his face was a strange one. I knew that Maria would say that I should have confronted him. But I didn’t want to. I enjoyed our strange dynamic and, truth be told, I liked making him squirm. Who was I becoming? I had no idea.

I wrote my diary as normal, dropping a hint again. I got back home and the diary looked unmoved. He didn’t ask me if we should go and see the movie I’d written that I wanted to see. He didn’t mention anything that I wrote in my diary for the rest of the week. By Friday, I was a little sad. I had scared him off it. I wish I hadn’t, but I found that I was writing more honestly than I had in a while. We were back to our nice-enough relationship. And yet I missed that intense, strange time we had, when I simply wrote what I wanted him to do and he did it.

I noticed on the table that the flowers had died. They smelled like stale urine. They were so pungent as I threw the remains of the water down the drain. I placed the dead flowers in the bin. Washed the vase. Hid it in a cupboard.

Fear is maybe the basis for lasting relationships. So, then, I wrote in my diary: ‘If you decide to read this again, John, please know that I knew all along. I liked it and I didn’t like it.’

He never mentioned it again. I had my place to vent again.

One on the House

"Nobody get our table," Mrs. Rasmussen said.

"We gotta get down to cases," Mrs. Feeley said. "Katy an' Danny been wonderful, but they persuade us too much. We can talk things over better here. Count our money an' . . . any other little thing we have to do!"

"More impersonal," Miss Tinkham agreed.

"Just how much we got in the kitty, Mrs. Rasmussen? reckon we'll make it home?"

"We ain't spent much . . . we got two hundred an' four dollars an' thirty-seven cents, not countin' a couple o' bucks for beer tonight."

"Sure as hell won't stretch to ridin' no Pullman home!"

"Nothin' but a waste," Mrs. Rasmussen said. "Them bein' so snotty an' all cause the four of us was in one drawin' room!"

"Stuffy! So middle-class!" Miss Tinkham said. "With poor dear Old-Timer sleeping all the way across the room . . . on that narrow little bench against the wall. The bourgeoisie simply cannot seem to realize that there is such a thing as noblesse oblige."

"What burned me," Mrs. Rasmussen said, "was them



## The monkey calls

The monkey calls me from his high-rise.  
He wants what he always wants, an  
absolution of sorts. I do not tell him that  
heaven is only for the evolved. Instead  
I reassure him that he is honored for  
his contributions to the timeline. I tell  
him sometimes I feel like a monkey my-  
self. He hangs up-  
side down and tells everyone I am a  
liar like all men, a real grounded also-ran.

# New Beginnings

				Together
	How	Many		
	I		To	Pick
Them		The		And
	Put		Back	
			Up	
Times				Pieces
		Have		