

**She brings the pain**  
Sophie Gogl

STHEPAIN

*Hello?*  
*Does someone agree?*

*Somebody has to expose this farce as such. I can recognize it, the outline, I see it, how is it possible that something that is so obvious to me is not noticed by anyone else? Has the world conspired against me? This annoys me so much! I can't help thinking about her all the time while my hatred for her drifts into abstract intensity.*

*I hate them!*

*I hate them so much!*

*It's not my fault that the zeitgeist is asking for another type. I am a hetero man on a branch that is about to break off. Or dies, an empty branch that can only carry light birds. No thick ones, that live at McDonalds, no, only the feathery, real nature birds. I have worked all my life to build up a certain understanding of reality based on intellectual depth, and here she comes in like a bulldozer and flattens everything, as flat as her work, as flat as her colors, the technique, so unloving, unpoetic, bland, stupid. When he thinks of her, his body bends into an attitude of constant alien shame. Physically bent and emotionally beaten, he sits at the table in front of his computer. He closes it with a controlled push, only to open it again after 10 seconds. Fuck it.*

*Who is allowed to say what? The personal feelings are placed above everything that might be considered as content. Discourse becomes more difficult as personal traumas have only been published on Instagram. Instagram is a digital minefield. It is a cautious zigzag around the discourse, and I wonder what am I allowed to add to it? Am I even qualified to add something? Well, probably not, but I would prefer not to have to say anything anyway. As the words became harder to say, the image and content creation manifested itself in a tragedy. Through the daily bombardment with pictures, the necessity of artistic expression was replaced by the necessity of a retreat at a silent monastery. What a fucking bougy coping mechanism, he thought.*

He discusses everything with his girlfriend, it is comforting to be informed about everything. He pretends to be interested in the other person, although it's basically just a matter of secretly gaining power in the light of it all. They like to talk about this person against whom every fiber of

his body is trembling. Once, his girlfriend even claimed he had a crush on her, whereupon he opened his eyes endlessly and she twisted her sharply contoured lips into a shameful grin. He had a crush on her, just like his girlfriend, they all basically did. They all wanted to consume her at least once in their lives.

*That's the game, that's what she's good for – the outer boundary that shows you where her body begins and where yours ends always remains upright. She is probably not even turned on, with her turgid body, her exuberant curves, her non-existent self-hate. Is it even possible to sleep with someone without feeling shame, without sharing the same attitude, without bones dotting the outer layer of the body and serving as a reminder:*

*I have not eaten properly since 2010.*

*I have forgotten what a normal serving size of a dish is.*

*We all prefer to look sick rather than satiated.*

*We are all sick of the world, of all this injustice, all this oppression, it makes us all sick, we would rather throw up in the beam, like water cannons, which are being used against civilians probably somewhere in this very moment.*

When he thinks of her body, nothing stirs in his loins. When he imagines her having sex it feels like a mechanical, even technical process, as if his nemesis is transformed from subject to object. At most she is remaining in a supporting role. The lead is reserved to whoever could help secure her a permanent position in the art world. *Oh my! I am such a macho!* He thought, so he had to distract himself, because his thoughts were directed in a direction he no longer allowed himself to dive into.

Unaware of her boyfriend's inner conflict, his girlfriend walks to the new Bikram Yoga Studio. Between endless emails, 5 zoom meetings she was able to build herself a time slot, just for herself. To relax she would normally shop online, but her boyfriend started to condemn it. So she had to get out, out of their nest, built from straws, hair, and feathers plucked from stupid other birds. The nest was their joint project – a possible chance to build a foundation for their relationship. However, now that all the furniture and things have found their place, it feels ironically impersonal.

It was like a test, a shared experiment to see if they can create things together. Children? Never. Or, maybe? She always hoped she didn't want any, but she was aware that she could not know what kind of hormonal surges might await her in her late thirties. There is still time until then, she thought. And just like her boyfriend a few minutes before, she banished the thoughts that made her feel uncomfortable, just like that. She opened the door to the yoga studio and scurried into the changing room.

They got to know each other at a party. Well "getting to know" is an exaggeration. They saw each other for the first time ever at a party. Seeing describes their first meeting quite well. He stared at her, first minutes, then hours. She got used to the insistent staring, which was briefly interrupted by honest smiles. She liked him immediately. She knew from the beginning what she was getting herself into. She immediately saw the patterns she had to expect in a possible relationship and had no problems with them. In fact it was quite to the contrary: she knew she wanted to surrender to the dynamics of their relationship. She would be the louder and more communicative one. However, secretly she also knew that he would set the tone. That's what she liked, the game for power, the setting the tone, the little fights, the giving in.

From early on she had uncovered that the seemingly well-balanced relationship of their parents wasn't based on equality at all. Behind closed doors her mother was pulling the strings. The present mother, who always encouraged and supported her to go her way. Now she found herself in a late rebellion, the rebellion of escaping into a relationship whose dullness could not be surpassed: "*Mother!!!! Watch me!!!! I'm going to give in!*" Without exchanging a single word with each other, the two table neighbors left the party together and have never slept a night without each other ever since. It was the perfect Stockholm syndrome without a perpetrator or a victim. The symbiosis of two individuals was completed. From now on they would play in the same dodgeball team, the two of them against the rest. Their relationship was an invincible automatism, it felt like the perfectly calibrated machine.

## The Selfcare

While upward facing-dogging she thought:

*Who helps you when you can no longer help yourself?* She didn't know. She had never reached that point. Self-discipline was the motor imposed on her. She felt freshly oiled through and through after yoga. Self-pity despised her, her boyfriend knew that too, who himself has always only lamented inwardly without her knowledge. What online shopping is to him, to her is moaning, procrastinating and self-pity. The lazing that melts into an emotion. Emotions were an issue between the two partners anyway. He hated to be confronted with foreign emotions or had to pretend to have empathy. He simply had no empathy. Why should he? Nobody had the same experience, nobody came from such difficult circumstances, like he did. Everybody in their circle was either spoiled, rich, privileged, evil, artificial, deluded, superficial, or simply dumb. And he thought that the worst part of it was, that they were completely unaware of it.

After the yoga practice she took a shower in the neat bathing room of the yoga studio. She could do it at home too, but this place just made her feel cleaner. The membership was some sort of a monthly rent for a feeling she wanted to experience. They had soap dispensers by a high end brand, the same she once stole from the bathroom of an art fair and secretly desired or even bought since. It was a globalised trend, a taste you could smell as well as see. It was a lifestyle that spoiled you and was consumable. Sure, it wasn't cheap. But the real nice things in life are either free or extremely expensive. Completely bewitched by the aroma diffuser, which constantly pumped eucalyptus fragrance into the dressing room, her eyes slowly wandered over her body searching for a blemish. But instead a hint of self-acceptance unexpectedly set in. She did not know this kind of satisfaction, it was foreign to her, but she accepted her body in a way that only a very emancipated woman could. A woman who evaded any kind of objectification, who simply never put herself in the situation to be objectified, which translates to: *who simply was in the lucky situation to never have to expose herself to any kind of objectification.*

She wondered what her boyfriend liked about her body? Maybe her bum? The truth was: the sexy fantasies that get him going are plush animals that copulate with each other. She of course didn't know anything about that, and so she plagued herself through pilates courses, to eliminate all hints of coziness on her fleshy shell. Sometimes she pulled on pants with lace edging instead of the plain coloured seamless cotton panties and that was the signal. *Take me, here and now, fast and edgy.* After the lukewarm intercourse she had her peace for approximately 8 to 10 days. Not to get her wrong, she really loved and sometimes even desired him. But sex was not on her agenda, it was not something she fancied, it was simply something you *go along with*.

Meanwhile at home her partner was struggling with emails. *I am an artist*, he thought. *Not a secretary.*

The problem with irony is that the initial intention ebbs away in perception. One can no longer clearly see whether it is ironic or has become the reality of, say, the artist and their practice or self-representation. Before his blockade and the existential crisis that came with it, he usually expressed his view in an ironic and exaggerated way, or should we rather say: he fled in it. It is much easier to hide behind the irony, behind ugly grimaces, behind kitsch, behind the protective consensus, look at me: *I am one of you too. I know this language, I speak it fluently.* Let's pat each other's shoulders questioningly, but nothing more. The questioning should never exceed the patting. It must not send impulses from your hand back into the brain; *a simple gesture, as vague as my language, as empty as my dreams.* It was perfect, no one asked questions. No one dared to question anything to avoid being exposed as uninformed.

For his artworks (before the blockade) he would do tons of research, deep in the interweb. In particular, it had addressed the practices of the furry community. This community dresses up as oversized stuffed animals. Putting on muscularly shaped animal bodies. The animals always look alike, they have large exaggerated manga eyes and walk on two legs, they look extremely harmless. The wearers of the costumes organize themselves via internet forums, and the fantasies range from cuddling to orgies.

*His practice became a joke he wouldn't get tired of telling. The joke that hits home. However, home to him only described the time span he was trapped with people that felt foreign. In a not so nice environment next to a can factory.*

## The Can Factory

The can factory was more than a factory, it was a form of identification for a whole small town. It was a place of work that could be occupied but never dominated. Unless one belonged to the founding family, but they always kept to themselves anyway. Except at Christmas parties, where they cultivated the impression that they belonged to the workers. Because without their valuable work, they themselves would be nothing. It was the work place of his parents, and their siblings, and also in his youth he had spent summers there and had done assembly line work. Overall it was neither bad nor good, but as he had grown older and had become more woke he started to realize that the pseudo socialist beliefs the factory tried to spread were not congruent with the political views of the workers or the residents.


He was not able to reply in a smart manner to a smart email (it takes one to know one), which he should have had answered two weeks ago. He had nothing to say, he could not say anything because there was nothing to say. In his frustration he opened Instagram and instantly regretted it when he saw that his nemesis had a fine blue lining around her profile picture. *Of course, what else could she do other than spamming the internet by posting boring Stories* – Mechanically, he tapped on her profile picture to see it. He didn't want to really, but his thumb was faster than his reason. So he saw a flood of pictures and text.



*just went through a massive*

*thunderstorm*

*there was a lightning strike so  
close that I felt it in my legs*

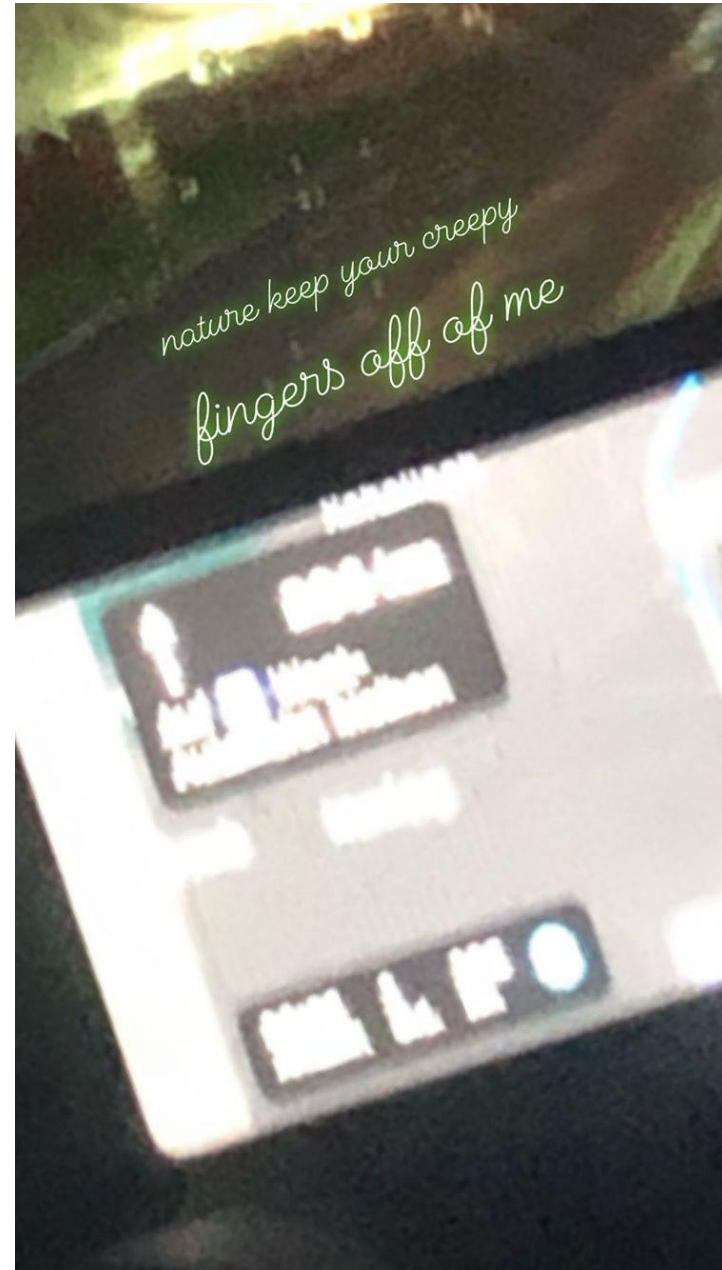


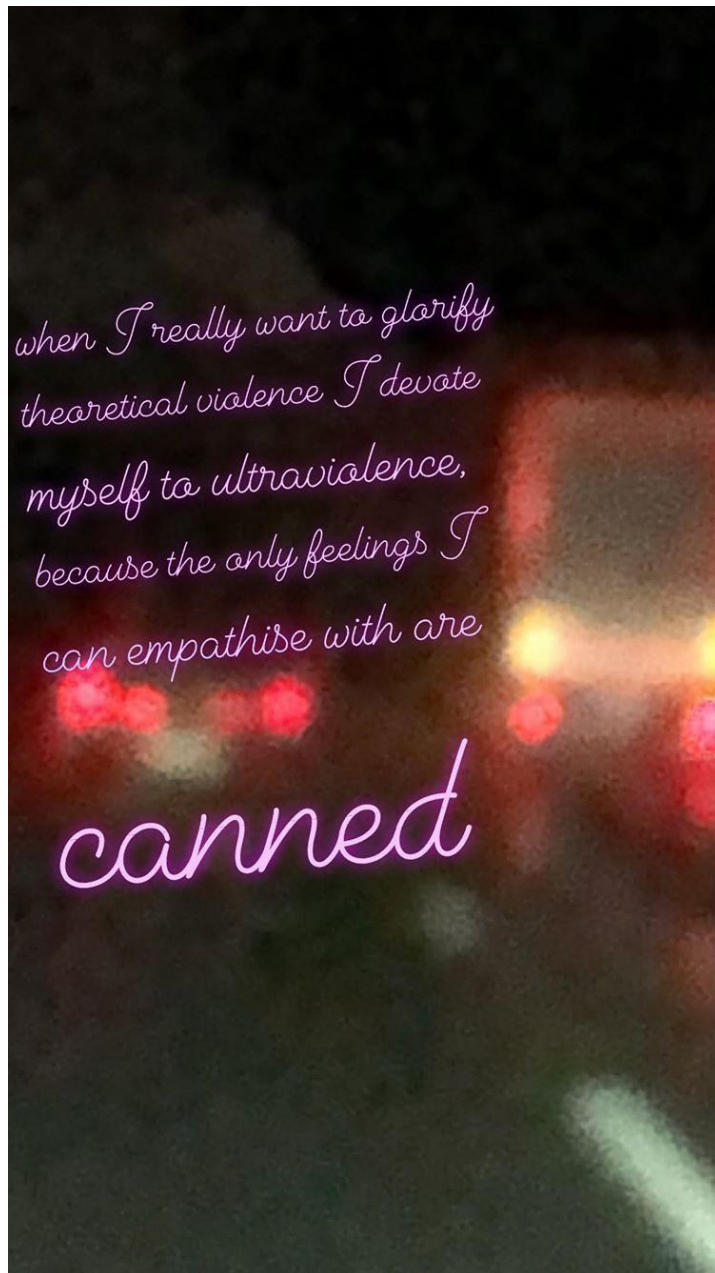
*it was as if my calf muscle  
fibre was pulled down by a*

*force*

but rather a human force,  
someone pulling muscle tissue  
down with their fingers. I  
remember when i was the  
epicenter of an earthquake,  
(last year) but it didn't feel  
like a natural phenomenon, it  
felt like a burglar stamping  
through the livingroom, or  
an elephant, or an elephant

burglar





He replayed the series of photos at least five times. *This simply can not be true. This simply can not be true. That stupid, stupid bitch! Why hasn't she really been struck by lightning, she could have just done herself a favour and be struck by lightning. At least that would be a tragically funny turn in her life.* His outburst was interrupted by the ringing of his phone and his girlfriend's name dissolved the posted content of the nemesis.

### The Cangirl

Girlfriend: *How are you? Were You able to get things done?*

Boyfriend: *No, maybe a little, I don't know.*

Girlfriend: *Whats wrong with you, you sound sad*

Boyfriend: *My Nemesis... she is painting cans as well*

Girlfriend: *How would you know about that?*

Boyfriend: *I just feel it, I saw her Stories on Instagram, and they gave me an odd feeling*

Girlfriend: *You are crazy, I am sure she does not paint cans, I am coming home now, do you want anything from the store?*

Boyfriend: *But what if she does? No I don't need anything, thank you, I am fine.*

He was not fine. When he read the word *canned*, he had the feeling that he knew exactly what would happen. Because he was convinced that he knew her inside out. She had been painting cans. Just like he did, secretly for a year now.

*You know, it is just what you expect to be painted by women, it is not that it is serving her cause, I should be the one painting cans. It is my thing. When I do it, there comes a twist with it. Apart from that it is my story, with the can factory and the problematic family, that runs it. The rumors of them having sympathies for the third reich during WW2. I have cobbled this narrative together, and it was really hard to do so. She just can't make it her own. There is a certain moment, just before you open a can,*



*and you can't quite be sure which content will present itself. LOL, did I just quote Forrest Gump? Anyways, sometimes it's the same with people. Not her, she's an open book. I like that in a way, because I never have had big expectations. Expectations have never been granted, nor taught to me. The only thing I know by heart is how to drown in disappointment. Its tacky and sticky drops dripping down my lumps. She bothers me so much that I almost think, maybe my girlfriend is right? Maybe my deep aversion, my constant disappointment about this person's existence is the only true form of love I have to offer.*

Profoundly surprised by his latest romantic realisation, he reopened Instagram. He typed her name into the handle, looked at the most recent post and had to foolishly grin as he tapped the screen twice. It showed a photograph of a dirty screen, a film still of a scene which is most certainly taken from a reality TV show. A man is wearing a statement t-shirt with the slogan NO RICH PARENTS / NO INVESTORS / NO ASSISTANTS / NO FAVOURS written all over his wide shoulders. Tapp Tapp.

The muffled sound of the “tapp tapp” was drowned out by a rattling sound. A key was trying to enter the lock – His girlfriend put the key into the hole, turned it, and lifted the lid – the lid to an uncertain content. It smelled fishy, pieces of the herringbone parquet as well as her boyfriend's remains were all over the place – greenish garnish and what seemed to be spices? dripped off the ceiling. Smelly transparent goo covered the whole apartment. It looked as if someone had a seizure while opening a fish can.

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