

GEORGIA STEPHENSON

Seasons

Originally printed as part of 'Miami Trip 3', published by Soup Gallery x Foolscap Editions to accompany Mitch Vowles' solo exhibition.

I

I've never been to Ocean Drive, the only East Coast I need is dreamland. A small town on the edge of the world where the sea isn't aquamarine, but a stripe of shimmering grey.

Still, when the sun sets we could be there. When orange blinks to pink to purple, every lift is drenched in a new shade of blinding light. My promise is to take you to heaven and I've been keeping it for months now.

II

The haul is gentle, half-asleep. Layers of tarpaulin and hoodies hold off the chill.

Then comes the unfurling, by a man named Simon who has kept me greased all winter long and visited on occasion for a solitary cigarette. He's my enthusiast. He even has a group of friends who show up especially to watch what they call 'the build' and this year is no exception.

Their necks crane and eyes widen at the giantess stretching her limbs. I shudder and splay. Galvanised vertebrae lock into place. I roll my shoulders and raise my arms. The genny revs. The fans applaud, and that's when I know I'm open again.

III

By the height of summer we're in full swing. It's like I never stopped. Jacked on love. Salted by the sea and seared by the sun. Every sense prickles with overload but my focus is the next sixteen to turn.

Up, up and there goes gravity. We pause at the crest and fall back into each other. Simon's nephew is in the playbox with the control panels, but he's just a stooge. Pushing those buttons means nothing anymore. I'm on my own current, moving with the waves, crashing over the bodies of strangers who cling to me. It feels so good to be needed.

They bottle it up all year, and let it out on me.

Every lift takes on a weight: of isolated kids forced to the fringes, of paranoid parents with the middle name of misery, of a secret chaos that can't be articulated. My g-force burns up the duties, and scatters the ashes into the sea. They stagger off, lighter. 'You're welcome.' – I call. This is what I was put on Earth to do. 'You need a fix, I can sort it.'

IIII

Months pass and under inky black my aching joints remind me: I was only built for a good time. For a thrill that lasts as long as the queue and not a second more. I fall for it every time. They rush back for another greedy fill and my jaw tightens. A bitter shift cracks in me.

"You think this is all I'm good for?"

I'll reveal how soft you really are. Doughnut flesh against metal bars. Here's your souvenir bruise – something to remember me by.

'You think you can handle me?'

Before you know it you'll be hunched around the back, vomiting on sore knees. Crawling back to virgin flings who think less of you now. Good.

'Oh, still haven't had enough?'

I'll remind you that no matter how much you earn, how loud you bark, how big the packet, how much of all that you're giving – that I'm the one who's in control.

And I'll make you beg to come back.

Every summer.

All of you.'

With each rotation, I punch the sky harder, hoping to fling them into another galaxy. To etch my own painful constellation on the night. My weight grinds into the honey tarmac, and wheels quietly wheeze 'don't leave me, I want you to stay'.