

**miniMAG**

*issue116*  
*crosswords in ink*





## Well of Misery

Sameen Shakya

Many make pilgrimage here, wishes in tow,  
And the number of coins at the bottom  
Could make a poor man rich, but little do they know  
This is not that sort of well. A rotten

God has made its home here. Each wish  
Corrupts, doubles the pain that the wisher  
Has sought to wish away. But this twist  
Never seems to become a clear picture

To the masses that come, in droves, to assemble  
Before a mouth that sucks up all their wealth  
Along with their wishes. They believe this a temple,  
But the only religion here's an in depth

Joke. But belief is often more powerful  
Than any fruit the tree of fact can bear,  
Because that fruit is bitter and folks are fools  
Who'd rather suck on the sweetness of hopes and prayers.



## the shades we color our fragments

Anshi Purohit

You convince yourself you have prowess and dignity, but you are more fable than fiction. You wrap yourself in a sage green weighted blanket with dots that look like how I thought stars speckled a night sky without light pollution—stars only give my orange-hued sky incurable acne. The blanket is thrifted, or it is a present I got you that you wore like you had thrifted it (to hide). You slip off your shoes, old converse and your head tilted because you aren't interested in my conversation about stingrays. I cannot tell whether you enjoy my company, but you linger at my side. Sometimes, you paint in shades of bruises, a spectrum of endless space. When you come over, I want to ask you where you left your kaleidoscope.

Green has always been your color. Every personality test we take, your color is green. Forest, army, pale, neon. But you were never interested in my conversations and I'll have to wade through those waters when I am forced to cope with abandonment's rough hands. I bet they are calloused but wrinkled in the right places, those places where Oracles smooth a trembling set of palms and paint a future. "I wish we could expand our definitions to include more," you chide. Your words pass through a dilated hemisphere and find my pale skin.

"What more do we need?" I say to you, already knowing it is the wrong question. If it even is a question, our limbs dangling in practiced acrobatics from a tire swing we are much too large for. If we bend decisions like a sculptor blowing glass or whittling at stone, where will we send our memories? They can fracture glass, leaving young stars and pitiful gargoyles in our wake. If we needed more than a clear sunset, ribs poking through crisp uniforms, brazen chests gleaming through the dense summer air (cicada season)—I would be the first to wallow in self pity. Because your sleeves never tangle your arms together. Your mother bakes casseroles and meal preps and doesn't forget to add salt to her curries. And yet, you still arrive at my doorstep, canvas and paints tucked under limp arms.

"I could die in my sleep if someone whispered in my ear," you lower your voice to match your vision and I almost recoil because how do you manage to say such things? Such horrific, beautiful mysteries packaged in styrofoam and bottled air. They can sell your voice and market its captive-ability.

Together, we sink into the harvested dew and sweet meadowgrass. Nobody is here, not a soul for what has to be thousands of prepackaged miles, if miles are sold. You can sell anything, anywhere. When I press my shoulder into your chest, I imagine you can sell every shade of our fragmented hemisphere.

## Making Love With The Words

Kushal Poddar

Words do you hear?  
I desire you  
in this premorning hush.  
Let's converse  
before we sleep, dip  
our heads in the id,

before  
we sink in that black and white  
where you were conceived  
and were killed many times.





# The Manifesto

K.T. Grant

Smoke rose like haze after cannon fire. Norfolk, one of the four MPs at the long table, hacked on the toxic grey plumes of her pipe.

Oil paintings of long-dead men lined the walls. Their porcelain skin blackened by years of tobacco and candle smoke. Cigar butts rolled ash onto the papers that decorated the table in a monochrome collage.

The right honourable gentleman for Uxbridge-Ruislip raised a hand to call the attention of his bickering peers.

“Now, now, now,” he said, picking up one of the pieces of paper in front of him, “The first line is the most atrocious,” he cleared his throat. “Our great and glorious nation sits on a knife edge: one side is the shining manifest of our forefathers and Lord in heaven, the other the sheer fall from control over our nation’s fields and wells.”

He looked about the room expecting to see his shock and horror mirrored. Blank faces stared through peals of smoke.

“It’s the first bloody sentence of our Party’s manifesto and it starts with great and glorious. Are our writers so inept that they don’t even know any descriptors past the letter ‘g’? Our countrymen won’t stand for that!”

After he said it, the MPs harrumphed at the now obvious stupidity.

“How about wondrous?” The right honourable gentleman for Richmond offered.

“You can’t have glorious and wondrous in the same sentence!” Uxbridge-Ruislip snapped, blond hair falling in his eyes as he raged.

Richmond only sat back, fiddling with the piled papers in front of him. As his long fingers dug through them, he saw the ink had begun to stain the table beneath.

“What about mighty?” Norfolk offered, leaning forward so her small voice could be heard by all.

The other three barely spared her a glance, before Maidenhead suggested, “What about our shining, glorious Empire?”

Uxbridge-Ruislip clicked his fingers, “That’s it! Onto the next sentence.”

“Now, Uxbridge-Ruislip.” All eyes turned back to the right honourable lady for Maidenhead, a thin woman with a grey bob of hair.



“Perhaps we are neglecting looking at our manifesto from a broader standpoint. Tell me,” she clapped her hands together, “Our mentions of the King. Do they seem... excessive?”

Norfolk went red in the face at the idea and together her and Uxbridge-Ruislip began banging their indignant fists on the table. Maidenhead tried to counter them as best she could while Richmond merely wondered if they’d still be serving the seared herring in the dining hall this late.

“Treason!” Uxbridge-Ruislip bellowed, his jowls wobbling.



“It’s not treason,” Maidenhead sighed, already having been accused twice by Uxbridge-Ruislip for blasphemy and heresy respectively. “Where is Witney? He drafted this abhorrent wording. Where’s that right honourable gentleman to explain himself?”

The short Norfolk shot up. “I’ll see if I can find him.” She scampered away from the table as if allergic to it, not even stopping when her hip collided with it, knocking over an inkstand. Uxbridge-Ruislip’s death threats towards Maidenhead calmed down as the three dabbed up the ink with crumpled drafts.

“I merely mean to say,” Maidenhead started, “That we are trying to invigorate the common man rallying with us. They have put us here, not the King, and it is their livelihood that will be most benefited by the Party’s plans. Surely, we want them to feel reassured and included when they hear our manifesto for the country’s future. Not something so lofty and above them as to involve the King, what—” she picked up her nearest draft and scanned it, “Eight times?”

“Do you really think the layman could ever understand the intricacies of strategy?”

“We should make him feel like he does. Perhaps we can take it down to five mentions- six mentions!” She quickly corrected as the gentleman for Uxbridge-Ruislip began to splutter again.

The grandfather clock chimed. In dread-filled unison, they looked up to its face. The clock stood as tall as the painted men and looked down upon the table with as much judgement. Midnight.

Uxbridge-Ruislip dropped the paper in his hand as if it burnt. A quick look to the MPs on the opposite side of the table showed both were still drinking in the passing of their deadline. He cleared his throat.

“I suppose we will have to stop there. Even if it isn’t perfect, the Party is expecting it tomorrow morning.” His grey eyes slinked over the MPs’ faces. “Richmond, I think you should deliver it to them.”

The short man startled, “What!?” Then, as quickly as his feathers had been ruffled, he settled again. “No, no I’m hardly the Party’s favourite to deliver such an important plan of action.”

“But you speak of it with such passion.”

“I know you, Uxbridge-Ruislip, would be far more passionate. I myself am hardly the voice the people want to hear.”

Uxbridge-Ruislip hated Richmond for being a clever coward. The door swung open, and the room flinched. However, it was not a righteous mob, but a portly man, with ruddy cheeks and a small wobbling chin.

“Witney!” Maidenhead exclaimed with a red-lipped smile. She stood, beckoning the right honourable gentlemen for Witney in. “Just in time.”

“Oh? For—” The man couldn’t get another word out, before Uxbridge-Ruislip also stood, arms wide, flopping paper in his left.

“Just the man we were about to summon. We’ve been updating that manifesto you made all those years ago. Made a couple of amendments but we still think it’s in line with... the spirit of your vision and we would be honoured if you would deliver it to the Party.” As he spoke, he approached the dumbfounded man in the door, handing over the battered wad of paper.

“Well there must be some mistake my good fellow,” Witney said, searching for Uxbridge-Ruislip’s eyes that were lost behind the mop of his hair. “I’m no longer on the Party’s front bench, I couldn’t possibly deliver it when there are better men to do so.”

“But, you planned it in the first place,” Maidenhead said, each word shaking with the anger she didn’t let show on her face. “Of course, you should.”

“Sorry old chap, I feel I would be stepping on your toes if I did. I only came in to deliver this to Richmond.” He thrust the manifesto back at Uxbridge-Ruislip and walked over to Richmond, who shrunk into his chair.

“Here you are,” Witney said with cheer, delivering the report he’d drafted up for the short man.

“Thank you, thank you,” Richmond whispered, each word quieter than the last.

Then with a jolly wave, Witney walked out again leaving the group to watch the door dumbfounded. The ancient clock’s ticks grew louder. They sounded like knives slicing through pork flanks by the time Uxbridge-Ruislip turned to Maidenhead.

“Perhaps you, Maidenhead?”

The right honourable lady for Maidenhead stood, a handful of the manifesto clenched in her fist. Anger compelled her to shake it at the man opposite, but she froze without a reasonable response. Richmond sat very still and pretended to be invisible.

“I think,” she started to drawl. “We all know one thing is certain. This manifesto is not ready. Our Party’s plan is clear, but it needs a vessel to present it to the country and this one is severely lacking.”

“I’m not even sure it’s all in order,” Richmond peeped up, looking at the pages of scattered thoughts.

The right honourable lady for Maidenhead ignored him and pulled up another sheet. “Look here! ‘It’s our duty’,” she read to the



the room. “to strive towards a better future for our countrymen, and to do so without delay or malpractice.”

There was a pause as Uxbridge-Ruislip looked between the paper and the pipe cleaner figure of Maidenhead.

“What’s wrong with that?” He finally said.

Maidenhead tutted. “It should be, it is our duty. ‘It is’ with emphasis you see. It’s not ready,” she said and in doing so, the other two MPs leapt to agree.

“The country deserves the announcement to be perfect,” Uxbridge-Ruislip said, “no matter what the Party wants, we must ensure it is perfect.”

“Yes, perfect,” Maidenhead said, fist hammering the table with such vigour that her colleagues were compelled to join in. Several sheets scattered to the floor.

“Yes. But tomorrow.”

The MPs stepped away from the table with a kerfuffle of grumbles and Richmond’s hopes for herring for dinner. He shut the door on the mountains of half thought out plans.



crowning teeth in the puddle emerald mine angel investor rag on a wire blue light in  
the crow's nest turbulent waves sin blossoms burning-face bodhisattva angle of sun makes glass grains sparkle  
small bic lighter paper plate upturned the child  
removed from the sidewalk  
tattoo parterry an anchor  
Nexus frozen authority of based

Jerome Berglund







## Are you an Eve Babitz or a Joan Didion?

Alex Avila

We have asked ourselves for decades ‘Are you a Marilyn or a Jackie?’

While womanhood defies binary experience, I think a better question after reading ‘Didion and Babitz’ is ‘Are you a Joan or an Eve?’ Both were amazing writers and enigmatic women within their own rights—and magazine writers during their time.

Reading the book gives you a sense that rather than opposites the pair of them were each two sides of the same aura—shadowy Gemini figures.

In honor of the book ‘Didion and Babitz’ by Lili Anolik coming out in November, I have created a quiz you might have found during the 70s in the very magazines they were writing for. So plug in that lava lamp, stretch out over that yellow bedspread, and keep the landline nearby—let’s find out who you are.

1. What sort of family do you come from?
  - A. Artists and dreamers
  - B. Salt of the earth practical folk
2. Are you...
  - A. Social when you have to be
  - B. Social to distract from the screaming inside
3. Poetry
  - A. As a discipline
  - B. A bore
4. Personality?
  - A. Flinty
  - B. Romantic
5. Sex?
  - A. ...
  - B. Like breathing
6. There at a party for
  - A. Individuals
  - B. The group vibe—the scene

7. During a fight
  - A. Ice them out
  - B. 'Here's my list of grievances'
8. Perspective on marriage
  - A. Life companion
  - B. Don't let your husband get in the way of finding your soulmate
9. Revenge?
  - A. Not worth it (unless it's in print)
  - B. Delicious

10. At the beach
  - A. Cover that up
  - B. Show it off

11. Reading

Trick question! Both women loved to read. Both were curators. Babitz trained herself like a star in the studio system—voice, laugh, language, smile—a Hollywood native she knew what a smile looked like when it was 30 feet tall. Didion did the same, but scrubbed herself of so much to become cool and removed.

12. Which are you?
  - A. Superego
  - B. ID

13. How do you handle rejection?
  - A. It's a part of the game
  - B. It's a rejection of me

14. The secret to making art
  - A. Discipline
  - B. Inspiration

15. Style (clothes)
  - A. Fashionable (almost sexless)
  - B. Fashionable (sexy)

16. Movies?
  - A. A necessary evil
  - B. Movies are it.

17. Star fucker, or fucking stars?
  - A. Star Fucker
  - B. Fucking Stars

18. What part of California will you ride or die for?
  - A. Northern
  - B. Southern



19. Emotions?  
A. To be shared deliberately in writing  
B. To cover with fun
20. Which are you?  
A. Paradox  
B. Mystery
21. Clubs? Sororities?  
A. Great if you can get in  
B. No thank you
22. What kind of artist are you?  
A. Inside the inner circle looking out  
B. Outside the inner circle looking in
23. In *Gone with the Wind* Rhett Butler says 'Reputation is something people with courage can do without.' Which is more important to you?  
A. Reputation  
B. Courage
24. What's your energy?  
A. Masculine  
B. Feminine
25. You tend to  
A. Under indulge  
B. Over indulge
26. Which is you?  
A. Minimalist  
B. Maximalist
27. You are more...  
A. Ice queen  
B. Lewd angel
28. Jim Morrison was  
A. A bad boy  
B. A nerd trying to be cool
29. Rock and Roll is  
A. Amazing  
B. Meh
30. Can you keep a secret?  
A. Mum's the word  
B. Secrets are worth telling
31. What compels your ambition?  
A. The work  
B. Rage

32. What's the worst thing someone could say about you?

- A. Someone died on your watch
- B. You're impossible
- C. You're a talentless groupie
- D. You're cold

33. First draft?

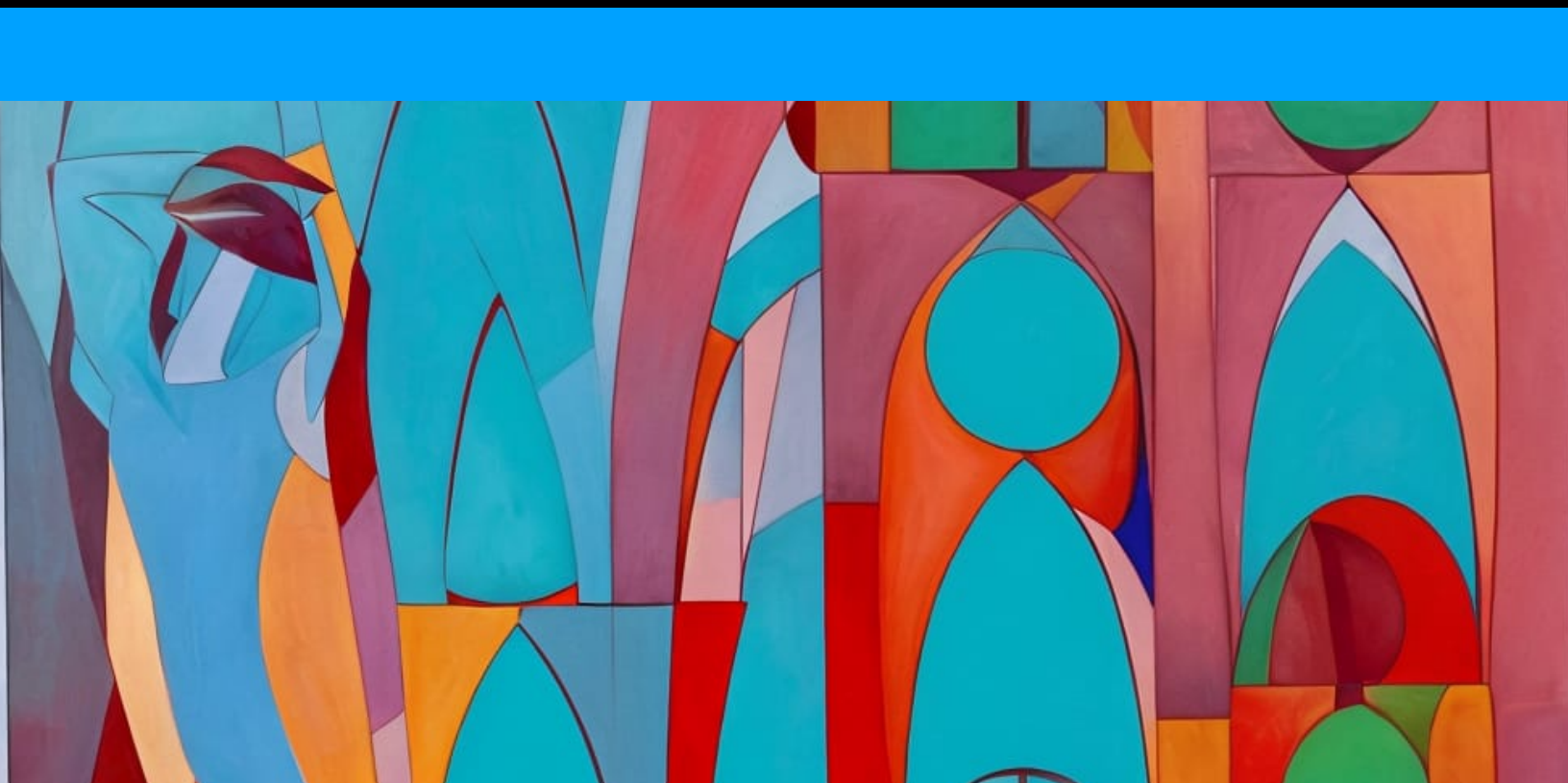
- A. Typewriter
- B. Handwritten

*If you answered mostly As:*

*You are more like Joan Didion. You love your work and love to investigate those around you. No one can keep the truth from you. You have a small inner circle that protects you. You're more likely to favor a simple dress than something extravagant. Chic. You are willing to be unpopular for the sake of good work but you are hard to get to know at times. You've been accused of being cold, and removed—but you know yourself. Make sure to not ignore the joys of life and do not sacrifice everything for your work. Let people get to know you a little.*

*If you got mostly Bs:*

*You're like Eve Babitz. You live wildly— not necessarily in your lifestyle but always with your ideas. You know how to make an impression with your clothes (or by wearing none!) You know how to appreciate the under-appreciated and are not easily swayed by what others think is cool. You follow your passions down the rabbit hole and despite your dedication sometimes people underestimate you and how much you're paying attention. Do not sacrifice your ambitions but stop sacrificing your sanity for the sake of your art—whether that's a beautiful life you want or a novel you're writing. Lean into your intellect a bit more and allow yourself to enjoy peace in your life.*





## Mapmakers With Their Eyes Closed

Nancy Machlis Rechtman

They say that love is everywhere  
But I wonder if that's true  
Since I've found it's everywhere but here  
And I think maybe I've ended up on an uncharted island  
That no one is able to find.

I've always been told that you should love yourself  
Before love can come to you  
Which can sound like calling a dog to come  
While you hold out a biscuit in your hand  
As enticement  
But I've found  
That I can't love myself  
Or believe in love  
When I'm hopelessly lost.

I guess I've made too many wrong turns  
Or studied too many maps drawn by  
People with their eyes closed  
Because I've been stuck in the quagmire  
Of loss and misdirection  
And I just want to find my way  
To the heart that I've been promised is waiting for me  
Residing between love and pain.





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