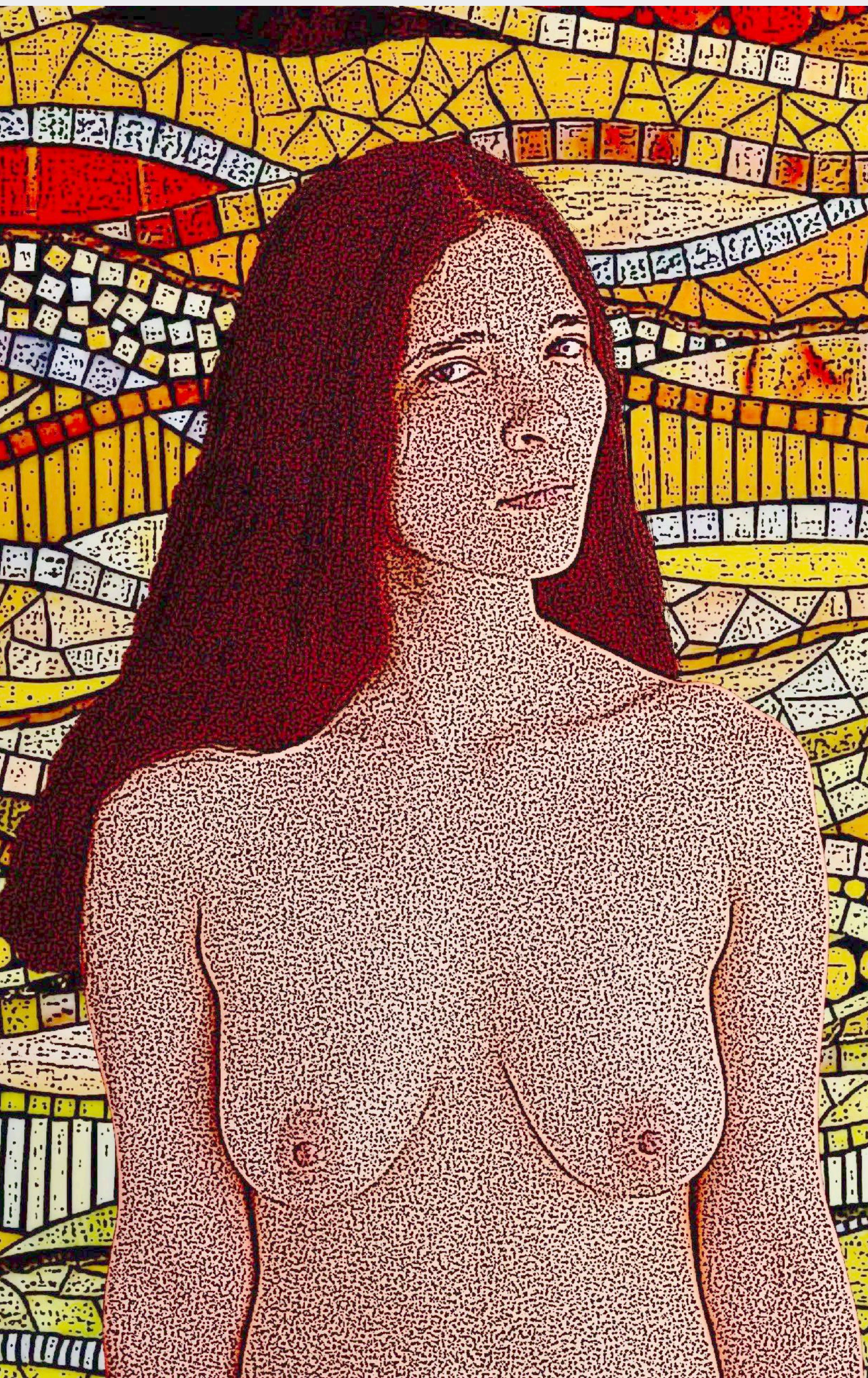
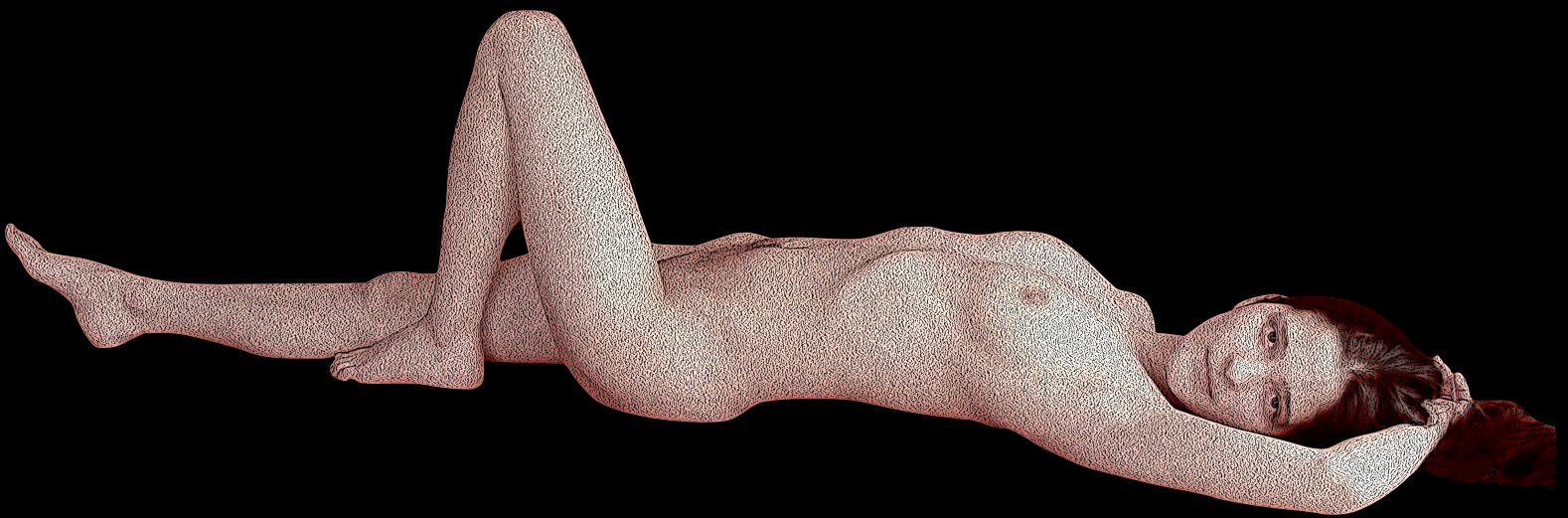


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Strathpine, December

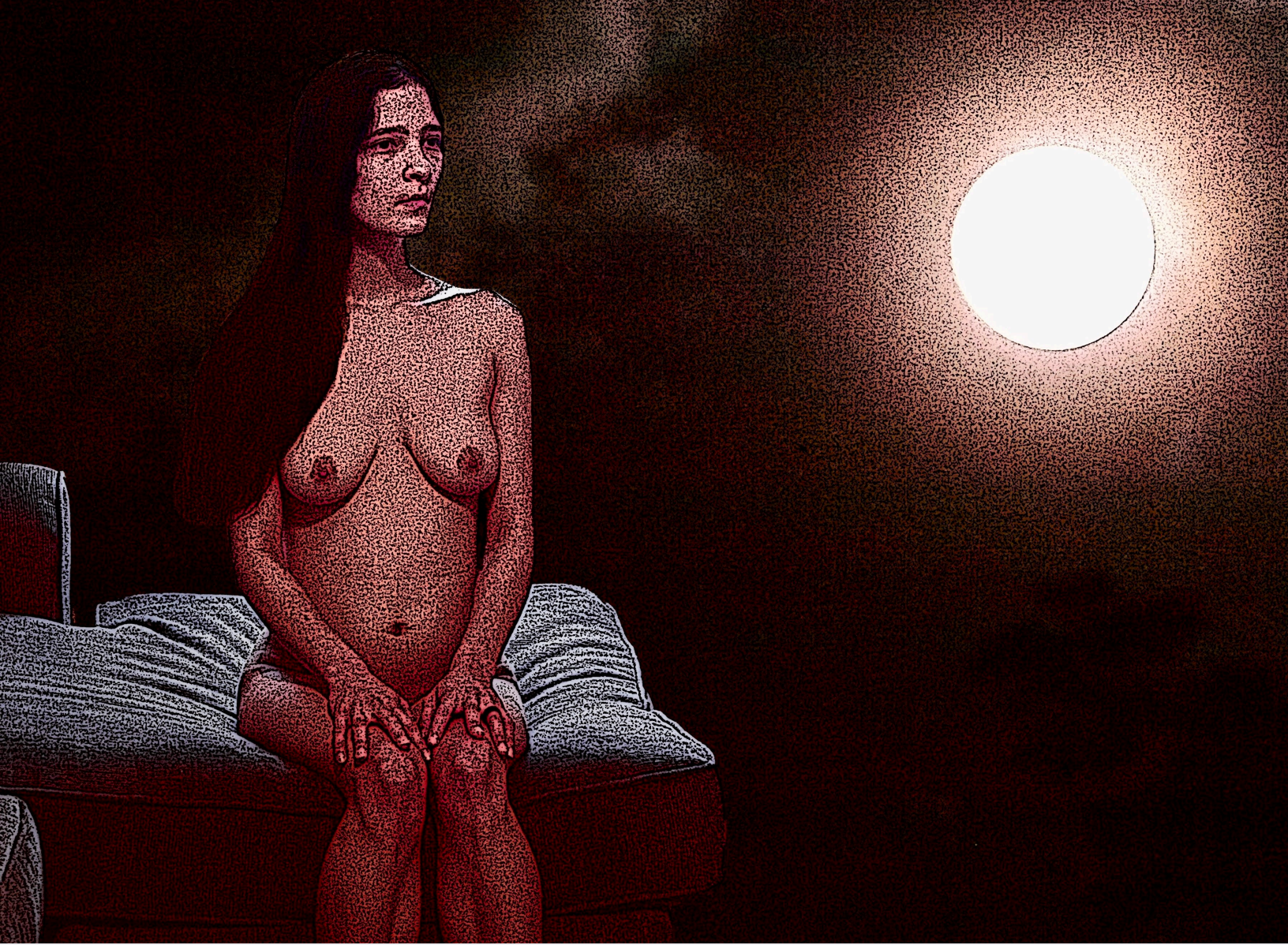
Jack Norman

While and here the night's emerged—it is Christmas...
Our cars, the fields. The park side is flooded with rain.
I am quiet behind my breath because it has just now
dawned on me... Cold eaves, the gray light, summer rain!

The car parks are pocked and worn across Kensington.
Rainwater in the creek goes under the litter. And strong!
But for days, it can't last, black ducks, empty wine casks.
Quiet Christmas. The retailers are working. Hot, and wet.

The silver wrappers, loose foods, McDonald's, the children.
Where the summer holidays are... "Reduced Activity Period."
And now when Grimbold finds the Eastern side of the Pelennor!
Last hours of the working hours, this Christmas, non-clinging...

For good!—while it whiles away.



Fallible Gods

Julian Gallo

To fall in love is to create a religion that has a fallible God
—Jorge Luis Borges

She is certainly not perfect. Neither is he, but he does know that he loves her and he knows she loves him.

Sometimes he feels his love for her far exceeds the love she has for him and that's okay. Sometimes that's just the way it goes.

She is not perfect, he is not perfect, and nothing is ever perfect.

Someone once joked that he was her God. This made him laugh but it was also embarrassing, and she explained why the joke was made when she didn't have to. He knows she looks up to him and to some extent he worships the ground she walk on, and often kisses those beautiful little feet covered in blisters and Band-Aids.

They must be careful not to build altars to one another, for they are fallible Gods, and these types of Gods are almost always mysterious, unpredictable, and inconsistent. They may give each other offerings, but they also must be careful not to take them for granted. A fallible God can wreak havoc on the soul, and nothing is worse than having someone you look up to come crumbling down around your feet, leaving you devastated, betrayed, destroyed, making you question the nature of everything.

New York City, October 2003

Memory

Swapna Sanchita

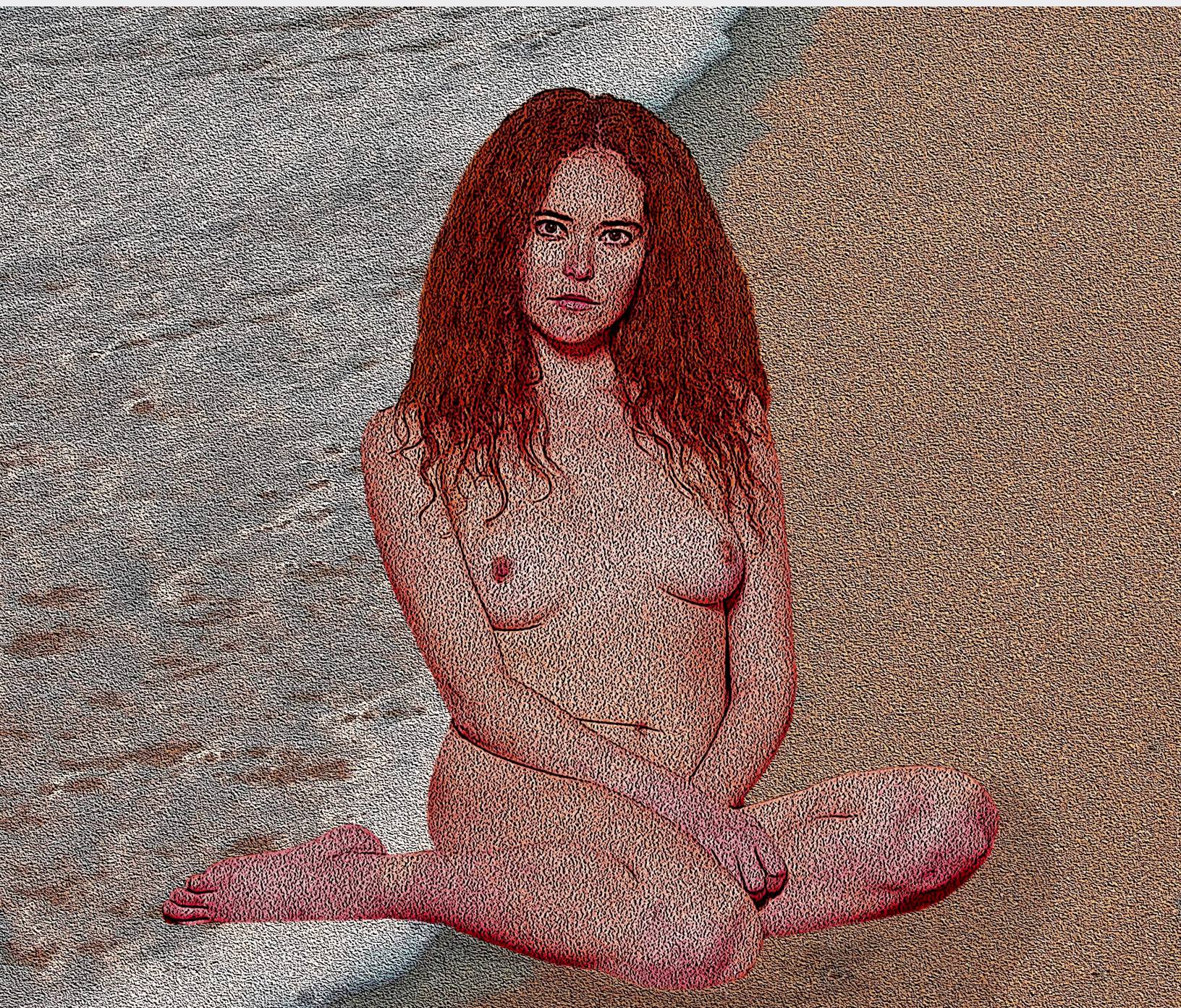
The Amygdala tells me roses mean love
The redder the better, overwhelmingly.

The Amygdala tells me to disengage, run
This, the fragrant fear of the tryingly tangly

Overpowers all my memories of the softness
Of red petalled aromas that should soothe.

I believe in the science and let it lead me
Into a labyrinthine escape, alone but free.





How does a marriage crumble?

Sukriti Patny

She asked herself at 7, and now at 36, she is beginning to find the clues.

- 1) *Eyes brimming with tears that went by unnoticed*
- 2) *The unchanged water in the vase*
- 3) *All the words they held back*
- 4) *Absconding patience*
- 5) *That one unreturned hug at 2 am*
- 6) *The way they both flit back to the screen mid-conversation*
- 7) *Silent dinners*

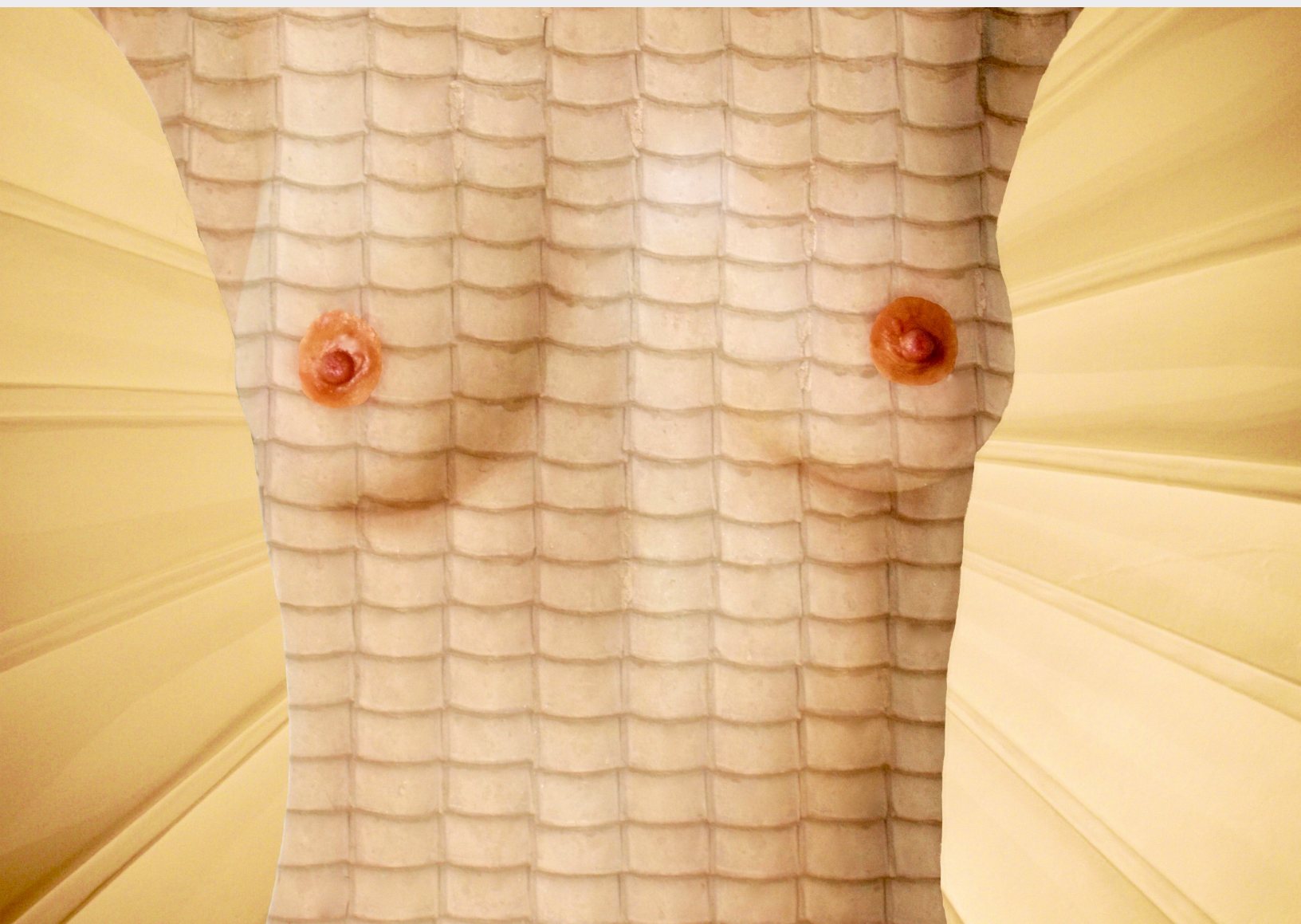
a harsh nap

O.P. Jha

napping beside a passionless partner
looks like watching the fire
from a distance in the winter

here, breathing sounds as uncared chirping
of an angry bird in a broken nest

here, after reaching the destination
words ask the addresses of meanings.



dry water

Prarthana Vijayakumar

i drag a wire through gold teeth and you mistake it for the finish line and drag my body with you through it as i crumple into a heap of discarded poetry and latent rainseeds. you feed me chess pieces and the five-seven-fives of haikus and soon my insides are glowing like a scythe over the speckled skies of my city. i almost quench you, almost bury. almost. you, a desert oasis abandoned by the bandits. thirst hovers like a warm breath above the fleeing armies. you string me up (not in tune) and berate the breeze to play me but all it does is make my own poem wage a war against me and almost get me killed by the riverbank where wives dive into blazing pyres and troops of ants lead the skirmish towards the biggest thing the clouds look to drown before cracking apart into pieces of words that moan in every poem of yours. you pick up marbles from the begging bowl of ibises without remorse and the planet twists and throbs between the hem of your forefinger and thumb and you unflinch the green smile on your face and continue talking about the scorpion that learnt how to play a piano while i roll the birds into the fabric of the makeshift tents you will go to weep in.



Because i was straight

Kit Willett

Because I was straight, I could:

- tell my folks there's nothing wrong
- hang with girls and be a player
- feign desire to get her keen
- get called fag and brush it off

Because I was straight, I avoided:

- sex at every cost
- porn—who'd look at dicks?
- showering when I could
- urinals (like the plague)

Because I was straight, I only:

- slept with women (once a year)
- met with men with three or more
- touched myself to stop a dream
- cried at night when all alone

Because I was straight, I could:

- only hold one thing as true
- only be in love with you



A Lie

Emma Sheppard

When she's bored she tears at her own cuticles
little drops of blood press into the pages of the books she's reading
rips flesh from fingers to give herself something to do.

That's a
lie.
Not when she's
bored. When
she's worried.

It's how
her brain
works.
It runs too fast
to find
fears
futures
fantasies.

It runs ahead
to warn
her. Nothing
has happened
yet.

It runs so fast
it bursts
out of her
body. On to her
hands.



small talk

Bradley David Waters

so much has changed
it seems
there will never be
anything new again
to pass us by in bliss and ruin
and under wet umbrellas
waiting
we'll say vaguely to someone of
mediocre radiant atmosphere
there it went
and nothing will ever be new again
and we better never return
and we better get there again
sooner than later
or else
all the other things
all over again

Healthy Communication

Meeni Leevi

I am trying to grow a pearl
Like a tree
Taking the irritant deeper
Within myself like roots
Burrowing into fertility
Coating it with protective nacre
Until it blooms beautiful

I do not want to gift you
A grain of sand or misplaced morsel
Or even this one tacky bead
Placed just right
Where it will hurt
So unlike a seed
And yet still hopefully sprouting
Sensual

I want to give you something
You can love easily
So I embrace the discomfort
Rub my arms around its rough bark
I let it bite at me

Until it doesn't anymore
Polished by the love I gave it
By which I mean time
By which I mean all those parts of me
I didn't know
What else to do with

I hold it and I let it grow
Uncomfortable enough
For my throat to spit it out
Round and white and valuable
Or more likely

I keep it inside of me
Until you pry my body open
With your hands or a knife
And find it resting on my tongue
Like an apology
For not telling you sooner
About this living thing
Digging tunnels through my insides
Which I didn't want you
To dirty your fingers with

Shadow People

Megan Diedericks

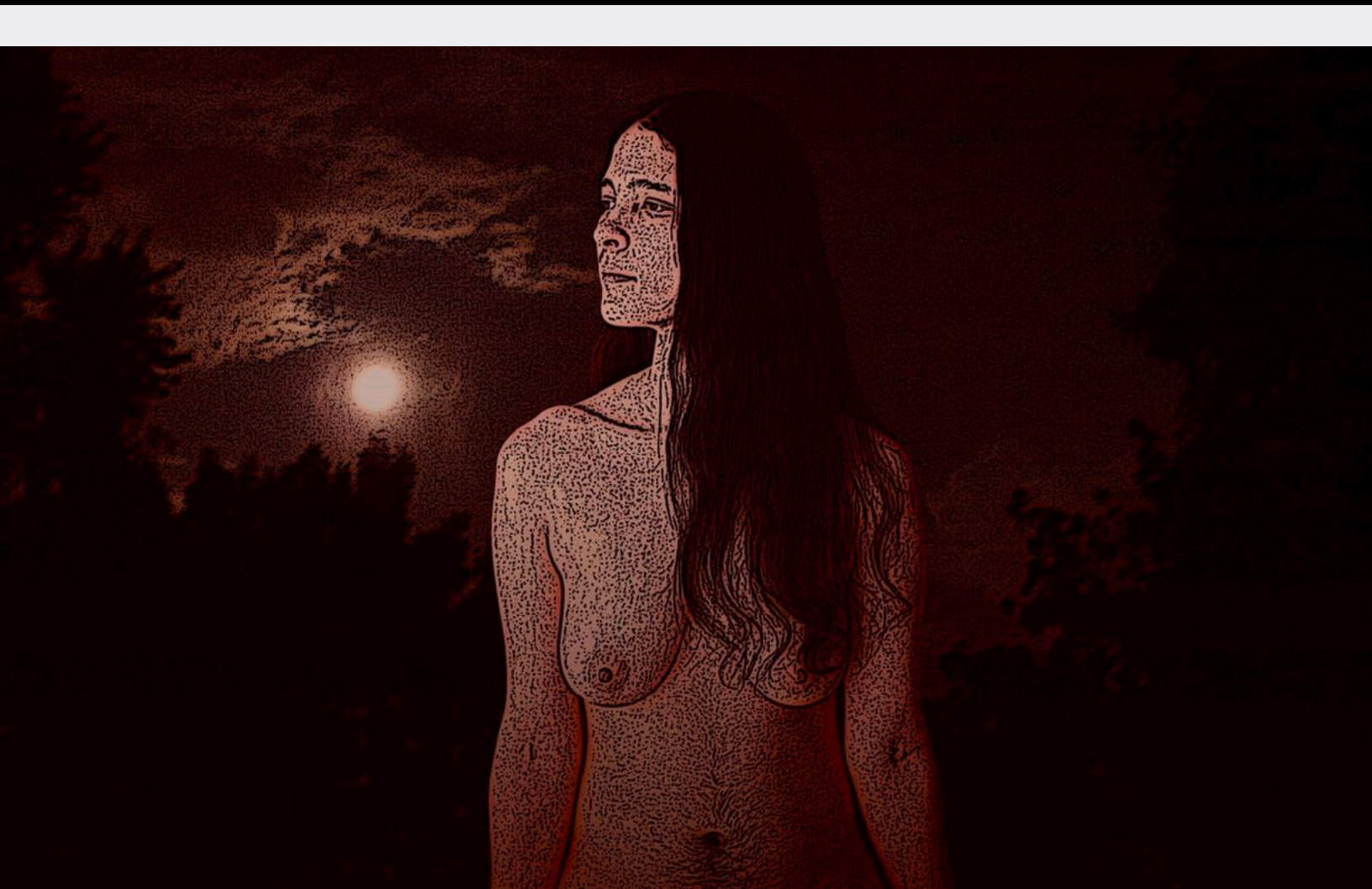
Lost in the abyss of a ninety degree angle,
my thoughts use my fears to mangle;
did I just see what I thought I saw?
My heart feels so raw
and from the corner of my eye, a claw.

When I'm face to face with a door without a handle,
there's nothing there except my own shadow holding a candle.

I'd walk away, I'd turn and run
but something is making me stay here.
Over my head, beneath my feet, something reaches out—
begging me to remember
how things were just last December.

It all collides in my mind
and implodes into nothingness,
but when our cosmic strings
touch, and I imagine rings
on fingers that aren't mine—
it takes me back in time.

But from my current stance,
just a single glance
reassures me that I'm better off
being haunted by your memory
rather than having you next to me.





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Book: All the Wind's Unfinished Kisses

01: Searching for a Pattern
02: A Sudden Stillness
03: The Radiance of Nakedness by the Rising Moon
04: What the Mist Exchanges with Daylight
05: Between the Waves
07: Tickled Nakedness
08: A Startling Encounter with the Unknown
09: Restless As Moonlight Linger in Your Hair
10: The Delirium of the Blue Velvet Blindfold
12: Moonlight Guiding Whispers

“Strathpine, December” by Jack Norman
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“Fallible Gods” by Julian Gallo
FB: <https://www.facebook.com/julian.gallo/>
Books: <https://tinyurl.com/5b5yh6w7>

“Because i was straight” by Kit Willett
Website: <https://kitwillett.tarotpoetry.nz/>
Book: Dying of the Light (Wipf and Stock, 2022)

“Memory” by Swapna Sanchita

“How does a marriage crumble” by Sukriti Patny
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Substack: sukritipatny.substack.com

“a harsh nap” by O.P. Jha
Twitter: @OPjha17

“dry water” by Prarthana Vijayakumar

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“small talk” by Bradley David Waters
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“Shadow People” by Megan Diedericks
Insta: @meganreflects
Website: bit.ly/megandiedericks
Book: the darkest of times, the darkest of thoughts

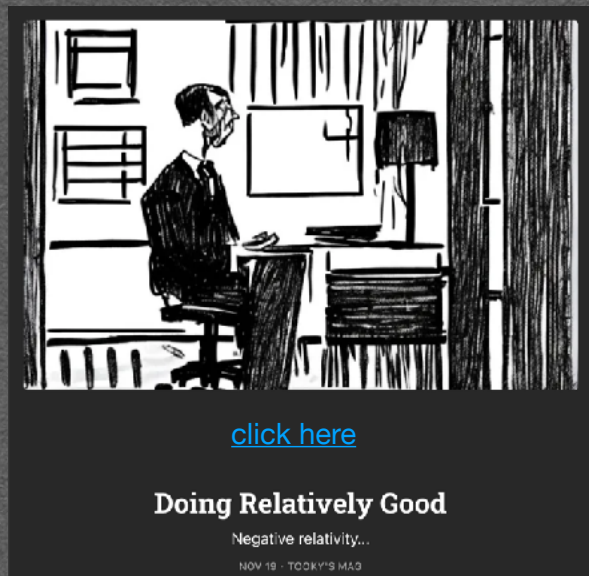
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All the Wind's Unfinished Kisses



Bill Wolak

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Man Cooking: A Pagan Story

Written by Daniel Gavilovski

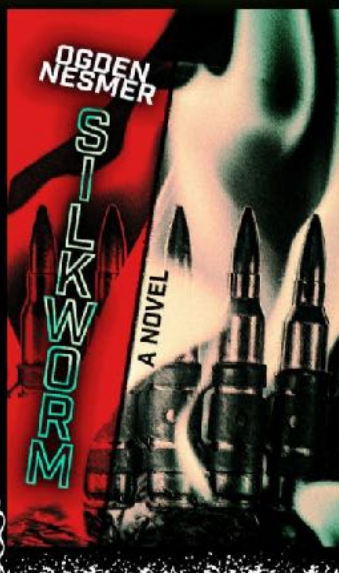


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