







## the feast

Kayla Donohue

sensationalist stories and  
salacious whispers  
gorging yourself on gossip

my bleeding heart served  
on a platter  
for you to devour

suck the bones clean  
let my blood spill  
from the chalice

you'll sleep soundly,  
overstuffed on the fodder  
of my darkest night





## Fear

NDS

It's all so easy

Once it's all so clear

That all of life

Can run on fear

Nothing will make you want to do something crazy like fear.

Real fear, fear of something or someone that is looking you in the eyes with fury behind those desperate lines.

Fear of danger and I'm not talking about the common terminology thrown around in the media of fear.

A fear of the *unknown*, a fear of global warming or lung cancer or a fear of the risk of something that is not quite here yet.

This type of tabloid fear is used to keep the public spending as their worried minds think less of the tomorrow, which is always losing its guarantee, for the current now; Stimulating the economy with quick plastic purchases and placing their presents of the Present moment as rewards for making it through this fearful world.

That type of fear can be read about or is lightly chatted about in coffee shops. Real fear, that has to be experienced as words do no justice to the sensations that are present when you are genuinely terrified.



# You meet someone at a bar...

I.M.SAW

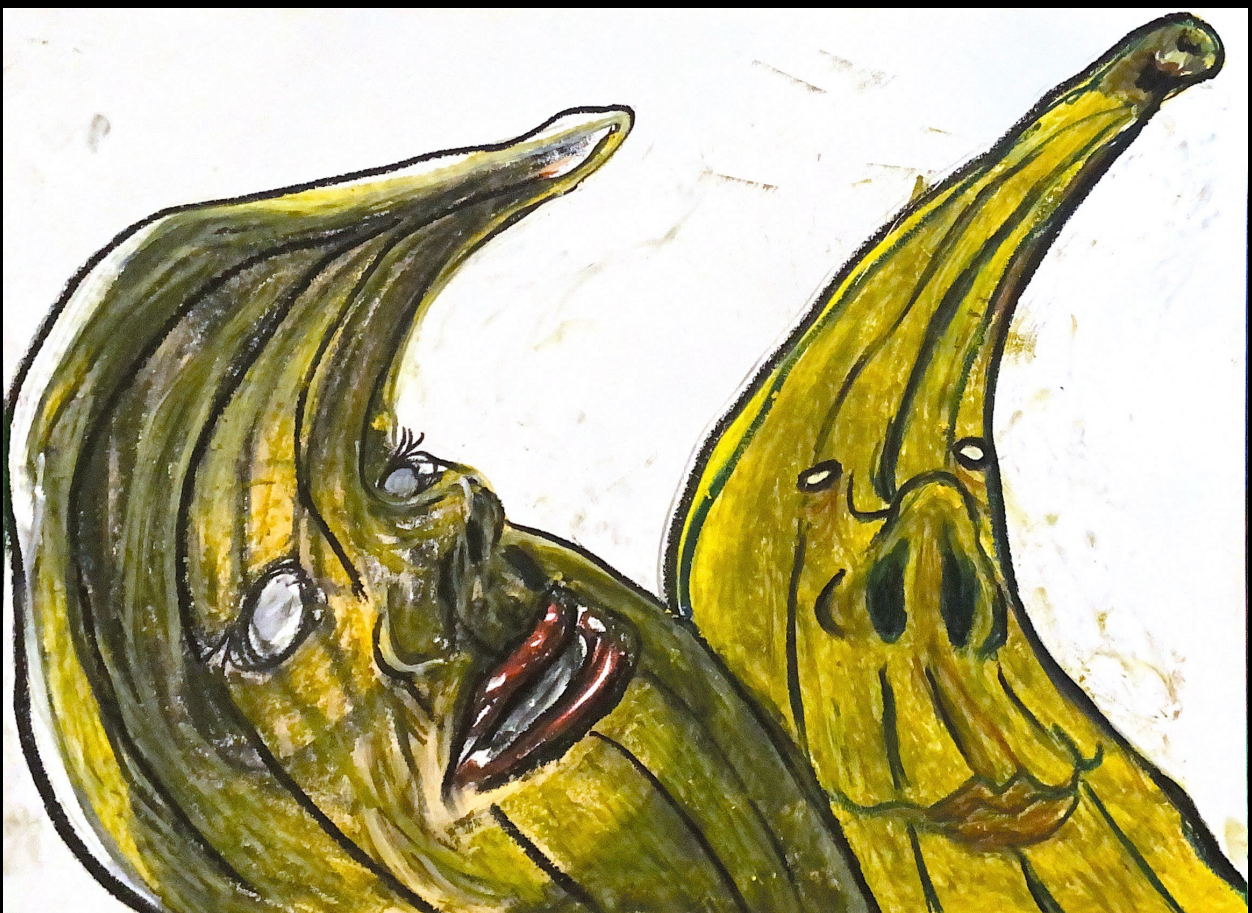
You meet someone at a bar, and you smile at them awkwardly, and they, God knows why, smile back at you. You tell yourself that there is no way they're smiling at you, and you glance behind to check if you are being pathetic, like your father, standing in the way of someone else's smile. But no, that smile is yours my friend. They approach you, and say hi, and even offer to buy you a drink. How about that?!

They are pretty, spontaneous, and brainy, and you get this feeling that you swear you haven't felt before, and call it with different flaky names at first, because you don't want to jinx it. You also don't want anyone, including yourself, to know how happy you are right now, because you're too scared something will happen—like the lights would go off for a second and that would be enough time to lose them to someone else in the dark—and you haven't been happy in a while, maybe never before.

A few months after, you're not yourself anymore—you're confident, assertive, secure in your feelings. Good job! Who was that other guy, anyway? So, you admit to yourself that its love after all and head to Costco that same night to find them the perfect ring, because **THEY ARE PERFECT**. Surprise, surprise—they love it, say yes, and even tear up the receipt to show you they mean it.

They are the real deal, you tell your mom and sister, and wish Grandma Ester were still around to meet them because she would have loved them so much that she would have insisted on baking the wedding cake herself. It's real love—love at first sight, you tell your friends. The kind that is pure, rare, and destined, even though you never believed in destiny before. But maybe it's not too late to start believing, is it? You're convinced it's the kind worthy of novels and screens; the love that is born to last, the kind that knows no end. Maybe God and the angels are real too, after all?

A year later, they're the devil—the worst thing that ever happened to you. The reason you've become your father, mother, and sister all rolled in one. You tell yourself all these good things about yourself, and the bad things about them and you make yourself feel better about



walking away. No, you're not your father, so you don't just walk away. Instead, you work late, drink more, and you lie awake at night next to them, thinking about what went wrong and you don't have a clue. But if you're sure of anything, it's that it's all their fault. You were good to them—too good—and they took advantage of you. They took you for granted.

Then you're out alone on a Saturday, and your partner is out alone too. You drink your drinks, and meet someone behind you in the bathroom line. You don't smile at them; they smile at you. They laugh at your jokes—without you telling them—and suddenly you feel charming and mysterious again. When was the last time you felt that way? Actually, have you ever felt that way before? You think: wait a second, maybe I am not damaged after all. Maybe I am salvageable. Maybe, just maybe, there is still hope for me, and I should end things, and start

again. You tell yourself if there is hope for me, ever, I'll get a sign tonight.

The restroom gets clogged and goes out, so you turn to them in line and say, "Now what?" They tell you they live close by, and offer to let you use their restroom. But you've seen this movie before, and you know exactly what that does to a marriage and a family, and you're absolutely not your piece-of-shit father. So, you lift your hand to show them your ring, and they say, "Married people still need to shit." You laugh and they laugh. Everyone laughs.

An hour later, after wine, cheese, twinkies, and three stories about your crazy mother and sister, you find yourselves naked on their bed. It's awkward—very awkward—and it takes you a while to get hard. They keep asking you if you were in, and to fuck them harder, and to do it like you mean it, and to please, pretty please, stop talking about your partner and the guests at your perfect wedding.

You go quiet and softer, and they politely ask if you mind them finishing themselves. You don't mind at all; in fact, you're relieved. This way, you tell yourself, you're nothing like your father, because you didn't enjoy it. You didn't follow through. You didn't satisfy them. Actually, you're the complete opposite of your father! You sacrificed for your family. You denied yourself a chance at love—a reason to walk away. After they're done, they get into their pajamas and yawn eight times, yet you're still talking about the perfect ring and your perfect wedding. They kindly kick you out, saying tomorrow is Sunday and they apparently work on Sunday. Surprised and still drunk, you ask if they are a pastor.

You find yourself standing outside your apartment—your love den—with your fly open and half sober, not knowing how you got there. You stare at the dark windows for a while and convince yourself that your partner is still out, and they're cheating on you, or worse, smiling at someone in a bar and buying them a drink on the family's credit card. You pick up a rock or something and throw it at your living room's window and it shatters. A light flicks on and you see a dark silhouette in the broken window that looks exactly like your mother.

What the hell am I doing back here? You mumble to yourself as you stumble away, alarmed and determined to find your way back to your apartment and partner. You need to tell them something very important. You need to talk to them right now. You need to confront them. You need to set the record straight. Sure, you don't know exactly what you'll say to them, but you're confident you will once you see them.

As you make your way into the darkness of a back alley, you recall a conversation your mom had with your sister after she got married when you were about ten. Suddenly, thoughts of tiny, glowing babies worm



their way into your mind. You start to feel something you've never felt before, too scared to put it into words, afraid it might slip away in the pressing dark around you. Maybe mom was right, you tell yourself. Maybe she wasn't so crazy, after all. Maybe this is it—what you really need to talk about tonight.



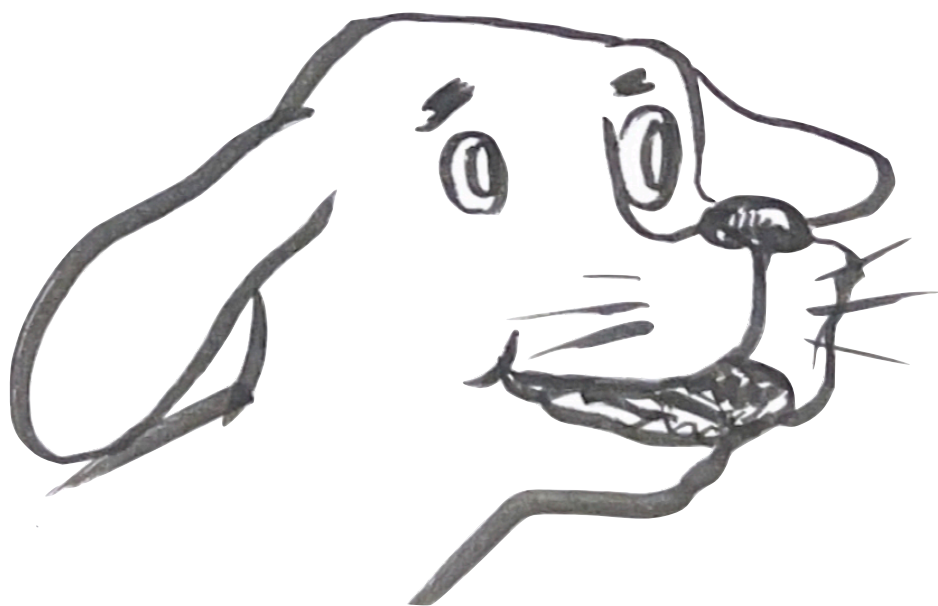


## Secret Notes

Pam Avoledo

He unfolds like a secret note taped to the cupboard door, pressing his sentences into me. You're beautiful, you're so beautiful, he says, his mouth against my ear. The brush script tattoos his body, the grooves of the letters in my fingers, the ink in my nails. Near his shoulder, a blank spot, a bruise. I apply ice. I apply heat. I wrap a bandage around it. Only now it has begun to fade. Only now the lines have begun to appear, forming the words I should've said years ago.

My hands sink through his flesh, reaching through his bones, finding his heart. His chest heaves. His ribs crumble, my nerves searing his arteries. I cradle it, counting the beats, bearing the weight. And when he's gone, I carry it to my bedroom, listening, lulling me to sleep. I place it on the counter, examining the chambers, learning a new path towards him.



HTBS

He was a fucked-up guy, so to perpetuate the metaphor, Orson Jay Ackermann white-knuckled the lily-white edges of the toilet's porcelain tank and let the businessman dig into his asshole with his unwashed and, fortunately, uncondomed cock. The pain was as welcome as an old friend—not that he had any, or a beloved childhood meal—not that he cared for his mother's cooking. This was as real as real got and was, for that moment, the only thing in his universe: A blinding, searing nova, bringing into existence touch, taste, sensation, and absolute.

Earlier that afternoon, he was watching his puppy sleep. The little thing was a seven-week-old German Shepherd bought from a Gypsy woman for a five-dollar bill and directions to a run-down campground upstate. What the hell, he thought; it wasn't a beautiful dog, but it was something. It couldn't smell, apparently. What kind of dog can't fucking smell? But, hey, what the hell.

Then the drop came. It seeped into his skull. That poison runoff.

His eyes wandered to the corner of his coldwater flat. Huh. The fifteen-pounders. Over there, next to the black milk crate of Dells and Gaye records, sitting in stoic certitude like a pair of Easter Island heads.



Oh. Sweet Jesus. Sweet fucking god. He was a dog murderer, wasn't he? Well, I mean, not until now, but what if he was? What if he put on 'What a Night,' cranked up the volume so Chuck Barksdale's hoarse war cry drowned out the whines, and then he'd have all the time in the world to-

The man came. Then came the deafening firecracker pop. And afterward, came the body of the pervert toppling over Orson, sliding off his naked back, and meeting the hard blue plastic with a muted thump that could hardly be heard but certainly felt.

Wisps of smoke wafted up through a gnarled buttonhole. He froze and focused on it. Cried. Screamed. The muzzle flash burned into his retina for a second, but he was able to drop down and slide his bleeding body over the tiles to the next stall. He couldn't even hear himself scream.

His nova shrank, time-reversed, and nothing new was created. It was, actually, the same fear as always. The reason he couldn't look at his own niece. He'd go into the bathroom and cry. He now went to the bathroom to do other things, but he couldn't even get away with that this time.

Somebody was doing something he should be doing to himself. The metaphor reached its conclusion when the door of the last stall opened and his nova blinked, smiled, and peaced out into oblivion.

In a brick-lined flat on 7th Street, a puppy slept soundly on a green pillow and dreamt of soft grass.





## Heartbreak Anniversary

JK Kim

**Balloons** once vibrant now sag in despair—  
**Are** we mere whispers in desolate air,  
**Deflated** joys linger;

**Guess** the revelry was a mirage in the night,  
**They** promised—now absent from sight.  
**Look** around—solitude's grip is tight.

**Lifeless** echoes of mirth that never was real,  
**Like** specters of a friendship, no warmth to feel.  
**Me**, alone, with the deflated balloons forlorn appeal.



## Sweetness Is A Luxury

Ivana Tubić

The rage is ubiquitous  
But missing the intensity in voice and movements to flood the streets  
Like it used to  
When they were discouraged  
And the nation sunk deeper into delusion to cope  
Struck by an epidemic of reptiles  
With see-through human-like skin  
Who go after the young  
Knowing the gullible ones make for the best prey  
With each bite  
The empire loses a line in history  
Replaced by an incomprehensible pledge  
Prideful Oscar winners for faking glamor demand an applause  
The reputation shall not be tarnished  
But those Bentleys are coated in mud that can't be rinsed  
And that suit has a thick layer of barbarity  
You're not even trying to hide  
Pushing for a fair deal on long-lost temples to retain the purpose  
You know who's pulling the strings  
And enter the game masochistically  
Flaunt that diamond-encrusted purse  
And watch your hometown lose its shine too  
These orchids can't endure residing on the 18th floor  
Wilt at the view of the fellow decay in the water below  
Let it flow through the souls desperate for a cleanse  
As the stifled cries echo in the distance  
*Dance for the camera and count your spare change*  
*While we count down the final days of your reign*







## **cucumber**

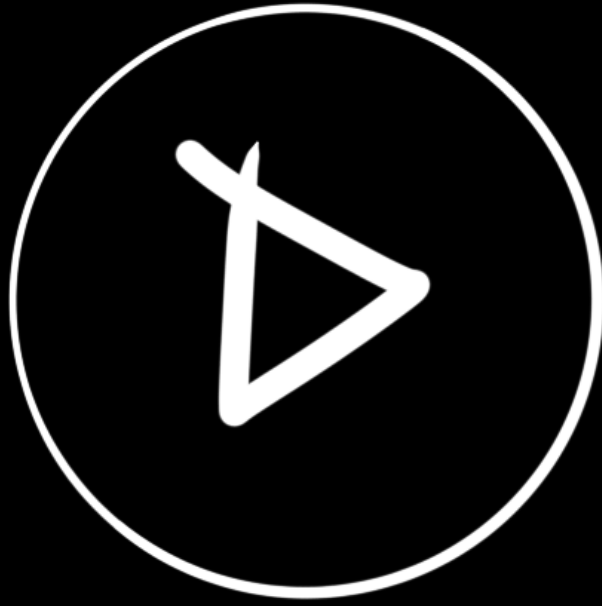
airport

oh cucumber  
you are nothing

oh how I love you  
because you are nothing

you're a crunch and a squirt  
a passing drizzle  
on a hot day

quietly bemusing  
the wicked spices  
which turn back towards troy  
and continue their invasion



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Art and “Fear” by NDS

Page 1: Drawing being and dog

Page 2: Dog Drawing

Page 3, 4, 9, 10, 11: DrawingsOfAnimals

Page 6: Banana2

Page 8: Banana

Page12: Scared cat drawing

Page13: Bird1

Page14: Rat

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“the feast” by Kayla Donohue

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“Tony Barnette at Meiji Jingu Stadium” by David Kim

“You meet someone at a bar...” by I.M.SAW

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“He was a fucked-up guy...” by HTBS

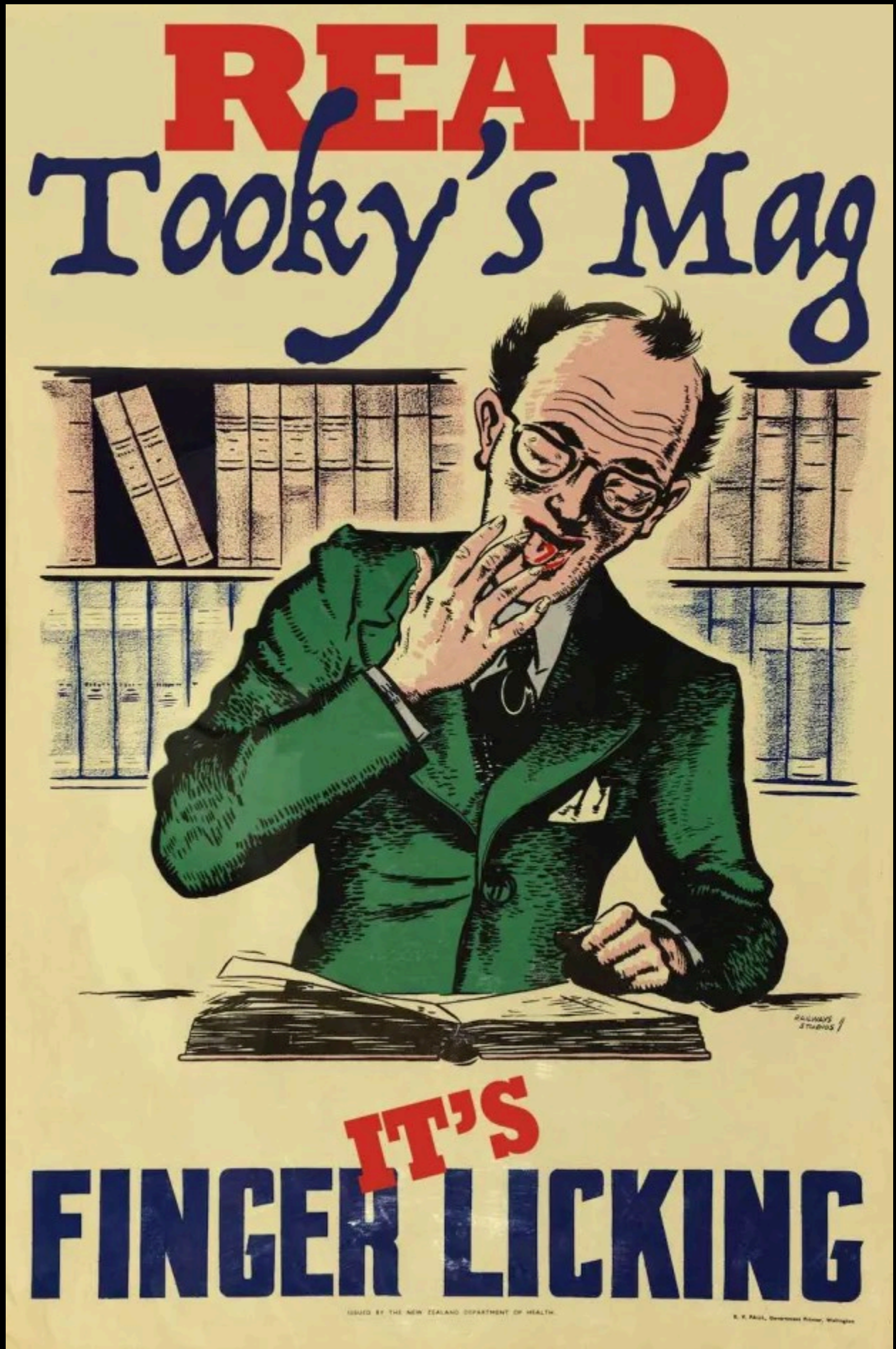
“Heartbreak Anniversary” by JK Kim

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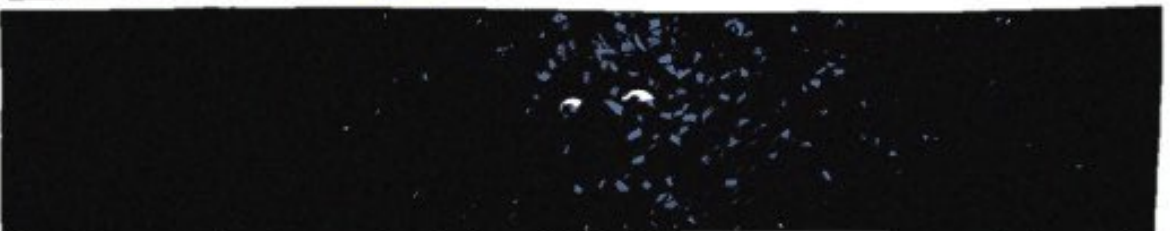
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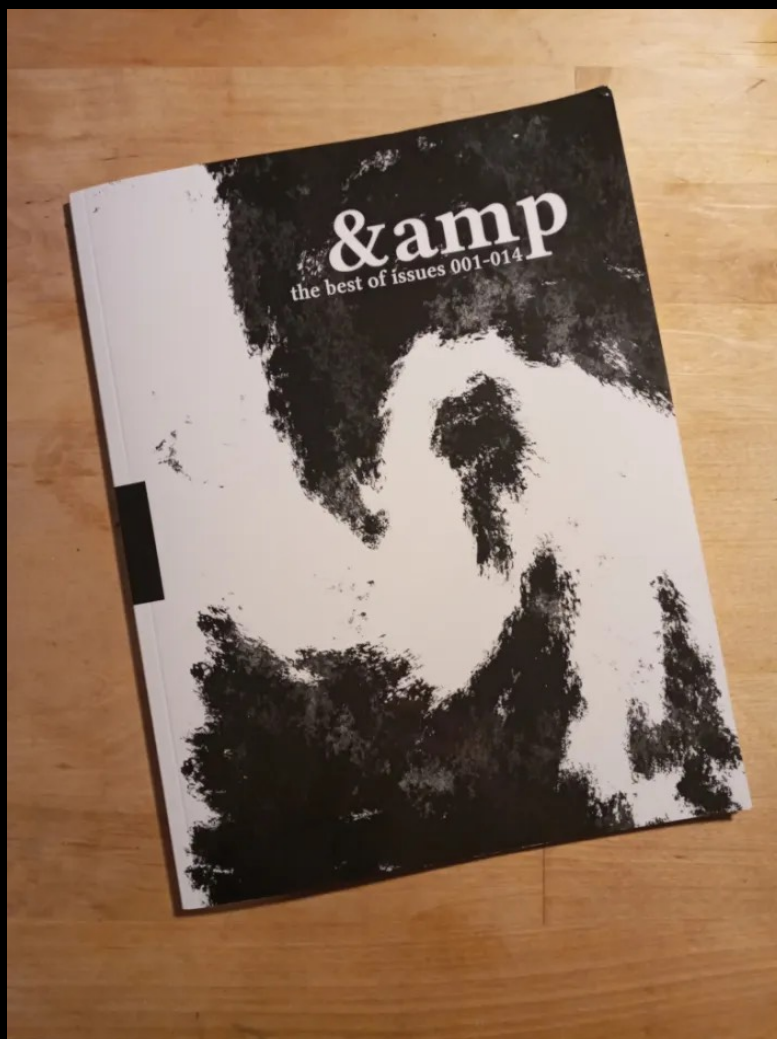
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