

Summer

Joana Figueiredo

Summer. A hot knife sharpening the edges of my swan skin. Again and again. Carving. Summer. Our fighting - a grand explosive thing; dancing, an inescapable ballet we keep repeating. Until I am defeated. Until rawness is all I am allowed to know. Summer. White teeth, nibbling my neck as if a treat, then biting, mauling, torturing away the softness. Summer. Caramel possessiveness, burning; smiling at every flinch. Summer. A purple eclipse just bellow my clavicle, as if you can suck the sourness out of me, as if you should try it, at least; as if you owned me. Summer. Covering my wounds with more words.



Spill Your Guts

Casey Clough

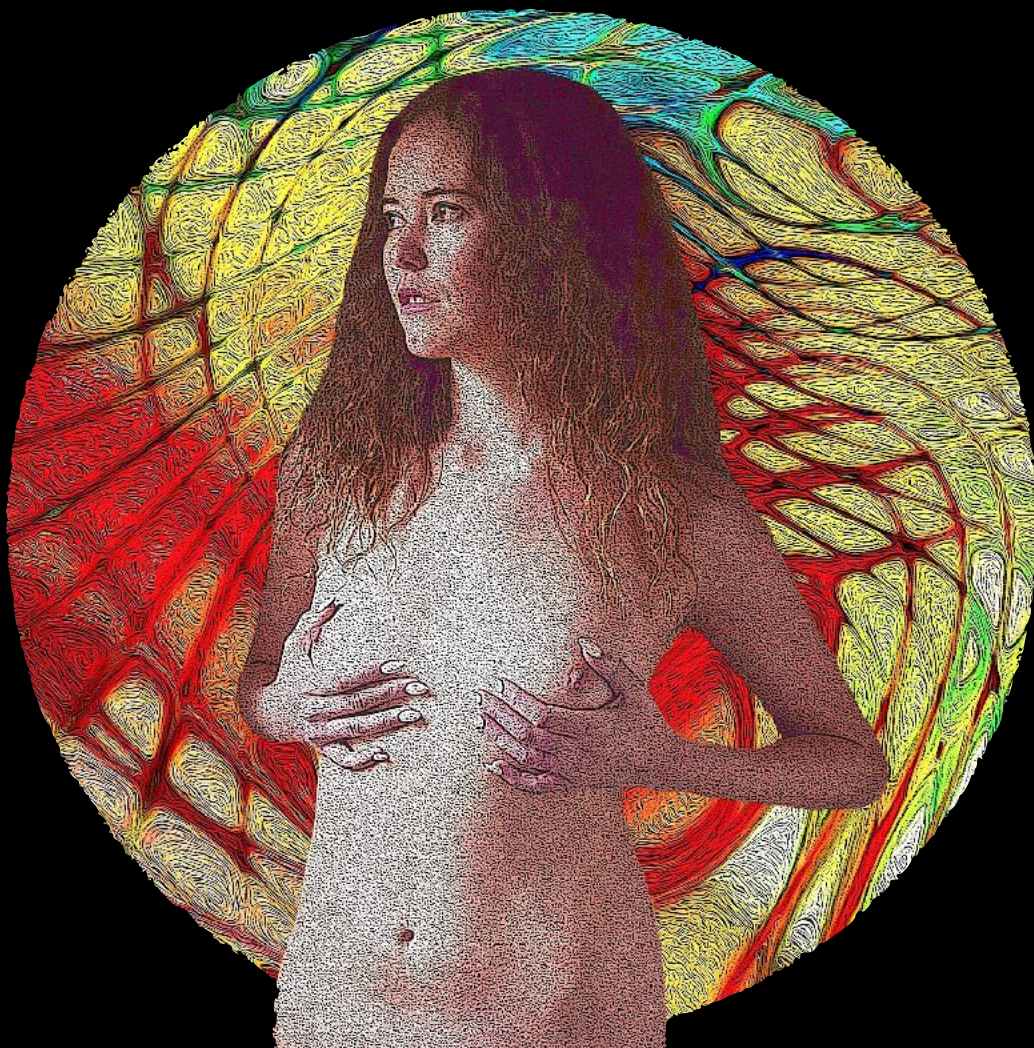
As a rule, Lydia did not shit on first dates. She waited until the second or the third or the fourth. In fact, she had gone through an entire six month relationship—more of a situationship, really—where she did not shit at all. At least, not at his house.

But this morning she'd had fiber for breakfast. A dense bean salad for lunch. Espresso martinis after dinner, the caffeine loosening her bowels like the liquor had loosened her tongue. It was going well, but then somewhere in the conversation, she began to become aware of her asshole. The clenching of it. The way it breathed in and out as she did. He invited her back to his place to watch a movie—clearly the date had gone well, she had passed some kind of test—and it was once she was inside, shoes off, having ridden in his car and left hers parked on a street outside the bar, that she realized it was like the tide. Inevitable, the movements impossible to stop unless one suspended gravity, pulled the moon down from the sky. She was going to have to shit in his toilet.

“Excuse me,” she said, and she kept her voice sexy, she thought she kept it sexy, she winked and took it back in the same instant, so that it

must have seemed like something was in her eye. And then she took a breath and went into the bathroom and thought about, but did not turn on, the fan. The roar of the fan's motor would have been a dead giveaway. She might as well have sent him a text that said, "I'm taking a shit in here."

She sat down and braced her belly, tightened her core like in Pilates class. Please, she thought, come out quietly, and then there was a terrible pain, and a loud splash, and she felt empty and sore and relieved until she remembered the splash and wondered if he could hear her from outside. Immediately, she began to brainstorm ways she could test



if the sound of a splash into the toilet was audible from the living room. Could she rig something up to fall into it when she closed the door? What could she leave that would make a similar sound but would not leave a trace of something weird for him to discover later?

Then there was another wave of pain, sweat and spasms rippling down her abdomen, and it felt like she was pushing out one massive turd that spanned the entire length of her body. When would it end? She contracted again. Still it emerged like an unholy push pop; still there was more to bite down and bear, until finally she could feel it disgorge, like giving birth from her ass.

She wiped and saw blood. Or no, it wasn't blood. The dense bean salad was full of beets. It was just beets. The whole thing, the fecal infant she had just delivered, was a sickly pinkish-gray color. She had never

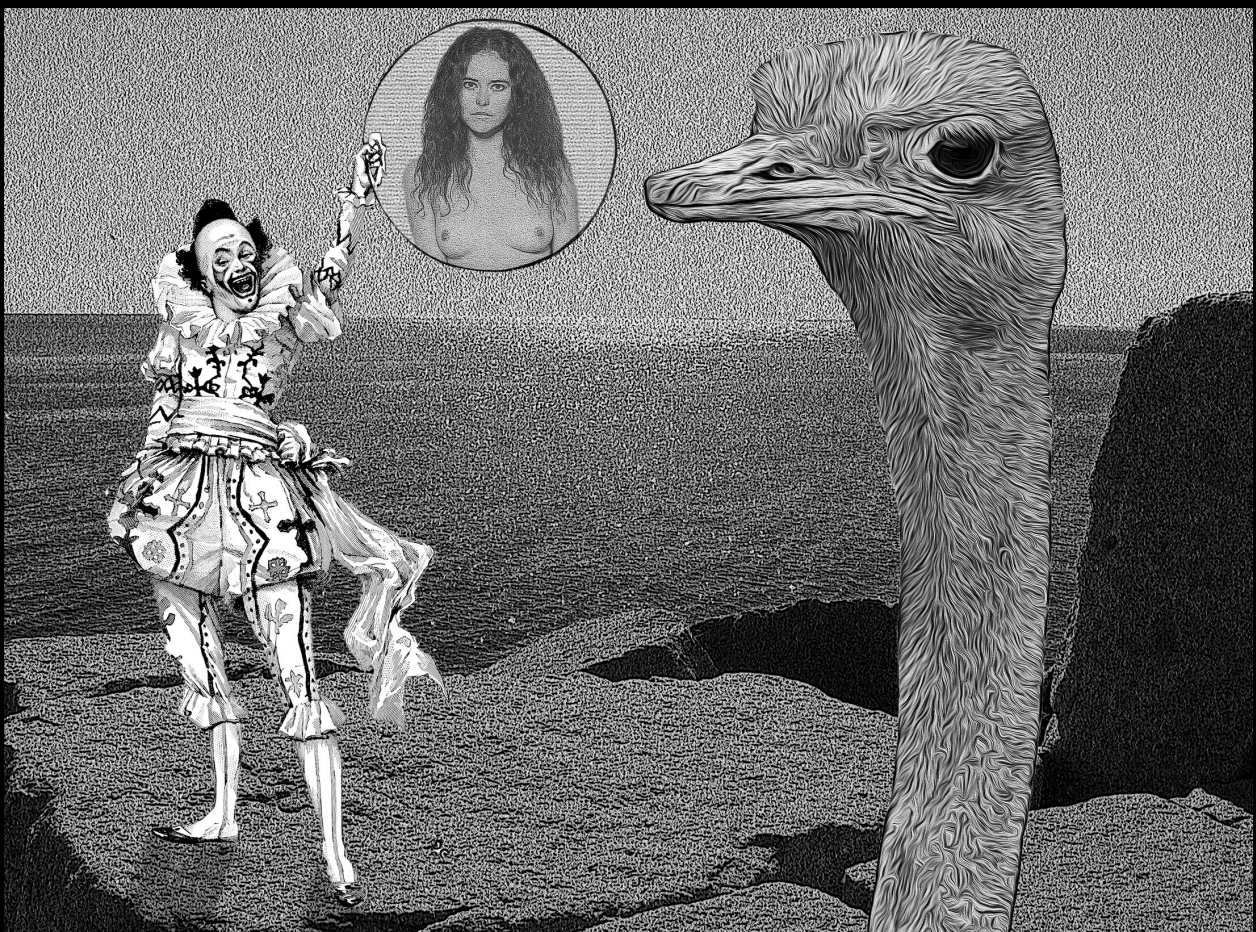
consumed such a quantity of beets and beans at once. It was almost beautiful, in a way. Shiny. Gummy. Full of what looked like veins but must have been undigested stalks of kale.

Doubled over, she reached for the corroded silver handle of the toilet, eager to offer her sins up to the sewer and go back out to watch the movie. The mouth of the toilet seemed to gag, retching up the mass of slimy pink matter. She thought of sick days at school, the way she'd twisted and spat like a trapped animal as her mother tried to coax violently pink bubblegum amoxicillin down her throat.

The load did not go down, but was instead pulled into the inner workings of the toilet, sucked down and cemented into the opening of it, so that the water began to bubble up and surge towards the lip of the bowl. Lydia searched the room for a plunger, frantic eyes roving over every surface, frantic hands prying open cabinets and drawers. But there was nothing. Not even a toilet brush.

She winced and rolled up her sleeves. She would have to attempt to unlodge the mass with her hands, that was the only way. Certainly she wasn't going to stick her head out of the bathroom door and ask him for a plunger. That would be humiliating.

She stuffed her fingers down the throat of the toilet. Where she had expected a soft, crumbling texture, the feeling of wet sand between her fingers, there was something fleshy. Bouncy. With little give. It felt like skin, almost. Like the smooth insides of her mouth. She closed her fingers around the fleshy snake of it and pulled. And pulled. And pulled. Wet fist over wet fist, like a magician pulling handkerchiefs from a sleeve.





Varsity Rhymes

Nik Hoffman

Gather my friends
And bury your heads
In the bosoms
Of great-chested women.

Trace up the gait
Of their bow-legged legs,
Let them sit down
And give what their given.

Hoo-Ha! Hoo-Ha!
Hee-Hee! Hee-Hee!

Flim-flam man,
Play us a jam,
Let your ass hang out,
Give us a wham.

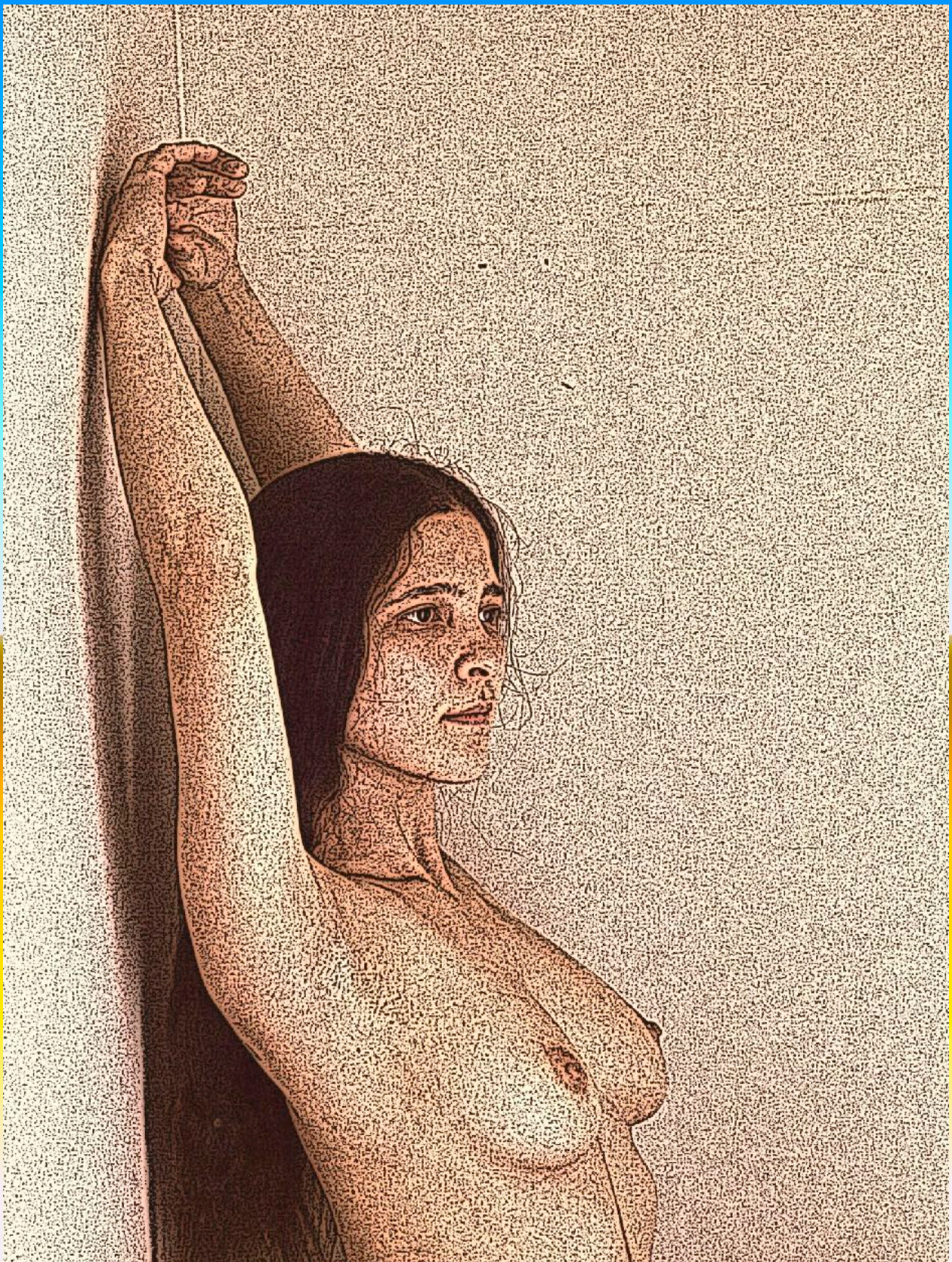
Hey diddle diddle,
Yippee ki-yay,
Milk maid, milk maid
Roll the hay

Hoo-Ha! Hee-Hee!
Hoo-Ha! Hee-Hee!

Ishmael Ishmael
Under the bush,
Mama threw him out
Onto his tush.

Eastern silks
And technic skulls
Cracked by blows
Of razor tongues.

Ha-Ha! Hoo-Hoo!
Ha-Ha! Hee-Hee!



ice cream

A. Albright

Alicia grinned sheepishly as their Jeep pulled up to the beach. Peter set it in park and took a deep breath.

"Are you going to be wearing it today?" He asked.

"Wearing *what*?" Alicia replied coyly.

Peter covered his face with his hands, feeling an absurd mixture of pride and embarrassment.

"It barely covers your tits, Alicia."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"You're doing this— I know why you're doing this. It's because I told you to cover up that one time—"

"You just don't get it. Nobody has J-cup bras, Peter. Bras my size cost a lot of money. So fucking what that I don't wear bras inside."

"You *will* wear bras inside, and you will if I tell you to. Especially when people are coming over."

"You didn't even tell me—"

"Sweetpea. It's my house, my rules. People are talking about how my girl has her tits out, they think we're shooting pornos."

"Aren't we though, Peter?"

They broke down into a fit of laughter.

"Alicia," Peter said, wheezing. "Take off your shirt. I wanna see something."

He reached into the backseat and opened a cooler, slick with condensation in the summer heat.

Alicia bit her lip and lifted up her shirt. She was wearing one of those whorish bikinis you'd find in a novelty store, the kind that made you question if God existed, or if they actually covered up anything when worn.

Peter held up an ice cream sandwich.

"Guess what I'm going to do with this," he said. "You wouldn't."

He removed the top wafer and flung it into the parking lot. The rest of the ice cream he began to slather all over Alicia's body, starting with her exposed breasts. With his other hand he brushed aside her small coverings and pinched her nipples gently. The ice cream dripped into her bottoms, onto the seat. Peter couldn't tell if she was tearing up from ecstasy or shame.

"Stop," she panted. "We're in public."

"That's exactly why."

Once the ice cream had completely melted in his hands, Peter wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close. Alicia remained silent.

"Can't wear it now, can you?"



clutch, 867 ถ. เจริญกรุง 2F, samphanthawong, bangkok

airport

her body's only sin is familiarity
the discolights flash red in her hair
the song goes zima zina see and the lights flash
it's another club poem
but i'm happier than usual
really

disco balls are still cool
and that gives me hope
concrete holds its shape
and that gives me hope too

Pen and Celestia

John Dufresne

1.

“We were together virtually all of the time,” Celestia Bell told me. She was talking about her boyfriend, Pen. “And then, all of the sudden, he was dead.”

Penrose Abel Beeman, 27, was born in nearby Kodachrome, the only son of Ted and Maisy (Crudup) Beeman and moved to Anastasia when he was hired three years ago to teach composition at Anastasia College.

Pen, who had earned his MFA at the University of Arkansas, was a critically acclaimed poet whose work had appeared in national literary journals, including *West River Review*, *Bugsville*, *White Hot*, *Real South*, *Super Happy Big Eyes*, and *Like Fun*. His first and only book, *Trust*, published by MidTown Publishing, won a Gold Medal at the Florida Book Awards.

Celestia told me that Pen sent her a new poem every Friday morning. And every Saturday night they watched a movie together while apart, Pen in his apartment on Cycad Avenue and Celestia at home in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. One of them would choose a movie. They’d place a FaceTime phone call at 7 CST, so they could be in two places at

the same time, so they could watch the synchronized movie on their computers and look at each other at the same time, so they could quietly comment on the drama and the performances.

Pen made a trip to Sioux Falls to see Celestia and to meet her parents, the Reverend and Mrs. Prentice Bell, with whom she lived. Of the visit, Celestia, who admits to being acutely shy, says she was a bit uncomfortable with Pen being always within three feet, preferring herself the bliss of distance.

When asked about their tragic last night, Celestia cried, excused herself, cleared her throat, and said, “We were watching *Dr. Zhivago*. I



must have drifted off. I noticed that Pen wasn't whispering his comments. I said hello. I noticed his face was not on my phone. I said hello again, and then I called 911. I said, no, I want the Florida 911. I told Daddy and he called the Anastasia police.”

Pen leaves his mother, his special cousin Frances Cahalan, his devoted students, and readers. A memorial service, open to the public, will be held on Friday at noon in the Flagler Room at Anastasia College. You are asked to bring a favorite poem of Pen's to read.

2.

Pen and Celestia met, predictably enough, on an online dating site, *thatsamore.com*. Pen sent photos. Celestia sent selfies. He was always smiling in his; she was always impassive in hers. Pen may have

mistaken vacancy for welcome. She told him she was living with her parents after getting a degree in elementary education and then realizing she didn't like teaching and didn't like kids. She worked part-time in a stationery store.

They met for the first time in the flesh when Pen flew to Sioux Falls and rented a car. Staying over at her home was out of the question, but he could stay late. He took a room at the Thrifty Lodge. He brought along DVDs so they could snuggle on the couch in the den and watch *The Big Lebowski* together while her parents busied themselves elsewhere in the house. Celestia said, "The guy's a bum. Why should I care about him?" They went for a drive and ended up at the DQ on North Kiwanis where Celestia chatted with some old school friends but didn't introduce them to Pen.

They drove to the Falls and parked in the lot. Celestia preferred not to climb the rocks to see the cascades she'd seen a million times, thank you very much. She braided a strand of her blond hair and sucked on it. When Pen asked her what she hoped to do with her life, she told him exactly what she was doing now, and asked him to roll up his window, please and thank you. She was freezing.

Pen said, "I meant what do you want to accomplish."

She twirled the strand of damp hair around her finger. "I have no ambitions."

"None?"

"Not one."

"How can I work with that, Celestia?"

She shrugged and smiled. "What is the point of just sitting here?"

So they drove downtown to the Phillips Avenue Diner, sat at the counter, and ordered chislic, which Pen raved about.

"It's just chislic, dude. Why do you have to be so enthusiastic about everything? It's not normal." Celestia went back to sucking the straw in her butterscotch milkshake.

On the drive to Celestia's house, Pen told her he was having an epic weekend, and you could hear her eyes roll. She had to work in the morning, she told him as she hopped out of the car, but would be home by two.

The next day Pen went back to the diner for lunch and more chislic. Then he bought two books at Zandbroz Variety, *So Long, See You Tomorrow* for himself, and *My Unsentimental Education* for Celestia. He drove to her house at two, but she was late for their second authentic date. Pen sat in the living room with Mrs. Bell. The Reverend Bell was upstairs in his study downloading his soul-stretching Sunday sermon from the Internet on the topic of "Life Is Hard, But God Is Easy." Mrs. Bell told Pen that Celestia was probably at her sister's watching TV. "They like to catch up on their soaps on the weekend."

“I could have gone there if I’d known.”

“What size shoe do you wear?”

Pen looked at his Toms, wiggled his toes. “Ten.”

Mrs. Bell picked up her cell. “Let me give her a shout.”

“Your daughter’s quite the young woman.”

“Is she?”

“She just hasn’t found herself yet.”

“She hasn’t been looking.”

When he asked Celestia if he could kiss her, she said no, he could not. “What do you think I am?”

“A girlfriend.”

“Well, slow down, Usain Bolt, I’m not the hundred-yard dash.”

After Pen had said goodnight and was headed back to the motel, Mrs. Bell walked into Celestia’s bedroom, tickled the gerbil under his chin, and said to her daughter, “Didn’t your last boyfriend have larger feet? Why would you date someone with smaller feet? Your daddy’s a fourteen double E.”

The last thing that Celestia said to Pen on the night he died of a pulmonary embolism was “What’s with all the snow?”

3.

Celestia is at home ignoring her children as best she can, but one of them, the chubby blond, keeps massaging her feet. She worries that he’s going to turn out to be a creeper, but the massage does feel both soothing and stimulating. The girl with the wandering eye says she’s bored and can we please do something besides watch people yap on TV. Celestia tells her to go bother her father for once. He’s sleeping, the girl without the wandering eye but with a loose front tooth, says. He’s sleeping his life away, Celestia says. She looks out the window. No school tomorrow either. What’s with all the snow?



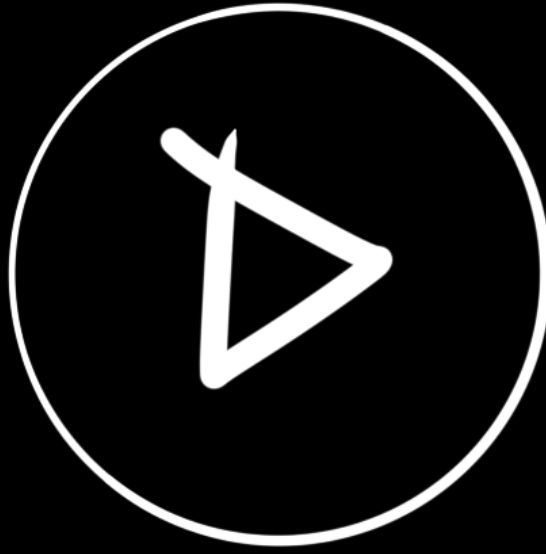
Figment

Nik Hoffman

Sweet, flowing, golden hair,
Draped across the dining chair,
Candle light and tea cup clink,
Smiles curls, playful wink.

Mingled presence, sultry air,
Heat and bliss without a care,
Precious time speeds away,
Evening melts into the day.

The room and she begin to shake,
I open eyes, and I awake.



url: minimag.press
subs: minimagsubmissions@gmail.com
substack: minimag.substack.com
twitter: @minimag_lit
insta: @minimag_write
book: <https://a.co/d/2O1yfmD>

Photo Collages by Bill Wolak

- 01: At the Threshold of Astonishment
- 02: With Dawn Trapped in the Mirror of Your Flesh
- 03: A Burning That Began with Your Lipstick
- 04: The Restlessness of Excited Flesh
- 05: Only the Dreams That Cherish Light
- 06: The First Inklings of a Deeper Silence
- 07: The Restless Smile of Deepening Silence
- 09: Restless As Moonlight Lingered in Your Hair
- 10: Waiting To Sleep Near Your Lips
- 12: Caught in the Mirror's Bewildering Trance
- 15: Night Dazzled by Moonlight and Flesh

Book: [All the Wind's Unfinished Kisses](#)

“Summer” by Joana Figueiredo

“Spill Your Guts” by Casey Clough

By night, she writes, hoping to atone for her daytime sins by putting something beautiful into the world.

“Varsity Rhymes” and “Figment” by Nik Hoffman

Twitter: @merkurymann

Substack: <https://acrossthespheres.substack.com/>

“ice cream” by A. Albright

“Pen and Celestia” by John Dufresne

Book: [My Darling Boy](#) (Norton, 2025)

ISSUE142 edited by Alex Prestia

ads

All the Wind's Unfinished Kisses

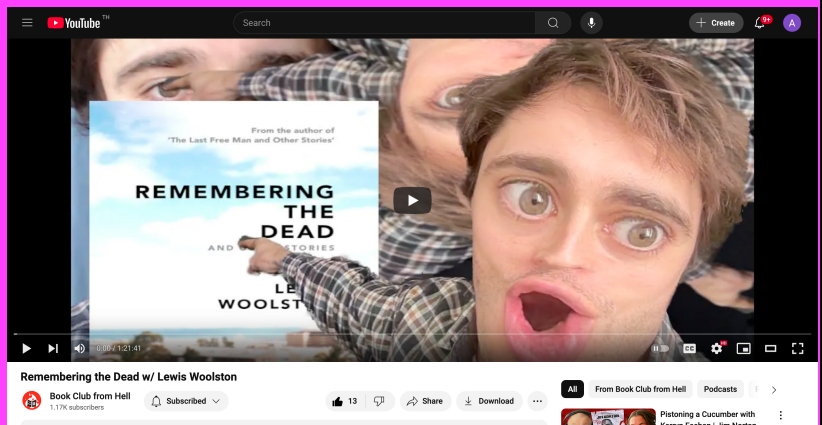


Bill Wolak

[click here](#)

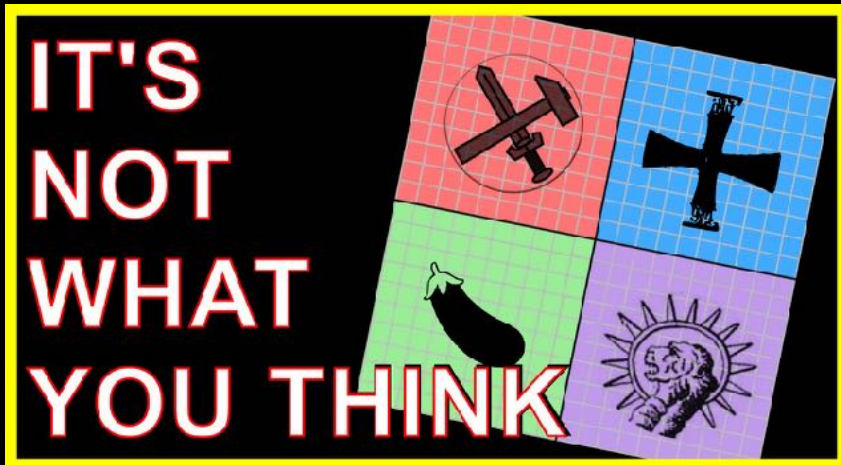


[click here](#)

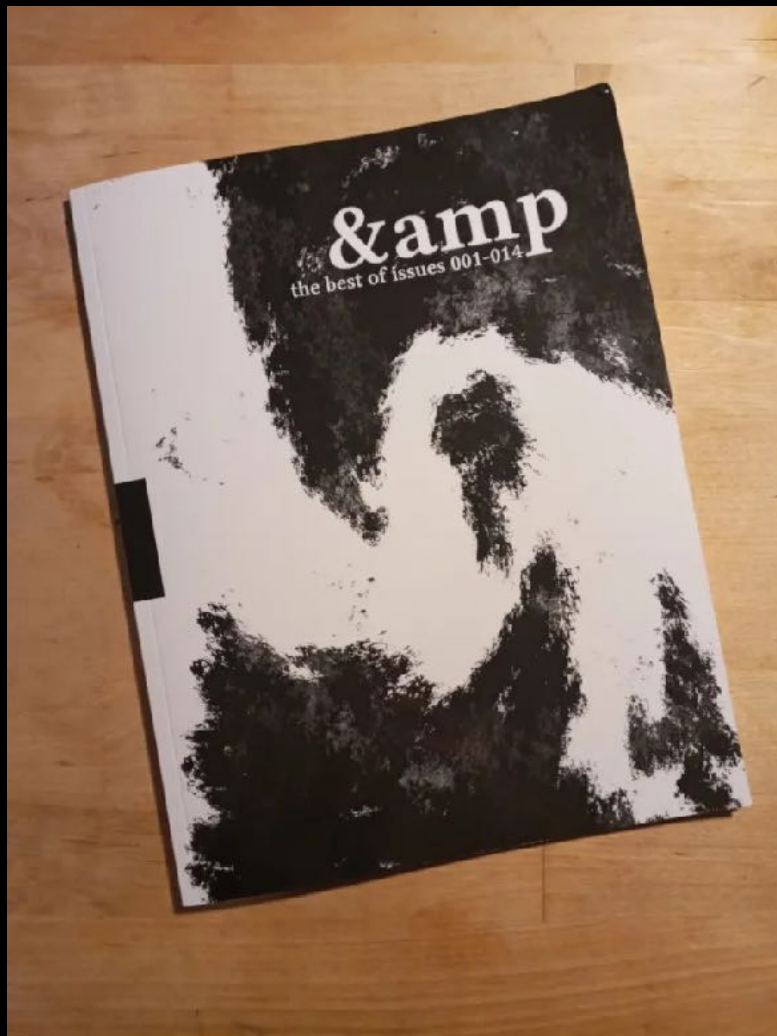


[click here](#)

tooky's sidebar podcast



[click here](#)



[click here](#)