

miniMAG

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chernobog





twenty-five

Md Mahiuddin

At midnight a man is standing under the street light all alone. He looks like a beggar his clothes are patched with colourful patches and his hair is long and dirty. He is looking into an open gutter in front of him and the gutter cap was put upside down close to the beggar's legs. The sewage of the gutter was spilt all around it like something had been thrown into it. with his right index finger, he is doing something strange. He points it into the gutter then he raises it making it point towards the black sky and then again points it into the gutter. He is doing it again and again and all the time he is murmuring "Twenty-five, twenty-five, twenty-five..". A man was walking and whistling through the street he looked at the beggar in amusement approached him and asked "What are you doing with this gutter?". The beggar abruptly turned at him and began circling him he took one round, then another one and then one more and he continued, all the time the man said "What on earth are you doing?!" At last the man said, "Stop doing tricks! I don't have any pennies to..." Before he could complete his sentence the beggar went behind him, lifted his right leg and kicked him into the gutter, the nasty black sewage spelt out, the man tried his best to get out but before he could the beggar lifted the cap of the gutter sealed the opening and sat on it. The man cried and begged for help but no one except the beggar listened to him and he did nothing but smile.

After a minute or so the voices got silent black thick liquid filled his lungs and his eyes got shut he gave up trying and accepted his fate. The beggar stood up and opened the gutter, the man was no longer to be found on the surface. The beggar putting the lid aside, started his old ritual. He pointed his right index finger into the gutter lifted it and pointed it again just as previously but this time he murmured "twenty-six, twenty-six, twenty-six.....".



There Are No Mountain Lions in the Upper Peninsula

James Eustace Hart

Dancing we find our protagonist, dancing as he navigates a broken-down path through a boggy marsh constructed of stripped-apart pallets and precariously placed limbs from felled aspen trees. The path he is traveling is many years his senior, and although one assumes such paths must require reconstruction often, as logs rots and feet crash through once-sturdy planks, never before has he noticed virgin boards or freshly-cut trunks laid upon the road, only the continual degradation of miry wood sinking deeper and deeper into the bog. Still the road well-traveled remains usable, and our deft champion has traveled this road many times. He hops between footholds, one foot after another, until he has no feet left and must start again with the first; through this process, dancing better than he had ever danced before when he danced with intent. His destination is a small island across the clear-cut swamp: not truly an island, as a narrow strip of land joins it to a relatively large and unsettled section of forest in the state of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, but regarded by himself as an island for all intents and purposes. Often are other hikers seen crossing the dilapidated path, but never before in the known history of the island has a human arrived from the strip of land connecting it to the vast wilderness, making it, in

spirit, an island of human thoughts and emotions, reachable only by a single uniting umbilical cord.

Our protagonist arrives at the island around noon and completes the short but winding hike to the topographical center. Tired, but less from the physical effort of hopping across a narrow path and more from the mental effort of remaining in-the-world and attentive to the precise location of each footstep to avoid slipping, he rests at a central, familiar tree whose roots jut out at just the correct angle to form a surprisingly comfortable seat on the pine-needle floor. This natural chair, if viewed from a separate frame of reference, may also resemble a natural latrine, a perfectly reasonable location to relieve one's self after a muddy hike through an open bog. He attempts to keep these thoughts out of his mind as he relaxes and rests his head against the trunk, instead believing others would feel compelled to respect the sanctity of the location and piss upon some uglier, less functional tree elsewhere. The tree is a source of comfort, a strong, paternal bosom on which weary travelers may rest before or after great excursions. It towers above the rest of the island, and perhaps was the first tree that grew on the island, or perhaps it was born in the swamp, and its roots helped coagulate enough soil to host the rest of the flora that grows today.

From this bark throne a complete view of the island can be made: a relatively flat clearing exists by the bog-path's entrance to the island, adjacent to the trail that leads atop the island's hill where the sitting-tree grows. The clearing can be viewed in full from the tree, and provides a pleasing contrast to the rest of the island, which is heavily wooded, much like the forest beyond the strip of land that connects to the island. Coniferous trees are the most common here, and although the forest floor seems to consist entirely of discarded pine needles, the source of the replenishment in this case is made obvious by the new-growing fascicles of needles covered by crunchy brown placentas, until the needles grow to sufficient length that the covering is discarded and wastes away slowly in the wind.

The sun has now reached an angle such that it begins to shine in our protagonist's eyes, and stirring after drifting off into the beginnings of a daydream, he rises to begin his trek into the vast wilderness across the land-bridge. Although the island is tranquil and refreshing, his desire is not to remain: his destination lies beyond.

Hours later, our protagonist arrives back at the land-bridge and crosses again onto the island, now awash in the orange-golden rays of sunset. His journey was long, and he desires rest, but it was not a new journey

by any means: he has charted most of the area in the immediate wilderness that can be reached by a day's hike, and venturing any further would require an overnight commitment. Perhaps feeling slightly disenchanted at the inability to make progress into a great unknown, he returns to the sitting tree and relaxes for but a moment before he is disturbed.

In response to a flash of red noticed in the peripherals of his vision, he glances out from the tree to the clearing and sees a couple lying in the grass on a red checkered picnic blanket. The immediate sight of another person shifts his solipsistic mind from a mode of freedom to one of defense and self-consciousness, with an even more extreme reaction than would be normally accounted for when running into a person after being alone in the woods for hours, as the couple is engaged in intercourse. Shocked, our protagonist collects himself, studies the couple to



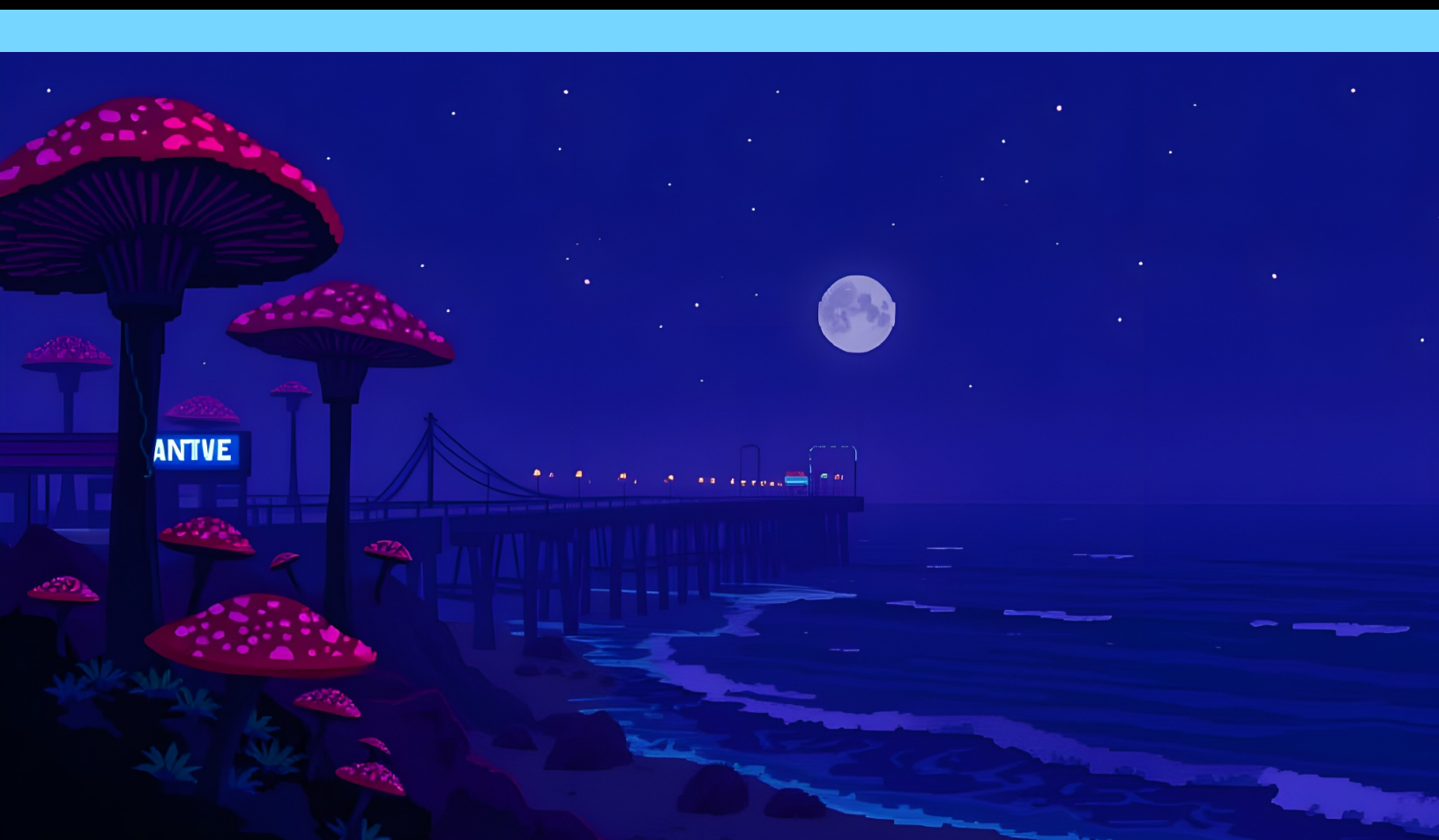
ensure his presence is not noticed, and with a motive not purely pedagogic nor perverted, finds himself inching closer to the edge of the hill overlooking the entangled couple, ignorant of the commotion simultaneously taking place behind him, as fate itself inches closer to our protagonist.

The man is atop the woman in the missionary position, face to face, although she is a good deal shorter than he is, with her legs and feet alternately wrapped around the man, then pointing up towards heaven, then back again to find footholds on the lean back of the man. Enchanted, our protagonist finds himself ever-so-quietly positioned behind a bush overlooking the clearing, but at the very moment the man contorts his body to bring the woman in for a kiss, our fated protagonist experiences, in quick succession, a powerful force at his backside and a searing heat across the left side of his neck, and, losing control of his movement, collapses to the ground.

Once a powerful man who thought himself capable of great action, our protagonist now lies helpless, unable to move, gazing out unfocused at the clearing and the swamp that lies beyond it. The pain in his neck grows until it envelops his entire being, as he feels a sinister warmth travel from the location of the heat to the areas of his skin that lie downstream of his neck. He attempts in vain to summon to action a disobeying arm that now lies uselessly pinned underneath his body. His vision is clouded and fades to black before each piercing heartbeat brings it back and injects it again with colors and lights that bear no resemblance to the beautiful sights he once saw in his coherent hours.

Behind him he feels an entity. The entity is the sitting-tree: no longer a pillar of strength, it now towers over him, a vulgar Methuselah, seeming to mock his helplessness with an eternal stoic gaze. The mask that nature wears to convince us of its tranquility and hide its grotesqueness has slipped away, and our protagonist's last coherent thoughts are directed in disgust towards the trees towering over him: irrational, disfigured, elongated stretches of cellular material sprung forth from the earth without reason, rising and devouring all the resources that they can, with no regards for aesthetics, beauty, compassion, or any other virtues that mankind holds dear.

Our protagonist is left with a final vision before the thread of his life is cut and his mind fades away, his body no longer able to support the chain of consciousness that brought him to this point: as the man issues a final groan and the woman pulls him to her body for the remainder of all eternity, no longer two distinct entities but instead both halves joined together as one, neither man nor woman but at the same time a unity of both, an immortal Baphomet with the ability to bring forth life into existence without consent, eternally, forever.





Tanka Poems I wrote instead of Sleeping

A. R. Tivadar

The snow falls like swarms
Of insects under the lights
Along our dark street.
Cars passing throughout the night
Turn the first snow into mud

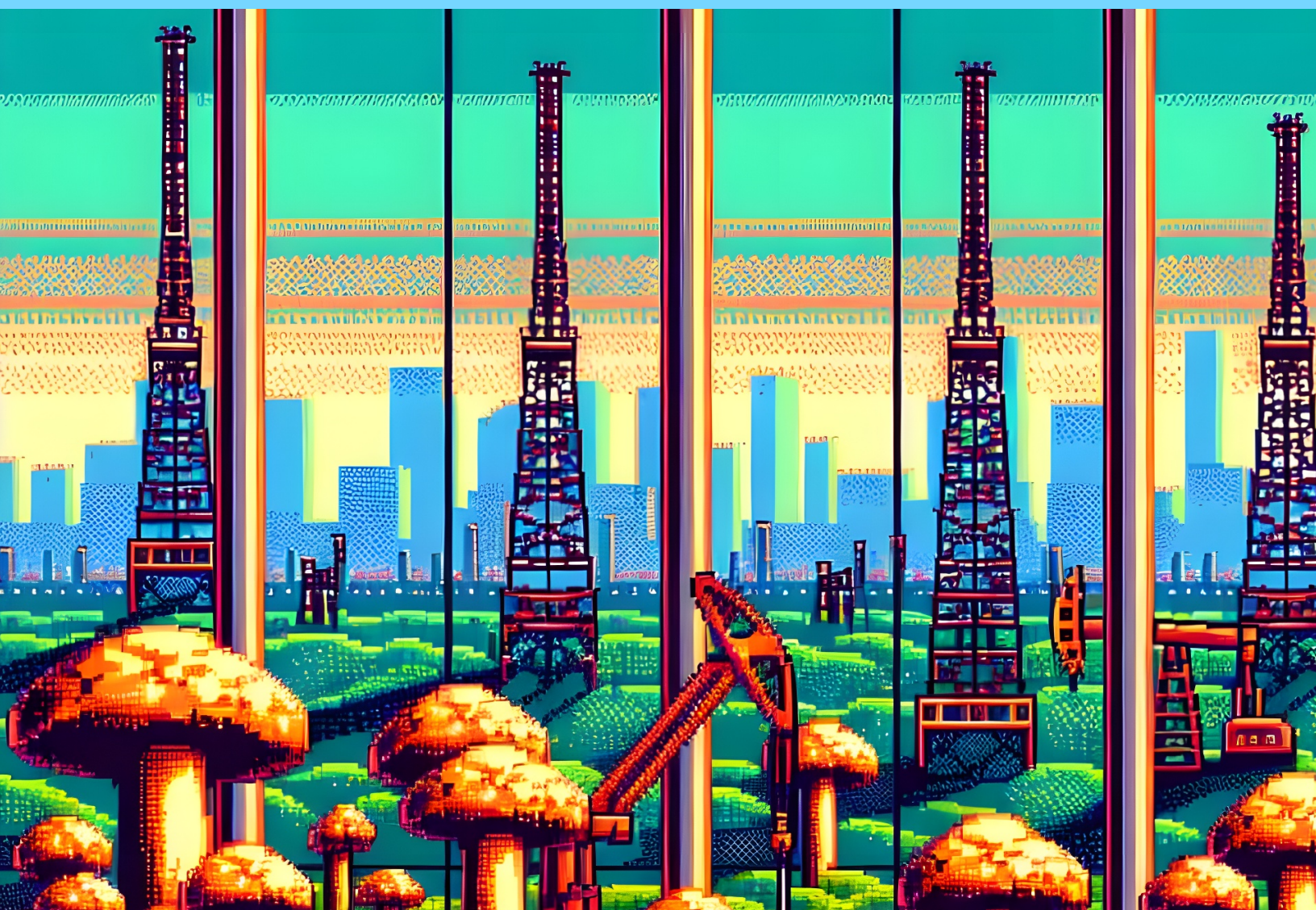
The orange glow of
Street-lights down the boulevard
Casts long black shadows
Of wandering citizens,
Chins tucked into their collars

From my dark bedroom
I look through the window, down
At cars, at strangers,
I wonder why they don't sleep
I know why I don't do it

My chest aches at night
When I try to sleep, to rest,
My lungs hate the air
Like the princess hates the pea,
I just want to fall asleep

It feels like my chest
Refuses access to air,
Like a fist squeezes
My heart jumping as it pumps,
My ribcage aches at the seams

It is near midnight,
Yet I hear kids shout outside
Their boots mark the snow
And their shrill voices echo
I feel old, "go home, you lot"



Guernica

Ah-young Dana Park

Blood.

Chaos.

Remorse.

I remember

It was a sunny bright day and

I wore a yellow shirt

with princess Belle imprinted on it.

“Catch me if you can!”

“Vroom Vroom”

“CRASH”

“Rinse with water!”

She screamed in pain.

“Be quiet, don't tell mom! It's going to be ok.”

She held back her tears.

Blood showered the bathroom sink.

I tried to rinse it off

but the splattered blood dried

Gravity pulled hard on my chest.

“I don't know what to do.”

“Can you resist the pain?”

She shrieked as the water pricked her scars

The ambulance came.

All eyes glared at me.

What have I done?

Now I have outgrown my yellow Belle shirt

But that stain of blood on it,

had not been erased.



A Meditation on the Death of One Hardly Known

Eric Vanderwall

Living through death is confusing for anyone, surviving the death of an acquaintance perhaps even more so. I met him once, maybe twice. We introduced ourselves and didn't speak after that. He probably didn't remember me a few weeks later. Rarely did I think of him, only when the holiday invitation list extended far enough to include us both. If not for those days and flukes of family and fate, we would never have met each other at all. His house would have been just another house on the cul de sac by the hill, passed on the way to somewhere else, like all others passed in the same way. His restaurant would have been just another low building on a side street, with a tall sign facing the main street, where it aimed its partially lit promise of cold drinks, late hours, and so on. Its neon drink signs in the windows, its parking lot with faded lines, its awning over the door where people smoked, and the name that he had kept on the sign from the previous owner, would have been no different from those nearby or on other streets, in other towns, in other places. He would have been another face in the crowd of humanity that I never saw, another person whose entire existence would have been unknown to me. He would have been nothing to me, and I the same to him.

With the death of someone close the roles are somewhat clear. What about the death of one hardly known? What is one to feel, to think, to say, to do? What do you owe somebody you met at Christmas two years, or maybe three, somebody who shook your hand and wished you well in a general sort of way? What do you owe somebody whom you hardly knew, whose first name you remembered, whose last name you never learned, whom you only slightly recognized, who, when he met you again the second year, or maybe the other time, was glad to meet you and what was your name? What do you owe somebody who was very nearly nobody to you? There are books and support groups and documentaries and articles—a grief industry—to instruct and console sons and daughters, step-sons and step-daughters, brothers and sisters, half-brothers and half-sisters, step-brothers and step-sisters, widows and widowers, mothers and fathers, witnesses, victims, perpetrators, coworkers, members of the same church, fans, citizens, the general public, a nation. Where among the categories and subcategories on the grief shelf of the self-help aisle is there a book for near strangers? Where to turn for those who see an obituary and vaguely recollect something, those who live a couple streets over and sort of knew one another by sight, members of the same gym, grocery clerks who will never again see a regular, mail-carriers and maintenance people whose routine days suddenly lack someone's already fleeting presence? Where is there a guide for understanding grief that is not quite grief? What is the word not for bereavement but for a loss so small it hardly exists?

He was my step-father's second wife's third husband. It sounds like a joke. What relation we had was defined at each link by the severances of divorce and remarriage. He went by Scotty. Even his surname I don't know. My only memory of him is a Christmas party several years ago, his flannel shirt over a long-sleeved undershirt, his blue jeans, his brown leather shoes, his tousled blonde hair, his hands in his pockets. His wife and step-children bustled about him. Maybe all we had in common was our silence and displacement. What was he thinking? I don't know. Maybe nothing at all. We stood in different parts of the room, looking around, staying out of the way while the pie was served. But maybe it was different times.

Who was it who knew this man? Where is the one who understood him? Who knew his story, his life as it never appears on a resumé or in a file? Who was it who understood this man who, somewhere a long time ago, was once a tiny helpless infant with his whole life ahead of him? Who is left to tell his story? Who knows what defined this man, the traits so utterly him that they could belong to no other? Maybe nobody living knows his story. Maybe he didn't know it himself, and only

a near stranger who saw him standing alone, shifting from one foot to the other, nodding absently as the children ran around the room, wished to know his story.

A conclusion to such a meditation seems an artifice when the implacable finality of death—the most conclusive event there is until the time all matter collapses to a single infinitesimal point—leaves more unresolved than not. To end with a toast or salutation would be false—a salute to what? A conciliatory remark would also ring hollow when there is no reason to believe everything is fine. Any possible judgment faced after death is for the dead to face themselves, and sounding the platitudes (about passing on, being at peace, it all being over, being in a better place) won't change the outcome. Should no judgment befall the dead, should there no longer be any person save traces of memory in the living, there is even less need to comment on what death has closed.

There is no answer, no end to questions, no resolution, and no end of doubts. It's just another day.





Shut The Door

Huina Zheng

Four years ago, when Yong had just turned 10, his mother passed away, leaving him with a lonely shadow. By the end of the year, his father married a young woman, and within a few months, Yong's stepmother gave birth to a half-brother. Yong longed to become part of this new family but always felt like an outsider.

On the eve of the Chinese Spring Festival, his father announced that the family would spend the holiday in Hainan. Yong was thrilled at the prospect of the trip. He dreamed of building sandcastles with his father and chasing waves along the shore. Carefully, he packed his luggage, including his favorite Pikachu toy, still carrying traces of his mother's scent.

On the morning of their departure, Yong woke up early, buttoned up his favorite dinosaur-patterned shirt with care, and ran to the car. But when he got there, he found them already seated, with the luggage neatly packed. The car window rolled down.

"Yong, I'm sorry. There's been a change of plans. You'll spend the New Year with your grandparents this year. They'll come to pick you up," his father said.

Yong watched as the car drove away. He turned around, walked back to his room, and shut the door. Holding his Pikachu close, he ran his fingers over its soft fur. He buried his face in its embrace, where his mother's scent lingered—the warm, ever-present comfort of a hug that had never truly left him.



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“A Meditation on the Death of One Hardly Known” by
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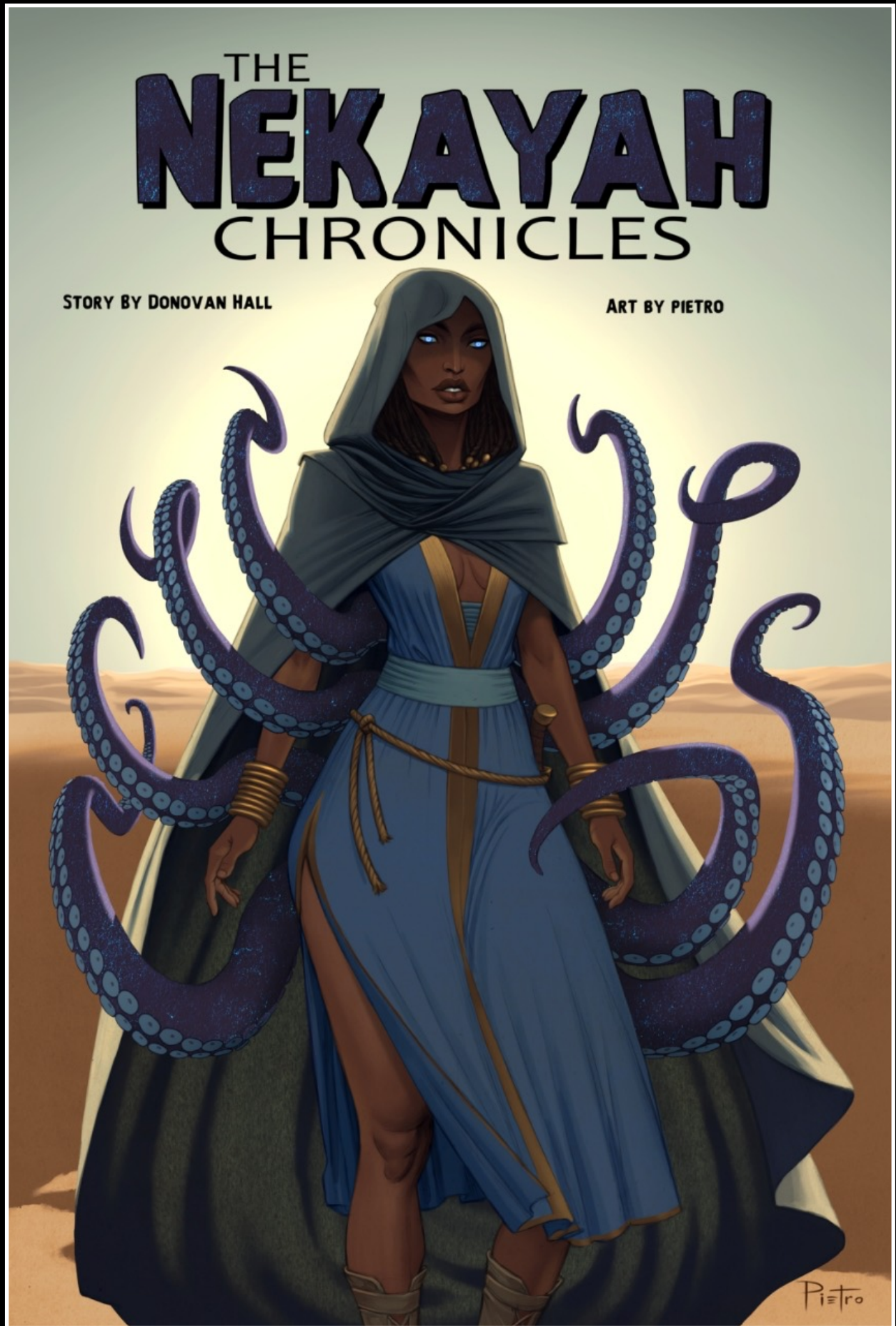
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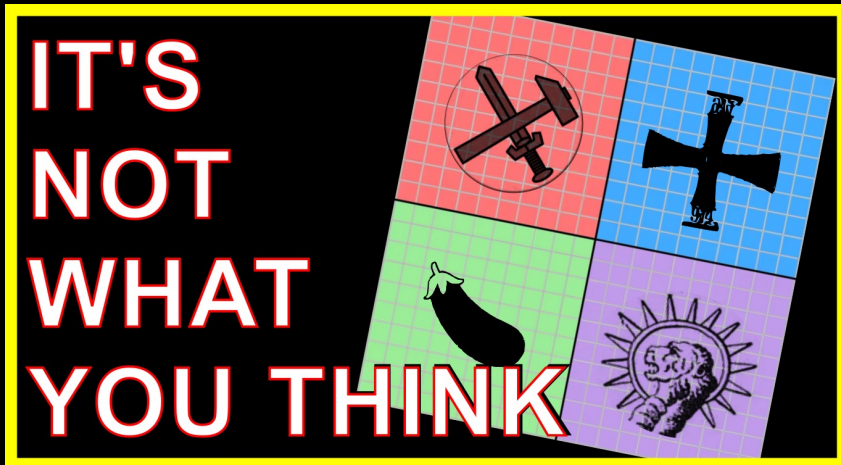
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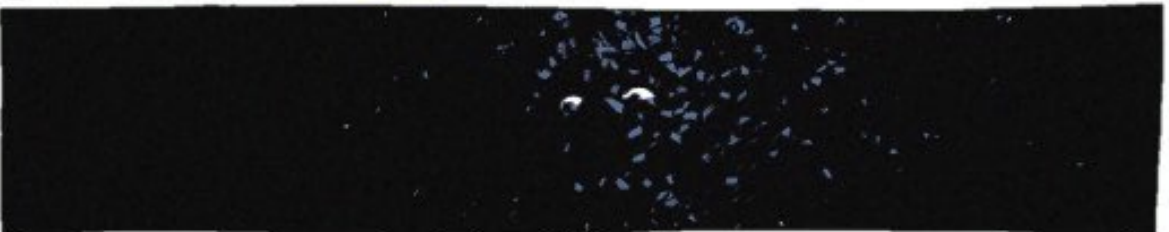
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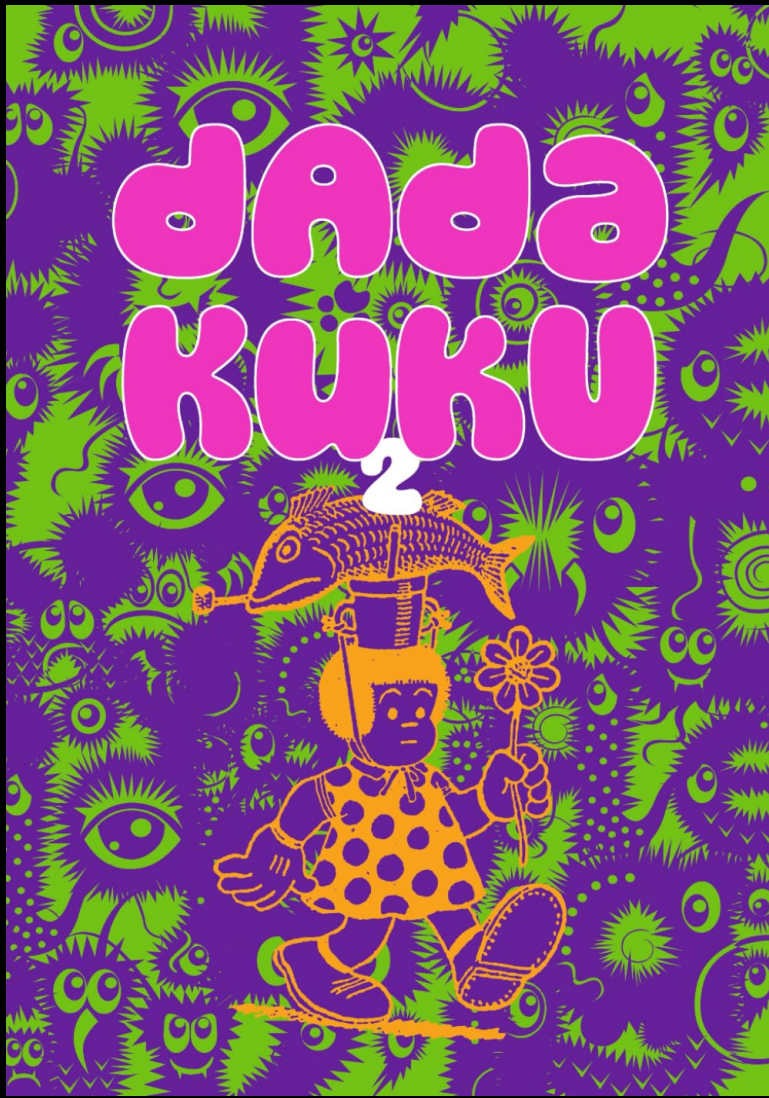


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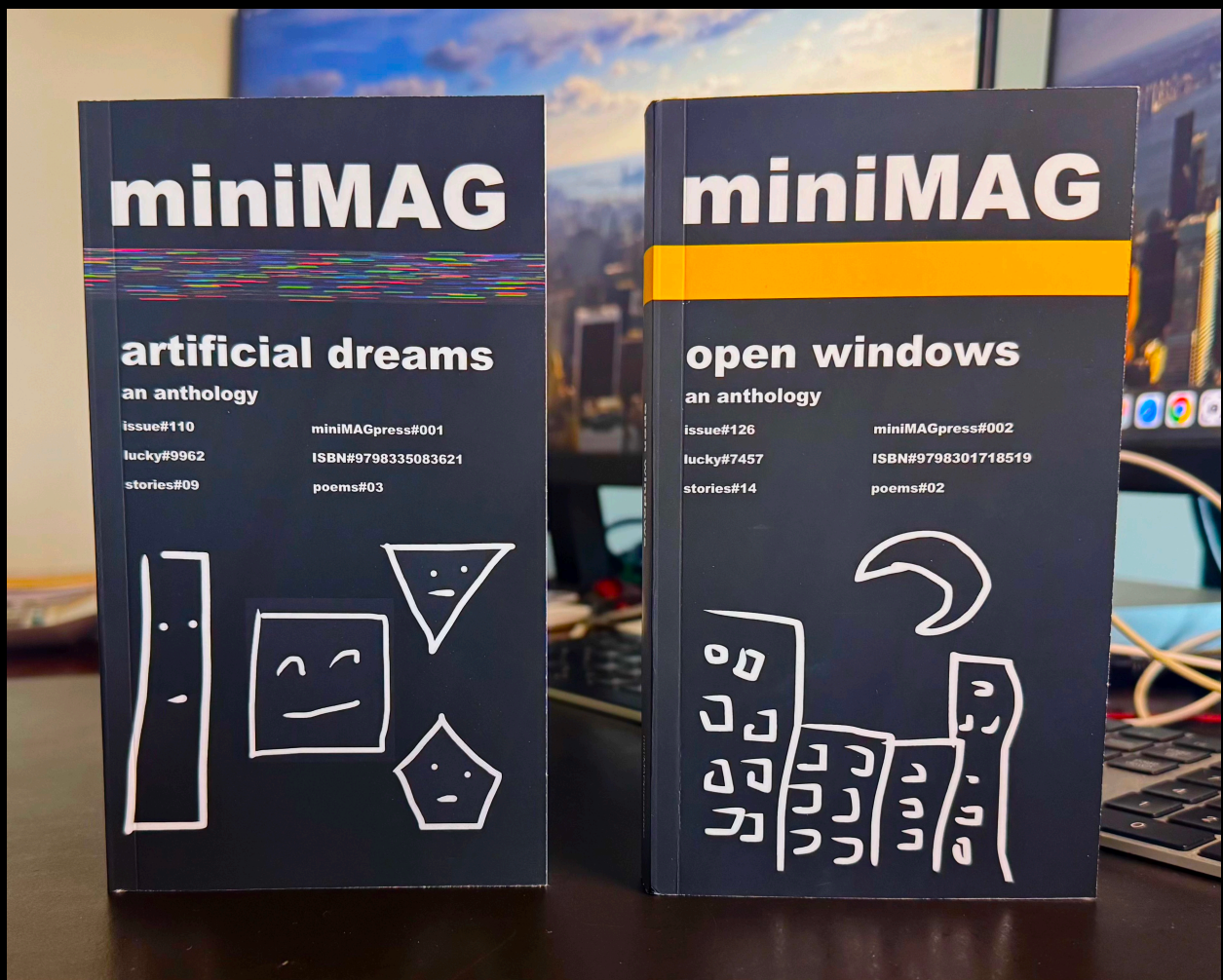
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